

March 23rd, 2023



Petition from the Sámi Parliamentary Council to Prime Minister Sanna Marin and the Government of Finland to ensure Sámi Self-determination According to Indigenous Rights

Dear Prime Minister Marin,

We, the representatives of the Sámi Parliaments appeal to you and the Government of Finland on the basis of rights guaranteed to us as Indigenous People. We appeal to the states of Finland, Norway and Sweden to ensure that our indigenous rights to self-determination are fully understood and fulfilled on all levels of decision-making: in local municipalities and provinces, on national legislations, and in the legislation and the agenda at the level of the European Union. We also ask for your support for the Sámi People in Russia, whose well-being is currently extremely threatened.

Sámi Peoples' status and rights as Indigenous Peoples have been established and elaborated e.g. in the Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, also approved by the states of Finland, Norway and Sweden. In addition, these states have fully committed to protecting our indigenous rights in their national legislations and international human rights treaties. The states are required to respect our right to self-determination and to acquire free, prior and informed consent on issues that might undermine our fundamental and human rights. Despite these extensive commitments, our rights are being repeatedly violated. These violations often seem to stem from a widespread lack of understanding of what these indigenous rights mean, and therefore not fully comprehending what kind of obligations are already binding the states. This has led e.g. for local officials in Sámi areas or national policymakers deciding on our issues debating or simply overlooking our rights.

Currently, we are facing several recognised violations of our indigenous rights. We know that you are familiar with the recent process to amend the Sámi Act in Finland, which failed despite the UN human rights bodies stating Finland's violations against Sámi Peoples' right to self-determination. Many statements made during the process, for example by the local municipalities or Finnish politicians, made it clear that our rights as Indigenous Peoples, even though written also into the Finnish Constitution, are not understood or seen as necessary to fulfil in Finland. In Norway, the state has severely overlooked Sámi rights when building windmills in the Fosen area and has been unwilling to make reparations even after the violations were ruled by their Supreme Court. In Sweden, the state has, despite severe criticism from human rights bodies, repeatedly greenlighted exploitative mining projects in traditional Sámi areas, e.g. in Vapsten. These recent examples show a worrying lack of understanding and respect from the states towards the indigenous rights they have committed to fulfil.

As we know your commitment to advancing human rights, we ask you, Prime Minister Marin, and the government of Finland: Help us to ensure that the States of Finland, Norway and Sweden fully pledge to both fulfil our existing right to self-determination and promote a clear understanding of these rights on local, national and European levels of decision-making. In addition, we express our deepest worry on behalf of the Sámi People in Russia. We hope that you help us to shed a light on the world stage on their well-being and their vulnerable position, as the Russian war of aggression towards Ukraine continues, so that their plight is not forgotten.

Respectfully,



Håkan Jonsson

President/Chairman of the board
Sami Parliament in Sweden and

President, SPC



Silje-Karine Muotka

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