



SOCIETY FOR
THREATENED
PEOPLES

ARCTIC LIFE, INDIGENOUS RIGHTS ~~~~~

NOW!

February 2021

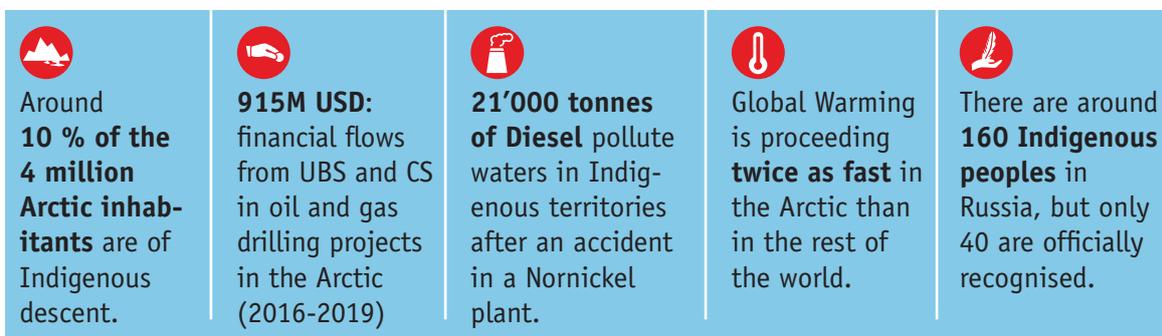
Arctic Indigenous peoples and the challenges of their survival

The vast territories surrounding the Arctic Ocean seem rather inhospitable for cultures to survive. However, Indigenous communities have settled in this area and managed to live in this harsh climate of ice and snow for centuries. Around 10 percent of the 4 million Arctic inhabitants are of Indigenous descent.¹

The Arctic region, as defined in the Arctic Council's Arctic Human Development Report², encompasses Alaska, Northern Canada, Greenland, the Faroe Islands, Iceland, Northern Norway, Sweden and Finland and the Northern regions of the Russian Federation.³ The Arctic is an area rich in natural resources, such as oil and natural gas, as well as minerals like iron ore, copper, nickel, zinc, phosphates and diamonds.⁴ The melting permafrost makes the natural resources of the region more easily accessible. Many of the minerals abundant in the Arctic region are key components of Lithium Ion batteries, the demand of which is expected to rise by 25% annually until 2030. The main driver of this increase is the growing global market for electric passenger cars.⁵

Consequently, there is increasing investment in infrastructure and resource extraction projects in the Arctic region. Estimates from Bloomberg convey Russia to be the major investor in the region, followed by the US and Canada. Planned, in process and finished Arctic infrastructure projects would require as much as US\$ 1 trillion in investment capital.⁶ Swiss banks are also involved in the financing process of such projects. Credit Suisse invested a total of US\$ 622 million in Arctic oil and gas companies between 2016 and 2019, whereas UBS invested US\$ 292 million during the same period.⁷ In the meantime, UBS has declared to stop financing offshore drilling in the Arctic⁸, while Credit Suisse has committed to stop financing Arctic drilling altogether⁹. In December 2020, the Geneva based trading company Trafigura announced the acquisition of a 10% interest in Vostok Oil¹⁰, a project in the Russian Arctic highly criticised by environmentalists.¹¹ In Norway, Credit Suisse offered its services as a nominee shareholder to a customer for the Nussir copper mine project, which is to be built on Indigenous peoples' territories. As of today, Credit Suisse has withdrawn its involvement, but the mining project is still ongoing.

Facts and figures



1 Arctic Council: Arctic Peoples, 2020, available at: <https://arctic-council.org/en/explore/topics/arctic-peoples/>

2 Einersson, Niels et al.: Arctic Human Development Report 2004, available at: https://pame.is/mema/MEMAdatabase/349_Arctic%20Human%20Development%20Report.pdf

3 The regions are Murmansk Oblast, the Nenets, Yamalo-Nenets, Taimyr, and Chukotka autonomus okrugs, Vorkuta City in the Komi Republic, Norilsk and Igrska in Krasnoyarsky Krai, and those parts of the Sakha Republic whose boundaries lie closest to the Arctic Circle.

