

**Submission to the United Nations
Human Rights Committee**
on the List of Issues Prior to
Reporting for the eighth periodic
examination of Sweden under the
International Covenant on Civil
and Political Rights



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The Swedish Institute for Human Rights (hereinafter the Institute) was established on 1 January 2022. Its creation aimed to establish an independent body with a strong position and a broad mandate to promote and protect human rights in Sweden, in accordance with the Paris Principles. The Institute also serves as an independent mechanism with a special mandate to promote, protect and monitor the implementation of the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities. The Institute was accredited with A-status by the Global Alliance of National Human Rights Institutions (GANHRI) in 2024.

The Institute submits this briefing to the United Nations (UN) Human Rights Committee (HRC), in advance of the adoption of the List of Issues Prior to Reporting (LOIPR) for Sweden's 8th periodic report under the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (the Covenant) at HRC's 144th session in June–July 2025.

This submission is not an exhaustive account of the Institute's observations but highlights several of the Institute's key concerns in relation to implementation of the Covenant in Sweden. This report is to a large extent based on the Institute's annual reports which are available in full in Swedish on the Institute's webpage: mrinstitutet.se. The annual reports provide more detailed analyses and references supporting the observations made in this report. Each chapter in this report has a footnote on where to find more information in the Institute's 2024 and 2025 annual reports, including detailed references. Footnotes in this report are thus otherwise only used when the data is not available in the Institute's annual reports 2024 and 2025.

Civil society plays a vital role in the reporting process to UN treaty bodies. In preparing this submission, the Institute has not only received input from the Institute's Advisory Board (which includes 20 representatives from civil society and independent experts), but also from umbrella organisations in the Swedish disability rights movement.

1. Constitutional and legal framework within which the Covenant is implemented and right to an effective remedy (art. 2)¹

Status of the Covenant in the Domestic Legal Order

The Covenant has not been systematically incorporated into the domestic legal order. HRC has advised Sweden to review its domestic legislation with a view to fully aligning it with the Covenant. However, such a review has not taken place.

While courts and authorities in Sweden are, in principle, able to apply the Covenant through treaty-compliant interpretation, it remains rare in practice. Steps should be taken to promote increased awareness among courts and authorities regarding Sweden's international human rights commitments.

Reservations to the Covenant

Sweden maintains its reservations to articles 10.3, 14.7, and 20.1 of the Covenant.²

The Legislative Process

Ensuring broad participation in the legislative process is essential for upholding the rule of law.

The Government has been criticized by civil society organisations for reducing the number of civil society actors included in such consultations. Additionally, in many cases, the Government has shortened both the investigation periods and the timeframe for submitting referral responses to legislative proposals, reducing the opportunity for interested stakeholders to submit comprehensive referral responses. Another concerning trend has emerged wherein government-appointed investigators are tasked with presenting predetermined measures, irrespective of their suitability or effectiveness.

1 For further information and detailed references related to the topic of this chapter, please see the Institute's annual report 2024 (p. 86–87, 165, 171–176) and 2025 (p. 32–34, 36–37, 230–231, 234–241). Footnotes are only included when the data is not available in the Institute's annual reports 2024 and 2025.

2 United Nation Treaty collection. Available on: https://treaties.un.org/pages/ViewDetails.aspx?src=TREATY&mtdsg_no=IV-4&chapter=4&clang=_en#EndDec. Obtained on 16 April 2025. See also: 2016/17:29 Regeringens strategi för det nationella arbetet med mänskliga rättigheter, p. 46.

The simultaneous progression of multiple inquiries particularly in areas such as criminal and migration policy, also makes it difficult to assess the cumulative impact of proposals on human rights.

The absence of clear provisions mandating human rights impact assessments poses a risk that new laws may not align with Sweden's constitutional and international commitments.

Enhancing the Follow-up on Recommendations

A comprehensive strategic approach to human rights requires a systematic and transparent process for addressing recommendations received from, for example, the treaty bodies. The Government's follow-up on such recommendations should involve collaboration with national authorities, regional and municipal bodies, civil society, and independent actors such as the Institute. Currently, such collaboration is lacking, making it difficult to monitor ongoing efforts. In addition, the Government does not have a system where external actors can see all recommendations Sweden has received and how they have been followed-up and implemented.

Right to Effective Remedy

A report from the Swedish organisation Centrum för Rättvisa highlights that individuals lose over 90 percent of cases when appealing authorities' decisions in court. This is attributed not only to correct decisions by authorities but also to structural deficiencies in the legal system and administrative processes. Additionally, there is no legal right to compensation for legal costs in administrative cases, even when the court rules in favor of the individual, making it challenging for individuals to seek justice against state errors.

A parliamentary committee tasked with reviewing constitutional matters recently proposed a constitutional provision guaranteeing everyone the right to have their case examined by a court or other independent judicial body.

A Swedish National Human Rights Institution has been Established

The Swedish Parliament approved a proposal on establishing a national human rights institution in Sweden in June 2021. The institution was formally established later that year and began its operations on 1 January 2022.

The Swedish Institute for Human Rights was established in accordance with the Paris Principles and was accredited with A-status by the Global Alliance of National Human Rights Institutions (GANHRI) Sub-Committee on Accreditation (SCA) in October 2024.

The Institute has urged the Government to take further steps to strengthen its independence in accordance with SCA recommendations, particularly regarding board appointments. In addition, the Institute has requested an increased budget from the government in line with the preparatory work to the enabling law.

In the spring of 2024, the government initiated the nomination process for two new board members. In accordance with legal requirements, the Bar Association, universities, and the Institute's council were invited to nominate candidates for the board. In December, the government appointed two new board members, both of whom have experience in qualified human rights work. However, the government did not clarify in its decision the procedures for the appointments or the criteria by which the nominees were screened and selected. Furthermore, one of the appointed members had not been nominated within the framework of the announced process. This means that the appointment process for the board members did not align with the Paris Principles and the intentions of the law, underscoring the need to clarify the regulatory framework to ensure the Institute's independence and to guarantee an open, inclusive, merit-based, and transparent process.

In-country Human Rights Defenders

Sweden's in-country human rights defenders (HRDs) face increasing challenges due to polarization, securitization, and shrinking civic space. The HRDs include civil society members, human rights specialists in government agencies, regions, and municipalities, whistleblowers, journalists, trade unionists, lawyers etc. Reports highlight insults, workplace reprisals, and political disregard for HRDs' contributions to legislation and public dialogue.³ Recent UN communications cite serious rights violations against environmental defenders.⁴

3 See for example: 1) Tyst stat – En rapport om den hotade öppenheten i statlig förvaltning, Fackförbundet ST, 2001 available at: https://editorial.st.org/sites/default/files/2022-06/tyst_stat_en_rapport_om_den_hotade_oppnheten_i_statlig_forvaltning.pdf. Obtained on 10 april 2025. 2) The Liberties Rule of Law Report 2024, p 591. available at: <https://www.liberties.eu/f/oj7hht>. Obtained on 10 April 2025. 3) "Regeringen bäddar för växande misstro", Svenska Dagbladet, 24 January 2025. Available at: <https://www.svd.se/a/dRzj6z/regeringen-skapar-misstro-mot-myndigheter-skriver-britta-lejon>. Obtained on 10 April 2025.

4 Communication from Michel Forst UN Special Rapporteur on environmental defenders under the Aarhus Convention. 1) Ref: ACSR/C/2024/62 (Sweden), 6 December 2024. Available at: https://unece.org/sites/default/files/2025-01/ACSR_C_2024_62_Sweden_Letter_of_Allegation_06.12.2024_redacted.pdf. Obtained on 10 April 2025. 2) Ref: ACSR/C/2024/39 (Sweden), 16 August 2024. Available at: https://unece.org/sites/default/files/2025-02/ACSR_C_2024_Sweden_to_HE_MFA_from_Aarhus_SR_EnvDefenders_complaint_16.08.2024_redacted.pdf. Obtained on 10 April 2025.

