FFWPU Europe and Middle East: Mother Han's S Korean Prosecution Without End

Knut Holdhus
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Dr. Hak Ja Han - also known as Mother Han

News1, South Korea's largest private news agency and wire service.

Yonhap News, South Korea's designated public news agency and the country's largest wire service.

Cycle of overlapping investigations raises questions about political retaliation as Mother Han faces three simultaneous legal battles

A disturbing pattern of weaponized legal maneuvers has begun to emerge from South Korea's judiciary, raising profound systemic questions about the weaponization of criminal investigations under President Lee Jae-myung (이재명).

Observers are increasingly echoing the concerns raised by former Commissioner General of the National Police Agency, Yoon Hee-keun (윤희근). According to several large Korean media outlets, including Yonhap News and News 1, on 26th August, he openly questioned how long the current administration intends to exploit what he calls "political-retaliation special prosecutors" to settle political scores.

Yoon's perspective - informed by his own experience under the crosshairs of administration-appointed prosecutors - points to a structural strategy: when a lengthy investigation fails to produce the desired indictments, authorities simply refuse to close the case, keeping the targets indefinitely pinned under state scrutiny.

This critical perspective is highly relevant to the escalating judicial campaign against Hak Ja Han (한학자) - known as Mother Han - and the Family Federation for World Peace and Unification - commonly referred to in Korea as Unificationism (통일교).

Segye Ilbo, one of the top 10 comprehensive daily newspapers in South Korea.

National publications, such as Segye Ilbo in an editorial on 24th August, have voiced explicit concerns that South Korea is entering an unprecedented era where state-appointed prosecutors act as permanent fixtures of political attrition, operating continuously through the entirety of President Lee's term, which runs until June 2030.

Rather than concluding exhaustive inquiries when initial evidence falls short, the state has continuously widened its net. This dynamic became undeniable when domestic outlets on 28th August reported a new indictment accusing Mother Han and senior officials of

embezzling 10.5 billion won (approximately US$7.5 million) over an eight-year period.

Crucially, this came just as an earlier, separate trial involving political-funding allegations was drawing to its verdict date on 31st August, where the Min Joong-gi (민중기) Special Prosecutor's team had demanded a staggering 13-year prison sentence. The tactical timing of these rolling, overlapping indictments strongly indicates an institutional determination to sustain an unending cycle of prosecution against the religious minority, ensuring that even if one legal theory collapses, another is immediately ready to take its place.

Judicial developments reported on 19th October 2026 by several South Korean media outlets - the same day Mother Han was granted bail - outline the upcoming logistical phases of her trials.

Scheduling of the 10.5 Billion Won Embezzlement Trial

Beobchi News, a specialized South Korean online news publication that focuses primarily on legal, judicial, and law enforcement affairs. The name means literally "rule of law news".

BBS News, BBS News, the news division of the Buddhist Broadcasting System (BBS), a major religious, non-profit public media network in South Korea, dedicated to Buddhism, operating alongside other major religious outlets like the Christian Broadcasting System (CBS).

According to a consensus report by Beobchi News, BBS News, Newsis, Yonhap News, SBS News, and others, the first-instance trial addressing the new embezzlement charges will officially begin next month.

What essentially the charges boil down to is not putting organizational funds in one's own pocket. It's rather that the prosecutors claim money belonging to the religious organization has been used in a way that the country's laws don't regard as "regular religious activities". Even if the money was spent entirely on the organization's broader global vision, doing so in violation of statutory financial controls is legally classified as embezzlement.

Believers revere Mother Han as a messianic figure ("True Mother"). From the perspective of the faith and many of its donors, giving money to the religious organization is synonymous with giving it to her to use as she sees fit for global and providential causes.

The prosecutors appointed by the left-leaning Lee Jae-myung (이재명) administration claim that legally, the money belongs to the registered religious corporation, not an individual. Using institutional assets for projects outside the narrow scope of what the charter and South Korean law define as "regular religious activities", constitutes a criminal diversion of corporate funds.

All the five above-mentioned outlets confirm that Criminal Agreement Division 22 of the Seoul Central District Court, presided over by Judge Jo Hyeong-woo (조형우), has scheduled the first public preparatory hearing for 12th November 2026, at 11:00 AM.

The South Korean media outlets provided a lopsided view of the case, focusing predominantly on the prosecution's theory and investigative details, while mentioning the defense's perspective only to a minimal extent.

A direct comparison of how the two sides were represented across the different reports reveals a clear imbalance:

The Defense's View (Minimal Mention)

SBS News (SBS), the primary news division of the Seoul Broadcasting System (SBS), one of South Korea's three major nationwide television networks alongside KBS and MBC.

