



Open letter to Swedish Prime Minister Göran Persson and UN secretary general Kofi Annan
In regards to the Stockholm International Forum Conference on the Holocaust topic.

YOU HAVE TO BE VISIBLE - TO EXIST?

The Saami People – Shut out for the fourth time!

Public Law: (1964:169) on punishment of committed Genocide says:

1§ ” If anyone commits deed, of which is lawfully subject to sentence of imprisonment for no less than 4 years or more, against a national, ethnic, or specific racial or religious group of people, with intent of; full or partial destruction of that group of people, will be subject to conviction of the crime of Genocide, thus sentenced to imprisonment for at least 4 years; and at the most 10 years, or full lifetime imprisonment sentence”.

We, the Saami People have not been subject to a bloody Genocide, but refer to the cultural Genocidal term of so called; “soft Genocide”, crimes committed with the help of hidden but effective tools, by the Swedish state, when they have used those tools to steal our lands, water, language, religion, identity and possibility to live by our traditional means for sustenance. (please see the rich scientific literature and research)

In the time of the late 1800:eds and early 1900:eds, the general opinion was that of an open naked racial discrimination and oppression, against all of the Saami People. This state of oppression has resulted in judicial mistreatment and disadvantage with regards to the Saami people, all the way into the 1990; th century.

As an example we can take a look at the Swedish Institute for racial biology studies from 1922 – where the Saami people, as a group, were considered as having several negative characteristics and were subject to special treatment; such as: 1913 years “apartheid school “, forced relocation; all in clear violation of the Swedish Constitution.

Still today remnants of this same oppressions against the Saami People, exists, who today find themselves loosing more and more influence over their lands and water. The most recent example of this is perhaps the administration plan for the World Heritage Site; Lapponia. The vital Traditional Reindeer husbandry is another area in which the Saami people experience the negative impacts of Swedish lawmaking. Swedish courts and judicial system does not exercise the required objectivity when it comes to issues that affects the Saami peoples, as is written in the Rights of Peoples.

The list goes on and on. Let us again go back to the introduction of this open letter; the law on Genocide, we have to look upon the intentions behind actions such as how the Saami people have been treated and still are treated, by the Swedish state. We come to the conclusion that the intentions behind the actions are designed towards an effort to destroy the Saami people and their way of life, and should therefore be considered and treated as an act of Genocide.

In the beginning of the 2000 century, the Swedish state received complaints from the UN Racial Discrimination Committee and the UN Human Rights Commission in Geneva, concerning protection of the Saami language and the issue of Saami landrights. The complaints stated that the Swedish state does not live up to the standard requirements, that has to be fulfilled by any nation state who is a member of the United Nations. The fact that Sweden has not yet ratified the ILO convention item 169 – a convention of which Sweden was an active participant, in creating, is remarkable, to say the least.

The Saami people has not been invited to attend, at any of the previous “Genocide Conferences”. Although the themes have been; 2002 Truth, Justice and Reconciliation; 2001 Fighting intolerance; 2000 The Holocaust, the Saami people have not been regarded as participants that “fits in”. At the same time groups of peoples with almost identical situations and experiences, from other parts of the world, has been invited and regarded as fully adequate participants. It is precisely these circumstances ; to not be regarded as fully adequate participants, and therefore not being able to make the voices of the Saami peoples, heard, that befalls us, time and time again. This is the kind of treatment that prevents us from participation in the democratic process.

To be locked out from participation in the democratic process, has to be rendered as particularly serious, considering the Saami people being in minority in the democratic decision making process. These circumstances often results in disadvantage to the Saami people, as decisions are being made on their behalf by Swedish state representatives, without regard of full knowledge and informed consent and understanding. The Indigenous Peoples of Sweden are not included in a good way when decisions that affects them, are being made.

In an effort to draw attention to our situation, we have contacted the organizers of this series of conferences, well in advance, with our wishes to participate in the conference. Previous years we have demonstrated and also arranged for an alternative conference, simultaneously. But we have, as previously stated, never been accepted as suitable participants, and no notice has been taken, to our efforts. The question is; will the Saami People ever be regarded as suitable participants, in any cohesion? The nomadic hunting and gathering lifestyle of the Saami People can never be compared to the farmer society and later industrial society.

It is of course highly commendable of the Swedish government, to bring up such an important initiative on the International arena, such as these conferences are designed to prevent unspeakable horrors of genocide, to happen in the future. But we cannot help reacting against the fact that in the same second that the Swedish state points its fingers at other countries mistreatments of its citizens, at the same time the Swedish state puts itself upon a pedestal, as having a better and more just history. Above all one strives to portray Sweden as being a country that has learned from history and taking every measure to not let the bad things in it, repeat itself.

Therefore we see it only fair to put into question the credibility, of a forum that knowingly hides away its own problems. For the same reasons one can ask why Sweden has chosen to keep the Israeli-Palestinian conflict out of the conference. Does Sweden really have a frank intention with these conferences, or does it serve some other purpose?

The knowledge about the Saami people in general when it comes to the Swedish people, both historicly and in present time, is very inadequate. Excluding Saami participation in these conferences, further contributes to an already bad situation. The circumstances created, when not including Saami representatives in any of the four conferences, sends messages to the public that the Saami voices are not important in this framework, that very well can be a great tool for setting standards to prevent history from repeating itself.

How can we as Saami peoples prevent to be subjects to violations, when we are not allowed to speak and participate in the democratic process? It is our inalienable inherent right as a People, to participate in the democratic process, as is the right of all peoples.

To write history in this way, is in no way unique for the Swedish state. It has happened and happens still in most countries. That is how nations are built; highlighting events that are considered to promote the national affinity, while less desirable events knowingly are hidden out of sight, where they are expected to stay until they are completely forgotten.

When the Primeminister initiated these conferences, the most important focus was to stress the importance of a “Living history”. As a fruit of this labour, the creation of a new public authority office came about: The Forum for a Living History. Inside the offices and the public premises at Old Town in Stockholm, we have searched in vain, for any traces of Saami culture or history.

If you are not visible – You do not exist. Once again we experience the lack of interest from the Swedish state, to live up to its responsibility when it comes to the Saami People ; The Indigenous People of Sweden!

We wish to draw public attention to the term; “Soft Genocide”, with this open letter – a form of Genocide without the bloodstained traces, but equivalent effective result.

Enclosed: Blodbok by Tomas Cramer (for UN Secretary General Mr Kofi Annan and Primeminister Göran Persson, only. The book will be presented and Released at the Jokkmokk Fair in February 2004)

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In cooperation with the WildOak Network