



Congress of the United States  
House of Representatives  
Washington, DC 20515-0906

August 8, 2023

The Honorable Rashad Hussain  
Ambassador at Large  
Office of International Religious Freedom  
U.S. Department of State  
2201 C Street NW  
Washington, D.C. 20520

The Honorable Douglas Hickey  
Ambassador to Finland  
U.S. Embassy Helsinki  
Itäinen Puistotie 14 B  
00140 Helsinki, Finland

Dear Ambassador Hussain and Ambassador Hickey:

Finnish Christians once again stand trial for simply being Christians. For more than four years, a rogue Finnish prosecutor has unjustly targeted Member of Finnish Parliament Päivi Räsänen and Bishop Juhana Pohjola for tweeting a Bible verse critical of her own church and publishing a twenty-year old booklet on marriage.

This prosecutor is dead set on weaponizing the power of Finland's legal system to silence not just a member of parliament and Lutheran bishop but millions of Finnish Christians who dare to exercise their natural rights to freedom of expression and freedom of religion in the public square. History will remember this case for either stopping the madness or as the beginning of the end as the West declares open war on Christianity.

Since 2019, MP Räsänen and Bishop Pohjola have been dragged through the Finnish court system. Most recently, they were unanimously acquitted of their so-called "hate speech" crimes. Across the globe, defenders of religious freedom and free expression cheered the landmark decision. But inexcusably the prosecution appealed the decision, and the retrial will be heard on August 22<sup>nd</sup>.

Last March, the district court's judgment made it clear - the prosecution was meritless. The three-judge panel got it right in a victory for the God-given rights of free speech and religious expression stating that "it is not for the district court to interpret biblical concepts" and that the case lacked "an overriding social reason for interfering with and restricting freedom of expression."

It is abundantly clear – the process is the punishment. The selective targeting of these high-profile individuals is designed to systematically chill others' speech under the threat of legal harassment and social stigmatism. Neither MP Räsänen or Bishop Pohjola are remotely questionable individuals. MP Räsänen is a mother to five and grandmother to ten, a medical doctor and has served in the Finnish Parliament for almost thirty years. Bishop Pohjola has been a pastor for over twenty years, served as the Bishop of the Evangelical Lutheran Mission Diocese of Finland and currently serves as chairman of the International Lutheran Council.

No American, no Finn, and no human should face legal harassment for simply living out their religious beliefs.

This case will have worldwide ramifications. For years, we and many others have raised the alarm that the West was experiencing a hostile takeover by radical secularists — guided by open hostility and rancid antagonism toward Christianity — and that one-day people of faith would face trial for merely living out their beliefs. In Finland, that day has come, and a guilty verdict will only expedite this disorders arrival in our courtrooms.

Freedom of expression and freedom of religion are engrained in what it means to be an American. As members of Congress, we stand shoulder to shoulder with all people of good faith in condemning the legal assault on MP Räsänen and Bishop Pohjola for merely being Christians.

We ask you both to continue to raise concerns over the ongoing legal harassment of MP Räsänen and Bishop Pohjola with your Finnish counterparts, and to publicly speak out on their behalf.

Bishop Pohjola puts it best, “The Gospel of Christ is at stake.”

Sincerely,



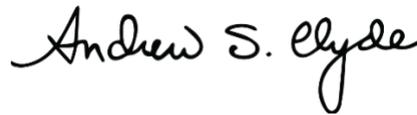
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