

FFWPU Europe and Middle East: Japan's Church Liquidation's Psychological Toll on Believers

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[Family Federation](#) place of worship in Japan closed due to dissolution. Illustration: ChatGPT



Survey after Japanese dissolution and church closures finds nearly 90% of believers report psychological distress

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Nearly 90% Report Distress, Many Have Sought Medical Care

Believers Suffering Severe Psychological Distress: Interim Report by Family Federation

by the Religious Freedom Investigative Team of the editorial department of [Sekai Nippo](#)

The [Family Federation for World Peace and Unification](#) (FFWPU; formerly the [Unification Church](#)), a religious organization, has conducted a questionnaire survey concerning the harm suffered by its members since 4th March, when [liquidation proceedings](#) began following the [decision to dissolve](#) the [religious corporation](#). The survey found that nearly 90% of respondents reported experiencing psychological distress. In many cases, the distress was attributed to being unable to use [church facilities](#). Although guidelines adopted by the Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology (MEXT) concerning the liquidation of "designated religious corporations" explicitly call for consideration of freedom of religion, the situation has revealed a contradiction between those guidelines and the actual implementation of the [liquidation proceedings](#).

Liquidation Has Prevented Members from Using Facilities for Worship and Other Activities

An Extraordinary Treatment Resembling That of Criminals

Shortly after the Tokyo High Court issued its [dissolution decision](#) at 11 a.m., on the same day, liquidators and their deputies visited [FFWPU](#) facilities throughout Japan. At some churches, police cars arrived at the

premises, creating scenes that appeared almost as though police powers were being exercised. Numerous media organizations also gathered with television cameras, creating the impression that the members inside the churches were criminals who were about to be arrested for having committed some offense. According to the report, many members were deeply shocked by the way they were portrayed.



On 4th March 2026, the day the liquidation of the [Family Federation for World Peace and Unification](#) began, three police cars were parked and the media gathered at the [Family Federation](#) church in Nagoya, Aichi Prefecture



Rev. Masaichi Hori, January 2026

Following the [decision](#), the [religious corporation](#) was converted into a liquidation corporation. Members were no longer permitted to enter [church facilities](#), while many employees were dismissed. Some remained employed by the liquidation corporation because their services were deemed necessary for the [liquidation process](#).

The Greatest Concern Is Isolation

Meanwhile, the [organization](#), which has a large number of members, maintained the [Family Federation](#) as a religious organization in July, with Masaichi Hori, who had served as president when it was still a religious corporation, becoming its president. Beginning 15th July, it conducted an "All-Members Victim Survey" to investigate the harm suffered by members since the [liquidation proceedings](#) began on 4th March.



[Family Federation for World Peace and Unification](#) Survey of Japanese Members' Experiences (as of August 12, 2026). Illustration: [FFWPU](#), English version by ChatGPT

According to figures compiled as of August 12, 86.6% of the 10,594 respondents reported experiencing psychological distress.

The breakdown was as follows:

- 14.1% (1,492 respondents):** "Feeling it extremely strongly"
- 23.0% (2,437):** "Feeling it strongly"
- 32.2% (3,408):** "Feeling it to some extent"
- 17.3% (1,830):** "Feeling it somewhat"

Among those who reported psychological distress, 288 respondents said that they had visited a psychosomatic medicine or mental-health clinic.

In addition, 3,093 respondents reported an impact on their physical health, of whom 451 said they had visited a hospital.

The [Federation's](#) Public Relations and External Affairs Office has been encouraging members to participate in the survey while also periodically publishing the results on YouTube since 22nd July. It has reported receiving accounts from members experiencing psychological distress such as:

"The church, which had been my emotional refuge, was taken away from me. I lost the will to live and became unable even to leave my house," and "There were many consecutive nights when I could not sleep."

The [religious organization](#) also reported cases involving children who had attended church together with their parents. Some of these children have reportedly become frightened and hypersensitive to even small noises, fearing that police officers might suddenly enter their homes.

People who join religious organizations often already have emotional vulnerabilities or personal concerns, and the [Family Federation](#) is said to be no exception. It is not difficult to imagine the shock and emotional pain caused when a place where someone had found "salvation" through religious teachings and interaction with other people suddenly disappears.



Entrance to the Suginami Church of the [Family Federation](#) - Suginami Ward, Tokyo

For example, in the series "[Where Will the Believers Go?](#)", published by [this newspaper](#) in June last year, the then pastor of the [Suginami Family Church](#) in Tokyo testified that "the disappearance of a church is not simply a matter of losing a place for worship."

He said, "The greatest loss is the disappearance of the community that has been formed around the church facilities." In particular, he was concerned about opposition and isolation within families faced by people who were the only member of their household to belong to the [religious organization](#).

The church also had many elderly members, and he expressed concern that among members who had been widowed, "there could be an increase in deaths in solitude."

