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Knut Holdhus  
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Democratic Party leadership race scrutinized. Illustration: ChatGPT



Independent South Korean investigative journalism outlet digging into religious ties in current leadership race of governing party

A [report](#) published on 2nd August 2026 by NewTamsa (시민언론 뉴탐사 / NTS), a progressive, independent South Korean investigative news outlet, examines whether a local figure associated with the Universal Peace Federation (UPF) also held an organizational role in the campaign of Jeong Cheong-rae (정청래), one of the candidates for leadership of South Korea's governing Democratic Party of Korea (DPK). The [article](#) by NewTamsa reporters Kang Jin-gu (강진구) and Pak Dae-yong (박대용) focuses on a political event held in the southern city of Gwangju on 10th July and compares public video footage with subsequent statements by one of the attendees.

See also [Religion as Campaign Weapons in Leadership Race](#)

The [report](#) comes at a time when UPF and other organizations founded by [Sun Myung Moon](#) (문선명) and [Hak Ja Han](#) (한학자) are receiving heightened media attention because of

ongoing investigations into alleged political lobbying in South Korea. NewTamsa argues that the presence of a UPF regional representative in Jeong's campaign organization raises political questions, although the article does not present evidence that Jeong himself knowingly appointed the individual or was aware of his affiliation. Much of the report revolves around conflicting accounts of what happened at the July event.

[NewTamsa reports](#) that a man publicly introduced as the head of Jeong Cheong-rae's organizational special advisers in Gwangju was, according to the outlet's investigation, also a regional official connected with UPF.

The individual is identified as Shin In-yong (신인용), a former Gwangju city council member. According to the [article](#), Shin was appointed in May 2022 as chairman of the Peace Ambassadors Association in Gwangju's Nam District. The Peace Ambassadors Association is described as a local network established by UPF, an international organization founded by [Sun Myung Moon](#) and [Hak Ja Han](#).

The [article](#) says the issue arose during a commemorative lecture held in Gwangju on 10th July to mark the first anniversary of the launch of Honam Ilbo TV. During the introductions of invited guests, Shin was reportedly announced as "Jeong Cheong-rae's Gwangju organizational special affairs director" on behalf of a political group known as Dangwon Jugwon Sidae ("Era of Party Members' Sovereignty"). NewTamsa notes that Shin later greeted Jeong and shook hands with him at the event.

According to the [report](#), this appearance follows earlier controversies in which people allegedly linked to another religious movement, Shincheonji [See editor's note below], were said to have been involved in Jeong's political activities. The [article](#) presents Shin's UPF connection as another example that could attract public scrutiny.



*Song Gwang-seok, June 7, 2024*

[NewTamsa](#) also places the story in the context of ongoing investigations into alleged political lobbying involving UPF. It notes that Song Gwang-seok (송광석), identified as UPF's former president in South Korea, has already been indicted without detention on charges of providing political donations to several politicians. The report further states that investigators recently questioned Song again while examining the use of large sums of cash allegedly kept by [Hak Ja Han](#). The article emphasizes that campaign organizational officials are responsible for recruiting supporters and building local political networks, making the identity of such individuals politically significant.

The [report](#) adds that Shin was not the only person introduced as representing Dangwon Jugwon Sidae at the event. Two other individuals were also presented as organizational officials and, according to the article, all three greeted Jeong with handshakes.

Before publication, NewTamsa contacted Shin by telephone. According to the article, he denied serving as Jeong's organizational special affairs director. He said he had attended the event for the first time and claimed that someone from Seoul had mistakenly provided his title to the event's master of ceremonies. Shin also denied having previously met Jeong, saying there had not even been enough time for a handshake before he left.

NewTamsa argues that this explanation is inconsistent with video footage it obtained. The outlet says the recording clearly shows Shin shaking hands with Jeong after being introduced to the audience. While earlier videos had only shown the guest introductions, NewTamsa says it later secured additional footage capturing the handshake itself.

Shin did acknowledge serving as chairman of the local Peace Ambassadors Association. According to the article, he explained that he accepted the position because he believed promoting peace was worthwhile. He added that he was an elder in a Christian church and said he knew of UPF's connection with [Unificationism](#) (통일교) but was not personally involved with the [movement](#) itself.

The [article](#) concludes this section by noting that Jeong has previously appeared at events connected with organizations associated with the [Family Federation](#). It cites a 2021 address that he delivered to the Hyojeong Forum, where he praised the group's activities in his parliamentary constituency of Mapo while also speaking about his own political background and imprisonment during the democracy movement which led to the 1987-start of the current democratic system South Korea is being governed by today.

