

FFWPU Europe and Middle East: M Balcomb - Mother Han's Unending Legal War

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Dr. Michael Balcomb, President of the [Family Federation for World Peace and Unification](#) in Europe and the Middle East, speaking online on September 20, 2026



Mother Han arriving in the heavy rain at Seoul Central District Court, August 31, 2026



And then [Mother](#) came. She arrived, as she does these days, in a wheelchair, wearing her hospital gown, her hair undyed, and in the pouring rain

Having appealed against the first instance ruling, Mother Han now prepares for a lengthy legal war from her heavily guarded hospital bed

Part 1 of extracts from a briefing titled "An Update from Korea" by Dr. Michael Balcomb, President of the [Family Federation for World Peace and Unification](#) in [Europe and the Middle East](#), given online at an international Sunday worship service for the Nordic countries on Zoom 20th September 2026.

The first presentation is an update from Korea. Fumiko and I were just there. In fact, we only came back a week ago from a visit to Korea and Japan.

And I'd like to share with you briefly four points about what's happening there legally, socially, organizationally and spiritually. And of course we're talking about mainly about [True Mother's](#) situation.

So the first part will be the legal thing. I'm not a lawyer, so this is my understanding based on meetings we had in Korea and with our own public affairs response team.

So this was 31st August. It was a very rainy day, and before [True Mother](#) arrived to go into court, the crowd was pretty calm and orderly.

[Mother Han](#) being mobbed by the media upon arrival at Seoul Central District Court on 31st August 2026. Photo: Michael Balcomb

You would think that an 83-year old in that situation would be treated with some respect. But suddenly she was mobbed by the press and reporters

trying to take photographs, to ask her questions. The security had to fight them off, literally.

Anyway, then we went up to the fifth floor. We couldn't go in the courtroom.

We sat in the corridor together with about eight or nine members of [True Mother](#)'s family. It was good to see them there in support of [True Mother](#).

When it was over, we hadn't even made it to the first floor again when the news was out worldwide that [Mother](#) had been [convicted and sentenced](#) on these charges of political collusion.

So what's happening after the [verdict](#)? It was 21 days ago tomorrow.

The court did convict her on political funding charges, but she was acquitted on charges of embezzlement, and other charges were dismissed.

Of course, the prosecutors were not happy either. They'd [asked for 13 years](#) in prison. They only got two.

And the defense, from the very moment of the decision, they cited this was a sign of the special counsel's overreach.

So both sides have appealed.

The [prosecutors](#) are asking for more time in prison. The [defense](#) is arguing for a complete acquittal based on the apparent lack of direct evidence that [True Mother](#) herself did or authorized anything at all.

Seoul High Court Appellate Phase			
SEPT 2026	OCT 2026	NOV 2026	LATE 2026
Appeal Filed	Bench Assigned	First Hearings	2nd Ruling
Both parties submitted formal appeal notices.	Assigned to High Court Criminal Division 13.	Brief submissions and initial arguments begin.	Statutory 3-month appellate window applies.

An overview of the appellate phase at Seoul High Court

The appeals have been filed, but it's a lengthy process. It will be assigned to the formal bench, and the judges will be decided quite soon.

The hearings may start in November, and the earliest a decision could be reached is December. But they have three months before issuing a ruling.

You might think, "What will the appeal court do?"

They'll review the facts. They'll see how reliable the testimony was, and they'll examine the lower court's legal reasoning.

Appellate Outcome	Rate	Practical Mechanism
Appeal Dismissed (Sentence Maintained)	~50% – 60%	The High Court upholds the lower court's reasoning, keeping both the guilty and acquitted portions intact.
Sentence Modified (Partial Reversal)	~30% – 35%	The appellate court re-weighs the evidence or sentencing factors. In mixed cases, this often means adjusting the prison term while leaving the core liability intact, or overturning one specific count.
Full Reversal to Complete Acquittal	~1.5% – 3%	Reversing the entire conviction to "not guilty" on appeal is statistically rare in Korea (overall criminal acquittal rates on appeal sit around 1.7%–2%).
Prosecution-Driven Reversal (Guilty on Acquitted Counts)	~5% – 10%	The prosecution successfully proves an acquitted count, resulting in a harsher combined sentence.