Liquidators Showing Little Consideration for Freedom of Religion

The Guidelines Are Being Rendered Meaningless

On 20th October last year, anticipating the dissolution and [liquidation](#) of the [Family Federation](#) as a religious corporation, MEXT adopted its "Guidelines Concerning the Liquidation of Designated Religious Corporations."

The guidelines explicitly state that freedom of religion should be taken into consideration insofar as doing so does not interfere with the [liquidation process](#). They state, among other things:

"When managing and disposing of the property of the liquidation corporation, [liquidators](#) are expected to take into consideration the freedom of religion of members of the existing [religious organization](#), including by permitting them to use facilities, insofar as this does not interfere with [liquidation work](#) and taking into account the degree of necessity and other relevant factors."

Many members have called for permission to hold worship services in church facilities.

In a [contribution to this newspaper](#), Pastor Hiroshi Kurose of Tokyo West Baptist Church stated:



*Pastor Hiroshi Kurose of the
Tokyo West Baptist Church*

"It is only natural that [liquidators](#) should carry out the liquidation process in a manner that does not infringe upon the freedom of religion of the [religious organization](#). At present, the [liquidators](#) have seized all of the [Family Federation](#)'s places of worship. Since places of worship are essential to religious activities, they must immediately be returned to the [Family Federation](#)."

The [liquidators](#) have so far announced that they have seized assets worth more than ¥80 billion (ca. US\$ 501 million) from the [religious organization](#).

Is that not more than sufficient?

The fact that the [liquidators](#) and the court supervising them have deliberately refrained from implementing the provision in the guidelines that permits members to use facilities "insofar as this does not interfere with liquidation work" constitutes a biased

response and raises human-rights concerns.

Attempting, through the practical administration of the liquidation proceedings, to render the wording of the guidelines meaningless amounts to an infringement of freedom of religion and should be avoided.

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Illustration: Grok xAI, 12th August 2026.

Unificationism officials indicted over unlawful political donations as Hak Ja Han and her assistant are cleared due to lack of proof

A large number of South Korean media outlets reported on 11th and 12th August on the investigation into alleged political influence-peddling by the *Family Federation for World Peace and Unification* (FFWPU), commonly known in Korea as *Unificationism* (통일교), particularly during the time when *Yoon Yeong-ho* (윤영호) was the Director-General of the *religious organization's* world headquarters.

The current investigation reached an important stage on 11th August, when the especially established *Joint Investigation Headquarters for Corruption Involving Politics and Religion* announced the indictment of three senior former officials and the summary indictment of six others.

At the same time, *FFWPU President Hak Ja Han* (한학자) **and her former chief of staff, Jeong Won-ju** (정원주), **were not referred for prosecution**, with investigators concluding that there was insufficient evidence that either had directly participated in the alleged offenses.

The basic facts are reported consistently by the various media outlets, although each emphasizes somewhat different aspects of the investigation.

According to *Chosun Biz*, the *Joint*

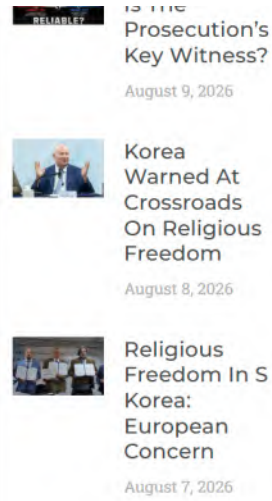


The Chosun Biz logo



Yoon Yeong-ho, 6th Dec. 2020. Screenshot from

Investigation Headquarters, headed by Kim Tae-hoon (김태훈), Chief Prosecutor of the Daejeon High Prosecutors' Office, indicted without detention *Yoon Yeong-ho* (윤영호), former head of the *FFWPU* World Headquarters; Song Kwang-seok (송광석), former chairman of the *International Association of Parliamentarians for Peace*



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2020. Screenshot from
Peacelink TV



Song Kwang-seok, here 26th April 2024. Photo: Screenshot from live transmission by [FFWPU](#)

Penitentiaries for Peace
(IAPP); and a former *Universal
Peace Federation*
(UPF) chairman
identified by his
surname, Lee (0).

They face charges of
violating the *Political
Funds Act* and
occupational
embezzlement. Six
additional [FFWPU](#)
officials, including
district leaders
allegedly involved to
some degree, received

summary indictments.

[Chosun
Ilbo](#)
reports
essentially
the same

朝鮮日報

The logo of the Chosun Ilbo

indictment but puts particular emphasis on the fact that **Hak Ja Han** (한학자) **was not referred for prosecution**. It describes the three principal defendants as accused of making approximately KRW 188 million (about US\$130,000) in illegal political donations to 132 politicians on 218 occasions between September 2019 and January 2025. According to the investigators, the funds were provided under the names of individual [FFWPU](#) associates rather than directly in the [organization](#)'s name.

