

Statement by the Swedish Institute for Human Rights at the UPR Info pre-session 49 on Sweden

(Slide 1)

The Swedish Institute for Human Rights was established in 2022. It is Sweden's national human rights institution and has been accredited A-status. Up until its establishment, Sweden had received around 70 recommendations to establish an NHRI, including from the Universal Periodic Review. Therefore, we are especially pleased to be participating here today.

So far, the Institute has contributed to the UPR process through a stakeholder report, which you can find on the table together with factsheets and on our website. We have conducted recurrent dialogues with different stakeholders, including several of the civil society organizations present here today. In October last year, we also participated in a national consultation organized by the Swedish government.

Our report covers a range of different areas pertaining to current human rights challenges in Sweden.

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In this presentation, we would like to highlight the following four topics:

- Sweden needs a new Human Rights Strategy and Action Plan;
- The respect and protection of indigenous Sami people's human rights needs strengthening;
- The recommendations of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission for the national minority Tornedalians, Kvens and Lantalaiget need to be fully implemented;
- Disability should be introduced as a protected ground in hate crime legislation.

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Starting with the **Institute's recommendation that Sweden needs a new Human Rights Strategy and Action Plan**. In 2016, Sweden adopted a national human rights strategy. The strategy needs to be evaluated and followed up on in its entirety, leading to a new strategy that should be long-term and relevant to current human rights challenges. The new strategy should be supplemented by a concrete and ambitious action plan. These efforts should be conducted in close collaboration with civil society, rights holders and other stakeholders. The new strategy should be decided on by Parliament.

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Secondly, the **Sami people** and their traditional livelihoods face serious threats from the warming climate's impact on the ecosystem and from ongoing industrialisation in northern Sweden, including natural resource extraction, wind power projects, and infrastructure developments. Sweden's third UPR cycle brought recommendations to strengthen measures ensuring participation with free, prior and informed consent (FPIC) on issues related to land rights, livelihood and resources. A recently issued Act on Consultation is not comprehensive, for example excluding the FPIC principle. Therefore, the Institute suggests these recommendations:

- Ensure, in close consultation with the Sami, that land use decisions in traditional Sami areas do not harm Sami culture, languages or identity.
- Ensure that legislation and law enforcement are fully in line with international law and indigenous rights standards, including the FPIC principle.

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Third: In 2020, Sweden's first **Truth and Reconciliation Commission for the Tornedalians, Kvens, and Lantalaïset** was established to examine the historical violations and abuses against the minority. During the 20th century, the State subjected the minority to assimilation policies, which, among other things, led to the suppression of their language and culture. In 2023, the Commission issued recommendations, advising the Government to, in close consultation with the minority, continue the reconciliation process, including an action plan, and to acknowledge the violations committed against the minority. The Commission also proposed further investigation of whether the Tornedalians should be recognized as an indigenous people, in accordance with their expressed wishes. After a country visit last year, the Special Rapporteur on the promotion of truth, justice and reparation recommended the establishment of a mechanism to monitor the implementation of the Commission's recommendations in consultation with and with consent from concerned communities. Similarly, the Institute suggests that Sweden is recommended to fully implement the Commission's proposals.

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Finally, the Institute suggests the following recommendations:

- Introduce **disability as a protected ground in hate crime legislation;** and
- Strengthen the involvement of persons with disabilities, including children and young people, in the implementation of the CRPD.

In 2024, the CRPD Committee recommended that Sweden amend its legislation to better protect human rights. One specific recommendation is to include provisions on hate crimes against persons with disabilities and to ensure the collection and analysis of data on the same. The Institute has not observed any such initiatives by the Government, nor has there been any general legislative review of CRPD compliance since Sweden ratified the CRPD.

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Thank you for your attention.

Concluding remarks

(No slide)

Today, we have presented four areas where we see a strong need to improve the human rights situation in Sweden. In our report, we present a broader view. For instance, we note that there are extensive and rapid reforms in the area of criminal justice that have far-reaching consequences for the right to privacy and the rule of law. We also point to the difficulties for individuals to effectively claim their rights in Sweden. Moreover, we highlight clear signs of increasing polarisation and a normalisation of racism and discrimination.

We look forward to continuing the dialogue on the human rights situation in Sweden and to actively engage in the follow-up of the recommendations.