National Human Rights Strategy and Action Plan

Nearly a decade has passed since the Government's national human rights strategy was adopted in 2016. Given societal and global changes since its adoption, it is necessary to evaluate and comprehensively review the 2016 strategy. Such an evaluation should serve as the foundation for developing a new strategy through broad and meaningful consultations with civil society and the public. The strategy should be submitted to the Parliament and complemented with a concrete action plan.

Proposed questions

- How does Sweden ensure that all rights protected under the Covenant are given full effect in domestic law and in decisions by authorities and courts?
- How many public judgements from Swedish courts over the last decade contains an explicit reference to the Covenant?
- What results can the Government show in relation to improved access to justice?
- What is the cumulative impact on human rights of the multiple legal proposals in the criminal and migration areas?
- How does Sweden ensure, and publicly show, that recommendations received from international treaty bodies in general, and from HRC in particular, are addressed?
- How will the Government act on the recommendations of the SCA⁵, including the recommendations on the board appointments and the budget?
- What measures is the Government taking to protect Sweden's in-country HRDs, including taking into account the 1998 UN Declaration on Human Rights Defenders, ensuring HRDs' views are considered, supporting their activities, and safeguarding them from reprisals and defamation?
- Will Sweden develop a human rights strategy and a national human rights action plan?

⁵ Report and Recommendations of the Session of the Sub-Committee on Accreditation (SCA) October 2024. Available at https://ganhri.org/wp-content/uploads/2025/01/SCA-Report-2nd-Session-2024-dec_EN.pdf. Obtained on 3 April 2025.

2. Non-discrimination in general (arts. 2 and 26)⁶

The right not to be discriminated against is protected in the Constitution and in the Discrimination Act. However, and also highlighted in the HRC recommendations to Sweden in 2016, the Discrimination Act does not cover all the grounds as in the Covenant. Language is one example of a ground not covered.

Additionally, not all actions of all authorities are included. If government agencies such as the police, the prison service, prosecutors and the courts, act discriminatory when they exercise public authority, this is not covered in the Discrimination Act. Consequently, the Equality Ombudsman cannot exercise jurisdiction over all cases of discrimination by these agencies.⁷

The Swedish Council for Crime Prevention issued a report in 2023 looking into the police's work in connection with profiling and equal treatment, specifically focusing on discriminatory and ethnic profiling. The focus was on drug related crimes. One of the findings was that the accuracy of the suspicion, and the control that followed, was the lowest for suspects who had mothers from Africa or Southwest Asia compared to persons having mothers from a Nordic country. Another finding showed that there is no strategy or guidance for profiling or what is expected of police officers in a check situation. Their assessment is based on what they have learned during their police training, applicable law, and their own assessments and those of their colleagues in various situations. There is therefore a risk of conscious or unconscious stereotypes about people that may influence who they initially take an interest in.⁸

The Swedish Council for Crime Prevention expresses the complex nature of the differences that may arise in police work, but they state that it cannot be ruled out that the differences are also due to discriminatory ethnic profiling.⁹

In 2021 a government inquiry presented proposals to expand the scope of the Discrimination Act. One of the proposals includes the inclusion of actions of more authorities, such as law enforcement.¹⁰ As of March 2025, no revisions of the Discrimination Act have been proposed even though the Government in mid-2024 announced its intention to prepare a revised law.

6 For further information and detailed references related to the topic of this chapter, please see the Institute's annual report 2024 (p. 49–50) and 2025 (p. 64, 157). Footnotes are only included when the data is not available in the Institute's annual reports 2024 and 2025.

7 Diskrimineringsombudsmannen, Förekomst av diskriminering 2024 – Årlig rapport från Diskrimineringsombudsmannen, 2024:2.

8 Brottsförebyggande rådet, Polisens arbete med profilering och likabehandling – med fokus på diskriminerande etnisk profilering, 2023:12.

9 Brottsförebyggande rådet, Polisens arbete med profilering och likabehandling – med fokus på diskriminerande etnisk profilering, 2023:12; Civil rights defenders i samarbete med Kriminologiska institutionen, Stockholms universitet, Slumpvis utvald – Ras/etnisk profilering i Sverige, december 2017.

10 SOU 2021:94

Accurate and comparable data are essential for assessing and analyzing individuals' access to human rights. It is also necessary for understanding the extent of the discrimination faced by certain groups. Sweden is failing to collect equality data, making it difficult to design and evaluate measures to combat racism and discrimination. During a discussion in Parliament in 2023, the Government stated that it does not intend to take measures to develop methods for collecting equality data arguing that it is contrary to the principle of equal treatment.

Proposed questions

- How can Sweden ensure that discriminatory ethnic profiling is not practiced within the agencies in law enforcement?
- What actions have Sweden taken to ensure the collection of data that can facilitate the understanding of how different groups are affected by discrimination?
- What actions have Sweden taken to include all grounds of the Covenant in the Swedish Discrimination Act?

3. Right to life, prohibition of torture and of other cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment and protection of the security of persons (arts. 3, 6, 7, 9, 24)¹¹

Gang-related violence

Gang-related deadly violence remains a pressing challenge in Sweden, with significant impacts not only on individuals directly involved in the gangs but also on families, communities, and the broader public. The increasing sense of insecurity restricts the daily lives of many, with some at risk of becoming direct victims of the deadly violence.

¹¹ For further information and detailed references related to the topic of this chapter, please see the Institute's annual report 2024 (p. 109–112 and 115–116) and 2025 (p. 17, 53–56, 119–121). Footnotes are only included when the data is not available in the Institute's annual reports 2024 and 2025.

The number of confirmed cases of fatal violence involving firearms has increased dramatically over the past 10–15 years. In 2013, 25 people were killed by firearms; by 2022, this figure had risen to 63—an increase of over 150 percent. Since then, the number of annual killings has declined, with 44 recorded in 2024. At the same time, the number of explosions has escalated with an average of more than one explosion every third day in 2024.¹²

It is essential that the government adopts effective measures to reduce the violence. However, such measures must be fully aligned with Sweden’s human rights obligations as enshrined in its Constitution and the international treaties it has ratified. While proposals from the government often emphasize stricter penalties and enhanced law enforcement powers, it is critical to ensure proportionality and adherence to human rights. While steps have been taken to combat the violence, concerns persist regarding the broader human rights implications of these measures, particularly the cumulative impact of them.

A comprehensive approach to stop deadly violence is vital. Focus cannot only be on repressive measures but must also focus on preventive measures. Efforts to prevent the recruitment of children into criminal gangs must be prioritized. Addressing structural inequalities and ensuring access to economic, social, and cultural rights can help reduce social exclusion and polarization, mitigating the risk of individuals being drawn into criminal networks.

Gender-Based Violence

Sweden has an obligation to combat gender-based violence (GBV), including domestic and sexual violence. The Swedish Government allocated over 600 million SEK in 2024 to support efforts to combat GBV. A national action plan for 2024–2026 on GBV has been launched.

Despite these initiatives, challenges remain. Gaps persist in municipal support services for survivors, inconsistencies exist in the implementation of protective measures, and efforts to address honor-based violence and human trafficking require strengthening.

Between 2018 and 2021, 23 percent of homicide victims in Sweden were women or girls, with 60 percent of the cases classified as intimate partner violence. Most of these incidents occurred in private homes, often perpetrated by current or former partners. Certain groups, including women with disabilities, older women, young women, migrant women, and women affected by substance abuse, face heightened risks of violence.

12 Sprängningar och skjutningar – polisens arbete. Available at: <https://polisen.se/om-polisen/polisens-arbete/sprangningar-och-skjutningar/>. Obtained on 6 March 2025.