4 National Ocean Economic Program: Arctic Natural Resources, 22.08.2017, available at: <https://www.oceaneconomics.org/arctic/NaturalResources/>

5 World Economic Forum and Global Battery Alliance: A Vision for a Sustainable Battery Value Chain in 2030. Unlocking the Full Potential to Power Sustainable Development and Climate Change Mitigation, Insight Report, September 2019, available at: http://www3.weforum.org/docs/WEF_A_Vision_for_a_Sustainable_Battery_Value_Chain_in_2030_Report.pdf

6 Roston, Eric: How a Melting Arctic Changes Everything. Part III: The Economic Arctic, Bloomberg, 29.12.2017, available at: <https://www.bloomberg.com/graphics/2017-arctic/the-economic-arctic/>

7 Rainforest Action Network, BankTrack, Indigenous Environment Network, Oil Change International, Reclaim Finance, Sierra Club: Banking on climate change. Fossil fuel finance report 2020.

8 Anchorage Daily News: UBS bank won't finance new offshore Arctic oil and gas projects, 06.03.2020, available at: <https://www.adn.com/business-economy/energy/2020/03/06/ubs-bank-wont-finance-new-offshore-arctic-oil-and-gas-projects/>

9 Reuters: Credit Suisse earmarks more than \$300 billion for sustainable finance, 01.08.2020, available at: <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-credit-suisse-gp-sustainability/credit-suisse-earmarks-more-than-300-billion-for-sustainable-finance-idINKCN24V1M3>

10 Trafigura: Trafigura acquires 10 percent of Vostok Oil, 30.12.2020, available at: <https://www.trafigura.com/press-releases/trafigura-acquires-10-percent-of-vostok-oil>

11 The Moscow Times: Russia's Rosneft Announces Start of Vast Arctic Oil Project, 26.11.2020, available at: <https://www.themoscowtimes.com/2020/11/26/vostok-a72149>

Due to the expansion of extractive industries and the development of infrastructure, traditional territories of Indigenous communities are coming under increasing pressure in several Arctic states. In Scandinavia, the construction of wind parks, railways, streets and settlements for workers cut up reindeer pastures and bring social disruptions to Indigenous communities. The pressure of the oil and gas, timber and mining industries on the land and life of Indigenous reindeer herders is also continuously growing.¹² Gwich'in communities in northern Alaska keep up their fight against oil and gas drilling in the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge, a crucial area for their traditional porcupine caribou herding.¹³ In Northern Siberia, oil spills, environmental pollution and the construction of roads, oil and gas pipelines, railways and sea ports are transforming Indigenous land, destroying the habitat of reindeers and threatening the way of life and livelihood of the Indigenous peoples. The massive diesel oil spill in one of the Norilsk Nickel (Nornickel) operations in May 2020 on the Taimyr Peninsula in Northern Russia is a sad example of this development: 21'000 tonnes of diesel polluted the watersheds on the Taimyr Peninsula,^{14 15} an area that is inhabited by many Indigenous communities. Nornickel holds a subsidiary in the Swiss canton Zug, Metal Trade Overseas AG. According to Nornickel's annual report 2019, Nornickel is selling its complete production from Russia and Finland through the trading subsidiary Metal Trade Overseas AG to countries in Europe, Asia or the US.¹⁶



Nickel factory in Norilsk (Photo: Ninara, Flickr: CC BY 2.0)

“The diesel fuel spill by Nornickel is a major environmental disaster for the Taimyr peninsula and the Arctic. For the Indigenous peoples of Taimyr, who are engaged in traditional activities – fishing and hunting – this has become a disaster, as their rivers and lakes are polluted. It is possible that these lakes and rivers will not have any life for a long time. We must remember that access to traditional resources (fish, wildlife) for Indigenous peoples is access to food.”

