

**UN High Commissioner for Human Rights Mrs. Michelle Bachelet Jeria,
UN Special Rapporteur on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples Mr. Francisco Cali Tzay,
Special Rapporteur on the right to food, Mr. Michael Fakhri
UN Expert Mechanism on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, UN Permanent Forum on
Indigenous Issues, UN Committee on the Rights of the Child**

As representatives of the Aborigen-Forum – a Russian network of the indigenous small-numbered peoples of the North, Siberia and the Far East, we ask you to look into the dire situation regarding the nutrition of the children of the indigenous minority Mansi people who live in the region of Sverdlovsk and study at Boarding School #3 in the village of Polunochny in the urban district of Ivdel.

Nine Mansi children live and study at this boarding school while their parents live far away in the forest and practice a traditional way of life (hunting, fishing). At school, these children do not receive the food which they normally eat with their parents prior to school age. As a result, their immune system suffers and they experience gastric and digestive problems (gastritis, lactose intolerance). The children cannot eat half of the food prescribed for them in the special school menu for Mansi and often go hungry. Specifically, they do not eat certain cereals, liver, gravy, milk porridge, pink salmon or black bread. Local authorities refused to supply traditional reindeer meat although there are many certified suppliers in the neighboring region, Khanty-Mansi Autonomous Okrug.

The children are not given food that they are able to eat or at least not in insufficient quantities, including meat (chicken, beef), river fish, eggs, butter for bread, vegetables, fruits and berries. We have evidence that the boarding school administration benefits from the large amounts of leftovers, because canteen staff uses them to barter with local livestock producers as livestock feed.

Due to low incomes and remoteness, the Mansi parents are unable to send food to their children. The boarding school administration refused to allow the fruit and juice which the parents tried to pass to their children through friends for fear of bad publicity.

The volunteer teacher who raised this issue and wrote about it in the media was forced to leave the village after the city administration summoned the police to put pressure on her (accusing her of inciting the children against the food and the educators)

The children do not have sufficient access to water for sanitation. The water pressure of the village's central water supply is insufficient, and the well at the school does not meet sanitary and epidemiological standards.

It should be noted that, apart from state funds for Mansi children, the boarding school receives additional funding from Polymetal International, a company which extracts minerals on the traditional lands of indigenous peoples. For some reason, these funds are insufficient to provide food, hygiene products, medicines and water for the Mansi children studying at the Polunochy village boarding school.

We kindly ask you to look into this situation and submit a written request to the Russian government asking authorities to take notice and resolve this problem. Indigenous children should not go hungry and suffer in our time, while major international corporations and the state receive huge revenues from mining on the traditional lands of the indigenous peoples.

**Best regards,
Gennady Shchukin Secretary of the Aborigen-Forum**