In its 2024 review of Sweden's implementation of the Convention on Preventing and Combating Violence Against Women and Domestic Violence (the Istanbul Convention), the Group of Experts on Action against Violence against Women and Domestic Violence (GREVIO) recognized Sweden's progress, including the adoption of consent-based sexual offense laws, the criminalization of violations against the integrity of children and stricter regulations on child marriage. However, gaps persist in ensuring justice due to weaknesses in investigations and prosecutions. GREVIO has emphasized the need for gender-sensitive policy implementation, increased funding for women's shelters, stronger support for vulnerable groups, improved intersectoral coordination, enhanced training for professionals, and more comprehensive data collection to strengthen protection and access to justice.

Proposed questions

- What evidence can be shown that stricter penalties and increased law enforcement powers are effective and necessary in reducing deadly gun-violence and explosions?
- What actions have been taken, and what future plans are in place, to prevent young people from being drawn into criminal networks?
- What actions has Sweden taken, and what future steps are planned, to combat violence against women?
- Will Sweden increase funding for women's shelters? If not, please explain why.
- What actions has Sweden taken, and what future steps are planned, to improve investigations and prosecutions in domestic violence cases?

4. Treatment of persons deprived of their liberty, protection of the security of persons and prohibition of torture and of other cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment (arts. 2, 7, 9, 10 and 14)¹³

Sweden is experiencing significant challenges related to overcrowding in prisons and detention centres. In 2023, the average occupancy rate reached 113 percent in detention facilities and 120 percent in prisons.¹⁴ This situation poses serious risks, including heightened tensions and violence, restricted access to healthcare and rehabilitation programmes, and reduced opportunities for detainees to maintain contact with the outside world.

The primary cause of overcrowding is not an increase in crime but rather extended pre-trial detention periods and longer prison sentences. The demand for detention and prison places is projected to rise further due to legislative changes aligned with the Government's coalition agreements (Tidö-avtalet). The Swedish Prison and Probation Service anticipates an expansion to 27,000 detention and prison places by 2033, compared to approximately 9,000 in 2023.

To manage the situation in pre-trial detention centres, the Swedish Prison and Probation Service has adopted measures such as placing two individuals in single-occupancy cells and utilizing alternative spaces, including visiting rooms and sobering-up cells, for housing detainees. This has decreased the standard of living conditions, often limiting access to communal spaces and exercise facilities and increased the risk of isolation. The Parliamentary Ombudsman concludes that the conditions risk subjecting detainees in pre-trial detention centres to inhuman or degrading treatment and states that the Swedish Prison and Probation Service urgently needs to review what measures are necessary to eliminate the risks associated with cell-sharing.¹⁵

Similar practices have been implemented in prisons, where inmates are sometimes housed in spaces that do not meet international size and privacy standards. In addition, threats and violence in prisons are increasing, both among inmates and against staff.

13 For further information and detailed references related to the topic of this chapter, please see the Institute's annual report 2024 (p. 109–112 and 115–116) and 2025 (p. 51–53). Footnotes are only included when the data is not available in the Institute's annual reports 2024 and 2025.

14 Kriminalvården – KOS 2023, Kriminalvård och statistik. Available at https://www.kriminalvarden.se/globalassets/forskning_statistik/kos-2023---kriminalvard-och-statistik.pdf. Obtained on 7 March 2025.

15 Riksdagens ombudsmän, pressmeddelande 4 February 2025. Available at: <https://press.newsmachine.com/pressrelease/view/jo-konstaterar-i-ny-rapport-dubbelbelaggnig-i-hakten-far-konsekvenser-for-de-intagna-54475>. Obtained on: 3 April 2025.

Trade unions have warned that the situation is reaching a critical point, with staff struggling to maintain control and inmates exerting greater influence over detention units.¹⁶ The situation has also affected the availability and effectiveness of rehabilitation programmes undermining efforts to facilitate reintegration into society.

Staff shortages, exacerbated by overcrowding, have led the Swedish Prison and Probation Service to extend the maximum duration detainees are confined to their cells at night. The Swedish Parliamentary Ombudsman has criticized this practice, emphasizing that staffing constraints cannot justify prolonged solitary confinement and that authorities must ensure conditions remain safe, humane, and effective.¹⁷

Individuals sentenced to prison have been held in detention centres for long periods due to shortages of available places in prison. At occasions up to almost one year.

In line with a recommendation from HRC, Sweden has introduced a statutory time limit for pretrial detention, limiting the duration at nine months for adults before charges must be filed. Exceptions require extraordinary circumstances.¹⁸

As part of efforts to alleviate shortages of places, the Swedish government is considering agreements with other countries to allow prisoners to serve sentences abroad. This approach raises concerns about risks for human rights violations and for example the ability to maintain effective oversight and accountability.

The increasing reliance on incarceration and the resulting overcrowding are of significant concern. Greater emphasis should be placed on alternative measures to detention, in line with international recommendations.

Sweden has yet to incorporate a definition of torture in its Criminal Code in accordance with Article 7 of the Covenant.

Proposed questions

→ What efforts are taken to ensure that international standards are adhered to in pre-trial detention centres and prisons? What results have been obtained by applying such efforts?

¹⁶ Swedish Public Service Television, SVT, 4 February 2024. Available at: <https://www.svt.se/nyheter/inrikes/valdet-okar-i-svenska-fangelser-vi-tappar-kontrollen>. Obtained on 7 March 2025.

¹⁷ The Swedish Parliamentary Ombudsman performs the special mandate as a national preventive mechanism (NPM) pursuant to the UN Optional Protocol to the Convention against Torture (OPCAT).

¹⁸ Chapter 24, Section 4a of the Swedish Code of Judicial Procedure (RB).

→ Is the Swedish strategy to reduce the overcrowding in Swedish prisons and detention centres only to build new prisons and/or rent prisons spaces abroad? What is Sweden's view of dealing with the overcrowding by increasing the use of alternatives to prisons in line with international recommendations?

5. Freedom of religion or belief, freedom of expression, right to peaceful assembly and prohibition of advocacy of national, racial or religious hatred (arts. 2, 18, 19, 20, 21, and 26)¹⁹

Freedom of religion or belief, freedom of expression and right to peaceful assembly are protected in the Swedish Constitution. Apart from the freedom of religion and belief, restrictions on these rights are possible, under similar conditions as in the Covenant. Under the Criminal Code, agitation against an ethnic or national group is prohibited. Hate crimes can also include other types of crimes such as abuse, defamation or inflicting gross damage, if the motive of the crime is to insult someone based on for example his or her sexual orientation, race, or religious group. Disability is not a ground for hate crimes in Swedish law.

In the past years, the debate around the limits of freedom of expression has intensified, particularly in relation to the burnings of the Quran. In 2023 and 2024, there were several cases where persons were found guilty of agitation against an ethnic or national group. Key factors in these cases were that not only the Quran was burned, but also that other Muslim-hostile actions were expressed, such as wrapping the Quran in bacon, and/or expressing strongly derogatory words about Muslims.

In 2024, an inquiry proposed limiting the freedom of assembly by allowing police to deny permits for public gatherings based on national security under the Public Order Act. Critics argued this could violate freedom of expression, lead to arbitrary decisions, and result in unjustified restrictions on public gatherings.

¹⁹ For further information and detailed references related to the topic of this chapter, please see the Institute's annual report 2024 (pages 90–92, 98–101) and 2025 (pages 61–64, 112–113). Footnotes are only included when the data is not available in the Institute's annual reports 2024 and 2025.

Online and offline hate speech continues to face major challenges for several groups such as civil society organisations, religious groups, academics, journalists as well as public and elected officials. Particularly those organisations involved in promoting feminism, the climate and those organisations working with and for Muslims, experience negative labelling and stigmatization which affect their work.

The Special Rapporteur on freedom of religion or belief highlighted the concern for hate speech and harassment faced by many organisations, which among others leads to self-censorship and fear of being stigmatized.

