

«The Sami culture might just disappear»

Maja fears that the wind turbines will be disastrous for reindeer husbandry and Sami culture. It's high time for the Norwegian government to act.

Maja Kristine Jåma and the other Sami in the North Norwegian district of Fosen, county Trøndelag, have been in conflict with the state for many years, due to a decision to build wind farms in an area they depend on for reindeer herding.

Quote:

"The wind turbines take away the pastures for reindeer. Endangering reindeer husbandry is not just an attack on our livelihood, but also on Sami culture."

Maja Kristine Jåma

The Sami won in court. On 11 October 2021 Norway's supreme court passed an unanimous judgement that the wind farms, which by then were fully operating, violated the Sami's human rights.

500 days later, however, the authorities still have not resolved the situation.

It is high time for the government to act!

Sign our petition and call on the Norwegian Prime Minister Støre to finally comply with the supreme court's judgement and make sure the Sami do not lose their livelihood and the possibility to practice their culture.

151 wind turbines

Indigenous people's right to practice their culture is protected by international human rights standards.

Norway's supreme court has ruled that the Fosen wind farms violate human rights because they undermine the Sami reindeer herders' right to practice their culture.

Reindeer husbandry is an important fundament of Sami language and culture. According to UNESCO the South Sami language is seriously endangered.

The wind farms, with a total of 151 wind turbines, power lines, roads, and other infrastructure, occupy half of the winter pastures for reindeer herders in the district of Fosen.

Quote:

“If you truly wish to protect Sami culture, you also have to protect its natural foundations. That means to leave the territory alone so that reindeer herding can continue.”

Maja Kristine Jåma

The judgement must be respected!

It's been over 20 years since the first plans for wind farms in Fosen became known. For Maja and the other reindeer herding Sami this has been a long and tedious process.

Quote:

“When we started this fight, we weren't listened to. People wouldn't understand that we were fighting against wind power, which is supposed to be so “green”. But I can't see what is “green” about destroying nature and pushing aside a people who is using nature in a sustainable way.”

Maja Kristine Jåma

Maja thinks it is especially frustrating to see that the state just would not respect a judgement by the Supreme Court.

Quote:

“The government has now had 500 days to stop an ongoing human rights violation. And they haven't done anything. (...) I find it worrying to see that we have a state that is unwilling to listen to us, and not even respects a final judgement. If we allow that to happen, we all are in danger.”

Maja Kristine Jåma

Stand up for Maja's and the other Sami reindeer herders' right to cultural practice – sign our petition!

Amnesty calls on the Norwegian government to:

- Comply with the Supreme Court's judgement by stopping the ongoing human rights violation and repairing the damage that has been done, so that the Sami of Fosen can resume their cultural practice.

The signatures will be sent to the Norwegian prime minister, Jonas Gahr Støre.

Appeal letter:

Prime Minister Jonas Gahr Støre
Prime Minister's Office
PO Box 8001 Dep.
0030 Oslo
Norway
postmottak@smk.dep.no

Dear Prime Minister Støre,

On 11 October 2021, the Norwegian Supreme Court found in a unanimous judgement that the government's license for the development of wind power in Fosen was invalid because the development interfered with the reindeer-herding Sami's right to practice their culture.

The right of indigenous peoples to practice their culture is protected by human rights, and the Supreme Court has ruled that the permission to build wind farms in Fosen is a human rights violation. Reindeer herding is an important basis of Sami language and culture, and the Southern Sami language is, according to UNESCO, seriously threatened. The wind power plants, with a total of 151 wind turbines, power lines, roads and other infrastructure, occupy half of the important winter pastures for the reindeer herding in Fosen.

In the Fosen judgment, the Supreme Court concludes that the granting of a license for wind farming violates the reindeer herders' rights under Article 27 of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (CCPR), and that the license is therefore invalid. The South Sami families' right to cultural practice has been violated by the permits for the wind power plants at Storheia and Roan.

Almost 500 days have now passed since the Supreme Court handed down the Fosen judgment, without any solution being in place. This human rights violation is ongoing as long as the right to cultural practice according to CCPR27 cannot be exercised. The State of Norway is responsible for securing these rights, which are also incorporated into Norwegian law through the Human Rights Act.

The Southern Sami reindeer herding families on the Fosen peninsula, who have been subjected to this ongoing human rights violation, still have to bear the brunt of the fact that the matter has not been resolved. This also puts pressure on them to accept solutions that the Supreme Court has already rejected as unacceptable.

I am concerned that Norway's important role as a champion of human rights in the international arena may lose much of its credibility and impact if it is not mirrored by uncompromising respect for human rights at home.

I urge the Norwegian government to comply with the Supreme Court's judgement without further delay and to stop and repair the ongoing human rights violation, so that the Fosen Sámi can again exercise their human right to cultural practice according to CCPR27.

Yours sincerely

The Fosen case and human rights:

- The right of indigenous peoples and minorities to practice their culture is protected by human rights. The Supreme Court has ruled that the Fosen wind farms have been built in violation of human rights as reindeer herding is an important basis of Sami language and culture.
- In its judgment, the Supreme Court has concluded that the government's decision to grant a concession for the wind farms violated the reindeer owners' rights under Article 27 of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR), and that the concessions therefore are invalid. The South Sami families' right to cultural practice has been violated by the permits for the wind farms at Storheia and Roan.
- The Supreme Court handed down the Fosen judgment on 11 October 2021, and there is still no solution in place. This violation of human rights is ongoing as long as the right to cultural practice according to international human rights law cannot be fulfilled. The State of Norway has a duty to respect and fulfill its obligations under the ICCPR, which is also incorporated into Norwegian law through the Norwegian Human Rights Act.

Sami:

- The Sami are an indigenous people who have their traditional settlement areas in Norway, Sweden, Finland and Russia.
- In the Nordic countries, ethnicity is not registered, so there are no official figures on how many Sami there are. But it is assumed that there are between 40,000 and 60,000 Sami living in Norway. The majority live in what is considered the traditional Sami settlement area in central and northern Norway.
- As is the case with other indigenous peoples, the Sami's traditional economy is closely linked to nature and an important fundament of their language and culture. Fishing, hunting, trapping, gathering, crafts and reindeer husbandry are central to Sami tradition.
- There are traditionally eleven different Sami languages.

Source: Store norske leksikon, snl.no