

Religious Freedom Brought into Question due to Recent Sudden Cancellation of a Large-Scale Religious Gathering

Shincheonji Church of Jesus Asserts that the South Korean Government's Religious Discrimination and Constitutional Violations Led to the Controversial Cancellation of its 111,628-Person Graduation Ceremony.



Chicago, Illinois Nov 1, 2024 ([Issuewire.com](https://www.issuewire.com)) - A planned religious gathering of approximately [111,000 people](#) hosted by Shincheonji Church of Jesus, in collaboration with the Central Buddhist Council for National Unification, scheduled for October 29th to the 31st in Paju, Gyeonggi Province of South Korea, was abruptly canceled by the Gyeonggi Tourism Organization on the day of the event (October 29th) [without any consultation to the event organizers](#). The decision, citing potential national security risks, has sparked controversy and accusations of religious discrimination.

Shincheonji Church of Jesus maintains that all safety and security concerns raised by the Gyeonggi Tourism Organization had been addressed. The group alleges that the cancellation was motivated by religious discrimination.

On November 1st, 2024, Shincheonji released the letter below addressed to the general public making known its position in the matter.

Shincheonji Church of Jesus' Position on Cancellation of Rental of Imjingak Peace Nuri

An outrageous act that directly denies the freedom of religion guaranteed by the Constitution of the Republic of Korea has occurred. Gyeonggi Province and Gyeonggi Tourism Organization have committed unconstitutional and illegal acts that cannot be justified by any excuse. Such religious oppression? What on earth?

Where are Gyeonggi Province and Gyeonggi Tourism Organization trying to lead this country to now? Are they blinded by their own political interests, trying to divide the citizens in two, divide religions in two, and ultimately lead the Republic of Korea to ruin?

Our Shincheonji Church of Jesus planned to rent Imjingak Peace Nuri in Paju in Gyeonggi Province from October 29th to 31st and hold the *Religious Leaders Forum and Graduation Ceremony* on the 30th. [Tens of thousands of graduates and religious leaders domestically and abroad had arrived, and fully prepared for participation](#). Furthermore, it was a large-scale international event with a budget of hundreds of billions of won (approximately US\$14 Million) invested. On the morning of October 29, the very day of the scheduled event, the venue reservation was unilaterally canceled without a single word of consultation with us. This is not an appropriate treatment toward the sovereign citizens and seriously damages the dignity of South Korea. What explanation should we give to the religious leaders and graduates from each country who have already entered the country? The Republic of Korea, which used to shout about the Korean Wave and emphasize globalization, is causing international shame with religious oppression. Do you want Shincheonji Church of Jesus to protest?

We carried out all administrative procedures abiding by the laws. After receiving approval for the rental on July 22, we paid the rental fee in full on October 2. On October 16, a work meeting was held to discuss the event scale, layout, safety plans, and use of special effects with fireworks. Gyeonggi Tourism Organization reviewed all event details and completed the safety inspection review. Gyeonggi Tourism Organization reviewed all the details of the event and completed a safety inspection. In particular, on the same day, there was news that Gyeonggi Province designated the entire city of Paju as a danger zone, but we received a response that it was a measure to block the distribution of leaflets to North Korea and had nothing to do with our event, and there was no prior notice or sanctions related to this. Furthermore, on October 23 and 28, the officials officially confirmed twice that "there are no plans to cancel the venue."

Canceling an event that had been reviewed for safety on the same day due to opposition from a specific religious group is an act that undermines the credibility of the administration and divides the nation by dividing the people in two. Furthermore, Gyeonggi Province Governor Kim Dong-yeon ordered the cancellation of the venue, making the flimsy excuse of "provoking North Korea." However, other events held at the same location had no issues. Administrative measures based on the opposition of a specific religious group directly violate the principle of separation of religion and politics guaranteed by the Constitution, and are unconstitutional acts that can never be tolerated in a democratic country.

Are Gyeonggi Province and Gyeonggi Tourism Organization trying to drive Shincheonji Church of Jesus out of this land? Where else can we find such an administrative practice of having granted a permission and then canceling it based on a single word from a specific religious group? We are proud citizens of this country. Why should we be discriminated against while using a public facility operated with our taxes?

We can no longer tolerate this. Do they want hundreds of thousands of members of Shincheonji Church of Jesus to take to the streets? Shincheonji Church of Jesus has made numerous efforts to resolve

issues peacefully, but if this is the result, we will now take to the streets for our rights and justice.

Shincheonji Church of Jesus is not a second-class citizen who can be ignored and discriminated against, and second-class citizens should not exist in this land. Do you think that this kind of discrimination and oppression will bring peace to this country? Do not be mistaken.

We sternly warn you. Gyeonggi Province and Gyeonggi Tourism Organization should disclose the grounds for the cancellation of the venue that are acceptable to the public and make an official apology to all Shincheonji Church of Jesus saints and invited domestic and overseas VIPs. Immediately stop the religiously discriminatory administration. If this is not accepted, we will mobilize all legal means and take to the streets with hundreds of thousands of saints. We will report the religious oppression in Korea to international human rights organizations in detail and take all possible legal measures, civil and criminal.

All citizens of this land are equal. Religious freedom is not a subject of negotiation. Shincheonji Church of Jesus and all members will fight to the end until the day when they can freely practice their faith without discrimination in this land.

All members of Shincheonji Church of Jesus

To view the large-scale graduation that wound up being held at one of Shincheonji's branch churches, you can visit their Official YouTube Channel: https://youtu.be/-9le_xqmxEk



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