Judgements of civil disobedience

Freedom of assembly have been in the spotlight in the past years, for example in relation to environmental defenders protesting the lack of action from the Government to tackle climate change and environmental problems. In 2023, politicians and government representatives referred to climate activists practicing peaceful civil disobedience as criminals, security risks, and saboteurs, calling for tougher penalties and compulsory detention. The Council of Europe and the UN Special Rapporteur on Environmental Defenders under the Aarhus Convention expressed concern over the increasing negative rhetoric towards the activists. Court rulings on climate-related protests have been pronounced in recent years where people who participated in climate-related protests, mainly on highways and traffic routes in rush hour traffic, have been charged primarily with crimes such as sabotage and disobeying police order. Jurisprudence is inconsistent and has led to both acquittal and conviction.²⁰

If charges and penalties for protests that use peaceful civil disobedience become disproportionate, it may hinder the environmental defenders' ability to convey their message and undermine their right to demonstrate. Several lawyers have emphasized that provisions on sabotage should be applied in the light of the Constitution and relevant international conventions and should therefore be applied restrictively.

Proposed questions

- What results can Sweden report that has contributed to combating hate speech, racist and xenophobic violence and negative stereotyping against ethnic or religious minorities?
- What actions has Sweden taken to mitigate online hate speech and encourage a respectful online discussion and debate?

²⁰ A fundamental principle of civil disobedience is that the person who has committed an unlawful act bears legal responsibility for that act. However, international human rights conventions provide a certain level of protection to ensure that the severity of the penalty is not disproportionate to the unlawful act.

→ What measures have Sweden taken to ensure that charges for peaceful civil disobedience is not disproportionate?

6. Fair Trial (arts. 2, 14 and 26)²¹

The independence and impartiality of the judiciary are fundamental components of the rule of law and essential to ensuring a fair and effective judicial system. Sweden's legal framework includes safeguards to uphold these principles and there are proposals to further reinforce these safeguards through constitutional amendments. However, there are still areas of concern.

The lay judge system

One area of concern relates to the Swedish lay judge system, in which lay judges are nominated by political parties. Lay judges hold the same voting rights as professional judges and are therefore positioned to influence judicial outcomes. In recent years, several incidents have taken place that have raised questions regarding the political affiliations and impartiality of lay judges. A review from a major Swedish newspaper in 2025 reveals that clear political patterns emerge in how lay judges approach sentencing, where a non-Nordic name can either be beneficial or result in a significantly harsher punishment.²² This is not only highly problematic for the individual cases, but it presents a risk to public confidence in the judiciary, as it raises concerns about political influence or the perception that judicial decisions may not be entirely impartial.

To ensure both the actual and perceived impartiality of lay judges, the Institute has repeatedly recommended that the Government appoint a special investigator to examine alternative recruitment mechanisms for lay judges that exclude political party involvement. However, so far without success. Also the European Commission has in their annual Rule of Law report for a number of years recommended Sweden to ensure that the nomination system of lay judges safeguards their independence, taking into account European standards on judicial independence.²³

21 For further information and detailed references related to the topic of this chapter, please see the Institute's annual report 2024 (p. 87–88, 105–106, 170–171) and 2025 (p. 40–43). Footnotes are only included when the data is not available in the Institute's annual reports 2024 and 2025.

22 Göteborgs Posten, Partipolitiska mönster i svenska domstolar. Available at: <https://www.gp.se/krim/partipolitiska-monster-i-svenska-domstolar-ac6eb7d0-75c9-4895-9db2-f628ed472eb5>. Obtained on 12 March 2024.

23 European Commission, 2024 Rule of Law Report Country Chapter on the rule of law situation in Sweden, SWD(2024) 827 final.

Anonymous witnesses

The Swedish Parliament has enacted legislation allowing courts to hear testimony from anonymous witnesses. The stated objective of this law is to enhance witness protection, break the culture of silence surrounding criminal gangs, and improve the investigation and prosecution of crimes.

The issue of anonymous witnesses raises numerous fair trial rights concerns, for example the accused's right to examine witnesses testifying against them and that all parties in a case must have full access to the information upon which the court's decision is based.

To ensure that fair trial standards are upheld, testimony from anonymous witnesses should be assigned limited evidentiary weight and should have minimal influence on judicial decisions. Accordingly, anonymous witnesses will most likely only be used in Swedish courts to a very limited extent, if at all, and the introduction of the law can be questioned. The law could ultimately undermine public confidence in the judicial system.

Long processing times

The Parliamentary Ombudsman states in its annual report that many courts struggle with long processing times and difficult working conditions. It is not only highly unfortunate for the parties when cases are not resolved within a reasonable time, it also risk undermining public confidence in the judiciary.²⁴

Proposed questions

- What steps is Sweden taking to ensure both the actual and perceived impartiality of lay judges, including the development of a new recruitment process for lay judges that does not include political party involvement?
- Provide statistics on the use of anonymous witnesses in Swedish courts, including the number of requests for anonymity by witnesses and prosecutors, the frequency of court approvals, the evidentiary weight given to anonymous testimony by judges, and whether the law has effectively broken the culture of silence around criminal gangs and improved crime investigation and prosecution?

²⁴ Justitieombudsmännens ämbetsberättelse 2024, Redogörelse 2024/25:JO1, p. 14.

7. Right to privacy and freedom of movement (arts. 12 and 17)²⁵

Several proposals and legislative amendments have been presented posing restrictions on the freedom of movement and the right to privacy.

One example is a new law on preventive exclusion orders where a person that is not even suspected of a crime may be prohibited from entering a designated area that is not geographically limited in the law, for up to six months. The person subject to the prohibition does not, generally, have the right to a public legal representative to safeguard her/his rights.

Concerns have been raised in relation to the ‘stop and search’ zones established by the police for lack of sufficient legal safeguards and disproportionate restrictions on privacy rights. There are also risks of actual and perceived discrimination, as the police powers can be used arbitrarily, and individuals can be stopped and searched without suspicion and only based on for example how they are dressed or how they behave.

Covert coercive measures have been introduced. In relation to these the Swedish Legislative Council has pointed out that the number of suggested revisions has led to very complicated overall legislative framework. This has in turn made it difficult to assess the overall consequences for personal integrity.

In 2024, legislative amendments were proposed aiming at expanding the use of surveillance cameras by law enforcement, for example the use of facial recognition. Additionally, a revised law was passed allowing public authorities and municipalities to set up surveillance cameras without the prior consent of the Swedish Authority for Protection of Privacy.

In 2024, the Government presented a proposed bill for a new law aiming at increasing information sharing to law enforcement authorities. According to the proposal, state agencies, municipalities, regions and schools are obliged to provide such information. This applies to information that law enforcement authorities need in their work to prevent, deter or detect criminal activity and to investigate or prosecute crimes.

Another government inquiry was presented in 2025 with the remit to draft a regulatory framework that involves an expanded exchange of information regarding irregular migrants (see further in chapter 11).

²⁵ For further information and detailed references related to the topic of this chapter, please see the Institute’s annual report 2024 (p. 112–115) and 2025 (p. 44–49). Footnotes are only included when the data is not available in the Institute’s annual reports 2024 and 2025.

In 2021, the European Court of Human Rights ruled that Sweden's Signals Intelligence Act violated the right to privacy under Article 8 of the European Convention on Human Rights. In response, Sweden revised the law in 2024 inter alia by establishing a new decision-making body under the Foreign Intelligence Inspectorate to handle individual requests regarding collected data. The revisions also introduce requirements to consider personal integrity when sharing intelligence with foreign partners.

