



Truth Commission for the Sámi People

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for the Truth Commission

**Recommendations of the UN Special Rapporteur to Sweden –
Request from the Truth Commission for the Sámi People in Sweden
for a follow-up dialogue**

The Truth Commission for the Sámi People in Sweden (*Sanningskommissionen för det samiska folket*) welcomes the timely recommendations put forward by the former UN Special Rapporteur for truth, justice, reparation and guarantees of non-recurrence, Mr. Fabián Salvioli, and commends the visit of the Special Rapporteur to Sápmi¹ in Finland and Sweden from 11 to 22 March 2024. The purpose of the visit was to examine the transitional justice measures adopted by Finland and Sweden to address the legacy of human rights violations committed against the Indigenous Sámi people in these countries.

The Truth Commission for the Sámi People have had the honor to meet both the former Special Rapporteur, Mr. Fabián Salvioli, and the current mandate holder, Mr. Bernard Duhaime, and address some relevant concerns in the context of the mandate of the Truth Commission particularly related to the harsh public debate in Swedish media, which has questioned the of the legitimacy and methods for the work of the Commission.

The Truth Commission for the Sámi People in Sweden reiterates our appreciation of the concrete recommendations² of the UN Special

¹ Sápmi is the traditional territory of the Indigenous Sámi People currently politically and territorially divided by the borders of the Nation-States of Sweden, Norway, Finland and Russia. There are multiple Sámi languages and thus multiple words for the traditional territory of the Sámi People. For example, Sápmi is the word used in North Sámi language, Sábme in Lule Sámi, Saepmie in South Sámi, Sábme in Ume Sámi, Säämi in Inari Sámi, and Sää mjánnam in Skolt Sámi language.

² UN Document A/HRC/57/50/Add.3, [20240322-sr-truth-preliminary-observations-sweden.pdf](https://www.unhcr.org/refugees/wp-content/uploads/2024/03/20240322-sr-truth-preliminary-observations-sweden.pdf)

Rapporteur, which are highly relevant for the mandate, work and follow-up of the future recommendations of our commission to Swedish authorities, and especially:

"The Truth Commission began convening conversation meetings to collect testimonies in February 2023. It established an official website to provide access to information and receive testimonies. Given the relevance of the work that is being carried out by the Commission, it is imperative to ensure that it is fitted with the sufficient resources and afforded the necessary support."

The Sámi are indigenous people in Sweden, recognized by the Swedish Constitution and whose rights enjoy protection both collectively and individually under international law. The Truth Commission of the Sámi People in Sweden is established based on a request from the Sámi People and decisions from the representative bodies of the Sámi people in the Nordic Countries, the Sámi Parliaments in Finland, Sweden and Norway. In Sweden, Sámi organizations and the Sámi Parliaments have jointly worked with the discussions on the establishment, mandate and organization of a Truth Commission for the Sámi People.³

The Truth Commission of the Sámi People refers to the input received by the Special Rapporteur from Sámi institutions and organizations and the dialogue between the Truth Commission for the Sámi People and the Special Rapporteur. These inputs together with experiences and testimonies received by the Truth Commission for the Sámi People from Sámi communities, families and persons, confirms the gaps and shortcomings of Sweden's implementation of the fundamental human rights of the Sámi people.

The Truth Commission for the Sámi People shall survey and examine the state policies pursued towards the Sámi from a historical perspective, and their consequences for the Sámi people in the past and at present. The Truth Commission for the Sámi People is established and appointed by the Swedish government in dialogue with the steering committee for the Truth Commission of the Sámi People of the Sámi Parliament, as a follow-up of the Sámi Parliament's petition. The Commission is an independent and autonomous expert body, and its mandate follows from a directive from the Swedish Government. In its petition to the Ministry of Culture, the Sámi

³ Preparations before a Truth Commission on the Violations of the Sámi People by the Swedish State, Report by the Sámi Parliament, 2021, [Preparations before a truth commission on the violations of the Sami People by the Swedish State](#)

Parliament pointed out that the Truth Commission should be a platform and initiate reconciliation processes in the Swedish society at large and in Sámi communities after the Commission's work is completed, provided that the Commission's proposed recommendations are met.

