



NEWS RELEASE

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Anomaly Of UK Government Stance On Indigenous People Highlighted

The Scottish Crofting Foundation will present the research project "Crofters; Indigenous People of the Highlands and Islands" at the Parliamentary Crofting Cross Party Group today (27th). The report looks at parallels between Highland crofters and Norwegian Sami and some of the political implications of indigenous status.

Indigenous Peoples legislation has developed in response to the oppression of peoples' language, culture and way of life in colonial and postcolonial societies worldwide. Throughout the world recognition is growing and many indigenous people, including the Sami of north Norway, Sweden and Finland, now have their own elected representatives to determine policies that relate to their way of life.

The UK government refuses to ratify UN legislation on indigenous rights arguing that there are no indigenous peoples in the UK, though they have ratified legislation that recognises Gaelic as one of the indigenous languages of the UK; the curious case of the indigenous language that has survived despite there being, it is alleged, no indigenous people to speak it.

A fundamental tenet of the global indigenous peoples' movement has been self-determination on issues that are central to their way of life. In practical terms this means that indigenous people should have full participation when it comes to legislating and deciding on issues that pertain to them.

In Scotland crofters have historically suffered the same kinds of oppressive treatment as indigenous peoples globally in an effort to destroy their language, culture and way of life. Currently the region of the Highlands and Islands has its future determined by policy decisions made by civil servants based outwith the area, policy formers who, because of their commitment to wider government policies, may not be fully aware of, or committed to, the needs and aspirations of crofters and crofting communities. Even the Crofters Commission, whose remit is to "promote the interests of crofters", is appointed from Edinburgh without the participation of the Highland and Island people.

This report examines parallels between the Sami and Highlanders before arguing that the UK and Scottish Government should respect the norms of international law and give realistic support to crofters, as indigenous people of the Highlands and Islands, in order to protect and nourish their traditional way of life.

This call mirrors the recommendation made by OECD last week in a report on rural development in Scotland where they called for decision making to be decentralised.

END

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Notes to editors

SCF representatives will be available for comment in the Parliament foyer at 14.30

Picture can be found at: http://www.croftingfoundation.co.uk/index.php/contact_headoffice