

# **FINLAND: Defence Ministry reconsiders Jehovah's Witnesses military exemption**

YLE News (06.04.2018) – Men are granted waivers from conscription if they can show they are active members of the denomination. All other men must carry out either military or non-military service.

The Finnish Defence Ministry has set up a panel to reconsider the exemption from conscription granted to members of the Jehovah's Witnesses. The non-mainstream Christian denomination urges its members not to participate in military service, even in unarmed roles.

The ministry said on Friday that it has established a working group to consider revising the legislation that waives Jehovah's Witnesses' obligation to perform military service.

All Finnish men aged 18 to 60 must carry out either military or non-military service. Under current law, a man can be granted a deferment of service for three years at a time as long as he can certify that he is an active member of a Jehovah's Witnesses congregation.

## ***"Problematic" from equality standpoint***

The Defence Ministry says that previous studies of the issue have found the current practice to be problematic, particularly from the standpoint of equality.

The legislation on Jehovah's Witnesses' conscription was originally passed as a special act before the present constitution came into force.

The committee is to complete its work by late June.

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