

FFWPU Europe and Middle East: New S Korean Case Claims Illegal Mobilization

Knut Holdhus
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Alleged political mobilization. Illustration: ChatGPT



FFWPU leadership faces new case of political influence claims with 2000 members allegedly having been mobilized

Nate News, the South Korean digital news aggregation service, [reported on 21st August](#) on a new chapter in South Korea's extensive investigations into alleged political influence-peddling involving religious organizations and figures from the country's former conservative administration. On 21st August, the Seoul Central District Court opens the first full trial of Family Federation leader [Hak Ja Han](#) (한학자), former First Lady Kim Keon-hee (김건희), and several others over an alleged effort to recruit [Family Federation](#) members en masse into the conservative People Power Party (PPP).



He has already been given life sentence in another case, she 4 years in what some perceive as revenge on political opponents: Former South Korean President Yoon Suk-yeol and First Lady Kim Keon-hee, here in Tokyo 16th March 2023

The case is part of a much wider series of investigations and prosecutions that have followed the political upheaval surrounding former President Yoon Suk-yeol (윤석열, his wife Kim Keon-hee (김건희), and the collapse of the previous conservative administration. Several special prosecutor teams have been appointed by the current left-leaning Lee Jae-myung (이재명) administration to investigate allegations involving the former president, his wife, political figures and alleged links between politicians and religious organizations.



The investigations have resulted in numerous indictments and court proceedings. Yonhap News, for example, in a [report 26th June](#), records that the special prosecutor investigating Kim Keon-hee (김건희) eventually indicted 66 people before its investigation ended in December 2025.

The particular case beginning on 21st August concerns alleged violations of South Korea's Political Parties Act. The prosecution's central allegation is that members of the [Family Federation for World Peace and Unification](#) (FFWPU), in Korea also known as [Unificationism](#) (통일교), were mobilized to join the People Power Party in large numbers in connection with the party's 2023 national convention.

The [article](#) published by Nate News on 21st August focused on the allegations and interpretation of the prosecution. The claims described are therefore allegations, not established facts, and the defendants have the opportunity to contest them during the trial.

What is the prosecution alleging?



Yoon Yeong-ho, former director general of the international headquarters of the [Family Federation](#) (February 11, 2022)



Former People Power Party lawmaker Kweon Seong-dong (Dec. 23, 2024)



Aggressively promoting special prosecutor investigations: Lee Jae-myung, President of South Korea (June 4, 2025)

According to the prosecution's case as [reported by Nate News](#), former First Lady Kim Keon-hee (김건희) allegedly worked with a figure known as Jeon Seong-bae (전성배), sometimes referred to in Korean media as the "Geonjin shaman". They allegedly approached [Yoon Yeong-ho](#) (윤영호), then director-general of the [Family Federation](#)'s World Headquarters, and sought the organized recruitment of members of the [religious organization](#) into the PPP.

The alleged purpose, according to the special prosecutor, was to influence the outcome of the party's 2023 national convention. The prosecution believes that approximately 2,000 [Family Federation](#) members were encouraged to join the PPP so that they could participate in the selection of party leadership and support a candidate favorable to former President Yoon.

The prosecution further alleges that this political support was connected to promises of benefits for the [Family Federation](#). These allegedly included political and policy assistance on issues important to the [organization](#) and the provision of proportional-representation seats in the National Assembly.

One of the political figures mentioned in connection with these allegations is Kweon Seong-dong (권성동), then a prominent People Power Party lawmaker, whose candidacy for party leader Kim Keon-hee (김건희) allegedly sought to support.

Hak Ja Han's alleged role

The charges against [Hak Ja Han](#) (한학자) - also called [Mother Han](#) - concern a somewhat earlier stage of the alleged scheme.

According to the prosecution, in November 2022 she allegedly conspired with senior [Family Federation](#) officials, including former chief of staff Jeong Won-ju (정원주) and former World Headquarters director-general [Yoon Yeong-ho](#) (윤영호), to arrange for [Family Federation](#) members to join the People Power Party.

The prosecution therefore views the alleged mass membership campaign as part of a broader effort by the [Family Federation](#) leadership to develop political influence and secure favorable treatment from politicians.

[Mother Han](#) and the other defendants, however, should not be treated as having been found guilty merely because they have been indicted. The 21st August hearing is the beginning of the substantive trial, in which the prosecution's allegations will be tested against the evidence and the defense's arguments.

Why the case matters

The case is particularly significant because it brings together two highly controversial issues in contemporary South Korean politics: the alleged use of religious networks for political purposes and the government's increasingly forceful investigation of such activities.



As [reported by The Japan Times](#) on 10th December 2025, President Lee Jae-myung (이재명) has called for investigations into suspected links between religious organizations and politicians and has urged consideration of measures against religious groups that improperly intervene in politics. The [Family Federation](#) has consequently found itself at the center of an unusually intense political and legal controversy.