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See also [Religion as Campaign Weapons in Leadership Race](#)

Text: Knut Holdhus, editor

**[Editor's note:** Shincheonji, officially known as Shincheonji Church of Jesus, the Temple of the Tabernacle of the Testimony, is a new religious movement founded in South Korea in 1984 by Lee Man-hee, who claims to be the promised pastor mentioned in the Bible's Book of Revelation.

Shincheonji teaches that the Book of Revelation is being fulfilled through its church and that Lee Man-hee has received divine revelation to interpret it. He teaches that South Korea is the location where the prophecies of the Book of Revelation are actively playing out in real-time, making it the epicenter of the final harvest. Shincheonji focuses on filling the literal 144,000 slots of the 12 Tribes mentioned in Revelation. Once this number of truly sealed, flawless believers is completed, they believe they will rule as kings and priests over the rest of humanity.]

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# Former Aide Questioned In Police Leak Probe

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Former Family Federation aide questioned as witness as special prosecutors trace path of leaked police intelligence in South Korea

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Scholar's Journey: She Gave Up Academia For Faith





Jeong Won-ju, here on 19<sup>th</sup> Jan. 2025. Screenshot from FFWPU video, improved resolution by ChatGPT, 31<sup>st</sup> July 2026.

Comprehensive Special Prosecutor Team, headed by Special Prosecutor Kweon Chang-yeong (권창영), has summoned Jeong Won-ju (정원주), the former chief of staff to Family Federation President Hak Ja Han (한학자), as a witness. In South Korea, the Family Federation is

usually referred to as



The logos of Yonhap News, Sisa Journal, and Newsis

Unificationism (통일교). Jeong was questioned as part of the team’s continuing investigation into allegations that a police inquiry into suspected overseas gambling by senior leaders of the religious organization was deliberately suppressed. According to Yonhap News, Sisa Journal, Newsis, and many other media outlets, she was questioned on 31<sup>st</sup> July. The interview marks the first time she has been questioned by the current special prosecutor team.

See also Democratic Party Leadership Race '26 Scrutinized

Although Jeong is not being questioned as a suspect in this particular investigation, her position as Hak Ja Han’s former chief of staff places her at the center of questions about whether confidential police intelligence was passed from law enforcement to Family Federation officials before any formal investigation began. The special counsel is trying to determine how sensitive police information may have reached both political figures and representatives of the religious organization.

The case has its origins in June 2022, when the Chuncheon Police Station reportedly received intelligence alleging that Hak Ja Han (한학자) and other senior Family Federation officials had engaged in gambling at casinos in Las Vegas between 2008 and 2011, involving approximately 60 billion won (around US\$43 million at current exchange rates). According to Yonhap News and Sisa Journal, investigators allege that instead of pursuing the matter, confidential information about the intelligence was leaked into political circles, preventing a full criminal investigation from taking place.

The current investigation is not primarily about whether the alleged gambling actually occurred. Rather, it focuses on whether police officers or senior officials improperly disclosed confidential investigative intelligence and whether influential figures subsequently ensured that the investigation never progressed. That alleged obstruction has become one of several unresolved issues inherited by the Second Comprehensive Special Prosecutor after three earlier special prosecutor investigations.

Silent Arrival at the Special Prosecutor’s Office

According to Sisa Journal and Newsis, Jeong arrived at the special prosecutor’s office in Gwacheon, south of Seoul, at approximately 9:55 a.m. on 31<sup>st</sup> July before questioning began at 10:00 a.m.

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Waiting reporters asked her several questions, including whether she had:

- reported investigative information to [Hak Ja Han](#) or other [Unificationism](#) leaders,
- received information about the police investigation from former lawmaker Kweon Seong-dong (권성동) or former [Family Federation](#) World Headquarters Director [Yoon Yeong-ho](#) (윤영호), or
- sought political assistance after learning that police possessed intelligence regarding the gambling allegations.



Former lawmaker **Kweon Seong-dong** (권성동), here portrait January 2025. Photo: [국민의힘TV](#) / Wikimedia Commons. License: [CC Attr 3.0 Unp.](#) Cropped

Both publications report that [Jeong](#) declined to answer any questions, walking directly into the interview room without making any public statement.

**What Investigators Want to Know**

All three articles mentioned above explain that investigators are particularly interested in determining whether confidential police intelligence reached the [Family Federation](#) before any formal investigation was launched.

According to [Yonhap News](#), earlier investigators had already found indications that [Family Federation](#) officials became aware of the intelligence report and began preparing for a possible police investigation.

[Sisa Journal](#) similarly says prosecutors are examining whether police officers actually conveyed details of the intelligence directly to representatives of the [religious organization](#).



