FFWPU Europe and Middle East: S Korea's Star Witness Vs. Holy Mother Han Not Credible

Knut Holdhus
August 6, 2026

Court documents versus witness testimony. Illustration: ChatGPT

Yoon Yeong-ho, former director general of the international headquarters of the Family Federation, here 11th February 2022

문화일보

Munhwa Ilbo, a conservative newspaper and South Korea's only national evening daily, ranking among the top ten dailies by circulation

Witness credibility looms over 31st August verdict as defense claims prosecution case rests on unreliable testimony from its star witness

As South Korea awaits a closely watched court ruling at the end of August, lawyers for Family Federation President Hak Ja Han (한학자) have launched a detailed attack on the credibility of the prosecution's most important witness. They argue that the testimony of former Federation executive Yoon Yeong-ho (윤영호) is contradicted by documents, access records, diaries, and the timeline of events, making it too unreliable to support a conviction.

The case has attracted national attention not only because it involves the leader of the Family Federation for World Peace and Unification - often referred to in South Korea as Unificationism (통일교) - but also because it forms part of a much broader investigation into allegations of improper political influence during the administration of former President Yoon Suk-yeol (윤석열).

Unlike ordinary criminal cases, this investigation is being conducted by a special prosecutor. In South Korea, a special prosecutor is appointed to investigate politically sensitive matters where the regular prosecution service may be perceived as having conflicts of interest or insufficient independence. The current investigation, headed by Special Prosecutor Min Joong-ki (민중기), has focused heavily on allegations involving former First Lady Kim Keon-hee (김건희) and people accused of seeking political favors through gifts or other benefits.

Prosecutors allege that senior Family Federation officials attempted to influence government figures by providing expensive luxury goods and illegal political donations. Hak Ja Han (한학자) - also called

Mother Han - herself denies wrongdoing, and her lawyers argue that the investigation has gone beyond its lawful scope while relying on unreliable evidence. The Seoul Central District Court is expected to deliver its first-instance verdict on 31st August.

Writing in the conservative daily Munhwa Ilbo (문화일보) on 5th August, reporter Hwang Hye-jin (황혜진) summarizes the defense's final arguments before the court reaches its decision.

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

The article notes that much of the prosecution's case rests on the testimony of Yoon Yeong-ho (윤영호), the former Director-General of the Family Federation's World Headquarters. According to the special prosecutor, Yoon acted under Mother Han's instructions when he allegedly delivered an illegal political contribution of 100 million won (in 2022 ca. US$ 77,000) to former People Power Party lawmaker Kweon Seong-dong (권성동). Prosecutors also allege that luxury gifts were presented to former First Lady Kim Keon-hee (김건희) in connection with requests concerning matters affecting the Family Federation.

Because Yoon has provided detailed testimony about these events, the court's assessment of whether his statements are credible may prove decisive in determining the outcome of the trial.

Hak Ja Han's legal team, however, devoted much of its closing arguments to attacking that credibility. Rather than disputing only individual allegations, the defense argued that the entire prosecution case is built upon testimony that repeatedly conflicts with objective evidence.

The defense first challenged the legality of the investigation itself. According to Mother Han's lawyers, the special prosecutor expanded the inquiry beyond its legally authorized mandate by investigating what they describe as conduct that, if criminal at all, involved Yoon personally rather than Hak Ja Han herself. They also argued that nearly half of the approximately 3,400 items of evidence submitted by prosecutors were obtained unlawfully and therefore should not be admitted by the court.

The strongest criticism, however, was directed at Yoon's testimony.

According to the defense, Yoon claimed that after delivering 100 million won (in 2022 ca. US$ 77,000) to former lawmaker Kweon in January 2022, he reported the transaction to Hak Ja Han. Prosecutors presented a written report as evidence supporting that account. The defense responded that the document's actual creation date was January 2023 rather than January 2022. They argued that this discrepancy undermines the prosecution's narrative and suggests investigators shaped their questioning to fit a predetermined conclusion.

According to the Munhwa Ilbo article, Mother Han's lawyers further maintained that Yoon repeatedly changed his story during the investigation.

One of the sacred sites of the Family Federation - the Cheon Jeong Temple in Gapyeong, South Korea. The building houses a museum in honor of the life of the True Parents

One disputed episode concerns Yoon's claim that former lawmaker Kweon asked him to convey a message of gratitude to Mother Han shortly after the presidential election. The defense argued that neither Yoon's personal diary nor his special reports contain any mention of such a meeting. Moreover, they said that records showing when Yoon entered the Cheon Jeong Temple - the Family Federation's headquarters - and the wake-up times recorded in his diary contradict his claim that he met Mother Han between seven and eight o'clock that morning.

