



URGENT ALERT

Threats of forced eviction of the Maasai indigenous pastoralists of the Ngorongoro Conservation Area (NCA) and Ngorongoro District in Tanzania

23 February 2022

The Maasai indigenous pastoralists of the Ngorongoro Conservation Area (NCA) and Ngorongoro District in Northern Tanzania are currently under severe threat of forced eviction. According to reliable information received by IWGIA, the situation is very serious and there is panic among the people after they have become aware of the eminent threats of being forcefully evicted from their ancestral land.

Threats posed by the new Multiple Land Use Model

According to information received by IWGIA, the Tanzanian government is preparing to implement a new Multiple Land Use Model (MLUM) in the NCA. The current MLUM proposal has evolved from what at that time was known as the District Land Use Plan developed by the Land Use Planning Commission. In 2011, following a district wide consultation process, the Ngorongoro District Council publicly rejected this plan as being infeasible, as well as being illegal having been developed without due process required by law. This plan, presented again in the current MLUM, proposes annexing the whole of the Lake Natron Basin (currently a Ramsar site) as well as 1,500km² of land adjoining the Serengeti National Park, an area which has been leased to Otterlo Business Corporation (OBC), a company specializing in providing wildlife hunting trips for royals from the United Arab Emirates. Under the MLUM, these areas will be administered by the Ngorongoro

Conservation Area Authority (NCAA). These areas, as well as several large areas currently within the NCA, are to be designated as 'core conservation areas'. All people from the many registered villages within these designated areas are to be evicted, and grazing will not be permitted, while tourist and hunting activities will be enhanced. The MLUM plan is promoted by the Ministry of Natural Resources and Tourism (MNRT) and NCAA, as well as by several politicians, and is due to be implemented this year.

In January 2022, rangers attempted to demarcate the areas from which people are to be evicted, but had to give up due to strong resistance from local people. Several high standing government officials have been to the Ngorongoro District, and the Regional Commissioner has informed the district council that government intends to evict people from their village lands in the Loliondo area. This is despite the fact that the East African Court of Justice (EACJ) has issued a stop order on further government activity in the area, pending a judgement on the case (raised by four villages against the government).

[>> For more information see our 22 January 2022 Urgent Alert on Maasai forced evictions in Loliondo here.](#)

Coupled with the ongoing high profile eviction plans for the NCA, people in the whole of Ngorongoro District are deeply affected and stressed by the planned evictions, which would imply evictions of thousands of mostly indigenous Maasai pastoralists in the NCA and Ngorongoro District at large.



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As the government prepares to implement plans in both NCA and in the Ngorongoro District at large, communities have been working relentlessly to build collective solidarity to respond to the threats and resist any eviction plans.

Recent concerning debates

According to information received by IWGIAⁱⁱ, the Maasai people of the NCA are deeply concerned about recent debates that have taken place in Parliament. In these debates some Members of Parliament (MPs) have made threatening and hostile statements towards the Maasai people of the NCA and publicly insinuated that the Maasai should be forcefully evicted, if necessary with the assistance of the military. According to information received by IWGIAⁱⁱⁱ, the outcome of the debate in Parliament was that the NCAA, the Ministry of Natural Resources Tourism (MNRT) and the Tanzania Wildlife Management Authority (TAWA) were asked to organise a seminar to enhance the knowledge of the MPs on the situation in the NCA. The Maasai MPs strongly objected that these 3 institutions should organize the seminar since these are the very same 3 institutions that for years have been accused of violating

the rights of the Maasai people in the NCA. Nevertheless, the seminar was carried out on Saturday 12 February for all MPs, and allegedly the debate was dominated by strong negative perceptions and bias towards the Maasai people and their livelihoods.

The Maasai people of the NCA are also deeply concerned about the very negative publicity they have recently received from some sections of the media in Tanzania. The negative, unsubstantiated, and antagonizing information has contributed to creating hostile and concerning attitudes among MPs and others towards the Maasai people. And according to information received by IWGIA it has caused panic among the Maasai communities who feel isolated and stigmatized for living their pastoralist way of life in their ancestral natural land and environment.

According to information received by IWGIA, the NCAA has itself been active in spreading misinformation and falsehoods. The NCAA has allowed certain sections of the media, which are telling dangerously false stories, to enter into the NCA, while it has stopped other and more balanced journalists from entering the area, even going so far as to imprisoning and harassing them.





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There are strong indications that the NCAA and MNRT want the Maasai indigenous pastoralists out of NCA. However, the Maasai people are legal residents of the NCA as per the NCA Act of 1959, which recognizes the multiple land use system of the NCA with the triple objectives of conservation, protection of the rights and livelihoods of the indigenous people (who had been evicted from Serengeti), and tourism.

Exclusion and harassment

The Maasai people recognize the importance of protecting and conserving the NCA, and they are ready to join forces with the Government to ensure that the area continues to be well conserved. However, for this to happen in a genuine way, it is of paramount importance that the Maasai people fully participate in the discussions, background research, decision-making processes and actual management of the NCA. Currently, the Maasai are being excluded from all of this, and their Free, Prior and Informed Consent is in no way being sought or obtained. They feel that they are not being listened to by their own government and are becoming increasingly desperate.