Pavel Sulyandziga (Aborigen Forum)



12 Nilsen, Thomas: Miners hunting for metals to battery cars threaten Sámi reindeer herders' homeland, The Barents Observer, 9.07.2020, available at: <https://thebarentsobserver.com/en/node/7082>

13 Hanlon, Tegan: Gwich'in, conservation groups ask court to block ANWR oil leasing, Alaska Public Media, 15.12.2020, available at: <https://www.alaskapublic.org/2020/12/15/gwichin-environmental-groups-ask-court-to-block-anwr-oil-leasing/>

14 Staalesen, Atle: Environmental catastrophe is declared as one of biggest ever Arctic oil spills stretches out over Taymyr tundra, The Barents Observer, 4.06.2020, available at: <https://thebarentsobserver.com/en/arctic-ecology/2020/06/environmental-catastrophe-declared-one-biggest-ever-arctic-oil-spills>

15 Duparc, Agathe: Serien-Umweltsünder Norilsk Nickel vertreibt seine Metalle von Zug aus, In: Intransparenz, Skandale, Prozesse: die Schweiz und ihre Rohstoffhändler, Public Eye Magazin Nr. 25, September 2020.

16 ibid.



Sami reindeer herder (Photo: Society for Threatened Peoples)

“We strongly feel the resource rush in the Arctic. There is a very problematic power imbalance between the Indigenous communities and the private sector: The Arctic is a sparsely populated area with a lot of Indigenous communities. At the same time, a lot of people leave the area, searching for better opportunities in more urban areas. On the other hand, the private sector accommodates new industrial projects in the area, suppressing the Indigenous communities. The communities are weak and have little power to speak up against this development. In addition, now for the first time there is a moral argument for the land grabbing taking place: global warming and the need for a 'green transition'. This new moral argument is used to justify the industrialisation of the Arctic in order to extract minerals for batteries or build new wind power plants. It's the foundation of a very unfair climate action. Our hope lies in the young people. They have both the sense and understanding of the issue and they have the will and determination to change the situation.”

Silje Karine Muotka (Member of the Sami Parliament in Norway)



Not only do Indigenous communities in the Arctic bear the burden of the “green transition”, they are also suffering disproportionately from the effects of climate change despite having contributed only marginally. Temperatures in the Arctic are rising twice as fast as in the rest of the world.¹⁷ According to the latest findings, the Arctic could be ice-free in summer as early as 2035.¹⁸ Climate change is modifying the sequence of rain and snow, thaw and frost, so that reindeer herding becomes more challenging as reindeers often are no longer able to find food.¹⁹ Record high temperatures in the Siberian tundra are leading to massive wildfires.²⁰

17 World Ocean Review: The pathways of heat, 2019, available at: <https://worldoceanreview.com/en/wor-6/climate-change-impacts-in-the-polar-regions/the-pathways-of-heat/>

18 Borunda: Arctic summer sea ice could disappear as early as 2035: Study, National Geographic, 13.08.2020, available at: <https://www.nationalgeographic.com/science/2020/08/arctic-summer-sea-ice-could-be-gone-by-2035/>

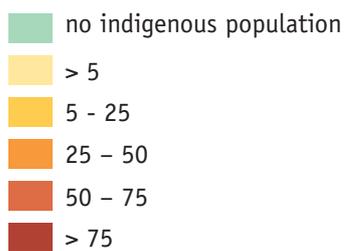
19 Bangert, Yvonne, Özge Özden, Tilia Götze: Indigene Völker der Arktis: zwischen Klimawandel und Rohstoffboom, Gesellschaft für bedrohte Völker, Göttingen 2020.

