



From Exploitation to Consent: Aligning the Green Transition with Indigenous Rights

Indigenous people pay a high cost for the green transition. Still, not to limit climate change is not an option. That is why we must do more to ensure that minorities in general and Indigenous people in the Nordic, the Sámi, in particular, are not overrun by neither “noble causes” like green energy projects nor profit interests of companies or the state. In order for the green transition to be just, everyone must give something up. The Sámi have however paid more than their fair share, and been taken away their right to self determination since they have been forced to give up their homeland without consent.

The Sámi people and their lands have been historically colonized by means of exploitation and assimilation. The Sámi ways of life, culture, land rights and traditional livelihoods are threatened to be wiped out by oppression and underrepresentation in legislative bodies. To this day, Nordic states continue to colonize the Sámi people and their ancestral lands.

The recent Amnesty report from 2025 with the title [Just transition or “green colonialism”?](#) recommends implementing policies such as the concept of Free Prior Informed Consent (FPIC). The current economical and legislative systems enable self-sustaining oppressive monetary and industrial practices, as well as allowing circumvention of indigenous consent required by law. This is why FPIC must be enforced.

Democratizing communities should lessen the negative impacts and human rights violations. Infinite economic growth cannot be sustained, where intersectional rights and wellbeing of all species are considered, we therefore strive for models of degrowth that allows for a system change.

This statement will entail recommendations for policies to both hinder and make up for wrongdoings in terms of resource extraction and colonialism.

We demand:

- Free, Prior, and Informed Consent (FPIC) defined by the UN to be the first priority.
- Initiatives promoting cultural and linguistic conservation, as well as self-governance through traditional Siida councils can help the Sámi culture reclaim some of its lost roots.
- Legislation enabling legal protections for practice of traditional reindeer herding, which requires travel free of border control.
- A degrowth model that allows for systematic change.
- That decision-makers be held accountable and advocate for equal rights for all.

THE JUST GREEN TRANSITION

We acknowledge that, even though transitioning to a circular economy and reducing excess consumption are the first hand priorities in limiting the extraction of new natural resources, minerals are needed in a green transition towards a low carbon society.

Instead of using virgin resources, we should develop and encourage systems to reuse already extracted and circulated minerals and all other materials in the pursuit of a circular economy.

This will however not be enough to meet the mineral demands of the green transition. In these cases upholding the rule of law is essential both in existing and in the planning of new mining and energy projects. Free, prior and informed consent is crucial for a just and green transition. Upholding high standards during mining operations in Nordic countries does not stand in conflict with stopping exploitation in the global south, but in fact helps raising good standards globally. A green transition cannot be just nor green without respecting indigenous peoples rights.

REPRESENTATION AND POWER

The Sámi are an Indigenous people whose voices have too often been excluded from the decisions that shape their lives. True representation means more than presence – it means power, influence, and recognition. We call for a future where the Sámi people are represented in all decisions that affect their lives politically, culturally and environmentally. Their voices must be heard, their rights respected, and their knowledge recognized as essential to the shared future of the Nordic region.

We call for complete overall representation:

- National parliament seat in Norway, Sweden, Finland and fair representation in the Nordic Council, with real political influence that is equal to other representatives.
- The Sámi need representation through consultation in organs of power that have influence over their lives. The Sámi live outside of Sápmi as well, where they still deserve to be supported in living and connection with their culture.

We call for the influence of the Sámi parliaments to be expanded:

- The mandate of the Sámi parliaments should continuously be reviewed and their voices empowered.
- The Sámi Parliaments should have influence in cases of land use in Sápmi, being able to comment, suggest amendments and suggest proposals based on the wishes of their constituents on issues regarding land, culture, language and heritage.
- The Nordic governments must always protect the human rights of all Nordic peoples over corporate profit.

We call for representation that also goes beyond legislative procedures:

- The Sámi people have the right to grow up with their culture, and see their culture represented in their homelands. Sweden, Norway and Finland should recognise the Sámi national holiday, Sámi culture, traditions and ways of life should be taught as part of the history of our nations.
- Furthermore, the Sámi have the right to news services and shows for children in their own language, to preserve their language and heritage.
- The Nordic countries should contribute to a perspective that Sámi people are affected by global warming and that we are all in the same boat. That Sámi people have traditional knowledge that contributes to a lot of important perspectives like our understanding of a circular economy in agreement with nature.

