

## Summary of the report “Preparations for a Truth Commission”

Throughout history, The Sami people have been subjected to abuse, violations, and racism. These wrongdoings still have a negative effect on the living conditions of the Sami people and individuals. They also effect the relations between different Sami groups and between the Sami people and the Swedish State. The Sami Parliament Plenary Assembly adopted a motion in 2014 to work with the matter of setting up a Truth Commission to examine the abuses of the Sami by the State. Vital parts in this work are the round-table discussions and seminars with international experts that were arranged in Umeå in 2016 as well as the SWOT-analysis that a working group developed in 2018. These are the foundation for the proposal that the Sami Parliament unanimously submitted to the Ministry of Culture in June 2019. In 2020, The Parliament was given a government assignment to prepare and anchor the work for a Truth Commission in the Sami community. This report is an account of what has been accomplished within the assignment and presents the viewpoints that have emerged in discussions and questionnaires.

A truth commission should examine how the actions of the Swedish State and the County Administrative Boards divided the Sami people, primarily through the so-called “a Lapp should be a Lapp”-policy, which had elements of both cultural darwinism and racism. This was expressed in the nomad school reform of 1913 and the reindeer husbandry legislation of 1928. The Sami lost ownership rights to land and water; the right to reindeer husbandry was limited, different types of reindeer husbandry were set against each other, and Sami in other traditional livelihoods such as hunting, fishing and handicrafts were excluded from the rights system. The issue of land is a theme mentioned by many. A truth commission should review what happened when the Sami lost their lands; the so called *lappskatteländ* (Sami tax-lands), land distribution, resource exploitation and encroachments.

The double policy of the State was partly segregation policy, partly assimilation policy, depending on group affiliation and where you lived. The nomad school was an attack on the family, the social coherency and culture when children were removed from their environment to live at boarding schools. Those Sami children that did not attend nomad schools experienced language oppression and cultural alienation in the ordinary public school. The “Swedification” process, the consequences of lost language and the difficulties in reclaiming one’s language as an adult is an urgent theme. The possibility for learning the Sami language is still limited in secondary and upper secondary school. Cross-border related problems include reindeer grazing conventions and forced migrations, primarily of North Sami reindeer herding families to areas further south and the consequences thereof, but also other types of forced migrations throughout history.

A majority of the Sami that have answered the questionnaire or participated in meetings express high or very high expectations on a truth commission. Several voices expect the truth commission to investigate injustice and wrong-doing and lead to change in many ways. It is of utmost importance that a future, independent truth commission is given a wide mandate, large room to maneuver and adequate time and resources. In closing, the Swedish Sami Parliament stresses the importance of health professionals being engaged in psycho-social support functions in connection with the truth commission work. This must be done together with the northern regions and the network knowledgeable in Sami health.