

A special press adjudication panel in Korea has required that thousands of stories in the South Korean media about the Sewol incident and its aftermath include a lengthy statement correcting the errors.

* Pursuant to an order by the Press Arbitration Commission, we have been asked to publish the following statement from the Evangelical Baptist Church (EBC).

Evangelical Baptist Church (“EBC,” the “Salvation Group”*) and Mr. Yoo Byung-eun
Related Corrections and Official Statement by EBC

After the April 16, 2014 Sewol ferry tragedy, the media published a flood of indiscriminate articles regarding the EBC (also known as Guwonpa* in Korean) and Mr. Yoo Byung-eun. Due to the immense volume of articles, it is impossible to correct and counter every single one. Therefore, in agreement with the EBC and the surviving family of Mr. Yoo Byung-eun, we are publishing the following combined corrections and Official Statement by EBC.

* This label, which is translated as the Salvation Group, has been applied disparagingly to the Evangelical Baptist Church

1. In regards to the claims that Mr. Yoo Byung-eun was the owner of the Sewol ferry vessel and the owner and Chief Executive Officer of Chonghaejin Marine Ltd (“Chonghaejin”) and its affiliated companies

The majority of the media reported that, as the owner of the Sewol ferry, Mr. Yoo Byung-eun directly managed Chonghaejin and its affiliated companies and that he used operating funds for personal purposes. However, Mr. Yoo retired from his executive management position in 1997. He did not own any shares in the noted companies, nor had he managed operations, nor used the operating funds for

personal reasons. He was not the owner of the Sewol ferry, nor the Chief Executive Officer of Chonghaejin. As such, he had not provided any directives in regards to the overloading of the Sewol ferry or its renovation (e.g. expansion of the cabins and cargo area).

2. In regards to the reports of Mr. Yoo Byung-eun's accumulation of illicit funds and lobbying of lawmakers

Although some media outlets reported that Mr. Yoo Byung-eun had established favorable relationships by paying bribes to politicians, Korean Prosecutors' Office verified last October that reports of such bribery activity were false. We hereby correct all articles pertaining to this matter.

3. In regards to the allegations of Mr. Yoo Byung-eun's asset holdings in other people's names and misappropriation of offerings made to the EBC

The majority of the media reported that Mr. Yoo Byung-eun was a wealthy billionaire who owned real estate properties, including Geumsuwon, both in Korea and abroad under other people's names and that he diverted the tithes and offerings made to the EBC to an illicit fund and expanded his businesses.

The EBC has confirmed that reports of his wealth incorrectly included real estate properties owned by farming associations, which had been established by church members. Thus, these reported properties were not held by Mr. Yoo Byung-eun in another person's name, but are owned by the noted farming associations.

Additionally, Mr. Yoo did not embezzle from the EBC nor did he expand his businesses by diverting tithes or offerings of the pertaining church and its members into an illicit fund.

4. In regards to the reports related to Mr. Yoo Byung-eun's position within the EBC

The EBC has stated that Mr. Yoo Byung-eun was not a religious sect leader. Although he was ordained as a pastor in the 1970s by missionaries at the Far East Broadcasting Company, he did not serve as a pastor. There is no pastor in the EBC, since it is a congregation of laymen.

It was also verified that Mr. Yoo Byung-eun did not participate in the official process to register EBC as a church in 1981, nor had he been revered as a religious sect leader or been made into a God-like figure by the pertaining church or its members.

5. In regards to reports that the EBC is a cult and that it has false doctrines

The majority of the media reported that the EBC is a religious cult and that it preaches doctrines that are not consistent with Christianity. There are certain churches in Korea that call the EBC a cult, solely based on differences between their and the EBC's doctrines. However, the EBC has affirmed its belief in the Bible, the Trinity, Jesus' conception by the Holy Spirit, His birth, death, and resurrection. The EBC does not worship a particular individual as a religious sect leader or preach any doctrine that contradicts the Bible.