20 Vallentin, Claudia: Feuer, wo Eis sein sollte, Zeit Online, 1.08.2020, available at: <https://www.zeit.de/wissen/2020-07/waldbraende-sibirien-russland-hitze-welle-klimawandel-polarkreis-permafrost-arktis>

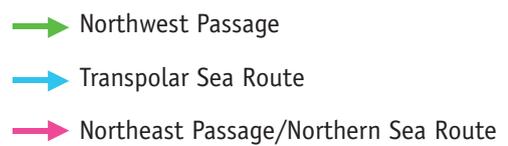
The run for the Arctic



Indigenous population as a share of total population, in %



Sea and trade routes:



Sources: Indigenous population in the Arctic | Nordregio

Sources: Economist, Norwegian Polar Institute



Geopolitical context

The Arctic region is subject to ongoing competition among the Arctic states for political, economic and geostrategic dominance in the region.²¹ Additionally, China is aiming for more influence in the region and has increased its fleet of icebreakers and its participation in infrastructure and resource extraction projects.²² Moreover, it has strengthened its strategic partnership with Russia.²³

The melting ice not only creates better conditions for resource extraction activities and construction of infrastructure, but also for shipping activities. It is expected that multiple sea routes will be ice-free for several weeks in summer in a decade or two, as a result of which increased commercial trade activities will take place. The international trade routes in the Arctic are the Northwest Passage (NWP), the Northeast Passage (NEP), including the Northern Sea Route (NSR), the Transpolar Sea Route (expected to be open to shipping traffic in 2030) (see map above) and the Arctic Bridge. These routes shorten the distance between the ports of Europe and East Asia compared to routes via the Suez or Panama Canals.²⁴ Up to two thirds of the ship traffic currently passing through the Suez Canal would eventually be redirected through the Arctic via the NSR. This will make the Arctic one of the busiest global trading routes, leading to increased economic and geopolitical interest in the region.²⁵

An important geopolitical institution in the region is the Arctic Council, the leading intergovernmental forum established in 1996.²⁶ It aims at promoting cooperation, coordination and interaction among the Arctic States, Arctic Indigenous communities and other Arctic inhabitants on common Arctic issues, in particular sustainable development and environmental protection. Its member states are Canada, Denmark, Finland, Iceland, Norway, Russia, Sweden and the US. In addition, there are organizations representing Arctic Indigenous peoples as permanent members in the Council.²⁷ Moreover, several non-Arctic states, intergovernmental and inter-parliamentary organizations and non-governmental organizations have observer status, which allows them to participate in working groups and gives them the opportunity to make statements.²⁸ Switzerland joined the Arctic Council in 2017 as an observer state, primarily due to its scientific expertise in polar regions.²⁹

The chairmanship of the Arctic Council rotates every two years among the member states. Iceland is currently chairing the Arctic Council until the Ministerial meeting in May 2021. The next chairmanship will be held by Russia until 2023.³⁰

21 Bangert, Yvonne, Özge Özden, Tilia Götze: Indigene Völker der Arktis: zwischen Klimawandel und Rohstoffboom, Gesellschaft für bedrohte Völker, Göttingen 2020.

22 Shagina, Maria and Benno Zogg: Arctic Matters: Sino-Russian Dynamics, CSS Analyses in Security Policy, No. 270, 2020, available at: <https://css.ethz.ch/content/dam/ethz/special-interest/gess/cis/center-for-securities-studies/pdfs/CSSAnalyse270-EN.pdf>

23 Perovic, Jeronim and Brenno Zogg: Russia and China: The Potential of Their Partnership, CSS Analyses in Security Policy, No. 250, 2019, available at: <https://css.ethz.ch/content/dam/ethz/special-interest/gess/cis/center-for-securities-studies/pdfs/CSSAnalyse250-EN.pdf>