The lawyers also challenged Yoon's testimony regarding a planned visit to then President-elect Yoon Suk-yeol. According to the defense, Yoon Yeong-ho had previously acknowledged that he had not informed Mother Han in advance about the meeting and only told her afterward, when she reportedly expressed surprise. That earlier statement, they

argued, directly contradicts his later testimony that she had been informed beforehand.

Another major point of disagreement involves luxury gifts allegedly intended for former First Lady Kim Keon-hee (김건희).

The defense argued that Yoon Yeong-ho's description of how a Chanel handbag was selected changed several times during the investigation. During his first questioning by prosecutors, he reportedly said that Mother Han herself chose the handbag. During a later interview, he instead said that he and another associate selected it before presenting the idea to her. Still later, during questioning by the special prosecutor, he claimed that he had even reported the precise model of handbag to Mother Han. According to the defense, these changing accounts cast doubt on his reliability.

Hak Ja Han's lawyers also disputed Yoon's testimony concerning a Graff necklace. Yoon claimed that he purchased the necklace in July 2022 on Mother Han's instructions. The defense responded that public controversy surrounding the necklace did not emerge until the end of August 2022. Because of that chronology, they argued that his account could not be accurate.

In concluding their arguments, Mother Han's legal team emphasized that she served as the movement's religious leader rather than its day-to-day administrator. They argued that administrative affairs and financial decisions were managed by Yoon himself and urged the court to allow the 83-year-old defendant to continue defending herself while remaining out of detention.

Munhwa Ilbo presents the defense's arguments in considerable detail, highlighting the numerous inconsistencies that Mother Han's lawyers say undermine the prosecution's principal witness. Whether the judges ultimately find those inconsistencies significant enough to reject Yoon Yeong-ho's testimony - or conclude that it remains credible despite the defense's objections - will likely be one of the central questions when the Seoul Central District Court announces its verdict on 31st August.

Text: Knut Holdhus, editor

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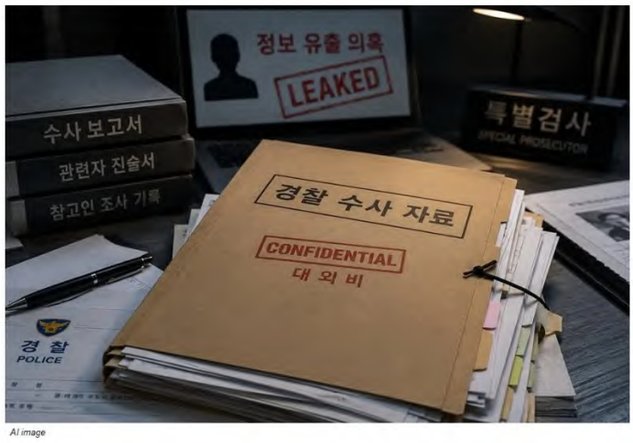

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Special prosecutors expand South Korean inquiry into police information leak as new Family Federation witness is called

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witness is called

South Korea's *Second Comprehensive Special Prosecutor Team*, an independent investigative body established to examine allegations connected to the *Family Federation for World Peace and Unification* – commonly called Unificationism (통일교) in South Korea – has according to a report by MBC News on 5th August widened its investigation by questioning another prominent figure linked to the movement. The latest witness is a former vice chairman of the newspaper *Segye Ilbo*, a publication founded by Family Federation co-founder Sun Myung Moon (문선명).

Logo of MBC News

See also Prosecution's Star Witness Challenged by Defense

Aggressively promoting special prosecutor investigations: ***Lee Jae-myung****, President of South Korea since 4th June 2025. Photo: Jeonnam Provincial Government / Wikimedia Commons. Public domain image. Cropped*

Unlike ordinary criminal investigations conducted by the public prosecution service, a special prosecutor (특별검사, translated as "special prosecutor" or "special counsel") is appointed by law to investigate particularly sensitive or politically controversial cases where an independent inquiry is considered necessary. Such investigations are typically limited in duration and focus on specific allegations authorized by the National Assembly. The current inquiry is being conducted by the *Second Comprehensive Special Prosecutor Team*, one of several special prosecutorial bodies created to investigate different aspects of major political scandals from recent years mainly involving opposition politicians and their perceived supporters.