The defense's perspective is almost entirely absent from the mainstream broadcast and wire reports (SBS, BBS, Newsis, and Yonhap), which strictly stick to the facts of the indictment and court scheduling.

The only notable exception is Beobchi News, which is the only outlet to explicitly provide the defense's counter-argument. At the very end of its report, it briefly notes that Mother Han's legal team flatly denies the charges, asserting that former Director-General Yoon Yeong-ho (윤영호) acted entirely on his own

authority without her prior knowledge, reporting, or instruction.

Additionally, the outlets do maintain standard legal neutrality by clarifying that these are "prosecutorial allegations" rather than judicially established facts, noting that the defendants were "indicted without detention". However, in terms of actual narrative real estate, the state's allegations received overwhelming dominance across the board.

Newsis, the largest privately owned news agency in South Korea

Beobchi News, Newsis, and Yonhap News explicitly identify the four co-defendants as Hak Ja Han (한학자), former Chief of Staff Jeong Won-ju (정원주), and former World Headquarters Director-General Yoon Yeong-ho (윤영호). Newsis provides the additional detail that a fourth individual, a former head of the Central Administration Office identified only as "A", is also being tried. All five outlets state that the charges have been brought under the Act on the Aggravated Punishment of Specific Economic Crimes (Embezzlement).

The Prosecution's View (Predominant Focus)

The bulk of the text in all the articles is dedicated to detailing the state's narrative. The outlets exhaustively report:

The precise alleged criminal mechanisms (conspiracy, false accounting, and using the guise of ceremonial "offering fees" to bypass normal accounting).

The sensational structural details of the investigation, specifically highlighting the discovery of 26 billion won (about US$19 million) in cash bundles inside Mother Han's private safe.

The institutional background of the Joint Investigation Headquarters (Hapsubon), framing the trial as a crackdown on systemic "religion-politics collusion".

The Investigative Authority and Mechanism of the Alleged Crime



Joint Investigation Headquarters. Illustration: ChatGPT

Beobchi News, BBS News, Newsis, and Yonhap News report that the prosecution was initiated by the specialized "Joint Investigation Headquarters for Religion-Politics Collusion" (Hapsubon). Newsis contributes the specific context that the headquarters is led by Chief Prosecutor Kim Tae-hoon (김태훈) of the Daejeon High Prosecutors' Office.

Regarding the mechanics of the alleged crime, Beobchi News, Newsis, and Yonhap News state that the defendants are accused of illicitly diverting roughly 10.5 billion won in Federation funds between 2017 and 2025. Beobchi News and Yonhap News specify that these funds were diverted under the guise of "offering/gift expenses" (예물비), while Newsis emphasizes that the core of the state's case relies on proof that senior officials conspired to execute false accounting procedures.

Beobchi News, Newsis, and Yonhap News all report that these cash bundles were subsequently hidden in a private vault inside Mother Han's living quarters at the Cheon Jeong Temple complex in Gapyeong, Gyeonggi Province. Newsis reminds readers that this follows a severe compulsory raid and seizure carried out at the Gapyeong complex and the Seoul headquarters on 6th May.

Genesis of the Vault's Discovery and Asset Seizure

Beobchi News, BBS News, and Yonhap News trace the origin of this new indictment back to an aggressive raid originally executed by the team of Special Prosecutor Min Joong-gi (민중기) while they were investigating unrelated allegations involving the former First Lady Kim Keon-hee (김건희).

Beobchi News, BBS News, and Yonhap News all write that the special prosecutors originally discovered 26 billion won (about US$19 million) in cash bundles within Mother Han's private vault.

In the highly competitive digital landscape of South Korean internet media, visual and concrete details - such as "hoards of cash hidden in private residential vaults" - drive massive click-through rates. The press naturally prioritizes these dramatic investigative leaks over the dry, highly technical legal denials issued by defense attorneys.



Granted bail due to her critical health condition: Dr. Hak Ja Han, aka. Mother Han, here being wheeled into the courtroom by her grandson Moon Shin-chul at Seoul Central District Court August 31, 2026

These three outlets report that while the initial special prosecutor team interrogated financial officers, they were unable to confirm the definitive source or legal nature of the money before their mandate expired. Beobchi News, BBS News, and Yonhap News explain that the case was subsequently handed over to the Joint Investigation Headquarters, which traced the financial flow, concluded that 10.5 billion won (about US$7.5 million) was embezzled, and subsequently seized the entire 26 billion won (about US$19 million) under asset-collection and preservation laws. Beobchi News adds a critical clarification: the media underscores that the pending trial is strictly restricted to the 10.5 billion won, meaning the remaining cash must be legally handled as a separate matter.

The Lower Court Verdict and Appellate Court Status

Beobchi News, Newsis, and Yonhap News provide comprehensive tracking of the separate, primary criminal trial concerning political-lobbying allegations. All three outlets note that on 31st August, the Seoul Central District Court found Mother Han guilty, sentencing her to a combined 2 years in prison.