The 21st August proceedings should therefore not be viewed in isolation. They form part of a larger confrontation involving the former conservative political establishment, the current administration's special-prosecutor investigations, and allegations concerning the political activities of religious organizations.

For the [Family Federation](#), the central issue is not simply whether individual members participated in political activities. The crucial legal question is whether the prosecution can prove that [Mother Han](#) personally participated in an unlawful scheme to manipulate party membership and, if so, what responsibility can legitimately be attributed to her.

The court will ultimately have to distinguish between political allegations, organizational activities and individually provable criminal responsibility.

That distinction will be particularly important as the case moves forward.

Text: Knut Holdhus, editor

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“We have to turn this around even if it takes 10 or 20 years”: Japanese second-generation leader speaks out



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“We’ll Turn This



Nozomi Kojima, representative of “[The Second-Generation Association for Protecting the Human Rights of Believers](#)”, here speaking at a press conference on 26th March 2025 in Shibuya, Tokyo. Photo: Screenshot from video recording by [FFWPU](#).

Around Over 10 or 20 Years”

Second-Generation Group Leader Speaks at Osaka Talk Event

by the editorial department of
[Sekai Nippo](#)

Nozomi Kojima (小嶋希晶), representative of the “[Second-Generation Association for Protecting the Human Rights of Believers](#)”, a group consisting primarily of second-generation members of the [Family Federation for World Peace and Unification](#) (FFWPU, formerly the [Unification Church](#)), attended a talk event organized by believers in Osaka City, Osaka Prefecture, on 9th August. Even after the decision to dissolve the [religious organization](#), Kojima has continued her activities of communicating the voices of current members. She said,

“I hope this gathering will serve as an opportunity for us to encourage churches to hold events more actively, including events jointly involving different churches.”

Kojima recalled her feelings on 4th March, when the *Tokyo High Court* decided to [uphold the dissolution order](#) against the [organization](#). Describing her state of mind at the time, she said,

“As a believer, I was deeply saddened and felt that I no longer wanted to do anything.”

Nevertheless, she explained that she had continued her activities because “many people encouraged me by telling me that this would also have an impact on people belonging to other religions, and that we have to turn this around, even if it takes 10 or 20 years.”

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Addressing approximately 350 believers gathered at the venue, Kojima said,

“Amid continuing anxiety and difficulties, I felt hopeful that so many people could come together across the boundaries between churches and spend this time together.”

Attorney Shinichi Tokunaga (徳永信一) also participated in the talk event. Referring to the High Court’s ruling and the arguments advanced by the *Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology* (MEXT) and others, Tokunaga observed,



Attorney Shinichi Tokunaga (徳永信一).
Photo: [Sekai Nippo](#)

“They probably believed that the only way to rescue believers who were being subjected to ‘mind control’ [See [editor’s note below](#)] was to dissolve the [religious organization](#), and that dissolving it would solve the problem.”

He then emphasized the importance of believers continuing to gather and act to protect their church even after its dissolution:

“Even if the [Family Federation](#) is dissolved, it is important for believers to come together and work to protect their church. The warm relationships in which everyone supports one another, and the way in which people practice their faith, have not changed at all.”

He continued:

“If we can show the people of Japan what the actual practice of our faith is like, we can overcome the difficult circumstances we are facing now.”

Featured image above:

[Editor’s note: In Japan, the **“mind-control” myth** has been a powerful tool used to stigmatize and suppress new religious movements (NRMs), particularly since the 1980s. The concept suggests that NRMs manipulate or “brainwash” their followers, depriving them of free will and rational thought. This narrative gained traction after the 1995 Aum Shinrikyō sarin gas attack, when public fear of dangerous cults intensified. Although Aum was an extreme and violent exception, the incident cast suspicion on all NRMs, allowing critics, media, and the government to label diverse groups as manipulative or psychologically coercive.

The “mind-control” myth serves multiple social and political functions. It simplifies complex questions of belief, making it easier to portray converts as victims rather than as individuals exercising spiritual agency. This framing justifies legal and social intervention, including the coercive **“deprogramming”** of believers – sometimes involving confinement or psychological pressure to force renunciation of faith. Lawyers, ex-member groups, and certain media

outlets have used the idea of mind control to construct NRMs as threats to family stability and national order, reinforcing social conformity and Japan's preference for established, non-controversial religions such as Buddhism and Shinto.

In recent years, the myth resurfaced following the 2022 assassination of former Prime Minister Shinzo Abe, whose attacker cited resentment toward the [Unification Church](#). Public outrage reignited scrutiny of NRMs, and politicians and journalists revived "mind-control" rhetoric to explain the [Church's](#) fundraising and recruitment practices. Critics argue that this framing discourages genuine religious tolerance and critical examination of Japan's restrictive religious climate. Overall, the "mind-control" myth functions less as a scientific or psychological concept and more as a moral panic – a cultural weapon used to delegitimize minority faiths and to reaffirm mainstream social norms about religion, obedience, and the boundaries of acceptable belief.]

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