24 *ibid.*

25 Bekkers, Eddy, Joseph F. Francois and Hugo Rojas-Romagos: Melting Ice Caps and the Economic Impact of Opening the Northern Sea Route, CPB Netherlands Bureau for Economic Policy Analysis, CPB Discussion Paper 307, 2015, available at: <https://www.cpb.nl/sites/default/files/publicaties/download/cpb-discussion-paper-307-melting-ice-caps-and-economic-impact-opening-northern-sea-route.pdf>

26 Arctic Council: About, 2020, available at: <https://arctic-council.org/en/about/>

27 These are the Aleut International Association (AIA), Arctic Athabaskan Council (AAC), Gwich'in Council International (GCI), Inuit Circumpolar Council (ICC), the Russian Association of Indigenous Peoples of the North (RAIPON) and the Saami Council.

28 The Arctic Council: About, 2020, available at: <https://arctic-council.org/en/about/>

29 Stünzi, Anna and Benno Zogg: Switzerland and the Arctic: Closer Than You Think, Foraus Policy Paper, Foraus, October 2020.

30 *ibid.*

Legal situation of Indigenous peoples in the Arctic region

The rights of Indigenous peoples are protected under international law through two main instruments:

→ The United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (UNDRIP), which was adopted by the General Assembly in 2007. This Declaration is the most comprehensive international instrument on the rights of Indigenous peoples. It establishes minimum standards for the dignity, well-being and survival of the Indigenous peoples of the world by applying existing human rights standards and fundamental freedoms to their specific situation.³¹

→ The Indigenous and Tribal Peoples Convention (No. 169), also known as ILO Convention 169, which was adopted in 1989 by the International Labour Organisation (ILO). So far, it has been ratified by twenty-three nations. It is the only international treaty open for ratification that deals exclusively with the rights of Indigenous peoples.³²

Most of the Arctic states are considered as Western democracies with solid human rights standards. However, among the Arctic states, only Norway and Denmark have ratified the ILO Convention 169 concerning Indigenous peoples. The UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (UNDRIP) is now adopted by Denmark, Finland, Norway, Sweden, the US and Canada. Russia abstained in the vote in 2007.³³ Both instruments of international law guarantee the right to self-determination of Indigenous peoples regarding projects that may affect them or their territories based on the concept of Free, Prior and Informed Consent (FPIC). FPIC is a widely accepted right, principle and process to be applied in relations between Indigenous Peoples and those who have competing interests for their land and resources. It is an expression of the right to self-determination, including respect for the collective decision-making processes of Indigenous communities. A key component of FPIC is that negotiations between Indigenous communities and other interest groups need to take place in good faith and with mutual respect and equality.³⁴

Although formally effective, the FPIC remains a dead letter in many cases, even in the global North. Particularly worrying is the situation of Indigenous peoples in Russia.

Case Study: Indigenous Peoples in Russia

The Russian Federation officially recognizes forty peoples of the North, Siberia and the Far East as indigenous, even though more than 160 peoples inhabit the territories of the country. The 1999 Russian Federal Act “On Guarantees of the Rights of the Indigenous minority peoples of the Russian Federation” defines Indigenous minority peoples as groups with less than 50,000 members who are living in a traditional way and inhabiting the northern and Asian parts of the country. Peoples with more than 50,000 members that have adapted a more modern lifestyle or live in more urban areas are denied official recognition. Other framework laws guarantee that Indigenous minority peoples have the right to consultation and participation in specific cases, although this excludes issues related to land and natural resources. Even though the Constitution of the Russian Federation allows different forms of land and natural resource ownership (private, municipal, state, etc.), most of the land and subsoil resources remain under state control. Indigenous peoples have the right to use land and natural resources, but the latter officially remain state property. The concept of Free, Prior and Informed Consent (FPIC) is not enshrined in Russian legislation.³⁵ The contradictory laws and regulations and their lacking or arbitrary enforcement de facto grants no rights to Indigenous peoples.³⁶

