

The Swedish Institute for Human Rights was established in 2022. It is Sweden's national human rights institution (NHRI) and has been accredited with A-status. The Institute's mandate is to monitor, investigate and report on how human rights are respected, protected and fulfilled in Sweden.

With our report and factsheets, the Institute contributes to the 4th UPR cycle review of Sweden on 5 May 2025 at the UN Human Rights Council.

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A history of exclusion and assimilation

Tornedalians, Kvens, and Lantalaïset (Tornedalians) are a national minority in Sweden with their own culture and language (meänkieli). During the 20th century, the minority was subjected to Swedish assimilation policies, which, among other things, led to the suppression of their language and culture.

In March 2020, the Swedish Government decided to establish a Truth and Reconciliation Commission (the Commission) to examine violations and abuses against the Tornedalians as a result of the assimilation policies. The Commission is Sweden's first Truth and Reconciliation Commission and the Commission submitted its final report in November 2023.¹

1. Som om vi aldrig funnits – exkludering och assimilering av tornedalingar, kväner och lantalaïset SOU 2023:68.

Suggested recommendation

- › Fully implement the proposals of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission for Tornedalians, Kvens and Lantalaïset.

Suggested questions for Sweden

- › How far has the Government progressed with the implementation of the truth and Reconciliation Commission's proposals?
- › How is the minority Tornedalians, Kvens, and Lantalaïset involved in the implementation of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission's proposal?
- › Is it the Government's plan to develop an action plan based on the Truth and Reconciliation Commission's proposals?



The need for a strengthened and more systematic approach to human rights

The Commission proposed measures that could contribute to restitution and promote reconciliation. The Commission also proposed issues that should be further investigated, including whether the Tornedalians should be recognized as an indigenous people, which the Tornedalians themselves has asked for. Regarding the reconciliation process, the commission proposed, among other things, the following.

The Government should:

- take responsibility for a continued, cohesive reconciliation process in close consultation with the minority, authorities, and other relevant stakeholders
- immediately acknowledge the violations that have been committed against the minority
- immediately initiate a dialogue with the minority about the conditions and forms for a public apology
- immediately, and in close cooperation and dialogue with the minority, develop an action plan for the implementation of proposals for continued efforts that can contribute to restitution and promote reconciliation.

In our referral statement,² the Institute welcomed all of the Commission's recommendations as well as its suggestions for issues that should be further investigated. Above all, the institute emphasized the importance of the Government adopting and implementing all of these proposals, stating that this is a prerequisite for the continued reconciliation process.

The Special Rapporteur on the promotion of truth, justice, reparation and guarantees of non-recurrence, Fabián Salvioli, undertook a country visit to Sweden in March 2024. In his subsequent report to the UN Human Rights Council, he recommended Sweden to design and implement, in consultation with and with the consent of the communities concerned, a mechanism to monitor the implementation of the recommendations of the Commission.³

The Council of Europe Advisory Committee on the Framework Convention for the Protection of National minorities strongly encourages the authorities to provide truth commissions with appropriate funding to deal with all necessary research and consultation aspects, and to use the outcomes for awareness-raising, trust building measures and for taking concrete steps to preserve and promote minority identities.⁴

2. Som om vi aldrig funnits – exkludering och assimilering av tornedalingar, kväner och lantalaïset SOU 2023:68, Ref. no.: 3.2.1-29/2024.

3. Visit to Finland and Sweden, Report of the Special Rapporteur on the promotion of truth, justice, reparation and guarantees of non-recurrence, 22 July 2024.

4. Council of Europe, the Advisory Committee on the Framework Convention for the Protection of National minorities, Fifth Opinion on Sweden, adopted on 11 October 2023, para 126.