

FFWPU Europe and the Middle East: Yong-cheon Song Pledges FFWPU Korea Reform After Apology

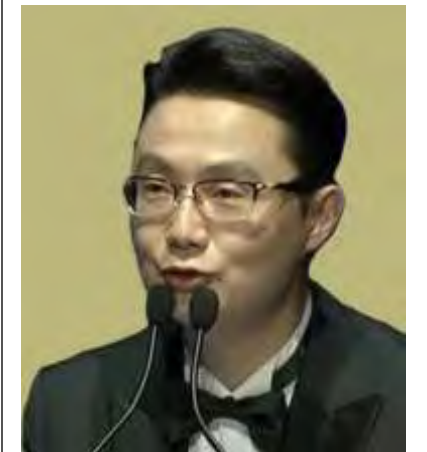
Knut Holdhus
December 13, 2025



Rev. Song Yong-cheon reading the [Family Federation](#) statement on December 11, 2025



The Constitution of the Republic of Korea. Here, the first version enacted in 1948



Yoon Yeong-ho, August 9, 2020

In statement to South Korean media 11th Dec. 2025, Family Federation admits oversight failures, vows political neutrality and transparency

A statement in Korean issued by the [Family Federation](#) in South Korea to the Korean media on 11th December 2025. Many national media outlets commented on the press release and quoted from it. Translated from the [text on the Korean language website](#) of the [Family Federation](#).

Statement by the Korean Branch of the Family Federation for World Peace and Unification on Apology and Reform Plan

We offer our deepest apologies to the people of this nation for the great disappointment and concern we have caused.

1)Despite our respect for the constitutional order, we failed to prevent individual misconduct.

The [Family Federation for World Peace and Unification](#) in Korea has been educated to clearly uphold and respect the principles of democracy, the rule of law, and the separation of religion and state as guaranteed by the Constitution of the Republic of Korea, and we are a faith community that abides by these principles. We believe that the moment religion colludes with political power to pursue its own interests, it loses its essential nature. This has been an immutable core value that we have upheld for more than 70 years under the teachings of our founders.

Our [religious organization](#) has never, at the institutional level, had any plan or intention to collude with political power or to gain benefits by supporting a specific political party. What the [Family Federation](#) genuinely seeks is harmony within the family, society, nation, and humanity – an objective that is unrelated to supporting or opposing any particular political party.

Nevertheless, we failed to properly manage and supervise our organization to ensure that these principles functioned effectively in actual operations.

The actions of former Headquarters Director Yoon Yeong-ho, which recently caused public controversy through his courtroom testimony, were an individual's unilateral and aberrant conduct. However, it is unquestionably the responsibility of the organization that such misconduct was not detected and prevented in advance.

As a result of this incident, the trust built over more than 70 years has been damaged, and most of all, we have deeply disappointed the people of this nation.

2) We deeply acknowledge our responsibility for inadequate internal management.

Through this incident, our [Federation](#) has painfully recognized that our internal systems and management mechanisms for detecting and controlling misconduct within the organization were severely insufficient

Due to management failures at the global headquarters level of the [Family Federation](#), the values of our teachings that have been upheld for more than 70 years have been undermined, and the faith and dedication of millions of believers around the world have been unjustly denigrated.



The Korean HQ of the [Family Federation](#) in Cheongpa-dong, Seoul, here at the inauguration in May 2005

Most importantly, we solemnly acknowledge that we have caused disappointment and distrust among the public.

3) We will undertake fundamental reforms to restore trust.

Taking this incident as a painful lesson, the Korean [Family Federation](#) will place "the restoration of trust with Korean society and the recovery of public accountability" as the highest priority in the governance of our [religious organization](#). To this end, we promise the public the following courses of action:

■ First, we will strictly uphold political neutrality.

We will clearly declare organizational political neutrality and institutionalize regulations that operate a transparency verification system involving external experts, thereby fundamentally and systematically blocking any possibility of political intervention.

■ Second, we will establish financial transparency and a sound governance structure.

We will address the absence of internal oversight systems, which was the root cause of this incident, and dramatically strengthen monitoring mechanisms. We will entrust accounting audits to independent external institutions and introduce independent audit systems for key organizations to ensure transparency.

■ Third, we will place public interest and social responsibility as the highest values in organizational governance.

As a member of Korean society, we will further expand the scale of our social contribution activities in order to regain public trust, and we will thoroughly implement compliance education and strengthen ethical guidelines.

Dear citizens,

Our [Family Federation](#) will faithfully fulfill its social responsibilities.

