

The Jehovah's Witnesses' internal judicial system as a human rights problem – efforts to draw attention to the problem in Finland



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Joni Valkila
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A brief introduction to UUT

- UUT (Uskontojen uhrien tuki) means “support for victims of religions”.
- UUT provides peer support e.g. to former members of fundamentalist groups and provides information for the media, researchers and the general public regarding these groups.
- UUT started in 1987, was registered in 1993.



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The sources of UUT “clients”

Group	Estimated number of members in Finland
Conservative Lestadians	120,000 (+over 120,000 former members)
Charismatic Christian groups	>50,000
Jehovah's Witnesses	20,000
Mormons	3,500



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Jehovah's Witnesses and shunning

- Shunning = JWs are not allowed to speak with a former member or say “hello” to them.
- UUT has been successful in drawing the attention of the media, researchers and the government (including ministers and a government funding source) to the problem.
- How did we do it?



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The pre-history of former JW's in Finland

- In the 1970's a critical book by Herrick Åberg was published.
- Some criticism in the media in the 1980's.
- The internet changed everything in the late 1990's. Former JW's form a community through on-line discussions.
- Between the late 1990's and 2015 over 40 former JW's have told their story in the media.



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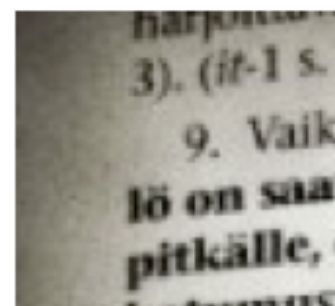
WORLD

CULTURE

The end of the world

Details Parent Category: [Finland](#) Category: Domestic 04 May 2014

Last autumn, Jussi K. began to plan his disassociation from Jehovah's Witnesses. But if he left the apocalyptic movement, he would lose everything: his friends would refuse to meet him, as would probably his parents.



News 3.5.2014 16:58 | updated 3.5.2014 20:54

NGO calls on Ministry to probe closed religious groups; Jehovah's Witnesses under scrutiny

The UUT - the Support group for the Victims of Religions - has asked the Ministry of Justice to study ways in which to intervene in the activities of closed religious communities. The group released a report Saturday on the Jehovah's Witnesses which UUT claims uses its own internal judicial system with a board that interrogates members and hands down sentences for infractions.



Recommend

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Räsänen: people must not be punished for leaving a religious community

Details Parent Category: [Finland](#) Category: Domestic 04 May 2014



Päivi Räsänen (Christian Democrats), the Minister of the Interior, will next week sit down with Minister of Justice Anna-Maja Henriksson (SFP) to discuss the results of a survey conducted by UUT, a support group for the victims of religions, according to which the customs of Jehovah's Witnesses trample on human rights.

"People must not be punished if they choose to disassociate from a religious community," stresses Räsänen.

Räsänen on Saturday expressed her concerns over the realisation of freedom of religion within Jehovah's Witnesses and other religious communities. "Freedom of religion entails not only the right to practice a religion but also the right to disassociate from a religious



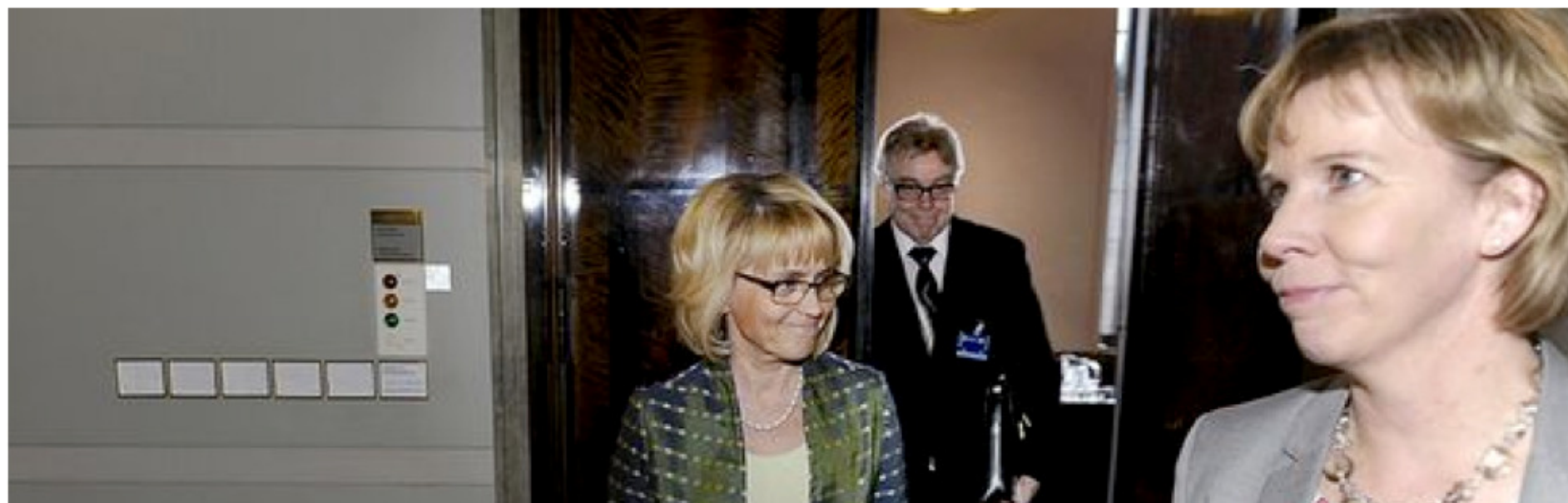
Päivi Räsänen (Christian Democrats), the minister responsible for church affairs, stresses that resignation from a religious community should have no penal consequences.

