

Statement by the Sami Parliament in Norway submitted to the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women for consideration in relation to the ninth Periodic Report on Norway



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The Sami Parliament in Norway has chosen to submit its own statement containing viewpoints in connection with the 9th periodic report from the Norwegian Government on Norway's implementation of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women to the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women.

The Sami Parliament in Norway is concerned about the violence to which indigenous women the world over are exposed. In Norway, we have been presented with research¹ indicating that 49% of Sámi women report that they have been subject to violence of a physical, mental or sexual nature at some time in their life, as opposed to 31% of the women among the majority population in the same area. Sámi women also reported a higher incidence of sexual violence during childhood up to the age of 18: 17 per cent, compared with 11 per cent of the women in the majority population otherwise. In most cases, it is reported that the perpetrator is known to the victim. The police and support personnel in Norway generally lack expertise in Sámi language and culture.

International studies and reports indicate a higher prevalence of domestic violence among indigenous peoples than among the general population. For example, studies from Canada indicate that indigenous individuals are three times more likely than members of the general public to experience violence, and a comparative study on reported violence on Greenland and in Denmark shows that the overall incidence was higher on Greenland. In a report presented in the autumn of 2015, UN Special Rapporteur for Indigenous Rights Victoria Tauli-Corpuz concluded that indigenous women are especially vulnerable to violence and a host of other breaches of human rights.

The Sámi population in Norway enjoys a high standard of living and a large percentage of Sámi women have higher educations. However, that does not protect them from falling victim to violence and abuse. The Sámi population of Norway has been subjected to a tough Norwegianification policy, and many struggle with the after-effects of this State policy.

The Sami Parliament, in collaboration with the Ministry of Justice, commissioned a research project to determine in greater detail exactly what today's support system does to help Sámi people who have experienced violence.

The study², in which police and support services workers were interviewed, pointed out several elements:

- More Sámi language and cultural competence on the part of the police and support services might help improve trust and understanding.
- Many of Sámi background still do not trust the majority society because of the Norwegianification policy. This may have a bearing on encounters between those affected by violence who are of Sámi background and non-Sámi service providers.
- The topics of violence and abuse are still not talked about openly and are kept quiet within the family in Sámi communities, especially in small local communities where "everyone

¹ Emotional, physical and sexual violence among Sami and non-Sami populations in Norway: The SAMINOR 2 questionnaire study by Astrid M.A. Eriksen, Ketil Lenert Hansen, Cecilie Javo & Berit Schei, *Scandinavian Journal of Public Health*, 1–9

² [Øverli, I. T., Bergman, S. H., & Finstad, A. K. \(2017\). «Om du tør å spørre, tør folk å svare»: Hjelpeapparatets og politiets erfaringer med vold i nære relasjoner i samiske samfunn.](#) Oslo: Norwegian Centre for Violence and Traumatic Stress Studies (Report 2/2017)

knows everyone". This can also have an impact on employees who work with violence and abuse within the same close-knit community to which they themselves belong.

- Experience indicates that there may be special challenges inherent in meeting users from Sámi backgrounds, especially when dealing with taboo topics such as violence and abuse.

Norway does not take its responsibility for Sámi women seriously and does not have adequate measures in place to stop violence and abuse. On several occasions, the Sami Parliament in Norway has addressed these matters with the Government of Norway without receiving a satisfactory answer. In our opinion, the topic must be addressed on several levels:

- There is a need for more research-based knowledge on the topic to get a general idea about causes and appropriate measures.
- Develop measures to prevent violence in the Sámi population.
- Skills upgrades among those providing support services and the police that serve the Sámi population.
- Further develop assistance and treatment measures adapted to perpetrators and victims of violence among the Sámi population.

Attachments.

- Emotional, physical and sexual violence among Sami and non-Sami populations in Norway: The SAMINOR 2 questionnaire study
- NKVTS 2017 Om du tør å spørre tør folk å svare