

Maasai International Solidarity Alliance (MISA)* Newsletter 3: October 2023

Tanzanian Court rules in favour of the Maasai of Loliondo: Pololeti Game Control Area (GCA) was established illegally

On 19 September 2023, the High Court of Tanzania nullified the establishment of the Pololeti Game Controlled Area since it had been created without following the law. This means that the Court has formally allowed community members to access the area for grazing as they used to do before the violent operation which dispossessed them of their land in June 2022.

Following the two Court Orders, the Maasai have returned to their lawful land for grazing. However, the government has continued seizing and auctioning livestock and is showing no sign of respecting the rule of law. This court decision followed another High Court decision of 22 August 2023 that suspended the operation of the President's declaration of the Pololeti Game Reserve (GR) pending determination of the main case in Court (amounting to a temporary injunction).



Photo: 6 October 2023, Maasai are taking their cows back to graze in their rightful land

Tanzanian Government rejects court order on Pololeti

Following the [Court decision](#), the Tanzanian Government is now saying that a Game Controlled Area (GCA) in Pololeti is still in place, meaning that access to the area is still not allowed.

Days after the Court decided that the Pololeti GCA was illegal, all councillors and village chairpersons from 14 impacted villages (8 Wards) in Loliondo were called to the District Office and instructed that people cannot graze without getting permission from the Director of Wildlife. On 4 October 2023, it was communicated by Raymond Mangwala, District Commissioner for Ngorongoro District, and by the Regional Commissioner for Arusha Region, that the government should not comply with the two Court Orders and that livestock found grazing in the area will be seized and confiscated. On 6 October 2023, the Ward Councillor for Arash along with five other Maasai were arrested close to their homes and taken to the defunct Pololeti Area and severely beaten by Tanzania People's Defence Force (TPDF) personnel. The military were also seen in the company of Pius Rwiza (head of the inoperative Pololeti Area) among other Ngorongoro Conservation Area staff. The District Commissioner vehicle was also patrolling the area.

Maasai lawyers call on government to respect Court Orders and brings District Commissioner to Court

On 24 September 2023, Joseph Oleshangay, a lawyer representing Maasai in several court cases, wrote to the NCAA, the Attorney General and other government officials reminding them of their mandatory obligation to abide by lawfully issued Court Orders.

Two other letters were written on 25 September 2023 and 2 October 2023 pleading with state authorities to release cattle seized contrary to Court orders. Initially, the government responded by releasing a total of 2,005 cattle seized illegally. As livestock has continued being seized, community representatives filed a contempt Application No. 106 of 2023 in the High Court of Tanzania against the District Commissioner for Ngorongoro and other government officers. The Maasai lawyers also made a formal complaint to the presiding Judge in Misc Civil Cause No. 18 of 2023 to admonish the Solicitor General for disregard of the Court Orders.

Continuance of seizure of livestock

After initial compliance, the government continued seizing livestock in different parts of Loliondo and Sale Division of Ngorongoro District. In total, more than 2,500 animals have been held by rangers within village land against Court Orders.

The government filed a case in Ngorongoro District Court seeking to confiscate and forfeit all livestock, alleging that this livestock was found within Loliondo GCA and had no owner. When the lawyers appeared in Court to defend the Maasai, the government withdrew the case but continued holding the livestock.

Continuous payment of ransom fees for release of livestock within village land

Since 4 October 2023, John Mongela (Arusha Regional Commissioner) and Raymond Mangwala (District Commissioner for Ngorongoro District, Ngorongoro Conservation Area Authority) have put pressure on the community to pay a ransom fee for the release of livestock confiscated within village land.

This ransom fining is imposed despite an earlier [Court decision](#) (July 2023) that declared illegal the imposition of one hundred thousand shillings per cow and twenty-five thousand shillings per sheep or goat. The Court further established that the offence of grazing in a protected area should be punished with a single fine, independent of the number of livestock.

Government set fire in grazing areas after Court Order

Following the Court Order against the Government that nullified the Pololeti GCA, the government started setting fire to different areas so the Maasai would not be able to graze their livestock. It looks like the government, while stating it is pro-conservation, prefers to burn all grass and release carbon into the atmosphere rather than allow Maasai pastoralists to rightfully access their lands for grazing.



Photo: Mountain set on fire by game wardens as part of a livestock restriction strategy in different villages in Loliondo. Photo taken on 5 October 2023.

Livestock illegally seized and auctioned despite Court Order

On 26 October 2023 around 2:30 pm EAT at Orkimbai area, Kirtalo Village, Serengeti National Park rangers illegally seized over 1,500 livestock from the [village land](#).

There were five herders with the livestock. The rangers drove the livestock for approximately three hours into the Serengeti National Park. In the evening, the rangers drove the five herders back to Ololosokwan village with a TANAPA (Tanzania National Park Authority) vehicle. On 27 October 2023, the livestock owners followed their livestock into Serengeti National Park and lawfully entered the park (permit No. TNP/SEKL/00304433 and car registration No. T241 DEC).