Under the Constitution of the Republic of Korea, we are members of Korean society who have raised our children on this land, helped our neighbors, and lived our lives together with the broader community. Countless ordinary believers have quietly continued their lives of faith here.

We will make every possible effort to ensure that this incident does not lead to a situation in which even the conscience and lives of individual believers who have lived sincerely in this country are denied. [See editor's note below]

We will respond with concrete changes and actions so that we may be reborn as a faith community trusted by the people.

Once again, we sincerely apologize for causing social concern and anxiety.

[Editor's note: The expression "the conscience and lives of individual believers are denied", is typical in formal apologies. "Denying conscience" (양심이 부정당하다) in this context, 양심 (conscience) refers to a person's moral integrity, sincerity of belief, ethical self-understanding as a law-abiding, good-faith citizen. To say that someone's conscience is "denied" means their good faith and moral intentions are questioned or dismissed, they are collectively portrayed as immoral, deceitful, or culpable because of actions they did not personally commit, their personal sense of right and wrong is socially invalidated. It does not mean loss of inner conscience, but rather public negation of moral legitimacy.

Here, in the expression "denying lives" (삶이 부정당하다), 삶 (life) does not refer to biological life. It refers to one's lived life as a citizen, one's everyday existence: work, family, social relationships, reputation, the accumulated effort of living "sincerely" over time.

To say a person's life is "denied" means their entire life history is reduced to or judged by a single affiliation, their social identity is stigmatized or delegitimized, and they face social exclusion, discrimination, or reputational harm.

When combined, the phrase means that individual believers may be unfairly judged as morally suspect. Their personal dignity, sincerity, and social legitimacy may be undermined. They may suffer collective blame for actions of others.]

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SKorea: Bribery Probe Into Opposition Backfires

• December 12, 2025

• Knut Holdhus



Special prosecutor inquiry backfires with Lee administration engulfed by expanding bribery probe aimed at political opposition and its perceived supporters

The Korea Times, the oldest daily English-language newspaper in South Korea, published on 11th December an article carrying the headline “Unification Church bribery scandal rocks Lee gov’t”.

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South Korea's current president Lee Jae-myung. Here, on 4th June 2025. Photo: Korea.net / Korean Culture and Information Service (Photographer name). License: CC ASA

According to the [report](#) written by Anna J. Park, South Korea is facing an escalating political scandal that now threatens to destabilize key elements of the administration of President Lee Jae-myung (이재명). The controversy centers on alleged unlawful ties between prominent government officials and the [Family Federation for World Peace and Unification](#), formerly the [Unification Church](#) – a religious movement that has been catapulted onto the main stage of events in the country since the current government asked special prosecutors to investigate the [organization's](#) relationship to the main opposition party.

However, the investigation has now taken an unexpected turn as it appears that also senior policymakers within Lee's own administration allegedly have accepted money or gifts from a [Family Federation](#) representative. This has already led to one cabinet resignation and placed several other high-ranking figures under scrutiny. As

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domestic governance but also for party cohesion and candidate selection ahead of next year's crucial local elections.

The **Family Federation** originated in Korea and is known internationally for attracting top political leaders to large peace events and for its global religious network. Recently, the **religious organization** has been the subject of renewed public debate, particularly following allegations about outreach to South Korean political figures and the indictment of **Yoon Yeong-ho** (윤영호), a former senior **Federation** official, on charges related to delivering high-value gifts to the former First Lady. The current wave of allegations indicates that Yoon's political entanglements may run deeper than previously acknowledged, cutting across party lines and affecting bureaucrats at the highest levels of government.



Chun Jae-soo (전재수). Photo (2023): 이대일리TV / Wikimedia Commons. License: CC Attr 3.0 Unp. Cropped

The Korea Times reports that Oceans and Fisheries Minister Chun Jae-soo (전재수) is at the center of this latest episode. He submitted his resignation after being accused of accepting between 30 and 40 million won (roughly USD 20,000-27,000) in cash, as well as two luxury watches, from an individual linked to the **Family Federation**. While Chun has vehemently denied any wrongdoing, he stated that stepping down was necessary to prevent further disruption to governance and to allow investigative authorities to proceed without political distraction. His departure marks the first resignation of a minister since the Lee administration took office in June and has intensified scrutiny of potential misconduct involving other cabinet members and senior officials.