Beobchi News adds that the Special Prosecutor's team has appealed the verdict, arguing the sentences are too lenient and contesting the lower court's decision to acquit on certain embezzlement counts and dismiss charges of instigating evidence destruction.

Exclusive Details on Mother Han's Bail and Defense Strategy

Beobchi News also carried the news that on 19th October, Criminal Division 13 of the Seoul High Court - led by High Court Judges Kim Moo-shin (김무신), Lee Woo-hee (이우희), and Yoo Dong-gyun (유동균) - formally approved a bail request for Mother Han in the lobbying appeal. Beobchi News reports that the court cited her critical health condition and the fact that evidence collection had concluded. The publication details the highly restrictive terms of her release: a 200-million-won cash bond, strict confinement to the hospital where she has been receiving treatment since March, and an absolute ban on contacting any external individuals except for legal counsel, medical professionals, and essential mobility assistants.

Finally, Beobchi News maps out the immense logistical pressure on the leadership, reporting that Mother Han is now facing three distinct, simultaneous legal battles: the lobbying appeal, the upcoming 10.5-billion-won (about US$7.5 million) embezzlement trial, and a separate trial for allegedly violating the Political Parties Act through organized mass party registrations. In terms of defense positioning, Beobchi News reports that Mother Han's legal team is flatly denying the embezzlement charges, asserting that former Director-General Yoon Yeong-ho (윤영호) acted entirely on his own authority without her prior knowledge or instruction.

Text: Knut Holdhus, editor

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Tears After 13 Months Of Prayer

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Tears reflect a year of prayer, interfaith solidarity, and hope for justice for Mother Han



In a commentary published in the South Korean daily Segye Ilbo on 20th

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The logo of the Segye Ilbo, one of the top 10

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Religious affairs reporter Jeong Seong-su (정성수). Photo (2025): Segye Ilbo

October 2026, religion correspondent Jeong Seong-su (정성수) reflects on the emotional response among Family Federation members to Hak Ja Han's release on bail, highlighting interfaith solidarity, her decades of international peace initiatives, and the hopes of followers who continue to pray for her recovery and a fair trial.

Ilbo, one of the top 10 comprehensive daily newspapers in South Korea.

See also Mother Han: A Cycle of Prosecution Without End

The decision to grant bail to Hak Ja Han (한학자) – also called Mother Han – head of the *Family Federation for World Peace and Unification* (FFWPU), prompted an emotional response among many of her followers, according to Jeong. In his opinion piece, he looks beyond the legal implications of the *Seoul High Court*'s ruling to consider what the decision means to believers who have spent more than a year praying for their elderly leader's health and awaiting developments in her case.

Entitled "Mother Han Granted Bail: Tears of Those Who Sustained Her Through Prayer", the commentary does not dispute that the legal proceedings remain unresolved. Rather, Jeong focuses on the human and religious dimensions of the decision, describing the relief experienced by followers while acknowledging their disappointment that strict restrictions will prevent them from freely meeting Mother Han (83). He also places the present situation within the context of her longstanding efforts to promote peace across religious, national, and ideological divisions.

More than a year of prayer and waiting

Jeong begins by emphasizing that the bail decision, announced on 19th October, was not an acquittal. Mother Han's appeal against her two-year prison sentence will continue, and the question of her alleged involvement in unlawful acitivities remains before the courts. Nevertheless, the possibility of continuing medical treatment outside detention brought considerable relief to those who had been anxiously following her situation.



One of several reasons for being in need of medical treatment: During Hak Ja Han's detention, she suffered a fall causing a tear of the supraspinatus muscle, the most common form of rotator cuff tear. Illustrations: Nucleus Communications / Wikimedia Commons. License: CC Attr 4.0 Int

More than a year had passed since Mother Han was taken into pretrial detention in September 2025. Although the enforcement of her detention had been suspended on health grounds, enabling her to receive hospital treatment, uncertainty about her condition and the outcome of the proceedings had continued to weigh heavily on her followers.

Jeong notes that the *Seoul High Court*'s *13th Criminal Division* granted bail after considering Mother Han's health, the progress of the case, and the extent to which evidence had been collected. The court required a cash deposit of 200 million won, restricted her residence to the hospital where she is receiving treatment, and prohibited contact with almost everyone except a narrowly defined group, including medical personnel, lawyers, and caregivers.

These restrictions mean that the decision does not allow Mother Han to resume her ordinary activities. Jeong acknowledges the disappointment among followers who had hoped to visit her and embrace her after such a prolonged period of uncertainty.



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South Korean religious leaders at the prayer rally in support of Mother Han 13th October 2025 outside Seoul Detention Center. Screenshot from video by PeaceTV.