Former South Korean President **Yoon Suk-yeol**, here in a meeting at the Pentagon, Washington, D.C., 27<sup>th</sup> April 2023. DoD photo by U.S. Navy Petty Officer 2<sup>nd</sup> Class Alexander Kubitza / US Secretary of Defense. License: [CC Attr 2.0 Gen.](#) Cropped

[Newsis](#) provides the most detailed description of the investigators' current theory. It reports that the special counsel believes former *National Police Commissioner* Yoon Hee-geun (윤희근) may have leaked police intelligence after receiving instructions from then-President Yoon Suk-yeol (윤석열) to ensure that the [Family Federation](#) could prepare for the investigation. The [article](#) further says investigators suspect Yoon Hee-geun (윤희근) was instructed to prevent any actual investigation from proceeding and that those instructions were passed through the *National Police Agency's Criminal Intelligence Division* to officials responsible for criminal intelligence within

the *National Office of Investigation*.

These allegations represent the prosecution's current investigative theory. No court has determined that such instructions were actually given.

**Earlier Special Prosecutor Investigation**

According to [Yonhap News](#) and [Sisa Journal](#), an earlier special prosecutor investigation led by Min Joong-gi (민중기) had already resulted in indictments against former *People Power Party* lawmaker Kweon Seong-dong (권성동), [Hak Ja Han](#) (하하자) and others



That earlier investigation concluded that confidential police intelligence had been exchanged but was unable to determine exactly how the information leaked from within the police organization or whether higher-ranking officials had participated in the process. Those unresolved questions have now become the responsibility of the *Second Comprehensive Special Prosecutor Team*.

Previous Witnesses and Searches

The current investigation has already involved extensive investigative activity.

According to [Yonhap News](#), investigators carried out searches of the *National Police Agency*, the *Gangwon Provincial Police Agency*, and the *Chuncheon Police Station* in April. Former *National Police Commissioner* Yoon Hee-geun (윤희근) has since been questioned twice as a criminal suspect, while former [Family Federation](#) World Headquarters Director Yoon Yeong-ho (윤영호) and several police officers formerly assigned to the *National Police Agency's Criminal Intelligence Division* have also been interviewed as witnesses.



**Yoon Yeong-ho**, former director general of the international headquarters of the [Family Federation](#), here 11<sup>th</sup> February 2022. Screenshot from live transmission by [FFWPU](#)

Newsis adds that [Yoon Yeong-ho](#) was questioned on 2<sup>nd</sup> July because investigators believe he received information concerning the police intelligence from former lawmaker Kweon Seong-dong (권성동) in October 2022.

Police Intelligence Reports

The [Newsis article](#) also includes additional details that help explain how the case first developed.



**Kept long-term in tiny cell under inhuman conditions: Hak Ja Han**, the [True Mother](#), here on 27<sup>th</sup> March 2026 after more than 6 months in detention cell. Photo: [FFWPU](#)

It reports that a police officer formerly stationed at Chuncheon testified earlier this year during [Hak Ja Han's](#) separate trial on alleged violations of the Political Funds Act. According to his testimony, the *Chuncheon Police Station* received three separate reports from an insider within the [Family Federation](#) between May and July 2022 alleging that [Hak Ja Han](#) (한학자) frequently engaged in overseas gambling using cash provided

by members of the [religious organization](#).

The officer testified that police prepared intelligence reports based on those allegations and entered them into the police intelligence system.

According to [Newsis](#), these reports received the classification “Byeolbo” (별보 – Special Intelligence Report), the highest level of police intelligence reporting, meaning they would also be shared with the South Korean



they would also be shared with the South Korean Presidential Office. Nevertheless, the *National Police Agency* reportedly decided on 15<sup>th</sup> July 2022, not to assign the matter to criminal investigators, citing insufficient supporting evidence, and instead archived the reports without opening a formal investigation.

**Separate Criminal Proceedings**

Although [Jeong Won-ju](#) (정원주) appeared only as a witness in this investigation, *Sisa Journal* notes that she is already standing trial in a separate criminal case.

In that case, prosecutors allege that she conspired with [Hak Ja Han](#) (한학자) and others in 2022 to provide 100 million won (in 2022 ca. US\$ 77,000) to former lawmaker Kweon Seong-dong (권성동) and also arranged so-called “split donations” – the practice of dividing political contributions among multiple nominal donors – using [Family Federation](#) funds to support members of the National Assembly.

Those charges are legally separate from the present investigation into the alleged suppression of the overseas gambling inquiry, although several of the same individuals appear in both proceedings. The questioning of Jeong as a witness suggests that the special prosecutor is continuing to reconstruct the chain through which confidential police intelligence may have traveled from law enforcement to political figures and, ultimately, to officials within the [Family Federation](#).

See also [Democratic Party Leadership Race '26 Scrutinized](#)

**Text:** *Knut Holdhus, editor*

**Featured image** above: *Alleged police intelligence leak.*  
*Illustration: ChatGPT, 31<sup>st</sup> July 2026, edited.*

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