

FFWPU Europe and the Middle East: Mother Han Verdict - Family Fed Responds

Knut Holdhus
August 31, 2026



Dr. [Hak Ja Han](#), aka. Mother Han, being wheeled into the courtroom by her grandson Moon Shin-chul at Seoul Central District Court August 31, 2026



[Europe and the Middle East region of the Family Federation for World Peace and Unification](#)



Dr. Michael Balcomb, President of the [Family Federation for World Peace and Unification](#) in Europe and the Middle East, here in the rain outside Seoul Central District Court after the verdict had been issued on August 31 2026

Family Federation challenges Mother Han verdict raising human rights concerns over treatment of octogenarian religious leader of frail health

A statement 31st August 2026 by the [Family Federation for World Peace and Unification in Europe and the Middle East](#)

The [Family Federation for World Peace and Unification](#) expresses deep regret over today's ruling of the Seoul Central District Court concerning Dr. [Hak Ja Han](#).

Dr. [Hak Ja Han](#), who was [sentenced](#) to a total of 2 years imprisonment for political collusion, is 83 years old. For more than six decades she has devoted her life to reconciliation, interfaith cooperation, humanitarian service and the pursuit of peace - most notably through sustained efforts toward peaceful reunification of the Korean Peninsula. She is widely known internationally as the Mother of Peace. See also [Mother Han Sentenced to 2 Years in First Trial](#)

Throughout the proceedings [Dr. Han](#) has maintained her innocence. Her defense has consistently challenged the claim that she personally authorised, directed or knowingly participated in the unlawful actions alleged by the prosecution. Because important questions of evidence, individual responsibility and legal interpretation remain unresolved, her legal team will file an immediate appeal.

We are also deeply concerned by the humanitarian consequences of her prolonged detention and subsequent suspension of detention for hospitalization. An elderly religious leader was held for many months under conditions that [seriously affected her health](#), including [repeated falls](#) and the eventual need for [shoulder surgery](#), before any final determination of guilt. Whatever one's view of the legal case, the treatment of a person of advanced age and frail health before judgment raises serious questions, under the

Constitution of the Republic of Korea, concerning the principle of proportionality, human dignity and the protection of fundamental rights.



Mother of Peace: Here, the front cover page of [Hak Ja Han's memoirs Mother of Peace \(2020\)](#)

[Today's ruling](#) is not the end of the judicial process. We trust that the appellate court will carefully, fairly and independently examine the full evidentiary record, the question of [Dr. Han's](#) personal responsibility, and the legal issues raised by the defence.

We ask our members and friends throughout the world to respond peacefully and with dignity, to remain steadfast in prayer, and to continue the work to which [Dr. Han](#) has dedicated her life: reconciliation, strong families, service to humanity and peace.

Dr. Michael Balcomb, President of the [Family Federation for World Peace and Unification](#) in Europe and the Middle East
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FAMILY FEDERATION
FOR WORLD PEACE AND UNIFICATION

NEWS AND INSIGHTS



Mother Han Sentenced To 2 Years In First Trial

August 31, 2026 • The News Desk



AI image

Hak Ja Han (83) sentenced in South Korea's "church-state" case as court rejects several allegations made by Lee Jae-myung's special prosecutors



Asked for 13 years: Min Joong-gi (민중기), the head of an army of special prosecutors with extensive investigative powers. Image: Grok xAI, Jan. 2026.

South Korea's Seoul Central District Court on Monday, 31st August, sentenced **Hak Ja Han** (한학자), leader of the *Family Federation for World Peace and Unification* – in Korea often referred to as *Unificationism* (통일교) – to a total of **two years in prison** in the first-instance trial arising from allegations of unlawful political funding, improper solicitation and embezzlement. The verdict came about ten months after the special-prosecutor team led by **Min Joong-gi** (민중기) indicted her in October 2025.

See also [Mother Han Verdict: Family Federation Responds](#)

The sentence is considerably below the **13 years in prison** demanded by the special prosecutors appointed by the current left-leaning Lee Jae-myung (이재명) administration. The court imposed **one year for violating the Political Funds Act** and another **one year for violations of the Improper Solicitation and Graft Act and occupational embezzlement**.

朝鮮日報

The logo of the *Chosun Ilbo* (조선일보), South Korea's largest and most influential daily newspaper.

The South Korean media outlets reporting the verdict broadly agree on the central facts, but their framing differs. **Chosun Ilbo** and **MBC News** focus particularly on the court's findings concerning political money and gifts to former First Lady Kim Keon-hee (김건희). **Hankyoreh** emphasizes the alleged "split donations" to *People Power Party* organizations.

Kyunghyang Shinmun (경향신문) places the verdict more explicitly within the broader allegation of political-religious collusion under the former Yoon Suk-yeol (윤석열) administration.