Human rights defenders, lawyers and journalists trying to address the injustices

and human rights violations facing the Maasai pastoralists of the NCA and the Ngorongoro District at large face big challenges. Over the past several years, human rights activists have been harassed and threatened, and some have even been arrested and charged with espionage and sedition. Likewise, some journalists have faced difficulties in getting access and obtaining information. Most recently, on the 3rd of February this year, 6 journalists were temporarily detained and interrogated.

Demands of local communities to the Government of Tanzania

Local communities, village chairpersons and traditional leaders in Ngorongoro District are working hard to address the current human and land rights issues, as well as threats of evictions, and they have put together demands to the Tanzanian government, which among others include the following^{iv}:

- 1.** The Tanzania Government and international agencies involved in informing the new MLUM in NCA, such as UNESCO (United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization) and IUCN (International Union





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for Conservation of Nature), should desist from executing and supporting in any way the current, new MLUM, the General Management Plan and related law review proposals that will inevitably result in serious human right violations.

- 2.** The government should abandon its relocation plans as part of the new MLUM in the NCA that have caused sustained fear among the local community and, if implemented, will inevitably lead to the erosion of the community's livelihood and cultural identity.
- 3.** The government should be pursuant to the law that establishes the NCAA and gives equal weight and importance to the three founding legal objectives: 1) Safeguard and develop the interests of the Maasai Pastoral Community, 2) Conservation and 3) Tourism.
- 4.** Given the historical records and emerged misunderstanding between the Maasai community, on the one hand, and the government/NCAA, UNESCO and IUCN on the other, there is a timely need to re-address claimed historical injustices against the community, including the large-scale dispossession of Maasai land, displacement of Maasai people and eradication of their indigenous knowledge in the management of the area.
- 5.** The government should restore all suspended development projects including schools, health services and water projects in the NCA with no conditions.
- 6.** An independent commission of inquiry should address the current and historical human rights injustices in the NCA and the involvement and role of the Tanzania Government, UNESCO and IUCN in those violations.
- 7.** For both the NCA and Loliondo, the government should promote an independent study about the social, economic and environmental impacts of the existing model

of coexistence between the local ecosystem and local communities before any eviction. The study should come up with the best long-term strategies for both the government and local communities and be carried out by an independent team of environmental, as well as human and land rights, consultants.

The pastoralist citizens, Civil Society Organizations, elected leaders, customary leaders and young educated people have stood in solidarity with each other and they have done all they can to try to prevent the emerging forced evictions. It is uncertain how long they can keep up the protests and pressure, and they desperately need the international community to put pressure on the Government of Tanzania. On the 12 February 2022, 20 key civil society organizations in Tanzania issued a Press Release/Advisory Document^v and, based on this, IWGIA makes the following recommendations to the international community:

Recommendations to the international community

IWGIA recommends the international community to make the following recommendations to the Government of Tanzania:

- Urge the Government of Tanzania, MNRT, as well as the NCAA, to immediately abandon the plans to evict the indigenous Maasai pastoralists from the NCA, and to respect the content and spirit of the NCA Act providing for both conservation, tourism and protection of the rights and livelihoods of the indigenous people. Apart from being illegal, the forced evictions of pastoralists of the NCA would further intensify the already serious and violent conflicts between pastoralists and farmers, which are rife in many parts of the country;
- Urge the Government of Tanzania to desist from interfering with the ongoing court case at the EACJ, and to ensure that, pending



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judgement on the case, the stop order be respected by all government agents and authorities;

- Urge the Government of Tanzania to ensure that the boundaries of the NCA are not expanded to incorporate other village lands, unless the village itself requests inclusion following due legal process;
- Encourage the Government of Tanzania to immediately establish an independent commission, which will involve the Maasai pastoralists of the NCA, Human Rights Defenders, conservation experts, tourism stakeholders, legal experts and livestock experts to jointly commission and oversee independent research on the disputed issues and come up with recommendations for the protection of the NCA and the rights and livelihoods of the Maasai pastoralist residents;
- Urge the Government of Tanzania to make sure that the indigenous Maasai pastoralists are genuinely consulted and involved in all planning and decision-making processes relating to the future of the NCA and to their livelihoods and rights within the NCA;
- Urge the Government of Tanzania to ensure that decisions on the future of the NCA, which will have an impact on the rights, livelihoods and future existence of the Maasai pastoralist residents, will only be taken based on their Free, Prior and Informed Consent (FPIC);

- Urge the Government of Tanzania to include the people of Ngorongoro, Human Rights Defenders and other key stakeholders in discussions and awareness raising initiatives towards MPs and other decision makers; and

- Urge the Government of Tanzania to ensure that various stakeholders including journalists, Human Rights Defenders and researchers will have the freedom to closely monitor and report on the situation in the NCA.

End.

References

i <https://www.forestpeoples.org/en/rights-based-conservation/press-release/2022/tanzanian-government-prepares-evict-thousands>

This is also based on information received by other internal sources.

ii "Human Rights Defenders' Advice on Land Dispute in Ngorongoro District", 12.2.2022 and https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=yTj1_h5RQ6g

iii Ibid.

iv <https://www.forestpeoples.org/en/rights-based-conservation/press-release/2022/tanzanian-government-prepares-evict-thousands>

v "Human Rights Defenders' Advice on Land Dispute in Ngorongoro District", 12.2.2022. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=yTj1_h5RQ6g