

Indigenous Arctic Population Accuses Russian Authorities of Rights Violations

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An indigenous population of Russia's Far North has appealed to the United Nations with claims that Russian authorities violated their rights by giving their historic land to a hunting club.

An estimated 80,000 Sami [live](#) in the northern lands of Sweden, Finland, Norway and Russia's Murmansk region, where reindeer herding has been the cornerstone of their culture and livelihood. Earlier this year, the Murmansk region's environmental authorities issued a 30-year lease for almost 73,000 hectares of Sami land to the Belgorod Hunting Club.

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In a letter to the UN, the Sami people accused the Murmansk region's administration of violating their indigenous rights by giving away land that is traditionally used for reindeer pastures, the investigative Novaya Gazeta newspaper [reported](#) on Friday.

The indigenous group invited experts from the UN Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues to visit their district and help establish a dialogue between the Sami and local authorities, Interfax [reported](#) on Monday.

The head of the hunting club [told](#) Russia's Daily Storm news website that it had "passed every inspection" and is operating legally.

The Sami had unsuccessfully lobbied President Vladimir Putin to intervene in the land transfer, Novaya Gazeta [reported](#) in February.

Reuters contributed reporting to this article.

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