The central allegation, as presented by both Chosun publications, is not simply that money was donated to politicians. Rather, investigators allege that the [organization](#) used its nationwide structure to facilitate political contributions while cultivating relationships with politicians who attended [FFWPU](#)-sponsored events. The stated purpose, according to the investigation headquarters, was to expand the [FFWPU](#)'s religious influence through the politicians participating in those events.



The scale of the investigation is highlighted particularly clearly by [Chosun Biz](#) and [Yonhap News](#). Investigators searched 24 locations, including the *Cheon Jeong Temple*, traced approximately 480 bank accounts, and questioned 82 people connected with the case. These investigative measures were presented as part of an effort to establish whether organizational funds had been diverted and used for political contributions.

[Yonhap News](#) provides somewhat more institutional detail. It identifies [Yoon](#) as the former Director-General of the [FFWPU](#) World Headquarters and explains the nature of the summary indictments issued against six other officials. A summary indictment is a procedure under which prosecutors ask a court to impose a fine or other penalty without proceeding initially through a full criminal trial.



A particularly
significant point,
emphasized by



No proof of involvement for Jeong Won-ju (정원주), here on 19th Jan. 2025. Screenshot from FFWPU video, improved resolution by ChatGPT, 31st July 2026.

Yonhap News and Chosun Ilbo, concerns the distinction between the officials who were indicted and the two senior figures who were not. Investigators concluded that there was **insufficient evidence that Hak Ja Han (한학자) or Jeong Won-ju (정원주) had directly participated in the alleged**

offenses. The investigation concerning them was therefore closed without referral to prosecutors, and the relevant records were returned.

The same reasoning was applied to the 132 politicians who received the contributions. Most of the Korean media reports state that investigators concluded that the politicians themselves were unaware that the money deposited into their accounts had allegedly been provided by **Family Federation**-related organizations for specific purposes. Consequently, none of the 132 politicians was prosecuted in connection with these allegations.

This distinction is important because the investigation's conclusions do not amount to a finding that the alleged donations were lawful. Rather, according to the reports, investigators allege that the **FFWPU-related officials who arranged the donations violated the Political Funds Act**, while concluding that there was insufficient evidence to prosecute either the politicians who received the money or **Hak Ja Han** and Jeong Won-ju.

The reports also place the case within a broader investigation involving another religious movement, **Shincheonji** [See editor's note below]. The *Joint Investigation Headquarters* is separately examining allegations that some Shincheonji members in the Seoul metropolitan area joined the **Democratic Party of Korea (DPK)** ahead of the 3rd June 2026 local elections, potentially in violation of the *Public Official Election Act*.



Also investigated for religion-politics collusion: Shincheonji Church of Jesus. Here, its logo.

Here the reports differ slightly in emphasis. **Chosun Ilbo** adds an allegation that Shincheonji [See editor's note below] members may have been encouraged to join the Democratic Party in connection with disputes over obtaining approval to change the designated use of buildings for religious facilities. **Chosun Biz** and **Yonhap News**, by contrast, mention the broader investigation without providing as much detail about the alleged motivation.

Finally, **Yonhap News** quotes the *Joint Investigation Headquarters* as saying that it will continue to conduct a "strict and swift" investigation into other allegations involving both the **Family Federation** and Shincheonji [See editor's note below].

The various media reports portray the 11th August announcement as a **mixed outcome for the prosecution's investigation of the FFWPU**: nine officials face charges, including three who have been formally indicted for trial, but investigators did not establish sufficient evidence to prosecute **Hak Ja Han** (한학자) or Jeong Won-ju (정원주), and they likewise found no basis to prosecute the 132 politicians who received the alleged contributions. The reports therefore distinguish between the alleged institutional scheme and the question of individual criminal responsibility at its highest level.

Text: Knut Holdhus, editor

Featured image above: Lack of evidence **Mother Han** is linked to political funding. Illustration: ChatGPT, 12th August 2026.

[Editor's note 1: Shincheonji, officially known as *Shincheonji Church of Jesus, the Temple of the Tabernacle of the Testimony*, is a new religious movement founded in South Korea in 1984 by Lee Man-hee, who claims to be the promised pastor mentioned in the Bible's Book of Revelation.

Shincheonji teaches that the Book of Revelation is being fulfilled through its church and that Lee Man-hee has received divine revelation to interpret it. He teaches that South Korea is the location where the prophecies of the *Book of Revelation* are actively playing out in real-time, making it the epicenter of the final harvest. Shincheonji focuses on filling the literal 144,000 slots of the 12 Tribes mentioned in Revelation. Once this number of truly sealed, flawless believers is completed, they believe they will rule as kings and priests over the rest of humanity.]

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