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Finnish Evangelical pastor, MP under investigation over anti-LGBTQ booklet

The 24-page booklet, titled 'Male and Female He Created Them – Homosexual relationships challenge the Christian concept of humanity,' was published in 2004 and is still available online.

By [AARON REICH](#) FEBRUARY 23, 2020 14:24



The rainbow flag, commonly known as the gay pride flag or LGBT pride flag, is seen during the first Gay Pride parade in Skopje, North Macedonia June 29, 2019

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The head of an [Evangelical](#) Lutheran diocese in Finland and a member of the Finnish parliament could face criminal charges after police began investigating them last week regarding the publication and distribution of an anti-LGBTQ booklet, Evangelical Focus [reported](#).

The preliminary investigation into the cases focuses on Finnish MP Päivi Räsänen – author of the 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.

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Helsinki Police questioned them for five hours as part of the investigation.

According to the state prosecutor-general, Raija Toivainen, the booklet – which is still available online in Finnish, Swedish and English – "incites hatred" against the LGBTQ community, Evangelical Focus reported.

As a result, both Räsänen and Pohjola could face charges of "ethnic agitation," a crime of racism in the Finnish Penal Code. Despite intending to only cover ethnic and racial discrimination, legislation in 2011 added discrimination against sexual orientation to the charge.

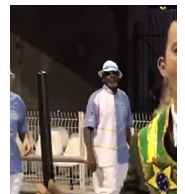
After meeting with the police, Pohjola published [a statement](#) on the diocese's website, saying that he admits he is responsible for publishing and distributing the booklet, as he is the editor-in-chief of the publishing house.

"I denied, however, being guilty of the crime of ethnic agitation," he added.

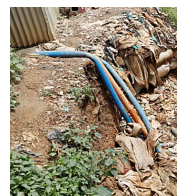
"In my view, Mrs. Räsänen's text is not defamatory or insulting to homosexuals. In my answers, I showed that the booklet teaches in line with Christian anthropology that every person is precious as being created in the image of God, regardless of sexual orientation," he continued.

However, Pohjola said that the LGBTQ lifestyle "is contrary to God's order of creation and a transgression against His will. If one is not allowed to teach this publicly, the message of sin and grace will be left without a foundation, and freedom of religion will decline."

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According to the diocese's [website](#), Pohjola is "under suspicion for distributing this material to the public and for keeping this material available online" and is suspected of having incited hatred.

Speaking to [Evangelical Focus](#) in November 2019 regarding the initial controversy of the police investigation, Räsänen said that "It is difficult to understand what is now happening in my home country."

This is not the first time that Räsänen – a former Finnish interior minister, leader of the Christian Democratic Party and a sitting MP since 1995 – has made headlines for anti-LGBTQ controversy. He is well-known for being a Conservative voice outspoken in defending traditional Christian views on numerous ethical issues such as abortion and marriage.

In June 2019, Räsänen took to Facebook to slam the Evangelical Lutheran Church of Finland's (ELCF) partnership with the Helsinki Gay Pride Parade. In the post, she posted a photo of the Finnish-language translation of Romans 1:24-27 – a part of the New Testament that describes relationships between same-sex couples as "shameful" – and asked "How can the church's doctrinal foundation, the Bible, be compatible with the lifting up of shame and sin as a subject of pride?"

Räsänen, like a majority of Finns, is a member of the ELCF. The Evangelical Lutheran Mission Diocese of Finland is an independent church not affiliated with the ELCF.

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Päivi Räsänen
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Kirkko, jonka jäsen olen, on ilmoittanut olevansa SETA:n Helsinki Pride 2019 virallinen kumppani. Miten kirkon oppiperusta, Raamattu, sopii yhteen aatteen kanssa, jossa häpeä ja synty nostetaan ylpeyden aiheeksi?
#pride2019 #raamattu #evlulkirkko #room1:24-27

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