

URGENT ACTION

STOP VIOLENT FORCED EVICTION OF THE MAASAI

More than 70,000 Indigenous Maasai people are at risk of being evicted from their ancestral grazing lands to make way for a tourism operation after a paramilitary group arrived on 7 June in the Maasai town of Loliondo, in Arusha Region of Northern Tanzania, to implement the authorities' plans to seize the ancestral and registered land of the Maasai people. On 9 June, community members began to protest the demarcation but were met with force by security officers, who used teargas and firearms against the protestors. 25 community members were arrested and have since been charged with conspiracy to commit the murder of a police officer. The authorities must end the security operation in Loliondo, immediately release the arrested persons and suspend any ongoing land acquisition plans.

TAKE ACTION: WRITE AN APPEAL IN YOUR OWN WORDS OR USE THIS MODEL LETTER

*President Suluhu Samia Hassan
President's Office
Utumishi Street, P.O. BOX 670,
Dodoma, Tanzania
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Twitter: @SuluhuSamia*

Your Excellency,

*I am writing to express my concern about the ongoing security operation in the town of Loliondo, in the Arusha Region of Northern Tanzania, and the arbitrary arrests and detention of **25 members of the Maasai community** for exercising their rights to freedom of expression and peaceful assembly.*

On 7 June, a security operation consisting of around 700 people, mostly police, park rangers, military and other security forces, arrived at Loliondo to implement the authorities' plans to seize 1500 kilometres squared of the communal land of the Maasai people. On 9 June, soldiers used force to disperse community members in four villages (Ololosokwan, Oloirien, Kirtalo and Arash) who had gathered to protest the demarcation exercise by removing the beacons that the security had placed marking the boundaries of the land that the Maasai lay claim to. According to two eyewitnesses, security forces started shooting at the protestors with firearms and also used teargas. Many sustained injuries, some bullet wounds.

Before the day of the protest, around 20 members of the Maasai community, some village elders, were arbitrarily arrested; 10 of them as they were meeting to discuss state plans to demarcate the parcel of land. On 16 June they were falsely charged with the murder of a policeman. They were arrested even before the policeman was killed. The statement of offence has since been amended four times to be conspiracy to murder, while also adding five persons to the list of accused persons.

The demarcation of the Maasai's land happened contrary to the court orders by the East African Court of Justice. Furthermore, eviction from their ancestral lands in the absence of their free prior and informed consent will violate their human rights and will take away their livelihoods and impact their traditional way of life. Police force caused serious injury and risked the lives of the Maasai community members.

I urge you to suspend the proposals for the development of the Maasai lands until the Maasai community has given their free, prior and informed consent through a meaningful consultation process and to ensure an effective investigation into the use of force against protestors. I also call on you to order the immediate release of 25 Maasai community members detained for their peaceful participation in the anti-eviction protests and drop the charges against them.

Yours sincerely,

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

Loliondo is a division in Tanzania's northern Ngorongoro district, in the Arusha region. It borders Serengeti National Park to the west, Ngorongoro Conservation Area to the south, and Kenya to the north. More than 70,000 Indigenous Maasai people are at risk of being displaced from their ancestral grazing lands to make way for a tourism operation. People are being evicted from their communal land as demarcation is ongoing despite a pending case at the East Africa Court of Justice. In 1992 the Tanzanian government leased the whole of the Loliondo division as a hunting block to a company from the United Arab Emirates.

The recent security forces operation is the fourth attempt to evict the Indigenous Maasai people who are pastoralists from their grazing site at Loliondo, in a dispute that has lasted more than a decade. Security forces were previously deployed in 2009, 2013 and 2017, when they evicted community members from four villages: Ololosokwan, Oloirien, Kirtalo and Arash. On 25 September 2018, the East African Court of Justice issued orders which included explicit directions that the state ceases from evicting the Maasai Indigenous people until the determination of a case that the community had filed against the state was completed. Nearly two weeks after the demarcation operation had already begun and the security forces were deployed to Loliondo, the court issued a notice of adjournment and postponed the delivery of its judgment to the September 2022 session.

The arrested persons include: Molongo Daniel Paschal, Albert Kiseya Selemba, Simeli Parmwati, Lekayoko Parmwati, Sapati Parmwati Sirikoti, Ingoi Olkedenyi Kanjwel, Sangau Morongeti Ngiminiso, Morijoi Ngoisa Parmati, Morongeti Meeki Masako, Kamabatai Lulu, Moloimeti Yohana Saing'EU, Ndirango Senge Laisier, Joel Clemes Lessonu, Simon Naiam Orosikiria, Damiani Rago Laiza, Mathew Kursas Njausi, Taleng'o Twambei Leshoko, Kijoolu Kakenya Olojiloji, Shengena Joseph Killel, Kelvin Shaso Nairobi, Lekerenga, Fred Victor, Wilson Tiuwa Kilong, James Memusi Taki and 5 others.

PREFERRED LANGUAGE TO ADDRESS TARGET: English

You can also write in your own language.

PLEASE TAKE ACTION AS SOON AS POSSIBLE UNTIL: 7 September 2022

Please check with the Amnesty office in your country if you wish to send appeals after the deadline.

NAME AND PRONOUN: Members of the Maasai community in Loliondo, including Molongo Daniel Paschal, Albert Kiseya Selemba, Simeli Parmwati, Lekayoko Parmwati, Sapati Parmwati Sirikoti, Ingoi Olkedenyi Kanjwel, Sangau Morongeti Ngiminiso, Morijoi Ngoisa Parmati, Morongeti Meeki Masako, Kamabatai Lulu, Moloimeti Yohana Ndirango Senge Laisier, Joel Clemes Lessonu, Simon Naiam Orosikiria, Damiani Rago Laiza, Mathew Kursas Njausi, Luka Kursas Njausi, Taleng'o Twambei Leshoko, Kijoolu Kakenya Olojiloji, and Shengena Joseph Killel, Kelvin Shaso Nairobi, Lekerenga, Fred Victor, Wilson Tiuwa Kilong, James Memusi Taki and 5 others. (she/her/hers and he/him/his)

ADDITIONAL TARGET

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SOCIAL MEDIA GUIDANCE

Suggested tweets:

⚠ URGENT ACTION ⚠:

#Tanzania'n authorities should release the 25 Maasai community members detained for exercising their right to freedom of expression and peaceful assembly #StopMaasaievictions [UA link + graphic]

⚠ URGENT ACTION ⚠:

The government should suspend the developments in the Maasai ancestral lands and engage with the community in a process to obtain their free prior and informed consent before proceeding with the tourism project on their ancestral land. Write to @suluhusamia to demand that due process is followed #StopMaasaievictions [UA link + graphic]