In its concluding observations from 2016, the HRC recommended Sweden to increase the transparency of the powers of and safeguards of certain intelligence related bodies. The recommendation focused on regulations around intelligence sharing of personal data and the necessity of independent and effective oversight mechanisms as well as the access to effective remedies in cases of abuse. Parts of these recommendations have been met through the revised law, but there are still challenges for example in relation to the lack of clarification on how the proportionality assessment should be made when information is shared with a foreign actor.

Proposed questions

- How will Sweden ensure that the accumulated effects of measures taken will not negatively impact the right to privacy and freedom of movement?
- What evidence does the Government have demonstrating that measures such as the law on preventive exclusion orders, stop-and-search zones and camera surveillance are effective in reducing crime and do not unduly restrict individuals' human rights?
- What steps are Sweden taking to counter the chilling effects of for example increased camera surveillance and preventive exclusion orders on other rights such as freedom of assembly and freedom of expression?

8. Freedom of association (art. 22)²⁶

Prohibition of participation in terrorist organisations

In January 2023, a constitutional amendment came into effect allowing restrictions on freedom of association for groups involved in or supporting terrorism. Building on the constitutional amendment, a new law was proposed and later also adopted, making it prohibited to participate in activities aimed at promoting or supporting terrorist organisations.

The proposed new law faced significant criticism during its legislative process, with organisations questioning its human rights compliance. The Swedish Council on Legislation criticized the law for lacking clarity, and the EU Commission expressed concerns about its impact on civil society and its compatibility with human rights. Four UN Special Rapporteurs warned of serious human rights issues, particularly the vague definition of participation in a terrorist organisation, which could lead to arbitrary application and violate freedoms of expression, assembly, association, and privacy.²⁷ The Swedish Government responded by asserting that the proposed bill complies with human rights, claiming that it clearly defines participation in terrorist organisations and ensures legal certainty. They emphasized its compatibility with constitutional rights and the European Convention on Human Rights.²⁸

In February 2025, the first ruling under the law was delivered by a district court. A man was convicted of aggravated financing of terrorism, aggravated participation in a terrorist organisation and three counts of traveling for terrorism in relation to his work for IS.²⁹

Further limitations of the freedom of association

In 2023, a parliamentary committee mandated to examine specific issues related to the protection of fundamental rights and freedoms in the Constitution, was established. Among its key tasks was to assess whether expanded restrictions on freedom of

²⁶ For further information and detailed references related to the topic of this chapter, please see the Institute's annual report 2024 (pages 118–120). Footnotes are only included when the data is not available in the Institute's annual reports 2024.

²⁷ Mandates of the Special Rapporteur on the promotion and protection of human rights and fundamental freedoms while countering terrorism; the Special Rapporteur on the promotion and protection of the right to freedom of opinion and expression; the Special Rapporteur on the rights to freedom of peaceful assembly and of association and the Special Rapporteur on the right to privacy, OL SWE 2/2023, 24 July 2023.

²⁸ Swedish Ministry for Foreign Affairs, Director General for Legal Affairs, UD 2023/10611, 26 July 2023.

²⁹ Attunda district court, 14 February 2025, case number B 6548-24.

association should be introduced in relation to criminal organisations.³⁰ The suggested revisions therefore further expand the limitations on freedom of association that was passed in relation to prohibiting participation in a terrorist organisation.

In January 2025, the Committee presented its findings, among others, recommending that freedom of association be subject to restrictions for entities engaged in serious criminal activities aimed at securing financial or other undue advantages. On basis of the suggested amendments to the Constitution, the Government has commissioned an inquiry whereby a special investigator shall consider and make proposals for criminal responsibility for participation in criminal assemblies/associations.³¹

Proposed questions

- How will Sweden ensure that the phrasing of the limitations in the freedom of association will not lead to arbitrary decisions and abuse?
- How will Sweden ensure that the phrasing of “serious criminal activities” complies with principles of legality and avoids arbitrary enforcement?

9. Juvenile Justice (arts. 7, 9, 10, 14, 17, 24)³²

Crime Prevention Measures

The involvement of children in serious organized crime has significantly increased. Between 2023 and 2024, suspected cases of children under 15 conspiring to commit murder tripled, while prosecutions of 15–17-year-olds rose by 250 percent from 2022 to 2023.³³ The number of children in pre-trial detention reached an all-time high in 2024, with around 100 children in custody on an average day.³⁴

³⁰ Några frågor om grundläggande fri- och rättigheter (SOU 2025:2).

³¹ Dir. 2025:28.

³² For further information and detailed references related to the topic of this chapter, please see the Institute’s annual report 2024 (p. 128–130) and 2025 (p. 53–60). Footnotes are only included when the data is not available in the Institute’s annual reports 2024 and 2025.

³³ Swedish Public Television (SVT) webpage. Available at: <https://www.svt.se/nyheter/lokalt/helsingborg/over-200-barn-i-sverige-misstankta-i-mordutredningar>. Obtained on 10 March 2025.

³⁴ Swedish Public Television (SVT) webpage. Available at: <https://www.svt.se/nyheter/inrikes/pyssel-och-bullar-for-barnen-i-hakte>. Obtained on 11 March 2025.

Efforts to prevent crime among children have seen some positive developments. A new national strategy has been introduced, supplemented by additional tools in the 2025 budget aimed at strengthening prevention measures. The revised Social Services Act prioritizes early intervention and accessibility. At the same time, criticism has been expressed regarding the insufficient allocation of resources to the social services for the implementation of the new Social Services Act.

The Swedish National Council for Crime Prevention (Brå) has identified a need for stronger coordination between local and national authorities to reduce recidivism among young offenders. The Swedish National Audit Office has found that state interventions have been ineffective in addressing serious youth crime, calling for enhanced national oversight to ensure equitable access to social services and legal measures across municipalities.

A proposal has been presented to establish juvenile crime boards aiming to identify children at risk of engaging in serious offenses. While early intervention is important, the proposal raises concerns regarding legal certainty. The broad and vaguely defined criteria for identifying at-risk children, combined with a screening method open to subjective interpretation, pose risks of arbitrary decision-making and discrimination.

Children deprived of their liberty

The number of children sentenced to secure youth care increased sharply in 2024, resulting in capacity shortages within the National Board of Institutional Care (Statens institutionsstyrelse, or SiS).

Ensuring that children deprived of their liberty at SiS are placed in a safe and secure environment is of paramount importance. However, repeated reviews have long highlighted shortcomings in SiS concerning the use of coercive measures. For example, inspections have revealed that children are sometimes isolated beyond the legally permitted duration and subjected to physical restraint measures.

Additionally, very young children have been placed in youth homes. The Parliamentary Ombudsman documented a case in which a nine-year-old was housed in a unit for 13–16-year-olds.

In late 2024, the Swedish Parliament approved a proposal to introduce isolation during the daily rest period at high-security SiS facilities. It can be noted that HRC, the UN Committee Against Torture (CAT), and the UN Committee on the Rights of the Child (CRC), have urged Sweden to prohibit isolation and restrictive practices, particularly for young detainees.

At the same time, the Swedish Prison and Probation Service is preparing to introduce youth prison placements for 15- to 17-year-olds by 2026. This raises concerns regarding compliance with international standards for the treatment of detained children.

In March 2025, the Government appointed an investigator to propose legislative changes in relation to education in prison. The instruction to the investigator raises concern since it seems to focus on finding ways to permit exemptions from compulsory schooling since facilities will struggle to uphold children's right to education.³⁵

In 2021 Sweden established a statutory time limit on the duration of pretrial detention for children. Now pretrial detention for children can last only three months before charges are brought, unless an extension is granted by a court for exceptional reasons. However, a government inquiry presented in late 2024 considers that the time-limit for which children may be held in pretrial detention before charges are brought needs to be extended. The inquiry proposes extending the time limit from three to five months.³⁶ It can be noted that the children who have been held in pretrial detention the longest have spent approximately one and a half years in custody before receiving their verdict with. One child was detained for up to 616 days before receiving a verdict.

