



United States Department of State

Washington, D.C. 20520

May 10, 2023

The Honorable
John Kennedy
United States Senate
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Senator Kennedy:

Thank you for your December 15, 2022 letter regarding a Finnish prosecutor's appeal of acquittals in two criminal hate speech cases. Over the past year, we have directly engaged Finnish officials on these cases. As we have communicated to our counterparts, promoting respect for and protecting freedom of religion or belief remains an important U.S. foreign policy priority. The U.S. Embassy in Helsinki has closely monitored these cases and has raised them in discussions with Finnish government counterparts, as well as with religious and civil society leaders. Ambassador Hussain also raised these cases and in March 2022 during his meeting with Finnish Ambassador Hautala. The appeals process will likely not result in a hearing until August 2023, but our embassy will continue to engage on this issue with officials and religious communities in Finland.

Thank you for your continued interest in religious freedom and your specific concern with these cases. We look forward to our continued cooperation with Congress on international religious freedom and freedom of expression issues.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Naz Durakoglu".

Naz Durakoglu
Assistant Secretary
Bureau of Legislative Affairs