How likely different appellate outcomes are

But let's be enormously candid here. What usually happens at appeals in Korea is like this: 60% of the

time, the appeal is dismissed, meaning none of what the defense has to say is taken into account, or the prosecution.

In about 30% of cases, which is about 1 in 3, they may adjust the sentencing while leaving the verdict intact, or they might overturn one specific count.

So most likely, [Mother](#) will not be found innocent. That only happens 1 to 3% of the time in Korea. And in criminal cases, it's 2%, so almost never.

And it is possible the prosecution may succeed in asking for a harsher sentence.

So this is not like an appeal where you feel there's a fifty-fifty chance of success. I'm sorry to be blunt, but you deserve, I think, the truth as it is.

After that, there is a chance of escalating it to the Supreme Court. That becomes a very lengthy process. It might take a year; it might take more.



Supreme Court pathways

But in Supreme Court's cases, most of the time, the High Court will dismiss the appeal, and that might happen in the middle of next year.

But if they feel that there's something of legal importance, they can hear the case en banc, with the full bench.

That might take all of next year and some of 2028, and a decision might not be reached until the middle of 2028.

That's two years from now. So there's a very long road ahead.



History of early release in South Korea

It is true that in Korea, high profile defendants, including all the previous presidents, usually get their penalty reduced after a certain time.

They're also eligible for parole, or the sentence can even be suspended.

But we're talking about slim possibilities here to be honest.

[Mother](#), as you know, is now in [medical detention](#). This is very common in Korea. It's happened with many high profile political figures or business leaders, but it's very tight. There are only two or three places they can be. They're not allowed any visitors except for their legal and medical team, no family visits.

So in a way, it's more restrictive than being in jail. And the Ministry of Justice is always present.

The Asan Hospital, where [True Mother](#) is right now, is beautiful. It's the largest hospital in Korea. It's consistently ranked in the top 10 in the world, and it's number one for interventional cardiology in the world. So she's in very, very good hands.

Medical Detention Framework

-  **Designated Facilities:** Care restricted to major university hospitals.
-  **Visitor Oversight:** Access limited strictly to legal and medical team.
-  **Ministry Supervision:** Permanent Ministry of Justice security detail.

Medical detention framework in South Korea

Key takeaways here are that appeals are going on, and she might well stay in hospital for many more months, I'm sorry to say, but that's the truth.

To be continued. Part 2 coming soon.
The text has been slightly edited and is based on the transcription of a recording of the live transmission from Stockholm.

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Apartment Turned Prison: 12 Years To Break Faith

September 19, 2026 • The News Desk

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Toru Goto recounts how a family dispute became a 12-year ordeal of abduction, confinement and attempted coercive faith-breaking in a Tokyo apartment made into a prison

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Part 1 of **"My Experience of Abduction, Confinement, and Forced Deconversion"**, a testimony on 19th September 2026 by Toru Goto (後藤 徹), a Japanese member of the [Family Federation](#) and victim of attempted coercive [faith-breaking](#) – locked up for [over 12 years in apartment turned prison](#). This first-hand witness account – of [high relevance for the current dissolution case against the Family Federation in Japan](#) – was delivered at a Zoom conference organized by [Peace and Reconciliation Together \(PnR-T\)](#), a Dutch-registered foundation focused on reconciliation, peacebuilding, dialogue, and healing historical conflicts.

I was confined for 12 years and five months, from September 1995 until February 2008. In terms of age, I was 31 when it began and 44 when it ended. These should have been the brightest years of my life.

I was not confined in a foreign country or in some remote mountain area far from civilization. I was moved between three apartments, and for the last ten years or so I was confined in an apartment in Tokyo.

This photograph was taken immediately before I was confined for those 12 years and five months.

What I would like to tell you today is not simply what



Toru Goto at 31. Photo: Toru Goto

ordinary family who lived happily and got along well.

My father was a company employee who was extremely dedicated to his work and very capable. Although he could be strict and scold us when necessary, he also had a warm and friendly side. For example, he would sometimes make food himself and serve it to the family.

