

## **Presentation by Dr. Stefan Kirchner on Climate change and reindeer herding** <sup>[1]</sup>

In late August, HuSArctic team member Stefan Kirchner participated in a Skillshare on climate change organized by [350.org](http://350.org) <sup>[2]</sup><<http://350.org> <sup>[2]</sup>> and Sámi activists in Jokkmokk (Jåhkåmåhkke / Dálvvadis), on the Swedish side of Sápmi. Dr Kirchner, who is a practising human rights lawyer and who teaches human rights and indigenous rights at the University of Lapland in Rovaniemi, Finland, gave a presentation on climate change and reindeer herding and on the potential role of human rights as a tool in the fight against change. The emphasis of the presentation was on human rights not only in terms of litigation but also as an argumentative tool. The Skillshare was attended by about 40 young Sámi activists from across Sápmi. In the wake of the presentation, Stefan Kirchner was interviewed by Sveriges Radio on the future of indigenous rights in Sápmi, in particular in the absence of a ratification of ILO Convention No. 169 by Finland and Sweden. The presentation was based on Stefan Kirchner's article "Climate Change Effects on Snow Conditions and the Human Rights of Reindeer Herders" by Stefan Kirchner which is forthcoming in the *Pace Environmental Law Review*. No part of the world is as affected by climate change already today as it is the case with the Arctic. Already today, climate change has a massive impact on the Arctic and Sub-Arctic flora as well as on snow conditions. The changing climate conditions in the arctic and subarctic affect the vegetation as well as the amounts of snow and snow conditions in the area. This in turn influences the possibilities for reindeer to access lichen, a key ingredient of their diet. A particular problem is the thawing and re-freezing of snow which leads to a thick crust of ice on top of the snow. If this crust becomes too thick, reindeer, which can dig through the snow to access lichen, which they can sense below the snow, will not be able to dig through the ice and hence will not be able to feed. This effect is aggravated by changing herd structures which have seen an increase in the percentage of - smaller - female reindeer in herds. The lower weight of female reindeer and the relative absence of adult male reindeer increases the risk that no reindeer in a group will be able to dig through the ice and that all of the reindeer in a particular group will be unable to feed. The loss of tens of thousands of reindeer in such a situation in Russia in the winter of 2013-2014 is a stark reminder of the impact climate change already has today. In this article the issue is dealt with from the perspective of the human rights of reindeer herders. Already today, Sweden is providing financial support to reindeer herders who have to buy additional fodder. Subsidies, though, can lead to dependence and decrease resilience. Therefore this paper looks at climate-related state obligations in the context of cultural human rights of reindeer herders.





Tags:

[climate change](#) [3]

[reindeer herding](#) [4]

© HuSArctic.org 2018 - all rights reserved

---

Source URL (modified on Sep 25 2015 - 16:10):

<http://www.husarctic.org/en/news/presentation-dr-stefan-kirchner-climate-change-and-reindeer-herding>

Links

[1] <http://www.husarctic.org/en/news/presentation-dr-stefan-kirchner-climate-change-and-reindeer-herding>

[2] <http://350.org>

[3] <http://www.husarctic.org/en/tags/climate-change>

[4] <http://www.husarctic.org/en/tags/reindeer-herding>