Jehovah's Witnesses to hand over top secret manual

On Friday Finland's Jehovah's Witnesses will give their religious rule book to the Minister of Justice and the Minister of the Interior so that it can be inspected to ensure that it's in line with Finnish rule of law.



318 people recommend this. Be the first of your friends.



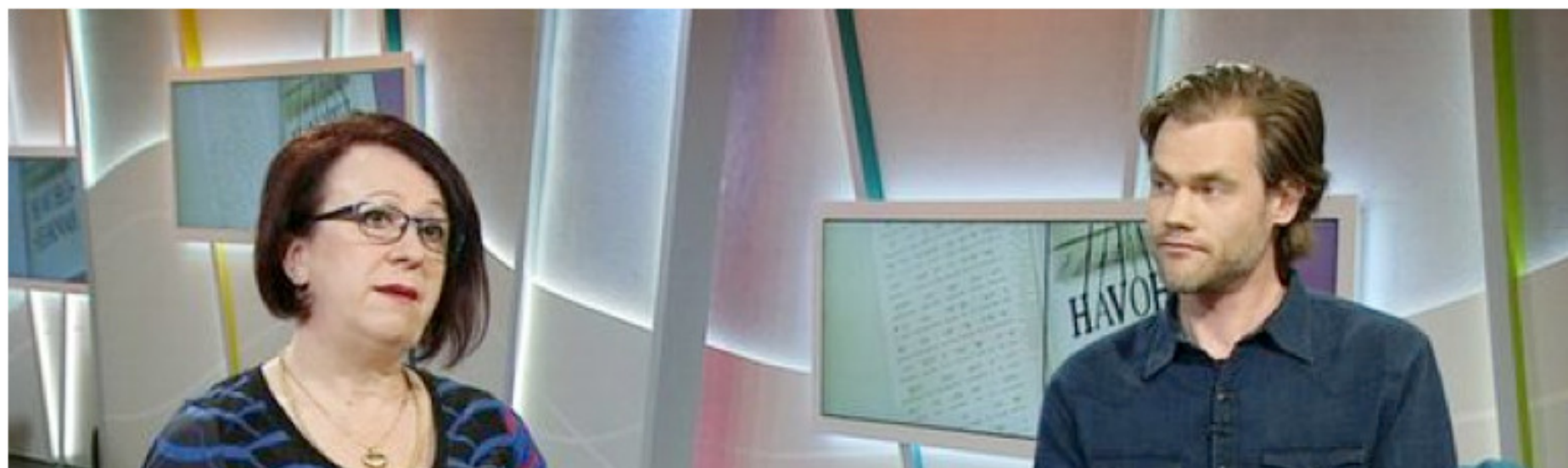
Entinen Jehovan todistaja: Erosin kun oma ja lapseni henki olivat uhattuna

Ylen aamu-tv:ssä vierailleet entiset Jehovan todistajat toivovat, että Suomi olisi edelläkävijä liikkeen jäsenten ihmisoikeuksien puolustajana.



Suosittele

622 henkilöä suosittelee tätä. Ole kavereistasi ensimmäinen.