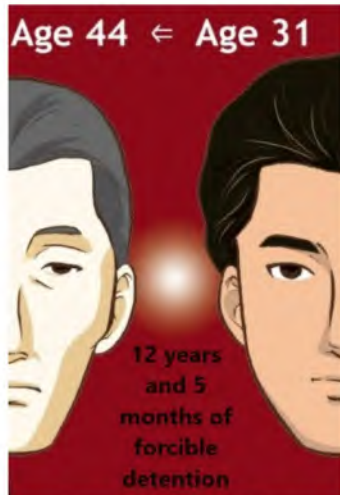
My mother was gentle and reserved, somewhat prone to worrying and conscious of what other people thought, but she was a wonderful mother who sincerely loved her family.

My brother and I sometimes argued, but whenever I had a problem, he was someone I could turn to for advice. I remember teaching my younger sister before her exams and celebrating together when she achieved good grades.

Perhaps we were just an ordinary family like any other. But it was our unique place in this world – the one place that belonged to us.

None of us could ever have imagined that we would later engage in such a bitter struggle over this family and our living environment.

I first encountered the teachings of the [Unification Church](#) in 1986, when I was in my fourth year at university.



Toru Goto went through 12 years and 5 months of forcible detention. Illustration: [Japanese Victims' Association against Religious Kidnapping and Forced Conversion](#)

happened to me. I want to explain how I maintained my faith during those 12 years and five months of confinement – what I suffered, and what enabled me to preserve both my heart and my faith.

First, let me tell you about my family.

There were five of us: my parents, my older brother, myself, and my younger sister. We were a very



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Protesting against the evil of deprogramming (faith-breaking) in Shinjuku, Tokyo 8th December 2024. Here, Toru Goto (後藤徹), representing the [National Association of Victims of Abduction, Confinement, and Forced Religious De-Conversion](#) (center), delivering a speech. The posters behind him carry pictures of Toru Goto hardly able to walk after more than 12 years of forcible confinement. Photo: Reiwa Kato (加藤玲和)

My older brother called me and said,

"There's a place where you can study some useful things.
Why don't you come with me and take a look?"

I was worried that my brother had gotten involved with something strange. My father also said, "Why don't you go and see what it's like?" I went with the intention, so to speak, of bringing my brother back.

When I first watched the introductory video, I found it boring and one-sided, and I complained quite strongly to the staff.

But my brother pleaded with me:

"I'm sure this will be useful to you in the future, so why don't you study it?"

I thought that if this really was a suspicious organization, I could simply leave together with my brother. So I began studying.

But once I actually began learning, I became deeply absorbed in its teachings.

At that time, I was struggling with spiritual and existential questions that I could not discuss even with my closest friends or family. I was depressed by the irrational things I encountered in the world – war, crime, adultery and so on – and I felt ashamed of my own selfishness. I was tormented by a sense of emptiness and meaninglessness, unable to find hope or value in human beings or in life itself.

At the same time, somewhere deep inside me I was searching for a noble way of life and for an unchanging, genuine love.

It was precisely at such a time that, through my brother, I encountered the teachings of the [Unification Church](#).

For the first time I encountered ideas such as the [existence of God](#); that [God's](#) purpose in creating was to realize love and joy; that [God and human beings](#) are related as parent and child; and that human history is the history of [God's](#) efforts to save humanity.

I was deeply shocked and moved by these teachings, which were completely new to me. It felt as though a dead soul had come back to life, and I became a member of the [Unification Church](#).

In 1987, my older brother, who was the most devoted of the three siblings in his involvement with the [Unification Church](#), suddenly disappeared.



Exposition of the Divine Principle, the official English version of the [Unification Principles](#), published in 1996. Photo: FFWPU

[Church, suddenly disappeared.](#)

Three months later, my father contacted me and said that my brother wanted to see me. We arranged to meet. My father took me to a hotel in Tokyo. When we entered one of the rooms, my brother was there.

Seeing him looking healthy, I almost cried with relief.

But then he told me that he had decided to leave the [Unification Church](#) and asked me to listen to what he had to say.

My brother had already been subjected to [abduction and confinement](#) for the purpose of breaking his faith, and he had lost his faith. Now they intended to break mine as well.

The door to the room had been secured so that it could not be opened from the inside.

I realized what had happened.

To be continued. Part 2 coming soon

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