31 United Nations: United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, 2020, available at: <https://www.un.org/development/desa/indigenouspeoples/declaration-on-the-rights-of-indigenous-peoples.html>

32 International Labour Organization: Indigenous and tribal peoples, 2020, available at: <https://www.ilo.org/global/topics/indigenous-tribal/lang-en/index.htm>

33 United Nations: United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, 2020, available at: <https://www.un.org/development/desa/indigenouspeoples/declaration-on-the-rights-of-indigenous-peoples.html>

34 Forest Stewardship Council: Implementing free, prior, and informed consent (FPIC): A Forest Stewardship Council Discussion Paper, 2018.

35 Murashko, Olga and Johannes Rohr: Indigenous World 2019: Russia, IWGIA 24.04.2019, available at: <https://www.iwgia.org/en/russia/3369-iw2019-russia.html>

36 The World Bank: Indigenous Peoples of Russia Country Profile. June 2014, available at: <http://documents1.worldbank.org/curated/en/537061468059052611/pdf/891510WPOBox380qual0ftipbook06B0WEB.pdf>

The fact that the Russian Federation has also not ratified the ILO Convention 169 and abstained from voting on the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (UNDRIP) indicates that Russia does not have any intentions of incorporating the rights of Indigenous peoples into its own legislation.³⁷

The “Law on Territories of Traditional Nature Use” (TTNU), adopted in 2001, is the only federal Russian law affording some form of recognition to Indigenous peoples’ land tenure. The law was established to protect traditional indigenous economic activities and to preserve indigenous culture. However, the lack of a mechanism to implement the TTNU rights, jurisdictional ambiguity and the weakness of the regional governments vis-à-vis the federal government are serious impediments to the protection of Indigenous peoples’ rights.³⁸ State and extractive companies use legal instruments to disempower Indigenous communities as well as apply pressure through the police or intelligence agencies.^{39 40} The industries are moving closer to Indigenous territories and increasingly evict Indigenous peoples from their own lands.⁴¹

The case of RAIPON, the Russian Association of Indigenous Peoples of the North

RAIPON, the official and biggest Indigenous organization of Russia, was officially closed in November 2012 on the grounds of the claim that the structure of the organisation did not comply with the Russian Federation’s legal requirements. Following strong worldwide protests, the organisation reopened but lost its independence and is now under State control.⁴² The current president of RAIPON, Grigory Ledkov, is a representative of the Putin-led party “United Russia” in the Russian parliament. Although RAIPON claims to represent the Indigenous peoples of Russia at the Arctic Council, it is no longer supported by independent Indigenous communities and therefore it has no legitimation to represent them. Its focus is now only on defending and valuing the cultural diversity of Indigenous peoples in Russia, while it hides rather than exposes the problems of Indigenous peoples and their rights. As a consequence, many Russian Indigenous representatives left RAIPON and founded the network “Aborigin Forum”.

Aborigin Forum

Aborigin Forum is an informal alliance or network of 39 independent experts, activists, leaders and community organisations of Indigenous peoples from fourteen regions of the North, Siberia and the Far East of the Russian Federation. Focusing on the protection and realisation of the Indigenous peoples’ rights, Aborigin Forum analyses legislation and monitors the state of land rights of Indigenous communities. In addition, it develops partnerships with other organisations for international cooperation and it works with authorities at all levels. In order to voice their opinion, the members of Aborigin Forum take part in various events in Russia and abroad.⁴³

37 Murashko, Olga and Johannes Rohr: Indigenous World 2019: Russia, IWGIA 24.04.2019, available at: <https://www.iwgia.org/en/russia/3369-iw2019-russia.html>

38 Russian Federation: Indigenous Peoples, Self-determination and Land Rights, 2020.

39 *ibid.*

40 Reflection on the Influence of the Current Political Development in Russia on Indigenous Peoples’ Land Rights, In: Indigenous Peoples’ Rights and Unreported Struggles: Conflict and Peace, Institute for the Study of Human Rights, Columbia University, 2017.

