

**Notice:** Undefined index: et\_header\_layout in /home/hrwfe90/domains/hrwf.eu/public\_html/wp-content/plugins/pdf-print/pdf-print.php on line 1214

**Notice:** Trying to access array offset on value of type null in /home/hrwfe90/domains/hrwf.eu/public\_html/wp-content/plugins/pdf-print/pdf-print.php on line 1214

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## **FINLAND: Paivi Rasanen: Finnish MP in Bible trial for anti-gay hate speech**

### **Paivi Rasanen: Finnish MP in Bible hate speech trial**

BBC (25.01.2022) – <https://bbc.in/3KNgvuM> – A former Finnish interior minister has gone on trial for hate speech against gay people, following comments which she says were based on the Bible.

Prosecutors accuse Paivi Rasanen of making derogatory comments on three occasions, including in a 2019 tweet showing verses from the Bible.

Ms Rasanen denies the charges and says she stands behind her words.

The case is being seen as a test of whether personal religious beliefs can justify controversial language.

Announcing the charges in April last year, Finland's state prosecutor said Ms Rasanen had made comments likely to cause intolerance, contempt and hatred towards homosexuals.

The charges relate to comments she made on three separate occasions: in an article published online, in a radio interview and in a 2019 tweet which included a photograph of an extract from the Bible.

In the tweet, she questioned why the Finnish Lutheran Church was officially supporting Finland's Pride week. The attached photograph contained verses from the Bible which appear to describe homosexual acts as shameful.

The court will have to decide whether citing the Bible can be considered a crime in some cases in Finland.

According to prosecutors, an online article by Ms Rasanen which was published in 2004 described homosexuality as a

psychosexual development disorder.

The politician, who was Finland's interior minister from 2011-2015, arrived at court on Monday holding a Bible and said that she was "honoured to be defending freedom of speech and religion".

"I hope that today it can become clear that I have no wish to offend any group of people, but this is a question of saving people for eternal life," she continued.

However, prosecutors say that Ms Rasanen's statements violate the equality and dignity of homosexuals, and therefore go beyond the limits of freedom of speech and religion.

In court on Monday, they argued that the case should be based on the secular legal system, not the writings of the Bible.

Although the charges against Ms Rasanen could technically lead to a prison sentence, prosecutors have asked that she receive a fine relative to her income.

A Lutheran bishop, Juhana Pohjola, who belongs to an independent, conservative Lutheran church, also faces charges for publishing one of Ms Rasanen's articles.

Finland has a population of about 5.5m people. The Evangelical Lutheran Church of Finland is one of the country's two national churches and says it has about 4 million members.

*Photo : Paivi Rasanen says she is defending her religious freedom / Reuters*

**Further reading about FORB in Finland on HRWF website**

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**Notice:** Undefined index: et\_template in /home/hrwfe90/domains/hrwf.eu/public\_html/wp-content/plugins/pdf-print/pdf-print.php on line 1268