According to the report, investigators recently questioned Yang (양), a former vice chairman of *Segye Ilbo*, as a witness rather than as a suspect. Yang has held several senior positions within organizations affiliated with the Family Federation, including serving as chairman of the board of the *Unification Theological Seminary* in the United States and chairman of the board of the *Washington Times Foundation*. He is widely regarded as a close associate of Family Federation President Hak Ja Han (한학자).

The investigators reportedly focused on allegations that a police investigation into gambling by senior Family Federation leaders was improperly obstructed before it could develop into a full criminal case. South Koreans aren't allowed to gamble at casinos not regulated by the country. But this law extends even when traveling overseas.

The original investigation dates back to June 2022, when the *Chuncheon Police Agency* obtained intelligence suggesting that Hak Ja Han and several other senior Family Federation officials had gambled at casinos in Las Vegas between 2008 and 2011. Chuncheon is the capital of Gangwon Province in northeastern South Korea, and the *Chuncheon Police Agency* is the regional police authority responsible for criminal investigations within its jurisdiction. In South Korea, police agencies frequently begin investigations after receiving intelligence reports, anonymous tips, or other preliminary information that may indicate possible criminal activity.

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The Korea Times wrote on 11th February that a court testimony from February 2026 revealed that the case officially entered law enforcement channels via the foreign affairs division of the Chuncheon Police Station. An officer from that station testified that they compiled an intelligence report based on local leads.

Korea JoongAng Daily The Korea JoongAng Daily pointed out in a report on 12th June 2025 that the original source to the allegations of illegal gambling in Las Vegas remains legally anonymous. At the same time, media speculation heavily focuses on the factional infighting within the movement resulting in a prolonged legal battle in the USA over funds and assets. Because of breakaway factions following Sun Myung Moon's death in 2012, external observers and media analysts frequently speculated that disgruntled former insiders or rival factions leaked the financial and casino records to investigators.

In this context, a well-informed source in the USA draws attention to the fact that the niche news agency UPI under a leadership that includes Hyun Jin "Preston" Moon and Youngjun Kim, the leaders of one of the above-mentioned breakaway factions, has published a string of investigative reports on legal actions in South Korea regarding the *Unification Church* / *Family Federation*. At an early stage after allegations of gambling had surfaced, UPI published a series of articles penned by Youngjun Kim highlighting the Las Vegas claims, in articles on 8th July, 15th July, and 10th October 2025.

According to the allegations, the gambling involved wagers totaling approximately 60 billion won, equivalent to roughly US$45 million at the time. The figure refers to the total amount reportedly wagered rather than confirmed gambling losses.

*Former lawmaker **Kweon Seong-dong** (권성동), here portrait January 2025. Photo: 국민의힘TV / Wikimedia Commons. License: CC Attr 3.0 Unp. Cropped*

However, the investigation allegedly never progressed as expected. Prosecutors are examining claims that confidential police information was leaked before investigators could proceed with a full inquiry. According to these allegations, details of the investigation reached political circles through Kweon Seong-dong (권창영), a former lawmaker from the conservative *People Power Party*, and that this disclosure ultimately contributed to the investigation being halted.

The article notes that these allegations overlap with an earlier investigation conducted by the *Special Prosecutor* investigating allegations surrounding former First Lady Kim Keon Hee (김건희). That earlier special prosecutor indicted both Kweon Seong-dong (권창영) and Hak Ja Han (한학자) in connection with the alleged exchange of confidential police intelligence. However, according to the report, that investigation did not fully determine how the confidential information had originally been leaked from within the police organization.

The current investigation is therefore examining a broader chain of events. Rather than focusing only on whether confidential information was shared, investigators are attempting to establish exactly how police intelligence left official channels, who received it, and whether those actions contributed to the alleged suppression of the gambling

investigation.

***Jeong Won-ju**, here on 19th Jan. 2025. Screenshot from FFWPU video, improved resolution by ChatGPT, 31st July 2026.*

As part of that effort, the *Second Comprehensive Special Prosecutor Team* has recently questioned several individuals connected with the Family Federation. Among them is former chief of staff Jeong Won-ju (정원주), who has already been interviewed regarding the alleged leak of investigative information. The questioning of former *Segye Ilbo* vice chairman Yang represents another step in the special prosecutor's attempt to reconstruct the events surrounding one of the most politically sensitive investigations involving the Family Federation in recent years.

See also Prosecution's Star Witness Challenged by Defense

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

***Featured image** above: Leak of confidential document. Illustration: ChatGPT, 5th August 2026.*

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