What the court found

According to **Chosun Ilbo**, the court found that **Hak Ja Han** (한학자) – also called **Mother Han** – was involved in providing **100 million won** (in 2022, ca \$77,000 USD) to then-*People Power Party* lawmaker **Kweon Seong-dong** (권성동) in January 2022. The court accepted the prosecution's account that **Mother Han** instructed former World Headquarters Director **Yoon Yeong-ho** (윤영호), through former chief of staff **Jeong Won-ju** (정원주), to take the money from an internal room and give it to Yoon, who subsequently delivered it to Kweon as political funding.

The court also found **Mother Han** and the other defendants guilty in connection with approximately 144 million won (in 2022, ca \$111,000 USD) in donations made to conservative *People Power Party* politicians and regional party organizations in March-April 2022. The prosecution characterized these payments as "**split donations**" (쪼개기 후원) – a method of dividing contributions into multiple payments in order to circumvent restrictions on political donations.

Hankyoreh gives particular prominence to this aspect, describing the case in its headline and subtitle as involving the alleged use of **Family Federation** funds for "split donations" to *People Power Party* metropolitan and provincial organizations.

A second major part of the case concerned **expensive gifts allegedly intended to secure favorable treatment for Family Federation interests**. The reports say these included a **Chanel handbag** and a

경향신문

The logo of *Kyunghyang Shinmun*, a large and influential South Korean national daily, ranked among the top ten in terms of circulation.

한겨레

HANI.CO.KR

The logo of the *Hankyoreh* (한겨레), one of South Korea's largest and most influential daily newspapers.

Graft necklace, worth approximately 80 million won (in 2022, ca \$62,000 USD) in total, which were ultimately delivered to Kim Keon-hee (김건희) through the self-described shaman **Jeon Seong-bae** (전성배), commonly known as “Geonjin Beopsa.”



Logo of MBC News, the news division of the Munhwa Broadcasting Corporation (MBC), one of South Korea's four major nationwide television and radio networks.

According to **MBC News**, the court concluded that the gifts were connected with efforts to obtain assistance for Family Federation projects and other pending issues. **Kyunghyang Shinmun** presents this as part of what the special prosecutors described as a **“two-track” strategy**: cultivating both Kweon Seong-dong and Kim Keon-hee (김건희) as channels for gaining access to the Yoon administration.

The court therefore accepted the prosecution's basic contention that the defendants were seeking political influence and government assistance for **Family Federation** interests.

Other defendants

The court also convicted several former Family Federation officials, although their sentences were substantially lighter.



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

Jeong Won-ju (정원주), formerly **Mother Han**'s chief of staff, received two eight-month prison terms, one for political-funding violations and another for improper solicitation and embezzlement. Both sentences were **suspended for two years**, effectively meaning that she does not serve the prison term unless the suspension is revoked.

Former World Headquarters Director **Yoon Yeong-ho** (윤영호) was sentenced to **six months in prison**, while his wife, former Finance Director **Lee**, received **six months with a one-year suspended sentence**.

Important limitations to the verdict

The reports also stress that **not every allegation brought by the special prosecutor resulted in a conviction**.



Six months: Yoon Yeong-ho, former director general of the international headquarters of the **Family Federation**, here 11th February 2022. Screenshot from live transmission by **FFWPU**

Most significantly, the court rejected the allegation that **Family Federation** funds used in the split-donation scheme constituted embezzlement. **Chosun Ilbo** reports that the judges found insufficient evidence of an intention to appropriate the money unlawfully.

The court also **dismissed the charges without reaching a substantive guilty/not-guilty determination** concerning several other allegations because it concluded that they fell outside the legally defined investigative scope of the special-prosecutor investigation.

These included allegations that **Mother Han** and Jeong Won-ju (정원주) obtained information about an investigation into their alleged overseas casino gambling and instructed Yoon yeong-ho (윤영호) to delete it; allegations concerning the use of **Family Federation** money to provide funds or valuables to foreign politicians in countries including Nepal and Senegal; and allegations concerning the purchase of jewelry with organizational funds. The **MBC report** likewise highlights these dismissals, including the allegation involving more than **700 million won** allegedly diverted through political support abroad.

Thus, while the verdict represents a significant conviction on the core political-funding and gift-related allegations, **the court did not accept the entire case assembled by the special prosecutors**.

Overall, the four reports portray the ruling as a partial judicial validation of the special prosecutor's theory that **Family Federation** officials sought political influence through money and expensive gifts, while at the same time

substantially narrowing the scope of criminal liability by rejecting or dismissing several other allegations.

See also [Mother Han Verdict: Family Federation Responds](#)

Text: Knut Holdhus, editor

Featured image above: Mother Han being wheeled into Seoul Central District Court on 31st August 2026.

Illustration: Grok xAI, 31st Aug. 2026

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