NORDIC CO-OPERATION

We call for a common framework that guarantees equal rights and recognition for the Sámi people and all indigenous people across all Nordic countries. The Sámi people should not be obliged to conform to colonial ideas and frameworks, and we therefore aim

for Nordic co-operation to be decolonial and to be in accordance with the right to self-determination. This framework focuses on the Sámi people, but can hopefully be applied to other indigenous peoples as well.

We urge the Nordic countries to implement:

- A unified status for Sámi people in the Nordic region, ensuring that they aren't restricted by differing laws between the countries.
- Increased Sámi representation across national broadcasting media, with cross-border access and subtitles available in all Nordic languages.
- A common legal framework protecting Sámi languages, land, and culture.
- Joint educational efforts to increase awareness of Sámi culture and rights across the Nordics.
- The ratification of ILO Convention 169 by all Nordic countries.
- Legally binding implementation of FPIC (Free, Prior and Informed Consent).
- Safeguarding equal rights to all Sámi by harmonizing the legislation regarding Sápmi and the Sámi people across all of the Nordics.
- Land rights and legally ensured decision-making power for Sámi institutions, concerning traditional Sámi customs and trades.

We urge Nordic governments to hold each other accountable through binding commitments and shared responsibility, as well as their own respective legal systems. Sámi rights are human rights — and they must be upheld equally.

KNOWLEDGE AND EDUCATION

The majority of Nordic people know very little about the Sámi and their culture. The Sámi people are systemically ignored in the national curriculum of Nordic countries. Therefore the knowledge is often outdated, stereotypical and even racist. The educational system does not cover topics of Sámi history, culture, language, and the rights and struggles of indigenous people. Hence the Sámi are not given equal opportunity to learn about their own history. To solve this significant knowledge gap, the educational system needs to reinvent itself and focus on Sámi people and their past, present and future.

All Nordic people should be taught the history of the Sámi minority, the assimilation policies, as well as the Sámi languages throughout the levels of the mandatory school systems. The right to use the Sámi language both as a first and secondary language in all aspects of life must be respected. Anti-colonial terms and language, as well as breaking down stereotypes should guide all educational institutions.

Filling the knowledge gaps in the adult population is also essential. This should be done through state funded research, tv, books, media, theatre, and culture. We should create more educational material both to Sámi students in Sámi languages as well as to the majority about the Sámi. There is a need for larger and wider representation of Sámi people and culture in all sorts of media, that is directed to all age groups. There needs to be cultural acceptance and decolonization of words. Changes in terminology, city and place names is also an important way to re educate generations and people. Possibilities to study and learn sámi languages should be enhanced and financial support should be earmarked for those reclaiming sámi language.

We urge the Nordic countries to integrate:

- The history of the Sámi minority, with emphasis on the assimilation policy, into the curriculum in elementary as well as secondary education in all of the Nordics.

- Birget, a Sámi idea of no overconsumption, having enough and sustainability, should be taught to emphasize the relevance of Sámi practices in the current green transition.
- The right of Sámi children to be secured access to Sámi language learning in school. There also should be emphasis on creating opportunities for adult language learners to keep the language alive. This applies both in Sápmi and other parts of Norway, Sweden and Finland.
- Respectful research on Sámi history, sacred places, culture and languages, should continue.
- Increased access to educational material: online resources for teachers, students and pupils.
- Increased production of state funded Sámi media and pop culture: given the need for representation in state media, tv, films, books, podcasts.

INEQUALITY

The cultural and economic problems of Indigenous communities, and the difficulties of a just transition, are the result of a struggle between the class of profit-driven capitalists, a bureaucratic state, and the cultural and occupational minorities. Marginalised Indigenous communities often experience environmental racism. They face the worst impacts of climate change while also bearing the highest costs of climate action when the resources of their land are extracted, and through the division of labour that places them in, i.e. mining work.

We urge the Nordic countries to recognizing that:

- Putting profit over the rights of Indigenous people is green colonialism.
- The Sámi people are a heterogeneous group.

- Economic inequality leads to unequal power dynamics in decision-making processes.
- Lack of involvement of the Sámi people in the past has led to irreversible damage.
- Land and culture have intrinsic value beyond profits.
- The impact of climate change is greater on marginalized groups.
- There is a need for more inclusive democratic processes, including securing monetary support and fair compensation for time spent on consultations and political participation.
- The value derived from land use should benefit the local community and be guided by democratic, bottom-up initiatives.
- Efforts must be made to prevent an unjust distribution of burdens between different groups in society.

FINAL REMARKS

We stand united in calling for justice, equality, and a lasting change. A just green transition cannot be achieved without Indigenous rights at its core. The Sámi people must no longer be left on the margins, but empowered at the center of decision-making. The time for meaningful action is now!