41 Russian Federation: Indigenous Peoples, Self-determination and Land Rights, 2020.

42 Bangert, Yvonne, Özge Özden, Tilia Götze: Indigene Völker der Arktis: zwischen Klimawandel und Rohstoffboom, Gesellschaft für bedrohte Völker, Göttingen 2020.

43 Indigenous Russia: Aborigin-Forum, 2020, available at: <https://indigenous-russia.com/aborigen-forum>



River polluted by diesel oil, in Taimyr. (Photo: provided)

“Aborigin Forum brings together indigenous leaders, community representatives, experts with vast experience in practical and research work at local, Russian and international levels. These people have always spoken honestly and openly about everything that happens to Indigenous peoples – their rights, development, and problems. Since the Russian authorities destroyed independent indigenous organizations and subjugated almost all remaining NGOs, turning them into GoNGOs⁴⁴, Aborigin Forum is almost the only organization that defends the rights of Indigenous peoples and has its own independent voice.”

Pavel Sulyandziga (Aborigin Forum)



On 6 August 2020, the alliance wrote a letter to Elon Musk, CEO of Tesla, asking him not to procure nickel, copper and other products from the Russian mining company Nornickel, which caused significant environmental damage in the Taimyr Peninsula in May 2020.⁴⁵ The network also launched a campaign appealing to Elon Musk to raise awareness of Nornickel’s impacts on the Indigenous communities and to demand restitution of their environment. Later, on 30 September 2020, more than 70 NGOs signed a second letter urging Tesla to respect Indigenous rights in its supply chain by not buying nickel from Nornickel until the company makes an effort to respect the standards set out by the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples.⁴⁶

⁴⁴ Government sponsored NGOs, as explained by Foreign Policy: <https://foreignpolicy.com/2009/10/13/what-is-a-gongo/>

⁴⁵ An appeal of Aborigin-Forum network to Elon Musk, the head of Tesla company, 2020, available at: <https://indigenous-russia.com/archives/5785>

⁴⁶ Aborigin Forum, Arctic Consult, Cultural Survival and Indigenous Peoples Rights International: Organization Sign-On Letter to Tesla: Respect Indigenous Peoples in your Supply Chain, 29.07.2020, verfügbar unter: <https://indigenous-russia.com/archives/8244>

Russian Arctic strategy and Arctic Council chairmanship

The Russian government is strongly promoting investment in its Arctic regions. A new development strategy for the Arctic zone, initiated in October 2020, has been put into effect until 2035. This Arctic development strategy is to be considered an updated state program for national economic development based on extensive exploitation of natural resources. The upcoming chairmanship in the Arctic Council will facilitate the promotion of these development plans and the increase of Russia's political power. However, this development strategy does not respect the land rights of the Indigenous peoples of the Arctic region nor the environment. It raises deep concerns among the Indigenous communities, who demand a different approach, wherein the Russian North is no longer marginalized and treated in a colonial manner.



Reindeer sledges (Photo: provided)

“Unfortunately, the Russian government’s statements about the upcoming chairmanship of the Arctic Council indicate that the same policy of propaganda and lies will continue. Therefore, one should not expect anything real with regard to the observance of the rights of Indigenous peoples in Russia. Statements such as ‘Russia has all the prerequisites to become a leader in the Arctic region’ testify to this. And the Arctic Strategy once again emphasizes that Russia’s priority will be to siphon off natural resources by any means necessary, while the Indigenous peoples of Russia are assigned the role of dancing and singing dummies with no rights (...).”

