

Samerna

– ett ursprungsfolk eller en minoritet?

En studie av svensk samepolitik 1986-2005

av

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Abstract

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The point of departure for this study is the official recognition by the Swedish government in 1977 of the Sami as an indigenous people. This recognition was typical for its time in an international perspective. The 1970s saw a shift in the global discourse on the status of indigenous people that included recognition as something else than “mere” minorities. In the 1980s this development took institutionalised form when the UN appointed a Working Group on Indigenous Populations and gave it the task of drafting a declaration on indigenous peoples’ rights. This process ended in 2007 when the General Assembly adopted the Declaration and thereby recognised that, in addition to the traditional rights of minorities, such as cultural, linguistic and religious rights, indigenous peoples also have the right of self-determination and special rights to land. The global discourse of indigenous peoples’ rights is further strengthened by ILO Convention no 169 from 1989. During the same period, the UN have developed the global discourse on minority rights through its Declaration on the Rights of Persons Belonging to National or Ethnic, Religious and Linguistic Minorities from 1992. The minority discourse has also been developed regionally through the European Council’s Charter for Regional or Minority Languages (1993) and Framework Convention for the Protection of National Minorities (1995).

This study has analysed how the official Swedish discourse of the status and rights of the Sami have developed from 1986-2005, i.e. from the year when the Sami Rights Commission (appointed by the government to inquire what the recognised status of the Sami as an indigenous people might mean in practice) produced its first report on the status of the Sami, and compared that to the international development during the same period. The conclusion is that Sweden, a country otherwise propagating human rights internationally, have trouble adapting to the developing global discourse on indigenous peoples’ rights. It has not ratified ILO Convention no 169 due to issues of land rights and has not taken steps to implement other parts of the convention, leaving the global discourse of indigenous peoples outside Swedish Sami politics. In contrast, Sweden has ratified the two minority conventions of the European Council and has based its minority politics (which includes the Sami) on the conventions. Sweden has thereby clearly adapted to international standards regarding national minorities. For the Sami, this means that in addition to unique, but very limited, historical rights to the use of land, that do not live up to the standards set by the global indigenous rights discourse, they also have national minority rights. Discursively, this put the Sami in a position of being a “minority de luxe” rather than an indigenous people in Sweden.

Keywords: Peace and development studies, Sami, Sweden, indigenous peoples, minorities, self-determination, human rights, international law, nationalism, ethnicity, discourse analysis.