# Demonstration in Oslo seeks removal of windfarms in Indigenous region

2023-2024

CPGE oral sessions with C. Hamard

# Ashifa Kassam, *theguardian.com*, 23 October 2023

# Hundreds of Indigenous and environmental campaigners have blocked a main thoroughfare in Oslo to demand the demolition of two windfarms that have been described by the Norwegian government as a “violation of human rights”. The Wednesday protest traces its roots to a landmark 2021 decision by Norway’s supreme court that found 151 wind turbines in the western region of Fosen had trampled on the rights of Sámi reindeer herders by encroaching on their pastures. While the court said the turbines’ expropriation and operating permits were invalid, it did not specify what should be done with the infrastructure. As a result, the 151 turbines continue to operate, making up part of Europe’s largest onshore windfarm, even as Sámi activists repeatedly call for their removal.

# “In this case there really isn’t an acceptable compromise,” said Ella Isaksen, a Sámi activist. “It’s really an absurd situation. Today on the second anniversary of the verdict, we have to drop everything and put our everyday lives on hold because we need to make sure that our own government is following its law.”

# The government’s reluctance to remove the turbines was “completely devastating”, she said. “It truly is a painful case. It feels like the government is really strategically removing the reindeer rearing culture. And it really scares a lot of young people because for us, our culture is everything. It really feels like we are nothing without our lands or our reindeer.”

# At a protest earlier this year, Greta Thunberg, who is due to join the protest on Thursday, was among those detained. At the time, the climate activist explained why she and others had rallied behind the Sámi. “We can’t use the so-called climate transition as a cover for colonialism,” Thunberg told the broadcaster TV2. “A climate transition that violates human rights is not a climate transition worthy of the name.”

# “I have apologised on behalf of the government to the reindeer herding districts for the fact that the permits constituted a violation of human rights,” the minister of petroleum and energy told a news conference. Even so, the government has so far resisted calls to tear down the turbines and restore the lands where dozens of kilometres of roads were built. In a recent social media post, Aasland appeared to rule out the possibility, writing that “the destruction of all wind turbines was excluded”.

# Instead, the government has thrown its weight behind a mediation process between the windfarms, which can reportedly power 100,000 Norwegian homes, and the herders.

# The outcome of the conflict is being watched closely across Norway as it could signal the fate of other projects under development, from mines to power lines, in the vast lands traditionally used by the Sámi.

# The head of the Norwegian branch of Young Friends of the Earth, welcomed the idea that the case could set a precedent. “I think it is important for politicians to note that industry can be moved but Indigenous people cannot.” (516 words)