6. In regards to reports that Lee Yong-wook, a senior Coast Guard official, and the Sewol ferry crew, including Captain Lee Jun-seok, are members of the EBC, and that the EBC managed Chonghaejin

It was verified that the captain and the crew members who abandoned the ship at the time of the Sewol ferry accident are not members of the EBC. Only two people have been confirmed as members of the EBC: the late Jeong Hyun-seon, who died while evacuating passengers and thus was designated a national hero, and another person, who had been rescuing passengers and was himself later rescued in an unconscious state. It has also been verified that the EBC does not own any shares of Chonghaejin and that it did not engage in its management. Furthermore, the EBC has stated that Lee Yong-wook, a senior Coast Guard official, has not attended the EBC for the past 15 years.

7. In regards to reports of Mr. Yoo Byung-eun's attempt to flee the country by ship, reports of his seeking asylum and reports of his possession of firearms

The majority of the media reported that Mr. Yoo Byung-eun attempted to flee the country by ship, that he requested asylum in several countries but was rejected, and that he possessed firearms to protect himself. The prosecutors hastily announced without confirming the facts that Mr. Yoo Byung-eun attempted to seek

asylum. However, two months later on August 18, the prosecutors revised their statement noting that “upon investigation into the identity of the caller, a person with no relation to the Salvation Group had placed a prank call.” In addition, there was no evidence of any attempt by Mr. Yoo to flee the country. It has also been confirmed that the firearms alleged to be in his possession were collectibles. Furthermore, not only were they collectibles that could not be operated they were also not in his possession while he was fleeing.

8. In regards to reports on allegations about the EBC’s and Mr. Yoo Byung-eun’s links to the Odaeyang incident and their relationship with the Fifth Republic of Korea

Some news articles created the impression that the EBC and Mr. Yoo Byung-eun were behind the Odaeyang mass suicide incident. Some also reported that Mr. Yoo Byung-eun had been able to rapidly grow the Semo Group in the 1980s (e.g. securing the business rights to operate the Han River Ferry Cruise) by using a connection with Mr. Chun Kyung-hwan and a close relationship with the former President Chun Doo-hwan’s Fifth Republic of Korea. However, the Odaeyang mass suicide incident was thoroughly investigated by the prosecution and the police three times—in 1987, 1989, and 1991. All three investigations concluded that the EBC and Mr. Yoo Byung-eun had no connection to the incident. Also, neither Mr. Yoo Byung-eun nor the EBC had any collusive ties with the Fifth Republic of Korea. All of this was verified in the official document issued from the Incheon District Prosecutors’ Office on May 21, 2014.

9. In regards to reports alleging that Mr. Yoo Byung-eun held photography exhibitions at the world’s top museums by donating funds and that he coerced purchases of his artworks

The artwork of Ahae (Mr. Yoo Byung-eun) was examined and authorized for exhibitions at renowned museums and exhibition sites in the United States and Europe by their screening committees. The exhibitions were unrelated to donations, and it was confirmed that there was no causal relationship between Ahae’s donation history and the exhibitions. Moreover, Mr. Yoo’s photography exhibitions were authorized by the committees after the directors of the respective museums had acknowledged the artistic value of Ahae’s works and subsequently

proposed hosting the exhibitions. It has been confirmed that the exhibitions were not a result of Mr. Yoo's patronage or donation. Additionally, the above museums have verified that an exhibition can never be authorized unless the artistic value of an artist's works is recognized by the screening committee, irrespective of the amount of money an artist donates.

Additionally, it was reported that Mr. Yoo coerced Chonghaejin and its affiliates to purchase his photos at inflated prices. However, this has been confirmed to be false.

Lastly, the Evangelical Baptist Church has released the following statement to the media:

“We sincerely request of the press to serve the public's right to know with objective and balanced reporting, guarding against biased arguments from its interviewees, all the while fulfilling its duty and responsibility to create no victims from such reporting.

We ask the press to reflect upon its manner of reporting on the Sewol ferry accident. Without waiting for the truth to be revealed through the completion of the investigative and judicial process, the reporting largely focused on releasing exclusive and sensational news reports, which led to misleading the public and essentially conducting a trial in the court of public opinion. We also ask the press to avoid compromising the democratic principles of a constitutional state and to prudently take strict precautions against those forces that aim to take advantage of this period of heartbreak for this nation in order to advance their own position and authority.”