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## Christian Finnish lawmaker who opposes same-sex marriage faces potential 6-year jail term

[Peter Kenny\\_\(\)](#) | Tuesday, May 11 2021

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(Photo: ADF International)Päivi Räsänen

Finland's Prosecutor General has charged Päivi Räsänen, a seventh-term Member of the Finnish Parliament and ex-chair of the Christian Democrats party, for allegedly committing crimes regarding her opinion on marriage and sexuality and she could face six years in prison.

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The prosecutor determined that the statements disparage and discriminate against homosexuals, violate their equality rights and human dignity, and foment intolerance, defamation and hatred, the [Helsinki Times](https://www.helsinkitimes.fi/finland/finland-news/domestic/19147-finnish-mp-charged-with-ethnic-agitation-over-remarks-about-homosexuals.html) (<https://www.helsinkitimes.fi/finland/finland-news/domestic/19147-finnish-mp-charged-with-ethnic-agitation-over-remarks-about-homosexuals.html>) reported on April 30.

The statements by Räsänen, a former Finland interior minister, thus breach the limits of freedom of speech and freedom of religion, according to a press release from the Office of the Finnish Prosecutor General.

One of the statements was published on the website of the Luther Foundation of Finland and the Evangelical Lutheran Mission Diocese of Finland. The two others charges, in turn, are related to statements made by the lawmaker on social media and YLE Puhe.

Räsänen, a member of the Evangelical Lutheran Church of Finland has been under investigation by police since June 2019 after questioning the leadership at the Finnish Lutheran church she attended, [Christian Headlines](https://www.christianheadlines.com/contributors/milton-quintanilla/christian-finnish-mp-could-spend-6-years-in-prison-for-supporting-biblical-marriage-sexuality.html) (<https://www.christianheadlines.com/contributors/milton-quintanilla/christian-finnish-mp-could-spend-6-years-in-prison-for-supporting-biblical-marriage-sexuality.html>) reported.

At the time, the church had sponsored the LGBT event 'Pride 2019' by using an image with a Bible text.

The preliminary investigation into the cases focuses Räsänen as author of a 24-page booklet titled *Male and Female He Created Them – Homosexual relationships challenge the Christian concept of humanity*, which was published in 2004 – and Juaha Pohjola – dean of the Evangelical Lutheran Mission Diocese of Finland, as well as the booklet's publisher, [The Jerusalem Post](https://www.jpost.com/international/finnish-evangelical-pastor-mp-under-investigation-over-anti-lgbtq-booklet-617967) (<https://www.jpost.com/international/finnish-evangelical-pastor-mp-under-investigation-over-anti-lgbtq-booklet-617967>) reported.

## QUESTIONED CHURCH'S LEADERSHIP

In response, Räsänen questioned the church's leadership in a tweet, which later got her in trouble for committing hate speech.

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She subsequently underwent several interviews by police regarding her views and waited more than a year for the Prosecutor General to determine whether the prosecution should continue.

ADF International, the Christian legal group representing Räsänen, stated that the politician faces two years in prison for each crime.

"I cannot accept that voicing my religious beliefs could mean imprisonment. I do not consider myself guilty of threatening, slandering or insulting anyone. My statements were all based on the Bible's teachings on marriage and sexuality," Räsänen said in a statement carried by ADF (<https://adfinternational.org/news/when-a-tweet-can-land-you-in-jail-criminal-charges-brought-against-finnish-mp/>).

"I will defend my right to confess my faith, so that no one else would be deprived of their right to freedom of religion and speech.

"I hold on to the view that my expressions are legal and they should not be censored. I will not back down from my views. I will not be intimidated into hiding my faith. The more Christians keep silent on controversial themes, the narrower the space for freedom of speech gets. "

Paul Coleman, the Executive Director of ADF International, said that "freedom of speech is one of the cornerstones of democracy."

"The Finnish Prosecutor General's decision to bring these charges against Dr. Räsänen creates a culture of fear and censorship," he said.

"It is sobering that such cases are becoming all too common throughout Europe. If committed civil servants like Päivi Räsänen are criminally charged for voicing their deeply held beliefs, it creates a chilling effect for everyone's right to speak freely."

Räsänen is also a medical doctor and a grandmother and has been a member of Parliament since 1995.

She has become a prominent defender of traditional Christian views on marriage, euthanasia and abortion. Her views are

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considered more conservative than those in the ECLF leadership.

Räsänen has served as a Finnish Member of Parliament since 1995, was chair of the Christian Democrats from 2004-2015, and from 2011-2015 she was the Minister of the Interior, during which she held responsibility for church affairs in Finland.

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