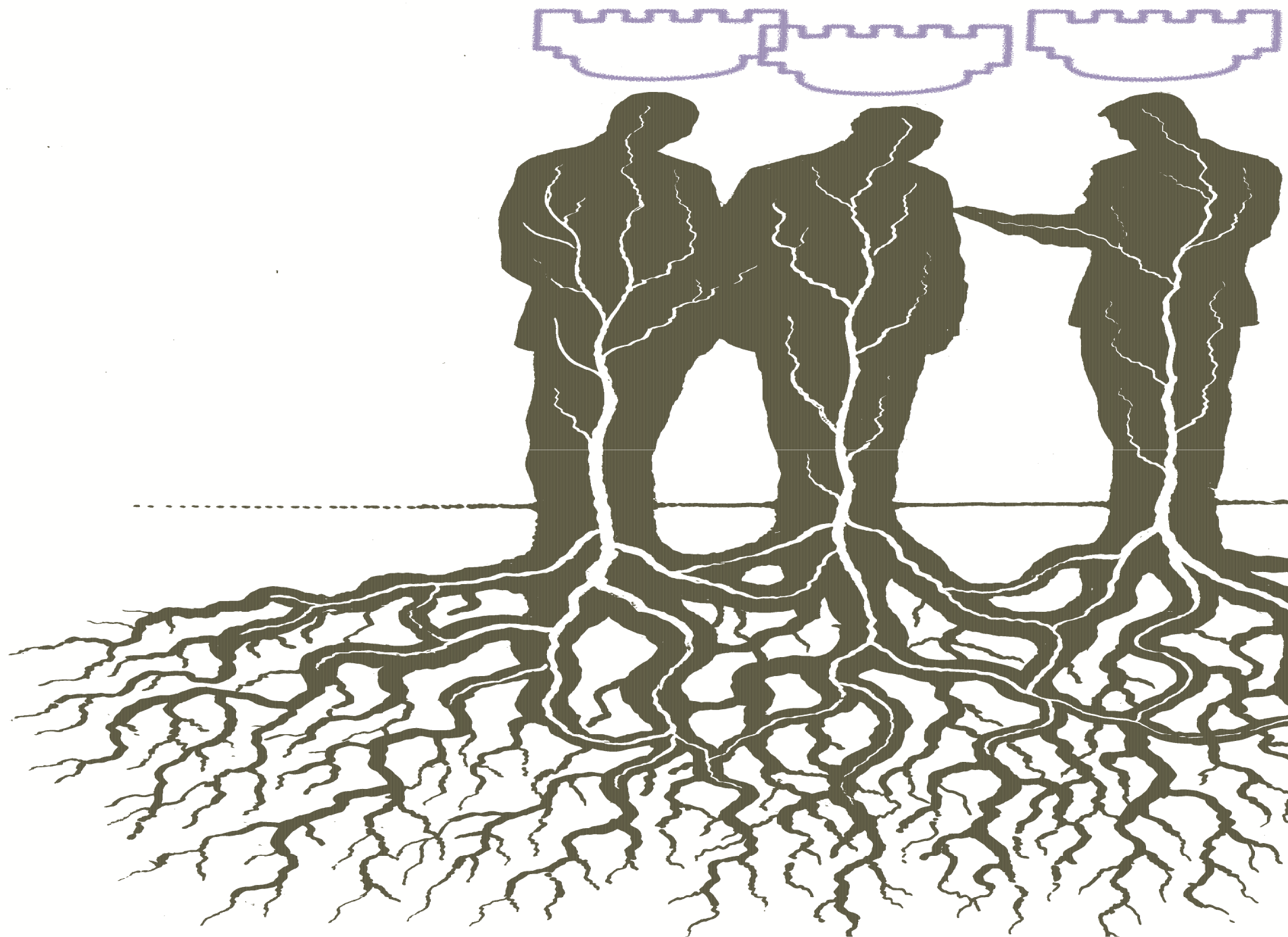


Abuse victim: "Jehovah's Witnesses refused to report rape to the police"

The Jehovah's Witnesses' so-called "judicial committee" is dealing with criminal cases, according to some former members of the Christian religious denomination. The committee has refused to reveal sexual abuse cases to the police. Minister of the Interior Päivi Räsänen of the Christian Democrats is asking for clarification on how police could better serve victims in such cases.

 **Recommend** 109 people recommend this. Be the first of your friends.





The situation now...

- The police is investigating shunning to see if it breaks existing laws.
- UUT continues to have meetings with various officials in Finland to provide assistance - e.g. healthcare - for former JW's. Child ombudsman.
- Research. For example a book will be published this year.
- More attention to Pentecostals, Lestadians, Mormons and other groups.



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