

Shincheonji Church Holds Rally to Condemn Religious Discrimination: Gyeonggi Province & Tourism Organization Apologize



Washington, D.C, District of Columbia Nov 23, 2024 ([Issuewire.com](https://www.issuewire.com)) - At noon on November 15, Shincheonji Church of Jesus, the Temple of the Tabernacle of the Testimony (hereafter referred to as Shincheonji Church of Jesus), held a “Rally to Condemn Biased Religious Oppression” in front of the Gyeonggi Provincial Government in Yeongtong-gu, Suwon, Gyeonggi Province, with tens of thousands of people in attendance. The rally was organized to protest strongly against the violation of religious freedom guaranteed by the Constitution and the discriminatory religious oppression.

On October 30, Shincheonji Church of Jesus had followed all proper administrative procedures and received official approval to hold the “Religious Leaders’ Forum and Graduation Ceremony” at the Imjingak Pyeonghwa Nuri in Paju. However, on the morning of October 29, just one day before the event, the Gyeonggi Tourism Organization abruptly canceled the reservation, citing security concerns related to North Korea.

In response, Shincheonji Church of Jesus criticized the cancellation in prior statements, calling it “biased religious oppression and a violation of Article 20 of the Constitution, which guarantees freedom of religion and the principle of separation of religion and politics.” The church condemned the actions as

“political interference in religion, infringing on religious freedom, and creating division among citizens.”

During the rally, Shincheonji Church of Jesus strongly criticized the actions of Gyeonggi Province and the Gyeonggi Tourism Organization. Tens of thousands gathered in front of the provincial government building, chanting slogans such as “Gyeonggi Province and the Gyeonggi Tourism Organization must apologize immediately” and “Compensate hundreds of billions of won for the damages to the international event.”

The rally included an opening declaration, a national ceremony, an opening speech, a briefing on the cancellation, a statement of position, speeches by regional leaders, and the reading of a resolution condemning the biased religious oppression.

In his opening speech, Shincheonji Church General Secretary Lee stated, “The cancellation was ostensibly due to security concerns. However, upon closer examination, security was merely an excuse, and the true reason was biased religious oppression due to pressure from groups opposing Shincheonji Church of Jesus, such as the Capital Area Association of Christian Churches.”

As evidence, Lee remarked, “If security truly was the issue, there should have been dialogue with Shincheonji Church of Jesus to find a compromise. Instead, without any apology or consultation, they sent a unilateral cancellation notice. They even stooped so low as to film themselves delivering the notice, possibly to claim we didn’t receive it.”

He added, “Since October 16, when Paju was designated a risk area due to tensions with North Korea, we repeatedly inquired with relevant agencies about whether the graduation event could proceed as planned. Each time, they assured us there were no plans for cancellation. Yet, on the day of the event, they issued a cancellation notice, ignoring laws and principles. This is behavior unworthy of a government that represents 13 million residents of Gyeonggi Province.”

Lee emphasized, “What’s more serious is that these actions violate the Constitution. Article 20, Clause 1 states that all citizens have freedom of religion, and Clause 2 stipulates that there shall be no state religion and that religion and politics shall be separated. Gyeonggi Province and the Gyeonggi Tourism Organization violated these principles by collaborating with the Capital Area Association of Christian Churches to oppress Shincheonji Church of Jesus. This is a clear breach of the law. Administrative officials, who should act in accordance with the law, have instead violated the Constitution.”

Furthermore, Lee criticized, “Shincheonji Church of Jesus members cannot contain their outrage over this biased religious oppression. Why do the authorities readily respond to complaints from Protestant groups while ignoring the appeals of Shincheonji members? Members of Shincheonji Church of Jesus are also citizens of South Korea. Why does the governor seek to divide the people? Shincheonji members pay taxes and fulfill their obligations to the nation.”

Yoo Jae-wook, leader of Peter Tribe, who read the statement of position, stated, “This event was an international gathering worth hundreds of billions of won, with tens of thousands of graduates and religious leaders from around the world in attendance. Many international religious leaders and members had already entered the country for the event. Yet, this large-scale event, which involved irreplaceable resources, was canceled overnight due to irresponsible administrative actions.”

He criticized the cancellation as “disrespectful to the sovereign people and a severe blow to the dignity of South Korea. While promoting global recognition and the Korean Wave, South Korea has now caused international embarrassment through religious oppression.”

After the rally, an official letter of protest was delivered to the Gyeonggi Provincial Government. Shincheonji Church of Jesus also announced plans to continue relay rallies in front of the Gyeonggi Provincial Government and the Gyeonggi Tourism Organization until their demands are met.

Gyeonggi Province and the Gyeonggi Tourism Organization apologized for notifying the cancellation of the “Religious Leaders’ Forum and Graduation Ceremony,” scheduled for October 30 at Imjingak Pyeonghwa Nuri in Paju, on the day of the event, October 29. However, they reiterated their previous stance that the cancellation was due to security concerns.

Song Jae-woong, Head of the General Affairs Department, explained, “Gyeonggi Province and the Gyeonggi Tourism Organization stated that the cancellation was an urgent measure for the safety of residents, but they acknowledged the abruptness of the cancellation and expressed regret, saying, ‘We are sorry for notifying you so late.’”

He continued, “We expressed our desire to hear an accountable statement from Governor Kim Dong-yeon of Gyeonggi Province, but we received no response on that matter.”

Regarding future plans, Song added, “The unfair decision to cancel the reservation on the same day was made under the direction of Governor Kim Dong-yeon. Unless he issues an apology and takes responsibility, we will continue our rallies to condemn his actions.”

A Shincheonji Church of Jesus representative stated, “Who in South Korea would disagree with concerns about national security? Shincheonji Church members are also South Korean citizens. However, after numerous discussions and confirmations that there were no plans to cancel, the reservation was suddenly canceled on the morning of the event due to an order from Gyeonggi Province. This is incomprehensible.”

The representative added, “After the Capital Area Association of Christian Churches held its rally, Governor Kim decided to cancel the event. This can only be seen as religious bias and discriminatory oppression against Shincheonji Church of Jesus. Why is the decision-maker himself not providing any explanation?”

Shincheonji Church of Jesus announced that they would continue relay rallies in front of the Gyeonggi Provincial Government and the Gyeonggi Tourism Organization until Governor Kim and the organization issue an accountable statement, apology, and compensation for the damages incurred by the church.

Protest Video: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ky-x-vA7uW8>

Source: <https://n.news.naver.com/mnews/article/003/0012905956?sid=102>

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