The Truth Commission of the Sámi People have received approximately 270 oral testimonies and additional written testimonies from members of the Indigenous Sámi People. The community dialogues started in Umeå in November 2022 and ended in Lycksele on January 25, 2024. In total, 29 community dialogues were arranged around Sápmi and in the larger cities in Sweden.

The Truth Commission's final report will consist of three volumes; a narrative volume based on the interviews, the written testimonies and input received from Sámi in community meetings, a research volume providing scientific background for the assessments of the Truth Commission and a volume where the consequences for the Sami people of the politics which have been pursued will be accounted for together with recommendations/calls for actions of the Truth Commission. The narrative volume will reflect the perspectives of the Sámi survivors of harsh assimilation policies and will be the central contribution of the Truth Commission. The Commission has decided that this examination shall cover the following four main areas. The areas are:

1. Legislation and issues concerning land, water, etc. (this area also includes exploitation of natural resources).
2. Forced displacement of the Sámi.
3. The reindeer husbandry right (particularly the consequences of the 1928 Reindeer Grazing Act).
4. The 'Lapps should be Lapps' policy, racial biology and dispersal of Sámi cultural heritage (this area also includes language and school policies).

The main areas include additional sub-areas. Other areas may also come under examination – for example, in response to the accounts the Commission receives through interviews and written testimonies.

The mandate period of the Truth Commission ends December 1, 2025. The allocated time and resources are insufficient considering the task of the Commission. **In January 2025 the Commission has now requested an extension of its mandate until October 1, 2026.** An extension is deemed necessary in order to analyze all the collected testimonies given the Sámi and to secure additional dialogue with the Sámi based on the results of the testimonies.

Further, the Truth Commission is highly concerned by the lack of sufficient budget allocated from the Ministry of Culture in Sweden to the work of the Commission. The total allocated budget for 2025 is 9 900 000 SEK (although 14 400 000 SEK was requested). A month into a new fiscal year, the Truth Commission has received a budget that will barely cover the salary of our secretariat while there is not enough funding for covering e.g translations of the conclusions and recommendation of the Truth Commission to Sámi languages, to communicate and have a dialogue about the findings of the Truth Commission to representatives of the Sámi People, and hiring staff to finalize the final analysis of the consequences of the state policies towards to Sámi people. With the current budget, the Truth Commission for the Sámi People in Sweden is unable to properly and effectively fulfil its functions within the decided mandate period.

The Truth Commission stresses the need for continued dialogue between the Special Rapporteur, the Truth Commission for the Sámi People and Swedish authorities and continued support from the Special Rapporteur for the work of the Truth Commission for the Sámi People in Sweden. In particular, entering the final year of the mandate period of the Commission, and experiencing a number of changes in the secretariat and the composition of the Commission, the Truth Commission are concerned with how these challenges affect the possibility for effective implementation our mandate within the term of the Commission. Furthermore, being the first commission of its kind in Sweden for an indigenous people, the work of the Truth Commission aims at following international standards for the rights of indigenous peoples, promoting *inter alia* the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples. The methods of work of the Commission differs thus from ordinary government inquiries as the Commission use consultation and community-dialogue as main ways of dialogue with the Sámi people. The proposals of the Truth Commission can give a framework for promotion of various transitional justice measures

to be adopted by the authorities in Sweden to address the legacy of human rights violations endured by the Sámi indigenous people.

At this juncture, we would like to ask your support for our need to

1. extend the mandate period,
2. receive from the Government the necessary funds to fulfill our mission, and
3. that the position of chairperson for the Commission is filled without delay.

The Truth Commission for the Sámi people thus urges you to continue your dialogue with representatives of the Swedish government to ensure the effective follow-up of the recommendations concerning strengthened support, sufficient resources and consideration of extension of the mandate period of the Commission.

Further, we also strongly support the recommendation of Mr. Salvioli stressing the need for relevant state authorities to ensure implementation of the future recommendations of the Truth Commission as we believe this will be vital to ensure the realization of rights of the indigenous Sámi people, building their trust in state institutions, and achieving reconciliation. The Truth Commission is at your disposal for further dialogue and for sharing the experiences through the work of the Truth Commission for the Sámi People in Sweden and the outcomes of our work.

Stockholm, January 28, 2025

Sincerely,

Expert members of the Truth Commission for the Sámi People

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