Although legislation prohibits placing minors in police custody except under exceptional circumstances, oversight reports indicate that this provision is frequently disregarded due to inadequate detention facilities.

Several parallel initiatives are underway to increase the level of repression. The overall consequences of this shift in criminal policy for children and young adults cannot be fully assessed. Examples of initiatives include an inquiry that has proposed extending the duration for which children and young adults can be deprived of their liberty. Another inquiry recommended lowering the age of criminal responsibility from 15 to 14 years for certain serious offenses which is in direct contradiction to recommendations from the Committee on the Rights of the Child.³⁷

Proposed questions

→ Is the view of Sweden that increased level of repression will lead to decreased involvement of children in serious organized crime? How will Sweden improve its work with crime prevention?

³⁵ Uppdrag om Kriminalvårdens skolverksamhet för barn och unga som avtjänar fängelsestraff, Ju2025/00631, Justitiedepartementet, 14 March 2025.

³⁶ Effektivare verktyg för att bekämpa brott av unga lagöverträdare (SOU 2024:93).

³⁷ Committee on the Rights of the Child, General comment No. 24 (2019) on children's rights in the child justice system, CRC/C/GC/24, p. 22, 25 and 28 and Committee on the Rights of the Child Concluding observations on the combined sixth and seventh periodic reports of Sweden CRC/C/SWE/CO/6-7, p. 44–45.

- How will Sweden tackle the risk of arbitrary decision-making and discrimination at the proposed juvenile crime boards?
- What steps is Sweden taking to prohibit isolation of children deprived of their liberty?
- In what way will the proposal to place children in prison contribute to better care and treatment and a safer environment facilitating reintegration into society?
- How will the right to education for children in prison be upheld?
- What is Sweden's view on recommendations from UN treaty bodies in general? More specifically, how does Sweden justify lowering the age of criminal responsibility when such measure is in direct conflict with a 2023 recommendation from the CRC?

10. Equal rights of men and women, and non-discrimination of women (arts. 2, 3, 25 and 26)³⁸

Discrimination based on sex is prohibited by the Swedish Constitution, and equality must be ensured in all areas of society. However, progress toward economic gender equality has stalled in recent years, health disparities persist between women and men, and inequalities remain in representation in decision-making positions.

Sweden's national gender equality policy, unchanged since 2006, aims to ensure that women and men have the same power to shape society and their own lives. However, significant disparities persist. For example, women in the working-age population (20–64 years), reports higher levels of stress, anxiety, loneliness, and sickness-related absences.

In the concluding observations on the seventh periodic report HRC recommended Sweden to step up its efforts with a view to promoting women's equal access to full-time employment and to eliminating the gender wage gap. However, the trend of narrowing gender pay gaps has stagnated since 2019, with women more likely to work part-time, take parental leave, and have higher rates of sick leave which negatively impacts their incomes and pensions. In Sweden, women as a group continue to earn less than men.

³⁸ For further information and detailed references related to the topic of this chapter, please see the Institute's annual report 2024 (p. 137–139 and 145–146) and 2025 (p. 72–73 and 117–119). Footnotes are only included when the data is not available in the Institute's annual reports 2024 and 2025.

While household incomes have generally increased, the slowest growth has been observed among single mothers. Women continue to bear the primary responsibility for unpaid domestic and caregiving work, which affects their lifetime earnings and contributes to a persistent gender pension gap. Although pension reforms have helped reduce disparities, women's pensions are approximately 30 percent lower than men's.

In addition, reports of workplace sexual harassment persist, with one in ten women experiencing harassment, and young women being the most affected.

The number of government agencies with explicit gender integration mandates has decreased. The representation of women in decision-making positions has also declined, particularly in the Swedish Parliament, where the proportion of female committee chairs dropped from half to one-third after the 2022 election, with further declines since then. A similar trend is observed in municipal councils, where the share of female representatives has decreased.

Health disparities between women and men remain significant, with women experiencing worsening mental health. Gender differences in health outcomes are influenced by structural factors such as income inequality, economic stress, and the burden of unpaid care and household responsibilities. Mental health issues are particularly prevalent among young people, with adolescent girls and young women disproportionately affected.

Proposed questions

- Is the opinion of the Swedish Government that progress towards gender inequality has stalled in the last five years? Explain the position.
- What results have been achieved, and what future steps will the Government take, to ensure equality between men and women regarding:
 - Economic gender inequality and the wage gap
 - Health differences between women and men
 - The decreasing number of women in decision-making positions?

11. The rights of aliens, including refugees, asylum seekers and migrants (arts. 2, 9, 10, 13, 14, 17 and 24)³⁹

Over the past ten years, there have been extensive adjustments in migration law and policy in Sweden. Aliens, including refugees, asylum seekers, irregular migrants and persons included under the EU Temporary Protection Directive face growing obstacles to having their rights recognized and respected.

In 2023 and 2024, the Government presented several inquiry directives and legislative proposals to this end, such as the necessity to live in special asylum housing to obtain daily allowance, and enhanced restrictions on family reunification.

Legislation has been approved on the statute of limitations of expulsion decisions and decisions to refuse entry to Sweden. This can result in an increased risk of deportations and other types of forced returns in conflict with the principle of non-refoulement.⁴⁰

As the EU pact on migration and asylum was adopted in 2024, further revisions are foreseen that will affect Swedish legislation. The pact has met strong criticism from several human rights and refugee rights organisations that fear that the pact will undermine the possibilities for refugees to get access to protection in the EU.

Legislative proposals have been made regarding detention centres including an increase of security controls and restrictions during visits, as well as more far-reaching measures to keep migrants, including children, in detention centres. Many proposals have been modeled after other legal provisions concerning the treatment of persons deprived of their liberty such as in institutions run by the Swedish Prison and Probation Service. A government-appointed inquiry has recommended that the Swedish Migration Board establish specialized security units to accommodate certain foreign nationals.⁴¹

In 2024, an inquiry proposed increasing information exchange between authorities to enforce expulsion decisions and impede the possibilities of living in the country without a permit. The inquiry suggests a regulatory framework requiring certain authorities to share data, including personal details, with enforcement bodies such as the Police Authority and the Migration Agency. Although schools and healthcare providers are not included, data can still be accessed through other agencies, potentially deterring

39 For further information and detailed references related to the topic of this chapter, please see the Institute's annual report 2024 (p. 42–44, 67–69) and 2025 (p. 145–150). Footnotes are only included when the data is not available in the Institute's annual reports 2024 and 2025.

40 Civil Rights Defenders, Joint submission to the UN Universal Periodic Review of SWEDEN, 49th Session of the UPR Working Group of the Human Rights Council, April–May 2025, p. 10.

41 Ett nytt regelverk för uppsikt och förvar - Slutbetänkande av 2023 års förvarsutredning (SOU 2025:16).

individuals from seeking essential services.⁴² The inquiry also included proposals in relation to inner border control of foreigners which also risks discriminatory ethnic profiling affecting migrants and asylum seekers.⁴³

Legislative revisions have been proposed with stricter requirements to become a Swedish citizen and for revoking citizenship. One inquiry aims to extend the possibility to deny and revoke residence permits not only because the individual has been convicted of a crime, but also based on “deficiencies in their way of life”, for example association with criminal networks, unwillingness to pay debts or non-compliance with Swedish laws and fundamental Swedish values.

Proposed questions

- What are the accumulated effects of the proposals in the migration area for the enjoyment of aliens’ human rights in Sweden?
- What steps have been taken to ensure that restrictions of non-Swedish nationals’ rights are not in violation of the Covenant?
- What measures are Sweden putting in place to ensure that the implementation of the EU migration pact is in compliance with human rights and that the Swedish Institute for Human Rights as well as civil society is duly involved in the process?

