



## Norske Kveners Forbund/Ruijan kveeniliitto

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From: Ruijan Kveeniliitto/Norwegian Kven Association

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Deres ref.

### **Written submission for The Universal Periodic Review (UPR) for the hearing of Norway, 19th session, spring 2014**

#### **References:**

International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (SP), Article 27 (1996)

The European Framework Convention on Protection of National Minorities (1999)

The European Charter for Regional or Minority Languages

#### **Summary:**

1. The Kven language is in a very precarious situation. The language is considered as highly endangered.
2. The Kven culture is under great pressure. The weak situation for the language together with loss of a major part of objects of cultural importance and Kven heritage sites under the Second World War are contributing to this. We see now that a great part of the remaining memories of our culture and history are destroyed by time and negligence. Action is needed to ensure the collection and protection of Kven heritage.
3. The opportunity for Kven language in education is marginal. The authorities of Norway need to be urged to, as soon as possible, develop a special curriculum for Kven in co-operation with the speakers and to improve the situation of the Kven language at all stages of education.

#### **Report:**

#### **Background:**

The Kven people are acknowledged as an old national minority in Norway, and we have throughout our history lived side by side with the Sami people, whom have the status as an indigenous people. There is an ongoing discussion whether or not the Kven people also should be considered as indigenous. So far the Kven people are accepted and hold the status as an old national minority, but feel to a great extent ignored by the Norwegian authorities concerning need for e.g. education and broadcasting in our own language, and concerning rights, including our rights to land and waters in our own area. The Norwegian authorities exhibit substantial legal and political incoherence in the treatment of the Kven minority compared with our status as national minority. Moreover, the Norwegian authority's measures to protect against violation of the human rights by third parties through appropriate policy and regulations do include the Kven people.

On local and regional levels members of the Kven people overall meet more support and understanding, however with the limitations set by policies and regulations and/or the lack of such concerning the Kven people. We are therefore more worried about the national policy than anything else.

**Factors:**

1. The Kven language is formally protected under the European Charter for Regional or Minority Languages, ratified on 20. of November 1993. In the fifth periodical report in respect of Norway the committee of experts *“Recommends that the authorities of Norway take account of all the observations and recommendations of the Committee of Experts and, as a matter of priority: (...) 2. adopt a comprehensive structured policy for Kven, combined with an action plan, in co-operation with the speakers.”*
2. In addition, due to the precarious situation for the Kven language it is necessary that the Ministry of Government Administration, Reform and Church Affairs, and the Ministry of Education and Research take initiative to carry out a major language survey, or find a way to obtain better data, to assess the Kven language situation among the Kven population.
3. Pupils with Kven backgrounds in primary and lower secondary schools in Troms and Finnmark are entitled to learn Finnish as a second language, not Kven language, when at least three pupils request this. This is not sufficient.
4. The situation for the Kven language in broadcasting is insufficient. Since the 70ties the offer for the Kven minority has been a weekly broadcast on the radio called the Finnish broadcast (Finskendinga), but only 12 minutes pr. week and mainly in Finnish language. The authorities should be urged to improve the situation radically, as daily TV and radio broadcast are considered as crucial for the survival of the Kven language.
5. The occurrence of Kven names on places on maps (printed or online) and on signs is weak. The only newspaper “Ruijan Kaiku” still is printed only once a month.
6. Despite reports of actions taken by the authorities to promote the situation concerning Kven language, the situation on the ground has not changed, and the language situation is still in a very precarious situation. Conferences and meetings arranged by the Norwegian authorities on Kven matters hardly ever end in visible actions or practical results. To improve this situation the authorities should be urged to act with concrete measures, combined with an action plan, in co-operation with the kven minority.
7. Without concrete action the Kven language remains in a very precarious situation. Measures are needed to promote the language such as providing for Kven in education, including adult education and strengthening its position in broadcasting and literature. Particular attention should be paid to develop its positions in education.
8. Norwegian authorities should be urged to raise the level of the Kven language from level II to III according to the European Charter for Regional or Minority Languages.
9. A European research project (ELDIA-project) on twelve European minority languages show that the kven language is clearly the most threatened of those examined. This situation is not mentioned in the Norwegian national report of the minority languages of Norway to the United Nations.
10. Some Kven cultural object and buildings are or are in the process of being registered as Sami. A joint Norwegian, Sami and Kven committee in cultural heritage should be established. The authorities should be urged to ensure that historical remains are secured and ensure that ethnicity is respected in historical and archeological collection and research in this area.
11. The Kven people’s need for support for cultural collaboration in the High North is urgent. The authorities must immediately create a joint national Norwegian, Sami and Kven cultural committee for northern Norway. Although Kven languages are found in Russia, Sweden and Finland the Kven language is not mentioned in Norway’s plan for cultural collaboration in the area. This must be improved.

Best regards • Ystävällisin terveisin  
For RK/NKA

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Anne Gerd Jonassen  
Leader

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Ivar Johnsen  
General Secretary

*About the Norwegian Kven Association:*

*The Norwegian Kven association, established 1987, is the only national organization to maintain Kven interests. The association has just below 1000 members. Thirteen local groups are affiliated with the union, and these are spread over large parts of the country, but most are in the core areas in North Troms and Finnmark. We also have a youth organization, Kveeninuoret, which specifically works to preserve and develop the Kven language and culture among the young.*

*The Norwegian Kven association works to maintain the Kven people's interests in the Norwegian authorities at the local, regional and central level. The Norwegian Kven association will work to strengthen the Kven identity by preserving and developing Kven language and culture. The association will also work to highlight the Kven language and culture internationally.*