

Riddu Riđđu

15 July, 2023,
2 pm CET

Seminar: The war's impact on Indigenous peoples of Russia

Co-organized by

International Committee of Indigenous Peoples of Russia (ICIPR)

60 – 75 minutes

Interpretation: English / Russian

Context

Russia's military attack on Ukraine has significantly impacted the life of Indigenous Peoples in Russia. One of the implications of this situation is that some Indigenous representatives who have openly opposed Russia's actions in Ukraine, have had to leave their native land for security reasons. For Indigenous peoples, the connection to their land is an integral part of their culture.

Sápmi is the territory where the Sámi people lived before the current state borders were established. At present, Sápmi stretches across four nation states – Norway, Finland, Sweden and Russia.

Three Sámi activists who fled Russia after the full-scale invasion of the Russian army to Ukraine are asylum seekers in Norway, living in refugee camps among other refugees. The side event will address the impact of the war on relations between the Sámi in Russia and the Sámi in Norway, Sweden and Finland, as well as the current situation of the Indigenous Peoples of the North, Siberia and the Far East in the context of the war.

Since the Russian aggression started on February 24, 2022, indigenous communities of Russia have been disproportionately affected: In Ukraine, members of indigenous communities are dying in the war; being originated from the poorest "ethnic" regions of Russia, they are vulnerable in front of military mobilisation. Besides, Indigenous Peoples within Russia are also suffering from the economic and political consequences of the war; the activists are experiencing unprecedented pressure from the government.

During the seminar at Riddu Riđđu, the representatives of the Sámi People of Kola Peninsula will share their personal stories and views on the current situation.

Agenda

1. Introduction of the seminar & moderation:
 - Dmitry Berezhkov (founder of the International Committee of Indigenous Peoples of Russia (ICIPR) - 3 min
2. Welcome remarks and background
 - Áslat Holmberg (President of the Saami Council) - 5 min
3. Speakers
 - Personal stories:
 - Andrei Danilov - 10 min
 - Aleksandr Slupachik - 10 min
 - Andrei Zhvavyi - 10 min
 - Valentina Sovkina - 10 min
4. Audience: Q&A (20 min)
5. Conclusion & closing

Participants

1. Andrei Danilov

Andrey represents the Sámi people of the Kola Peninsula. He joined the Sámi movement in 2003 – first the Saami Association of the Murmansk Region, later he became one of the founders of the Sámi national cultural autonomy in Monchegorsk. In 2008, he was elected to the Council of the Sámi Representatives of the Murmansk region (the Sámi Parliament of the Kola Peninsula) at the First Congress of the Sámi People. Since 2011, he has worked as a director of the Sámi Heritage and Development Fund. From 2013 to 2017, Andrey was a member and vice-president of the Sámi Council. In 2022, due to repressions from the Russian security service, he had to move to Norway seeking for political asylum.

2. Aleksandr Slupachik

Alexander Slupachik has been involved in the Sámi movement for many years. He was vice-chair and then chair of the Sámi organization (OOSMO). Alexander left Russia in 2022 due to the threats and political persecution related to his anti-war position and support for Ukraine.

3. Andrei Zhvavyi

Andrei Zhvavyi was born in Lovozero/Lujavvri – a Sámi reservation in Murmansk region, Russian side of Sápmi. From 2010 to 2021, he was a member of the organization Sámi Nuraš, from 2021 till now he is a member of the organization OOSMO. Due to the risk of forcible mobilization he left Russia. Last December he applied for political asylum in Norway.

4. Valentina Sovkina

Valentina is an Indigenous woman from Lovozero, the leader of the Sámi people. Currently an elected member of the UN Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues. Valentina is head of the international organization "Saami Women's Forum" ("Sámi nisson forum") and also director of Kola Saami Radio. Valentina has many years of experience as an Indigenous expert in Russia, a member of the network of Indigenous Peoples of Russia "Aborigin Forum".

5. Dmitry Berezhkov

Dmitry represents Itelmen Indigenous people from the Russian Far East. Since the late 1990s, he has become a youth activist in the indigenous movement in Kamchatka. After graduating from the pedagogical university in 2000, he worked as a geography teacher in a school for several years. Later he worked in the indigenous peoples' information center "Lach" in Petropavlovsk-Kamchatsky and since 2004 as a vice-president of the Russian Association of Indigenous Peoples of the North (RAIPON). In 2011 because of harassment from the Russian security service FSB, he was forced to move to Norway, where he received political asylum. Today he works as the head of the [Indigenous Russia](#) information center.