

Confronting Religious Bias in South Korea: Shincheonji Speaks Out

A response to the Gyeonggi Province Governor's remarks regarding the cancellation of a major Shincheonji Church of Jesus event.



Chicago, Illinois Dec 9, 2024 ([IssueWire.com](https://www.issuewire.com)) - On November 29, the Gyeonggi Provincial Council in South Korea met to discuss the abrupt cancellation of a major Shincheonji Church of Jesus event. During the meeting, Governor Kim Dong-yeon failed to substantiate claims justifying the cancellation. Shincheonji Church of Jesus recently responded to Governor Kim's statements with concerns about religious freedom, which is promised in South Korea's constitution.

Governor Kim claimed that the cancellation was necessary for public safety in the midst of tensions with North Korea. However, he failed to provide clear evidence of the public safety threat that the Shincheonji event allegedly posed. The decision came shortly after protests from Protestant groups against the event. This raises questions about the provincial government's ability to remain impartial, and violates Article 20 of the South Korean constitution, which safeguards freedom of religion and separation of church and state. Not only was the decision unconstitutional, but it sets a troubling precedent for administrative decisions influenced by religious bias.

Governor Kim cited the designation of "red zones" across Gyeonggi province in response to a separate

altercation on October 30 involving the distribution of anti-North Korean leaflets by North Korean Abductees. Public announcements regarding red zones and anti-North Korean leaflets were made in the weeks prior, without implication or notice to Shincheonji Church of Jesus of cancelling the event, which was planned for October 31. In the days that followed, both religious and secular events continued to be held at the park venue as scheduled, isolating the standalone cancellation as unjustified. Still, no further reasoning was given to support the claim that the event would have posed a public safety threat. If security was truly the main concern, then comprehensive action should have been taken to address all gatherings in the area, rather than singling out a religious group, and would have demonstrated genuine concern for public safety.

By the end of the meeting, Governor Kim had not taken accountability for the cancellation, but stated that “the responsibility for leasing the Imjingak Peace Park lies with the president of the Gyeonggi Tourism Organization,” despite his own claims that the decision to cancel was due to public safety concerns.

There were no measures proposed to address the damages incurred by Shincheonji Church of Jesus. This lack of accountability and dialogue with the church represents a blatant display of administrative negligence and ultimately undermines trust in public governance.

Shincheonji Church of Jesus calls on Governor Kim to directly address the members protesting in front of the Gyeonggi Provincial Office with a sincere apology and concrete steps for compensation for the harm caused to the Church. Should Governor Kim continue to evade responsibility, the church is committed to pursuing legal action to ensure accountability and justice.

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