An unexpected expression of interfaith solidarity

One of the most striking details in Jeong's commentary concerns a Catholic peace ambassador who had been praying for Mother Han.

According to an associate quoted by Jeong, the ambassador telephoned after hearing the news of the bail decision. She explained that she had been praying for Mother Han every morning at dawn in a Catholic church and that the announcement had moved her to tears.

For Jeong, this account illustrates how concern for Mother Han's health has extended beyond the boundaries of the Family Federation itself. The participation of someone from a different religious tradition suggests that the emotions surrounding the case cannot be understood solely in terms of the organization's own membership.

He also describes how followers continued their prayers in different circumstances. Some waited outside the detention center, while others offered their support from distant countries. The strict conditions attached to bail, however, have prevented some from realizing their hope of meeting Mother Han personally.

Jeong interprets these reactions as the expression of a community that has endured a long period of anxiety and now hopes for further relief. He acknowledges that some believers may regard the court's decision as an answer to their prayers, while distinguishing this religious interpretation from the court's legal reasoning.

A record of international peace initiatives

The commentary then broadens its perspective, connecting the emotional response to Mother Han's release with her record of international peace activities.



Mother Han speaking in Dakar, Senegal 18th Jan. 2018. Photo: FFWPU

Jeong argues that bringing together people separated by religion, nationality, and ideology requires sustained effort and dedication. He points to Mother Han's travels around the world to promote cooperation and dialogue.

In 2018, she delivered a keynote address at the Africa Summit in Dakar, Senegal. She also helped lead efforts to organize the *Asia-Pacific Summit* in Kathmandu, Nepal, where peace and cooperation were central themes.

Jeong further recalls two





Father Moon and Mother Han with Mikhail Gorbachev in the Kremlin, Moscow 11th April 1990. Photo: FFWPU

notable encounters involving Mother Han and her husband, Sun Myung Moon (문선명 – 1920-2012). In 1990, the couple met Soviet President Mikhail Gorbachev in Moscow. The following year, they visited North Korea and held talks with its leader, Kim Il-sung (김일성 – 1912-1994).

Jeong highlights the ideological significance of these encounters: although the movement opposed communism, its leaders nevertheless sought direct engagement with leaders of communist states. In his account, these meetings exemplified an effort to pursue dialogue across deep political divisions.

He also cites the establishment of the *Women's Federation for World Peace* and the *Interreligious Federation for World Peace* as institutional foundations for initiatives emphasizing women's participation and cooperation among different faiths.

Nobel Peace Prize nomination and the importance of a fair trial



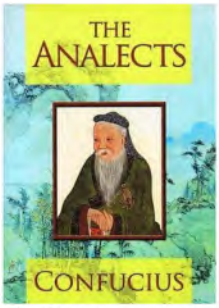
***Jan Figel**, European Union's Special Envoy for the promotion of freedom of religion or belief 2016-2019, here in July 2023. Photo: FOREF*

Jeong adds that Hak Ja Han (한학자) was nominated for consideration for the *2026 Nobel Peace Prize*, although she did not receive the award. In April, media outlets reported that Ján Figeľ, the former *European Union Special Envoy for the Promotion of Freedom of Religion or Belief*, had nominated her. The reported grounds included interreligious dialogue, peace on the Korean Peninsula, and humanitarian cooperation.

The final part of the commentary returns to the legal proceedings. Jeong argues that the questions raised by Mother Han's defense, including the admissibility of testimony and opportunities for cross-examination, should be examined thoroughly during the appeal. He expresses the hope that the court will scrutinize both the allegations and the evidence carefully.

He also cautions the media against allowing criticism of specific allegations to become a negative portrayal of Mother Han's entire life or of the religious convictions of her followers. In his view, determining legal responsibility should not mean abandoning respect for human dignity.

Concluding with a reference to the *Analects* (논어), an ancient Chinese text collecting the sayings, teachings, and discussions of the philosopher Confucius (공자) and his disciples, Jeong recalls the observation that the enduring greenness of pine and cypress becomes apparent only when winter arrives. He hopes that Mother Han's lifelong commitment to peace will likewise remain steadfast through adversity.



The front cover page of The Analects, published by Arcturus Publishing, 2010.

For Jeong, the tears shed by followers on 19th October embodied more than immediate relief. They represented a year of prayer, uncertainty, and perseverance. The bail decision has not settled the legal questions surrounding Mother Han, but it has allowed her supporters to turn their attention toward her recovery while

continuing to hope for a fair judicial outcome.

See also Mother Han: A Cycle of Prosecution Without End

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

***Featured image** above: Young members of the Family Federation at a prayer vigil outside Seoul Detention Center in October 2025. Screenshot from video by PeaceTV.*

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