Pavel Sulyandziga (Aborigen Forum)





Conclusion

In recent years, the Arctic received increasing attention due to the impact of global warming, the race for natural resources, which has intensified territorial disputes, and the growing geopolitical tensions that are likely to escalate because of the new transport routes. This affects the Indigenous communities and poses a threat to their culture and livelihood, which often depends on hunting and fishing. Resource extraction and infrastructure projects in the Arctic region should respect Indigenous rights, especially the right to Free, Prior and Informed Consent (FPIC).

Of special concern is the situation of the Indigenous communities in the Russian Arctic. Their legal situation is deteriorating and many Indigenous activists fear repression if they raise their voices against development projects in their territories. The Arctic Council is the institution that should avert conflicts of interest in the region, given its role is to promote cooperation between Indigenous peoples and other inhabitants and stakeholders of the Arctic. However, the Russian Association of Indigenous Peoples of the North (RAIPON), the representative of the Indigenous peoples of Russia at the Arctic Council, is strongly tied to the state and no longer represents the needs and interests of the Indigenous peoples in the country. In light of the upcoming chairmanship of Russia in the Arctic Council, other member states and observers need to closely monitor the human rights situation of Russian Indigenous communities. Also, any development project in the Arctic has to be discussed with the affected communities and the principle of Free, Prior and Informed Consent (FPIC) must be respected.



Demands of the Society for Threatened Peoples (STP)

To the Russian Federation as a member state of the Arctic Council:

- Adopt the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (UNDRIP) and ratify the UN Convention 169 of the International Labour Organisation (ILO 169).
- Incorporate UNDRIP and ILO 169 rules in Russian legislation, particularly the right to Free, Prior and Informed Consent (FPIC).
- Incorporate and respect the rights of Indigenous peoples within Russia's Arctic Strategy.
- End the criminalisation of Indigenous organisations, activists and human rights defenders.

To Switzerland and Germany as observer states at the Arctic Council:

- Assume responsibility within the Arctic Council and show active engagement for the rights of Indigenous peoples.
- Give special attention to the situation of Indigenous peoples in the Russian Arctic, especially with regard to the Russian Arctic Strategy and Russia's upcoming chairmanship of the Arctic Council.
- Seek to align commercial activities and regional development in the Arctic with the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), which would benefit the local population, including Indigenous peoples, and be in the interest of Switzerland's engagement to mitigate climate change.

To corporations operating in the Arctic region:

- Respect and recognize the rights of Indigenous peoples, especially the right to Free, Prior and Informed Consent (FPIC).
- Terminate trade in raw materials sourced under conditions that lead to violations of Indigenous peoples' rights in the Arctic, especially their right to Free, Prior and Informed Consent (FPIC).
- Conduct appropriate human rights and environmental due diligence.

To financial institutions:

- End any investment in companies that violate the rights of Indigenous peoples in the Arctic.
- End any investment in projects that are harmful to Indigenous peoples in the Arctic and their environment.
- End any investment in oil and gas and other extractive industry in the Arctic territories of Indigenous peoples.
- Use of leverage to enhance the rights of Indigenous peoples in the Arctic.

Imprint

Publisher: Society for Threatened Peoples Switzerland

Birkenweg 61, 3013 Bern

www.gfbv.ch / info@gfbv.ch / Phone: 0041 31 939 00 00

Donations: Berner Kantonalbank BEKB / IBAN CH05 0079 0016 2531 7232 1

Publication date: February 2021

With the STP for human rights

The Society for Threatened Peoples (STP) is an international human rights organisation that supports minorities and indigenous peoples. It documents human rights abuses, informs and sensitises the public, and represents the interests of victims against authorities and decision makers. It supports local efforts to improve the human rights situation for minorities and indigenous peoples, and works together, both nationally and internationally, with organisations and people that are pursuing similar goals. The STP has advisory status both at the Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC) of the UN and at the Council of Europe.

Do you want to get involved? Please support us!

Our engagement is only possible with your support. With your membership or donation, we support minorities and indigenous peoples throughout the world.

Register at: www.gfbv.ch/en/support-actively

Thank you very much!

