

STATEMENT

The government has explicitly targeted a specific religious group, categorically labeling it a "social harm" and a "detriment" while mobilizing state power in a retaliatory manner. Such actions constitute a grave violation of Article 20 of the Constitution of the Republic of Korea, which guarantees the freedom of religion and the principle of the separation of church and state.

The Shincheonji Church of Jesus expresses profound concern over this unilateral interference by state power and strongly urges the administration to uphold the principles of fair, restrained, and constitutional governance.

On 12 January, President Lee Jae-myung stated during a meeting with religious leaders that "societal harm [caused by a specific religion] has been neglected for too long, resulting in great damage." This was followed on 13 January by Prime Minister Kim Min-seok, who, during a Cabinet meeting, utilized terms such as "cult" and "heresy" to order a joint investigation and "eradication" measures. These statements effectively draw a conclusion before any formal investigation has begun. Such rhetoric from the head of the executive branch preemptively brands a specific religious group as a "socially problematic entity," which could be interpreted as compromising the due process and principles of the investigative process.

While a government-mandated joint investigation is underway, the administration is blatantly dismantling constitutional boundaries by declaring the group a "cult" and a "harm" as a foregone conclusion. By what authority does a secular government define and judge religious doctrine? On what legal basis does the highest seat of power provide "investigative guidelines" that undermine the independence of the judiciary?

The criteria for "orthodoxy" or "heresy" must never be based on political proximity or secular interests; they must be rooted solely in the Holy Scriptures.

History repeats itself. Two thousand years ago, Jesus Christ was branded a "heretic" and persecuted by the religious establishment of his time. Yet, history has vindicated Jesus as the cornerstone of the faith. Similarly, is it justifiable to label a religious body "heretical" based on congregation size or the assertions of rival pastors rather than the content of the Bible today?

With due regard for the issue, the Shincheonji Church of Jesus has repeatedly proposed a transparent solution: let us resolve these theological disputes through an open, public Bible examination, grounded in the Holy Scripture rather than emotion or political pressure. To date, there has been no fair response to this invitation. Shincheonji Church of Jesus has never claimed infallibility. If there are genuine doctrinal or social errors, we ask that they be identified with specificity. We are committed to correcting any faults and have consistently maintained this stance.

The Bible's teachings guide our actions as we strive to become upright believers respected in our communities. From voluntary service during national disasters to leading record-breaking blood drives during supply crises, we have sought to be a vital part of society. Despite this, the government continues to use abstract labels such as "harm" without presenting a single specific instance of verified damage.

Furthermore, despite numerous past allegations, the judicial process has repeatedly resulted in acquittals or findings of no suspicion. Recycling matters already settled by the courts as fuel for political and media attacks only leads spectators and all parties involved to question whether it reflects what the Republic of Korea stands for or marks a departure from the standards of a democratic state governed by the rule of law.

The President and the political establishment must move away from the politics of scapegoating and toward a politics of unity that serves all the people they represent. Attempts to use religious establishments to evade political risks, or to weaponize majority opinion to suppress a minority religion, serve neither national development nor democracy. The State has a duty to ensure that no citizen is ostracized or discriminated against on the basis of their faith.

If one religion is targeted today, any marginalized group could be the target tomorrow. The Shincheonji Church of Jesus will stand firm in truth and faith within the framework of law and order, and will not be silenced, affirming its constitutional right to freedom of religion. We call upon the government to cease emotional branding, base its judgments on facts and law, and return to its fundamental duty of serving all people equally.

The members of Shincheonji Church of Jesus have always been sincere as people of the Republic of Korea. They have shown it through their actions, including cooperating with authorities in a collaborative spirit, engaging in unsparing volunteerism, and donating blood that saved lives. As people of faith who believe in God and Jesus, and as people of this nation, the church members will continue to live up to who they are as they always have.

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Members of Shincheonji Church of Jesus