

Some In Greenland Grow Tired Of Danish Colonialism



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Greenlanders are voicing renewed anger at Denmark’s colonial legacy, pointing to decades of forced contraception, child removals, and entrenched economic neglect that continue to shape life on the Arctic island — and to fuel calls for full independence.

In the capital, residents describe a society still grappling with trauma rooted in policies imposed from Copenhagen. One of them, Amarok Petersen, learned at age 27 why she had never been able to conceive. During treatment for severe uterine problems, doctors discovered an intrauterine device implanted without her knowledge when she was just 13 — part of a Danish population-control campaign that targeted thousands of Greenlandic girls and women from the 1960s through the 1990s.

“I will never have children,” Petersen [told](#) *The New York Post*. “That choice was taken from me.”

The damage did not end there. Petersen said she later underwent multiple surgeries for unexplained pain, only to be told years afterward that her fallopian tubes had been removed during one procedure in the early 2000s — again without her full consent.

Petersen said relatives were caught up in Denmark's "Little Danes experiment," a mid-20th-century program that forcibly removed Greenlandic children to Denmark for adoption or institutional care, often severing family ties permanently.

"They wanted us smaller," she said. "Easier to manage."

Her family history mirrors the broader record of Denmark taking children away from Greenlanders. Just [this past summer](#) authorities from Denmark separated a Greenlandic mother from her newborn daughter just one hour after giving birth.

Denmark issued an [official apology](#) in 2025 for the forced contraception program and announced compensation of roughly \$46,000 per victim. For Petersen, the gesture only deepened the insult.

"They think we are worth pennies," she said. "They destroyed generations, and now they say, 'Here — be quiet.'"

The reckoning comes as Greenland once again finds itself at the center of global geopolitics. President Donald Trump has renewed interest in acquiring the territory for strategic reasons, an idea Denmark has flatly [rejected](#) with the refrain that "Greenland is not for sale." In January 2026, Danish and European NATO forces staged military exercises in Nuuk to emphasize Europe's commitment to defending the island from external pressure, including from the United States.

For many Greenlanders, however, the show of force only underscored a deeper grievance: that Denmark remains the primary authority over their future.

"People say 'Greenland is for Greenlanders,'" Petersen said. "But that's not reality. Denmark speaks for us. Denmark decides. They don't let us speak."

That imbalance is visible not only in diplomacy but in daily life. Residents describe government-owned apartment blocks built decades ago for Inuit families — poorly insulated, plagued by black mold, and expensive relative to local wages. Karen Hammeken Jensen, who moved north seeking better opportunities for her children, said the housing traps families in poverty despite Danish subsidies.

"These buildings were never modernized," Jensen said. "They were built for Inuit and then forgotten."

Economic frustration runs especially deep in fishing, Greenland's most important industry. Elias Lunge, a fisherman for more than 40 years, said Greenlanders shoulder the

dangerous work while Danish or international companies capture most of the profit by exporting and processing seafood abroad.

“We fish the cod,” Lunge explained to The Post. “Then it’s frozen whole, shipped out, processed elsewhere and sold for much more.”

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In some settlements, fishermen are paid as little as \$1.86 per kilo, while local markets can sell directly to consumers for many times that amount.

“It’s our fish,” Lunge said. “Why shouldn’t the money stay here?”

Many residents link these economic patterns to broader social crises — alcoholism, drug abuse, violence, and one of the highest suicide rates in the world, estimated at around 81 per 100,000 people annually.

“They took our resources. They took our bodies. And then they told us to thank them,” Petersen said. “How do you thank someone who stole your future?”

Few Greenlanders express interest in becoming American. But Trump’s attention, Petersen said, has forced a long-suppressed conversation about autonomy.

“At least he challenges Denmark’s control,” she said. “That conversation was never allowed before.”