

Statement on the UPR Pre-session on Sweden
of the Swedish Foundation for Human Rights
21 February 2025, Geneva

(Slide 1)

I represent the Swedish Foundation for Human Rights and this presentation is made on behalf of 20 Swedish human rights civil society organisations that have contributed to or supported the joint civil society parallel report.

We participated in a UPR consultation at the government offices in October 2024.

Since 2020, we have welcomed the establishment of the Swedish Human Rights Institute, but have also seen retrogression and a climate marked by a crisis narrative, permitting disproportionate measures and disrespect for human rights.

This statement will focus on 4 thematics: a national mechanism for follow-up and reporting, ratification of the optional protocol to the Covenant on economic, social and cultural rights, rights of older persons and national minorities, and the two Swedish truth commissions.

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Sweden lacks a national mechanism for follow-up and reporting, and human rights reporting is Ad Hoc. We congratulate the ministry of social affairs that initiated a cross sectorial working group on the matter in 2022. However, since then the process has been stalled.

There were no recommendations in the 3rd cycle, but, the former High Commissioner for Human Rights, Michele Bachelet, in her follow-up letter, encouraged the Swedish government to establish a national mechanism.

We recommend the Swedish government to:

- establish a national mechanism for follow-up and reporting that aligns with the guidelines from the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights, during the 5th UPR cycle.

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Individuals facing violations to their economic, social and cultural rights in Sweden have limited access to legal remedies. These rights are often treated as political priorities rather than rights. Sweden has not ratified the Optional Protocol to the Covenant on economic, social and cultural rights and individuals therefore don't have the right to take their cases to the UN committee.

There were 2 recommendations on the ratification of the Optional Protocol to the Covenant on economic, social and cultural rights in 2020, both were noted and there has been no progress. On the contrary, at the review of Sweden in the committee last year, the government stated that they have no plans to ratify the protocol.

We recommend the Government to:

- ratify the Optional Protocol to the Covenant on economic, social and cultural rights before the next review in the committee.

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There is widespread ageism in Sweden and age entails diminished rights. For example, persons older than 65 have no right to apply for personal assistance under disability legislation.

There were no recommendations on rights of older persons in the 2020 review.

Despite 4 supported recommendations on the effective implementation of the Government's strategy for Roma inclusion, little progress has been made. The strategy lacks concrete and measurable targets, making it difficult to assess progress. Many initiatives have been short-term, project-based efforts rather than structural reforms. The situation is particularly worrying as it erodes mutual trust and confidence in the Government's commitment and resolve.

Among Sweden's five national minorities the Sweden-Finns and the Tornedalian minorities are almost invisible. The Sweden-Finns are not even mentioned in the state report.

Recommendations:

- to promote a UN Convention on the rights of older persons
- to introduce measurable targets to the Strategy for Roma inclusion, align with the EU Roma Strategic Framework 2020-2030, and ensure long-term funding for Roma inclusion efforts.
- to include all five national minorities in the next UPR report.

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We welcome the establishment of the two truth commissions as a step towards addressing the legacy of human rights violations committed against the Sámi people and the Tornedalians, Kvens and Lantalauset in the context of assimilation policies.

There was 1 recommendation on efforts to promote reconciliation in the last cycle, which was supported and progress has been made.

However, the recommendations from the truth and reconciliation commission (from November - 23) have not been implemented, and the truth commission for the Sámi people is being questioned, running out of time and resources, and stand without a chairperson since October-24. The commission has asked the government to extend its mandate and allocate more resources to complete its mission. After his country visit to Sweden last year, the Special Rapporteur on truth, justice, reconciliation and non-recurrence wrote a report with specific recommendations to the government aimed at supporting the continued truth seeking and reconciliation processes.

We recommend to:

- establish a mechanism to follow up the implementation of the recommendations from the truth commissions.

- defend the truth commission for the Sámi people, extend its mandate and allocate necessary resources according to the filed request.
- make use of the recommendations in the report (A/HRC/57/50/Add.3) of the Special Rapporteur on truth, justice, reconciliation and non-recurrence.

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For more information, fact sheets, the joint parallel report, please go to humanrights.se, follow the QR-code, the link or contact me Charlotta Göller. Thank you!