12. Protection of minority groups (arts. 2, 9, 18, 19, 20, 26 and 27)⁴⁴

While some progress has been made to safeguard the rights of Sweden’s five recognized national minorities: the Sámi, Tornedalians, Jews, Roma, and Sweden Finns, challenges persist in ensuring their full participation in cultural, social, and political life, as well as in preserving their languages and traditions.

⁴² Institutet för mänskliga rättigheter, Remissyttrande över betaänkande Vissa åtgärder för stärkt återvändandeverksamhet och utlänningskontroll, SOU 2024:80, 10 mars 2025.

⁴³ Ibid.

⁴⁴ For further information and detailed references related to the topic of this chapter, please see the Institute’s annual report 2024 (p. 62–66) and 2025 (p. 131–132, 134 and 136–140). Footnotes are only included when the data is not available in the Institute’s annual reports 2024 and 2025.

In 2024, the Advisory Committee of the Council of Europe's Framework Convention for the Protection of National Minorities published an opinion on Sweden's implementation of the convention, emphasizing the need for stronger political influence for minorities, enhanced intercultural dialogue, and reinforced efforts to combat racism and hate speech.⁴⁵

Swedish law establishes national minority rights across the country, with specific provisions for administrative areas where Sámi, Meänkieli, and Finnish receive special protections. Oversight is managed by the County Administrative Board of Stockholm (CAB) and the Sámi Parliament, both of which have recommended enhanced mechanisms to ensure compliance. Persistent challenges at the municipal level have led the CAB to issue guidance in 2023 to improve Roma inclusion. In addition, a national inquiry in 2024 proposed a strategy for strengthening Jewish life in Sweden, particularly in response to systemic barriers and security concerns.

Despite measures to safeguard rights of the national minorities, significant gaps remain, for example in language protection. Over the last five years access to mother tongue education in minority languages has stagnated. Currently, remote learning options exist only for Sámi and Finnish. Sweden Finns have reported instances where their right to use Finnish in public services has not been upheld. The Committee of Ministers of the Council of Europe has recommended Sweden to include language as a protected ground in its anti-discrimination legislation.

Financial constraints have also affected language protection efforts. The Institute for Language and Folklore, which manages centres for Finnish, Yiddish, Meänkieli, and Romani Chib, faced budget cuts in 2024. Similarly, funding for Sámi Giellagáldu, a cross-border Sámi language institution, has declined.

Truth and Reconciliation Commissions remain crucial in addressing historical injustices. The Commission for the Tornedalian, Kven, and Lantalaïset peoples has emphasized increasing visibility and empowerment, recognizing Kvens and Lantalaïset as part of the Tornedalian minority. Additionally, the Commission has recommended addressing language rights. The Sámi Truth and Reconciliation Commission is also advancing work in this area.

In 2024, the UN Special Rapporteur on Transitional Justice visited Sweden to assess efforts to address historical injustices against the Sámi, Tornedalians, Kvens, and Lantalaïset. His report underscores the need for full implementation of the Truth and Reconciliation Commissions' recommendations to protect minority rights, restore trust in state institutions, and achieve reconciliation.

⁴⁵ Council of Europe, Advisory Committee on the Framework for the Protection of National Minorities Fifth Opinion on Sweden, 19 February 2024.

Additionally, the Sweden Finnish Delegation has requested a Truth and Reconciliation Commission to investigate historical injustices against the Sweden Finnish minority.⁴⁶

Jews in Sweden have reported a deterioration in their security, particularly for those living openly as Jews. Online hate crimes against Jews have increased significantly, with a marked rise in antisemitic expressions following the October 7 attack by Hamas. National crime statistics reflect this trend, showing a clear increase in hate crimes against Jews. Jewish organisations and individuals continue to face threats, undermining their ability to live openly as Jews, especially outside major cities.

The rise in antisemitism has had severe consequences for the Jewish community in Sweden, limiting their ability to fully exercise their human rights and creating a broader climate of fear and insecurity. Many Swedish Jews feel compelled to limit their public presence due to safety concerns.

Roma people in Sweden continue to face discrimination and prejudice, with antigypsyism persisting in daily life. Economic inequality, stemming from historical exclusion, remains a major challenge. Contemporary discrimination affects employment and education, particularly in schools, where Roma children experience bullying, harassment, and a lack of trust from teachers. As a result, many Roma hide their identity to avoid prejudice. Media portrayals further reinforce negative stereotypes.

Although some efforts have been made to combat antigypsyism and improve conditions for young Roma, more long-term measures are required to promote their inclusion and combat racism.

Proposed questions

- Will Sweden include language as a protected ground in its anti-discrimination legislation? If not, what other measures will be taken to ensure that national minorities can use their languages in both public and private life?
- How will Sweden ensure the full implementation of the recommendations made by the Truth and Reconciliation Commissions?
- What actions will Sweden take to address antisemitism, ensure the security of the Jewish community, and guarantee their ability to fully exercise their human rights?
- What steps will Sweden take to ensure equal access by Roma to various opportunities and services and combat antigypsyism.

⁴⁶ Visit to Finland and Sweden, Report of the Special Rapporteur on the promotion of truth, justice, reparation and guarantees of non-recurrence, UN Doc. A/HRC/57/50/Add.3, 22 juli 2024.

13. Indigenous peoples (arts. 1, 2, 9, 14, 26 and 27)⁴⁷

In the concluding observations on the seventh periodic report Sweden was encouraged to advance preparations for ratifying International Labour Organisation Indigenous and Tribal Peoples Convention No. 169. However, Sweden has still not ratified the ILO Convention No. 169.

Awareness of Sámi rights and living conditions has increased in Sweden over the last couple of years, particularly through debates on reindeer husbandry and land use. While this has contributed to greater recognition of the Sámi as an Indigenous people, it has also reinforced prejudices and negative stereotypes. Racist and hateful comments, especially on social media, but also in schools, at home, in public spaces and at the workplace has become more frequent.

An Action Plan against Racism against the Sámi was adopted for the period 2022–2024 and implemented by a number of authorities. The plan aims to raise awareness and combat discrimination through education, law enforcement, and institutional reforms. At the same time, the work of the Truth Commission for the Sámi People is ongoing, tasked with mapping and examining the consequences of state policies on the Indigenous Sámi people.

A report released in 2024 highlights violence against Sámi women in Sweden as a serious societal problem, calling for major reforms to support victims and prevent violence.

A fundamental principle of Indigenous rights is free, prior, and informed consent (FPIC), which guarantees that Indigenous peoples can approve or reject decisions affecting their lands and culture. In the concluding observations on the seventh periodic report HRC recommended Sweden to review laws and policies affecting Sami rights to guarantee meaningful consultation and FPIC. The Consultation Act, intended to ensure Sámi influence over decisions affecting them, is however not consistently implemented in practice.

Sámi rights are often treated as interests that can be balanced against economic or societal goals, allowing major projects to proceed on Sámi lands without their approval. Large-scale wind power, mining, and infrastructure projects in Sápmi that are fragmenting reindeer grazing lands and further exposing Sámi livelihoods frequently proceed without meaningful Sámi involvement.

⁴⁷ For further information and detailed references related to the topic of this chapter, please see the Institute's annual report 2024 (p. 39–40, 58–60 and 209) and 2025 (p. 135–136 and 142–144). Footnotes are only included when the data is not available in the Institute's annual reports 2024 and 2025.

Climate change is already affecting reindeer husbandry and other traditional Sámi livelihoods. The Arctic region is warming at an accelerated rate, making it harder for reindeer to find food and threatening the sustainability of herding practices. Ensuring Indigenous participation in environmental decision-making is essential to both climate action and the protection of Sámi rights.

The Supreme Administrative Court has ruled that the government's decision to grant an exploitation concession for the Gállok iron ore mine does not violate any legal provisions and will therefore stand. The court acknowledged the relevance of international law in interpreting national regulations but did not analyze the substance of these international commitments in the case. Additionally, the government has decided to dissolve the Committee on Reindeer Lands and launch a new inquiry, aiming for broad political and societal support.

