



Written by [Michael Tennant](#) on March 31, 2022

## Finnish Lawmaker Acquitted of Hate-speech Charges for Criticizing Homosexuality

A Finnish court unanimously acquitted a high-ranking lawmaker of hate-speech charges stemming from her public assertions of Christian teaching on homosexuality.

On Wednesday, the Helsinki District Court dismissed all charges against Päivi Räsänen and Bishop Juhana Pohjola, who published some of Räsänen's alleged hate speech nearly two decades ago. It also ordered the prosecution to pay 60,000 euros in legal costs.

"I am so grateful the court recognized the threat to free speech and ruled in our favor. I feel a weight has been lifted off my shoulders after being acquitted. Although I am grateful for having had this chance to stand up for freedom of speech, I hope that this ruling will help prevent others from having to go through the same ordeal," Räsänen said in a [press release](#) from ADF International, which supported her and Pohjola's defense.

Räsänen, a medical doctor and mother of five who is married to a pastor in the Evangelical Lutheran Church of Finland (ELCF), has been a member of the Finnish parliament since 1995 and previously served as interior minister and chairwoman of the Christian Democrats.

Her high standing, however, did her no good when, in 2019, she criticized on Facebook the ELCF's participation in Helsinki's LGBT Pride celebration, writing: "The Church of which I am a member has announced to be the official partner of ... Helsinki Pride 2019. How does the church's doctrine, the Bible, fit together with the cause where shame and sin are raised as a topic of pride?" She also referenced Romans 1:24-27, which describes homosexual behavior as "dishonorable" and "shameless."

Unfortunately for Räsänen, "in Finland, one may not criticize homosexuals or immigrants," reported [The New American](#). "The country's Ministry of Justice provides a long list of groups protected from hate speech and encourages Finns to snitch when they cross the trail of hate speakers."

Someone snitched to the cops about Räsänen's "crime," and before she knew it, she was being prosecuted on three counts, two of which were filed "after the police made strong recommendations not to continue the prosecution," noted ADF International.

"In the last two years, Räsänen attended several lengthy police interrogations about her Christian beliefs — including being frequently asked by the police to explain her understanding of the Bible," the



AP Images  
Finnish MP Päivi Räsänen



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group wrote.

Pohjola was prosecuted for publishing — in 2004 — a pamphlet written by Räsänen that also stated Christian views of marriage and sex.

According to ADF International, “The prosecution attacked core Christian teachings and cross-examined the bishop and Räsänen on their theology in court” and “called for heavy fines in the event of a guilty verdict.” The defense, meanwhile, “argued that finding Räsänen guilty would significantly damage free speech in Finland. What Räsänen said, they argued, was an expression of Christian teaching.”

Ultimately, the court found in the defendants’ favor, writing that although some people might be offended by Räsänen’s statements, “there must be an overriding social reason for interfering with and restricting freedom of expression.” The court found none.

“We welcome the Helsinki District Court’s ruling,” said ADF International Executive Director Paul Coleman. “In a free society, everyone should be allowed to share their beliefs without fear of censorship.... Criminalizing speech through so-called ‘hate-speech’ laws shuts down important public debates and poses a grave threat to our democracies.”

Pohjola told [Fox News](#) he was “relieved” by the ruling. “However,” he warned, “in the court decision it was said that our pamphlet includes offensive speech against homosexuals but not defaming in the criminal sense. That makes me worried, because although people can be offended by different things, the biblical teaching is never offensive in the sense of degrading human value. But it’s truthful, healing and liberating. I do not accept the idea that our writing included hate speech — no matter what the surrounding society might say.”

“Of course as Christians, we are called to forgive everybody, but I’m still worried about the damage this case has already [caused] for basic rights in our society,” he said. “I know also that the gender ideology behind all this is not disappearing, but increasing in the society.”

The court gave prosecutors seven days to appeal its decision.



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