

Gingrich urges Korea not to set precedent of curbing religious freedom

Lee Jong-hyun

November 24, 2025

Automatic Translation from Korean



Former U.S. House Speaker Newt Gingrich. /Courtesy of REUTERS News1

Newt Gingrich, a leading conservative politician in the United States and former U.S. House speaker, placed an ad in Korean media urging the release of Unification Church leader Han Hak-ja.

On the 24th, the former House speaker ran a print ad in some Korean media under the headline "The U.S.-Korea alliance is a values alliance." The former House speaker is a leading conservative politician in the United States and a close ally of U.S. President Donald Trump.

In the ad, the former House speaker said, "For decades I have worked in the U.S. Congress and the public sphere, consistently emphasizing that freedom of religion, human rights, and democracy are key elements of global stability," adding, "In a free society, religious leaders are not arrested for their religious activities or how they run their church. If that happens, it would be a direct violation of the core democratic principles of freedom of religion and freedom of conscience."

Aiming at the Korean government that detained President Han Hak-ja, the former House speaker said, "This action by the Korean government appears to be direct state intervention in the legitimate activities of a religious leader," adding, "This could also be a serious red flag for American leaders."

He continued, "President Han Hak-ja has led a faith community for decades, and the leader's activities belong essentially to the realm of religion," noting, "The moment the government infringes on this realm, the principles of Korean democracy begin to waver."

The former House speaker said, "The Unification Church has long carried out efforts to promote peace on the Korean Peninsula, ease inter-Korean relations, foster international cultural exchange, and conduct large-scale global volunteer work," adding, "We cannot say there has been no controversy or criticism at all, but rushing to label this organization and its leader as a 'criminal group' could be a grave misjudgment."

The former House speaker said the alliance between Korea and the United States is linked by the shared value of freedom, adding, "Korea must not set a disgraceful precedent that infringes on religious freedom."

He emphasized, "President Han Hak-ja is 82 years old and has long emphasized peace, family values, and interfaith dialogue in the international community," adding, "Detaining such a leader raises serious questions in terms of fairness, proportionality, and the public interest."

He continued, "Detention should be a last resort," emphasizing, "When applied to an elderly religious leader, its social and humanitarian ramifications must be considered with even greater care." The former House speaker said, "I once again urge the Korean government and President Lee Jae-myung to make the right decision," adding, "This case is a test of democracy, freedom of religion, and national dignity."