Despite these challenges, some progress has been made. The Truth Commission for the Sámi People continue its work, investigating historical injustices and their ongoing consequences. Other institutions, including the Church of Sweden, have acknowledged past mistreatment of the Sámi and are working toward reconciliation. In addition, repatriation efforts have also advanced with approvals to return Sámi human remains and cultural artifacts.

Proposed questions

- What steps are Sweden taking to ensure Sámi are not merely recognized as stakeholders but as rights-holders with legally protected autonomy over their lands, culture, and livelihoods?
- How will Sweden ensure FPIC on decisions affecting Sámi lands and culture?
- What preparatory steps have been taken since 2016 in relation to ratification of ILO Convention No. 169 and when does Sweden foresee that the convention will be ratified?

14. Rights of persons with disabilities (arts. 2, 9, 10, 14 and 26)⁴⁸

Persons with disabilities face discrimination in many spheres of life. The living conditions are still generally worse than for the rest of the population, education levels are lower, unemployment is higher, economic vulnerability is greater and physical and mental health is worse. Persons with disabilities are also more exposed to various forms of violence at home, at the workplace and on the Internet. Women with disabilities face worse economic conditions than both men with disabilities and the general population.

The Equality Ombudsman have seen an increase of discrimination cases, where the group of persons with disabilities are among the top two.⁴⁹

Persons with disabilities are protected by the Discrimination Act, which prohibits discrimination on several grounds including impairment. The law lacks in clarity regarding the protection against discrimination on some areas where societal barriers result in disability and denial of reasonable accommodations, as pointed out by the UN Committee on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities in its concluding observations regarding Sweden in 2024.⁵⁰

Access to individualised support for persons with disabilities is limited and the pre-conditions for real self-determination and full participation in society are lacking. The individual's full legal capacity is not sufficiently protected.⁵¹

Persons with disabilities face extensive use of coercive measures in both psychiatric compulsory care and at residential homes for young people run by the Swedish National Board of Institutional Care (NBIC). Several forms of coercive measures are still permitted in compulsory psychiatric care, such as solitary confinement, restraint and non-consensual treatment, including electro-convulsive therapy. Moreover, illegal use of coercion against children is a significant problem within all forms of institutional care, exacerbated by shortcomings in staff competence, and insufficient monitoring. Children and young people with neuropsychiatric disabilities are overrepresented in the special youth homes of the NBIC and subjected to more coercive measures than children without disabilities.

⁴⁸ For further information and detailed references related to the topic of this chapter, please see the Institute's annual report 2024 (p. 76–77, 79–82) and 2025 (p. 35–36, 159–160). Footnotes are only included when the data is not available in the Institute's annual reports 2024 and 2025.

⁴⁹ Diskrimineringsombudsmannen, Statistik 2015–2023, 2024:1.

⁵⁰ UN Committee on the rights of persons with disabilities, Concluding observations on the combined second and third periodic reports of Sweden, UN Docs. CRPD/C/SWE/2-3, paras 5–6.

⁵¹ Institute for Human Rights, Supplementary information to the UN Committee on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities Regarding the 2nd/3rd State party review procedure of Sweden 2024.

In group housing for adults and children with disabilities, there is coercive and restrictive measures and violence against the residents. Persons with disabilities are subjected to being locked in, restrained or prevented from leaving their apartments.

Persons with disabilities face challenges in relation to access to justice. In many court cases, there is no right to publicly funded legal counsel, even in complex legal issues that put high demands on the individual in terms of evidence and argumentation. This applies in cases which are clearly linked to disability rights and which persons without disabilities typically do not litigate, such as disability support, transport services, and supported decision-making. Also, information given to individuals about decisions in legal proceedings is not always accessible. There are examples where persons with disabilities have not received the support necessary to understand accusations made against them.⁵²

Proposed questions

- What steps have Sweden taken to prohibit the use of coercion and restrictive practices without consent, for children and adults with disabilities in all forms of institutions?
- What has Sweden done to ensure access to justice for persons with disabilities, including removing practical and financial barriers for individuals to litigate arguable claims of violations of rights?

15. Other groups (arts. 2, 3, 17, 19, 20, 21, 22, and 26)⁵³

Islamophobia

Mosques and congregation halls have long been targeted by attacks and threats. In 2023, several high-profile incidents occurred, including the burning of the Quran outside Stockholm's mosque during Eid al-Adha. Later in the year the entrance of a mosque was vandalized with Islamophobic messages.

⁵² Swedish Institute for Human Rights, Supplementary information to the Un Committee on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities – regarding the 2nd/3rd State party review procedure of Sweden 2024.

⁵³ For further information and detailed references related to the topic of this chapter, please see the Institute's annual report 2024 (pages 38–39, 41–42, 96–98) and 2025 (p. 123–130, 133). Footnotes are only included when the data is not available in the Institute's annual reports 2024 and 2025.

Reports of hate crimes with Islamophobic motives have risen in Sweden, particularly online. Civil society organisations face increasing challenges to their civic space, with those working for and with Muslim communities being particularly affected. These organisations are often negatively labeled as extremists or Islamists, leading to funding challenges, exclusion, insecurity, self-censorship, and limited opportunities for collaboration.⁵⁴

Many Muslims experience negative developments regarding access to their human rights. The greatest shift is felt to have occurred in politics, where examples are raised from both politicians' statements and political proposals that have consequences for Muslims in Sweden.

Afro-Swedes

The most common motive behind reported hate crime is Afrophobia. The crimes affect the everyday lives of Afro-Swedes and risk contributing to a reinforced sense of exclusion. Discrimination against Afro-Swedes occurs in many areas, such as in working life, healthcare and school. At the same time, there is a lack of sufficient knowledge and awareness of the situation of Afro-Swedes. Many Afro-Swedish students experience ethnic discrimination, harassment and even violence in school. Often schools fail in their duties to investigate and act. Furthermore, the Afro-Swedes that face discrimination in the labour market are subjected to both hatred and threats due to their ethnic background.

LGBTQI

LGBTQI persons in Sweden face discrimination in school and at work, as well as in the society in general. Transwomen feel more exposed than other LGBTQI groups.⁵⁵ Young LGBTQI persons, and trans- and intersex persons are particularly vulnerable.

The Government has repeatedly stressed that the work for LGBTQI persons' equal rights and opportunities is a priority. Several agencies have been given special assignments to ensure LGBTQI persons' equal opportunities and rights, and LGBTQI persons are included in action plans and measures that are, for example, about gender-related violence and honour-related violence and repression. A new action plan for LGBTQI persons' equal rights and opportunities is being prepared.

⁵⁴ Forum idéburna organisationer med social inriktning, Stämplad som demokratiextremist, 24 september 2024.

⁵⁵ Fundamental rights agency, EU LGBTIQ survey III, LGBTIQ Equality at a crossroads: progress and challenges, Country Data – Sweden, 2024.

As of date, there is no legislation criminalizing conversion efforts of LGBTQI persons. Almost one in five young LGBTQI person have experienced attempts whereby persons have tried to influence their sexual orientation. Many live in insecurity and are exposed to psychological and physical violence. Conversion efforts are not only linked to honour-related contexts but also in other “Swedish” cultural contexts.

A Gender Recognition Act has been passed and will enter into force in mid-2025. The Act entails two laws, one that concerns changing one’s legal gender and another concerning gender affirming genital surgery. An overall goal of the legislative amendments is to make it easier to change the gender recorded in the population register.

Proposed questions

- What actions are Sweden taking to ensure an effective protection of Muslims and Afro Swedes against hate crimes?
- What measures are Sweden taking to ensure that everyone regardless of sexual orientation are not discriminated in spheres of life? Will Sweden criminalize conversion efforts?

