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| Finland: Demand to Stop Mining Saami Land  |
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**Finland violates the rights of the Sámi people by allowing mining companies in Sámi homeland**

The Saami Council echoes the concerns of the Ergon Sámi siida in the North Western Enontekiö area and other Sámi communities regarding the news of a Dutch-owned mineral exploration company Akkerman Finland Oy attempting to enter the Finnish side of Sápmi, without the indigenous Sámi rights holders, such as reindeer herding siidas, being officially separately informed about the reservation.

The reservation (name: Hietakero, reservation notification permit code: VA2020:0007) that is given to the company must be withdrawn. The Sámi rights holders receiving information regarding the reservation decision on their pastures in practice only through a newspaper announcement is not acceptable, and this practice does not comply with international legal framework on the rights of indigenous peoples, says Christina Henriksen, the President of the Saami Council.

The Saami Council’s main priority is to protect and promote Sámi communities’ rights to their traditional territories and livelihoods. It is unacceptable that, in the Sámi homeland in Finland, the process in the Mining Act of making a reservation for an area is a mere formality, and by doing so pose a threat to the Sámi languages, culture and livelihoods, and the existence of the indigenous Sámi people, says Henriksen.

According to the Mining Act in Finland, Finnish authorities (in this case, the Finnish Safety and Chemicals Agency – Tukes) are not obliged to separately notify the Sámi rights holders or the Sámi Parliament in Finland on the reservation decisions in the the Saami homeland. This, together with court rulings during the recent years (such as SAC:2013:179), stating that Sámi rights holders and the Sámi Parliament are not entitled to file complaints on such decisions regarding the reservation of areas, is highly worrying with regard to the respect for the rights of the Sámi people in the Finnish side of Sápmi.

This practice is based on the false assumption that there are places in the Sámi homeland where a mine could be established without endangering the Sámi way of life, states the Saami Council.

The northwestern Enontekiö area faces heavy pressure from various mining interests and other large-scale interventions and plans, such as tourism, infrastructure, wind power etc. This is one of the rare areas on the Finnish side of Sápmi, where the key elements of traditional Sámi reindeer-herding, for example the year-round traditional siida system, have been preserved and are still maintained. However, the siida system is not recognized in the Finnish legislation.

The Saami Council considers the recent court rulings, and the current practice demonstrated, as highly worrying precedents. The Saami Council calls for the amendment of the Mining Act of Finland, to ensure that the rights of the Sámi people are protected in every stage of every process.

Finland voted for the United Nation Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (UNDRIP) in 2007, but still has not recognized the land rights of the Sámi people. The Saami Council urges Finland to seize the opportunity to implement the UNDRIP, by ratifying the ILO Convention No 169 and making necessary amendments to the inadequate Mining Act, to make sure that the principle of free, prior of informed consent is included. That also includes the right to refrain from giving consent, says the President of the Saami Council.

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[Original article](https://www.saamicouncil.net/news-archive/finland-violates-the-rights-of-the-smi-people-by-allowing-mining-companies-in-smi-homeland?fbclid=IwAR3tEa2iUzalCSjsM9mzGyuyYT3uTAU8lUirGorZZm7a1rCxdpwIqhqpjLk)