Chun's alleged connection to the **religious organization** appears to have arisen from its efforts to secure political backing for an ambitious infrastructure project – an **undersea tunnel** intended to physically link South Korea and Japan. While such proposals have circulated for decades, they have often attracted skepticism due to geopolitical sensitivities and cost concerns. Any suggestion that a government minister accepted gifts in exchange for influence over such a major initiative has therefore resonated sharply with the public and the political establishment.

Upon returning to the country from a United Nations meeting, Chun declared that he had "never engaged in any illegal exchange of money," describing the allegations as entirely baseless. Nonetheless, he acknowledged that remaining in office during an active investigation could create the perception of impropriety. The presidential office later confirmed that President Lee accepted Chun's resignation, signaling the administration's intent to cooperate with a broad investigation into political ties with the **Family Federation** – an investigation the president himself ordered earlier in the week.



Yoon Yeong-ho, Dec 6, 2020. Screenshot from Peacelink TV

According to the **Korea Times article**, the expanding inquiry originated from testimony provided by **Yoon Yeong-ho**, formerly the head of the **Family Federation's** global headquarters. As part of a corruption probe, Yoon reportedly informed investigators that the **Federation** had provided financial support not only to politicians from the conservative People Power Party (PPP), but also to members of President Lee's ruling Democratic Party of Korea (DPK). Such claims, if substantiated, may suggest a pattern of influence-seeking that transcends partisan boundaries.

Dong-young (정동영). In a strongly worded statement, Chung categorically denied any involvement, asserting that he met **Yoon** only once – briefly and casually – in 2021. According to Chung, the conversation lasted approximately ten minutes and focused solely on inter-Korean affairs. He emphasized that he has never met the **Family Federation's** leader, **Hak Ja Han** (한학자), and framed the allegations as an attack on his personal reputation. He also pledged to pursue legal action against media outlets that, in his view, published unsubstantiated claims.

One of the officials named in Yoon's testimony is Unification Minister Chung



Unification Minister Chung Dong-young (정동영). Photo (2025): 통일부 / Wikimedia Commons. License: Korea Open Government License. Cropped



National Intelligence Service (NIS) Director, Lee Jong-seok (이종석). Photo: Office of the President of the Republic of Korea/Lee Jae-myung. License: Korea Open Government License

Similar allegations have surfaced regarding the **National Intelligence Service** (NIS) Director, Lee Jong-seok (이종석). Lee confirmed that he met **Yoon** and other **Family Federation** officials once in 2022 at their request to discuss North Korean matters, but he denied receiving any money or inappropriate favors. Beyond these individuals, additional current and former lawmakers associated with the ruling party are reportedly under investigation, raising concerns that the political scandal could widen significantly.

The political consequences are already visible. Within the governing party, there is deep concern that sustained public attention to the scandal could undermine the administration's ability to execute its policy agenda. The episode is particularly damaging because Minister Chun was considered a leading contender for next year's mayoral race in Busan, South Korea's second-largest city. Losing a candidate with that level of visibility alters the party's electoral calculus and potentially weakens its position heading into the 2026 local elections.

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The opposition *People Power Party* (PPP) has seized the moment to launch an aggressive counteroffensive, branding the controversy “Unification Church-gate”. The PPP had previously faced accusations of its own connections to the religious organization – scrutiny triggered by allegations involving one of its lawmakers and the former first lady.

The party has now filed multiple police complaints targeting Chun and several DPK lawmakers, asserting that they violated the *Political Funds Act* and accepted bribes. PPP floor leader Song Eon-seok (송원석) argued that the emerging evidence points to a “deeply troubling” relationship between the governing Lee administration and the *Family Federation*, suggesting that the delicate matter extends well beyond isolated misconduct.

Police are currently reviewing the complaints and beginning to schedule questioning for individuals implicated in the testimony. Under South Korean law, alleged violations of the *Political Funds Act* must be prosecuted within seven years; if improper payments were made in 2018, that window will close at the end of this year. However, should investigators pursue more serious bribery charges, the statute of limitations could extend up to fifteen years, significantly broadening the scope for legal action.

As the investigations progress, it has become evident that they are now backfiring on the Lee administration. The process began when the current government appointed special prosecutors to examine alleged unlawful actions involving the main opposition party.

However, the findings that have since emerged represent a significant stress test for the administration’s commitment to transparency and political accountability. How the government navigates the resulting fallout will shape public perceptions of its integrity and influence both its legislative capacity and its electoral prospects in the year ahead.

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Text: Knut Holdhus, editor

Featured image above: The boomerang effect. Illustration: Grok xAI, 12th December 2025.

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