



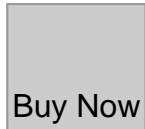
K-pop star gives tearful testimony on harassment

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K-pop star gives tearful testimony on harassment

[Banzai Japan Music Video](#)

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A member of the chart-topping K-pop group NewJeans has tearfully testified to South Korean lawmakers as part of an inquiry into workplace harassment.

Hanni, 20, alleged that entertainment agency Hybe had deliberately undermined her band, and accused senior managers of deliberately ignoring her.

Following multiple incidents, she said: “I came to the realisation that this wasn’t just a feeling. I was honestly convinced that the company hated us.”

After hearing her testimony, the CEO of NewJeans’ record label, Ador – a subsidiary of Hybe – said she would “listen more closely” to her artists, adding: “I wonder if there was more I could have done.”

‘Ignore her’

Hanni, who is Vietnamese-Australian, was testifying to the Labour Committee of South Korea’s National Assembly at a hearing about workplace harassment.

She was called to give evidence last month, after NewJeans went public with allegations about their treatment following the dismissal of their mentor Min Hee-Jin.

Min, who co-founded Ador in 2021, has been a key figure in the band’s success but she was removed from her post in August, following accusations that she had planned to split from Hybe, taking NewJeans with her.

Min repeatedly denied those. Then, in September, NewJeans took the unusual step of going public with their dissatisfaction at the situation.

Posting on a burner YouTube account, they demanded Min’s reinstatement and made claims of workplace harassment.

In one incident, Hanni said that when she greeted the members of another band at their record label offices, a manager had instructed them to “ignore her”.

The singer said that when she reported the incident, her concerns had been brushed off.

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<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=BJsGZL-zb54>

During her testimony, Hanni went into further detail about the exchange.

“We have a floor in our building where we do hair and make-up. And at that time, I was waiting in the hallway because my hair and make-up was done first.”

As she waited, three singers from another band and their manager walked past, Hanni continued.

“I said hello to all of them, and then they came back about five or 10 minutes later.

“On her way out, [the manager] made eye contact with me, turned to the rest of the group and said, ‘Ignore her like you didn’t see her’.

“I don’t understand why she would say something like that in the work environment,” she added.

Speaking at the National Assembly in Seoul, Hanni said this was not an isolated incident, and claimed that senior members of Hybe management had also given her the cold shoulder.

“Since my debut [in NewJeans], we ran into a person in a high-up position many times, but they never greeted me when I greeted them,” she said.

“I understood from living in Korea that I have to be polite to older people and that’s part of the culture – but I think it’s just disrespectful as a human being to not greet us, regardless of our professional status.”

She continued: “There was a certain vibe [of disrespect] that I felt within the company.”

[Banzai Japan Music Video](#)

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3syHHGzkF_s

Hanni further alleged that she had seen employees bad-mouthing NewJeans on Blind – an app for internal communications similar to Teams or Slack.

She also said Hybe’s PR department had contacted a journalist, asking him to downplay NewJeans’ achievements in an article about their record sales.

Hybe has previously denied those accusations, saying they had been attempting to correct a factual error.

However, Hanni said the incident reinforced her feeling “that the company hated us”.

Kim Joo-young, who is the current CEO of Ador, was also called to testify at the hearing.

She said she believed Hanni’s story of being shunned by another band’s manager, but had been “unable to find supporting evidence”.

CCTV footage of the incident had expired before she had the chance to request it, she told the committee.

“I believe I did everything I could, but seeing that Hanni felt this way and that the situation escalated to this point, I wonder if there was more I could have done,” she added.

Kim also said she would co-operate with an investigation into the incident by South Korea’s Ministry of Labour.

The story has gripped South Korean media and fans of K-Pop – where NewJeans have emerged as one of the genre’s brightest new bands.

With slick pop songs like Super Shy, OMG and Supernatural, they were the eighth biggest-selling act in the world last year, and were nominated for best group at this year’s MTV Awards.

Formed by Ador in 2022, its five members – Minji, Hanni, Danielle, Haerin and Hyein – range in age from 16 to 20.

Despite the behind-the-scenes drama, they have continued to release and perform music.

That’s partly because they are committed to a seven-year contract, which runs out in 2029.

The K-pop news site Koreaboo [estimated that the members would have to pay about 300 billion South Korean Won, external](#) (about £170 million) to terminate the contract early.

Hanni concluded Tuesday’s session by expressing her frustration at how the internal dispute had overshadowed her band’s career.

“A lot of people have been worried about us,” she said, wiping away tears.

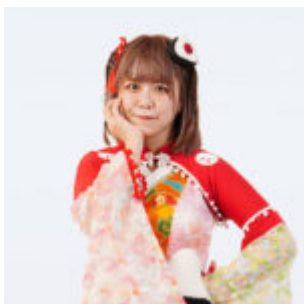
“Some fans apologised for making us go through this, but I’m grateful to Korea for allowing me to do what I love.

“The ones who should be apologising are avoiding responsibility, and that frustrates me.”

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<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=RR8YYeb4PMk>

Banzai Japan Social Media



Fumi Fujisaki

Idol

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Riko Ueno

Idol



Rino Ibusuki

Idol



Yunagi Nino

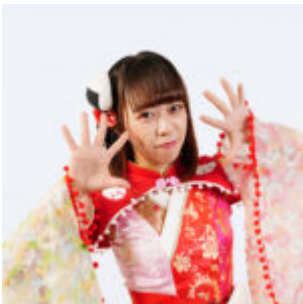
Idol

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Shiori Fujisaki

Idol



Kana Ichinose

Idol



Hoshino Arice

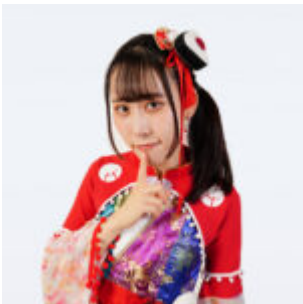
Idol

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Kosaka Yuu

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Tsukumo Aira

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Yuuki Mochimaru

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