A ranger identified as Shayo did not allow the owners to count the livestock and required them to get out of the park, telling them that means for reclaiming their livestock would later be communicated. A total of 1,033 cattle and 750 sheep and goats was illegally seized from: Oloomu Kursas (460 cattle), Sinjore Matika (573 cattle) and Ndagusa Koros (750 sheep and goats).



Photo: Following the Court Order, Maasai are grazing their cows in formerly confiscated area

On 31 October 2023, SENAPA (Serengeti National Park Authority) secretly obtained a Court Order in Musoma District to sell 806 cattle, 420 sheep and 100 goats as unclaimed property, despite clear evidence that the owners are known by name and had been following their cattle for five days. Before this Court Order was even secured, 227 cattle and 200 sheep and goats were apparently sold by rangers. On 1 November 2023, the High Court of Musoma issued a stop order against selling the livestock. SENAPA rangers have continued selling all of them despite the Court Order. MP Oleshangai tried to intervene by making a call to a SENAPA Game Warden named Moronda, the Deputy Minister and subsequently the Minister of Natural Resources and Tourism, all in vain.

Maasai celebrate change in leadership of Ngorongoro Conservation Area Authority (NCAA)

On 12 October 2023, President Samia appointed Mr Richard Rwanyakaato Kiiza to be Commissioner of NCAA. Before the appointment, Mr Kiiza was the Senior Assistant Commissioner of Conservation, TANAPA. For many Maasai, this is a relief, as it means Manongi, the most notorious conservator since colonial times, is no longer in function.

Manongi was known for discriminatory practices and for organising the evictions that took place in the Ngorongoro Conservation Area (NCA). He has been the [architect of conspiracies](#) invented and executed by the Tanzania Government against Maasai people. While the problem with Maasai will certainly not end with Manongi's departure, there is hope that less institutional hatred will be directed at the Maasai community. Manongi's assistant, Elibariki Bajuta, who is believed to also be anti-Maasai, has been dismissed as deputy conservation commissioner and appointed as District Commissioner.

Maasai bring their plight to the African Commission on Human and Peoples' Rights

On 24 October 2023, the Maasai organised a side event at the African Commission on Human and Peoples' Rights in Arusha entitled "[Coercive Conservation is broken](#)", highlighting the case of Ngorongoro and Loliondo.



Photo: Excerpt from the recording of the side event on 24 October 2023.

The session was co-organised by Minority Rights International, Human Rights Watch, Amnesty International and Protection Africa. It was well attended by Maasai including many women. Other indigenous peoples and pastoralists also attended. Interventions were powerful, and difficult questions were raised to the African Commissioner. The African Commission was also informed about similar crimes around the country. Discrimination against the Maasai was noted at the gates, with many people prevented from entering the premises until the African Commission was able to liaise with the State to allow Maasai to attend. During the meeting, Maasai representatives noted the presence of some supposedly security personnel who were busy sending messages and reporting the content of the interventions made by Maasai speakers.

Ngorongoro Conservation Area enters in agreement with Tanzania military

Ngorongoro Conservation Area has entered into an agreement with the Tanzania People's Defence Forces ([TPDF](#)) for the latter to build 5,000 houses in Msomera District (Tanga Region) amounting to [ninety-seven billion Tanzanian shillings](#) (thirty-nine million USD). It is unclear who is financing this project.

The use of the Tanzanian military for the execution of such a project makes it quite clear that the Maasai community is not free to relocate from the NCA to Msomera, contrary to government propaganda.



Photo: Houses built for the relocated (excerpt from informational video)

In early 2022, the TPDF and game wardens invaded Msomera village and forcefully annexed land so that the Tanzanian military could build 500 houses. The cost for construction of 500 houses in Msomera was nine million USD, making an average of eighteen thousand USD per two-room house.

German Embassy organises discussion on co-existence of human and wildlife activities in protected areas

The German Embassy in Dar es Salaam invited Maasai representatives to a discussion on the co-existence of human and wildlife activities in protected areas on 29 September 2023.

The meeting took place in the context of a field visit organised by the German Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development (BMZ). During the meeting, Maasai representatives insisted that the German delegation should:

1. Talk to the Tanzanian Government about ongoing human rights violations in Loliondo and Ngorongoro;
2. Visit the projects financed by the German Government and gather direct feedback from project beneficiaries;
3. Unpack the issue of so-called “human–wildlife conflicts” and develop a better understanding of the approach to conservation implemented by the Maasai.

Maasai representatives presented the state of human rights in the District. They also denounced the fortress conservation model and its true drivers, i.e. the financial gains made from hunting and hotel investments rather than care for nature and animal welfare.

The German Government representative informed the Maasai delegation that the Germans have stopped any financing of the highly controversial Ngorongoro District Land Use Framework that in essence intended to allocate 82% of the entire district land to conservation.



Photo: Ngorongoro Conservation Area (NCA), October 2023. NCA is a conservation area and not a national park. This means people can live in NCA and it is the responsibility of the government to protect the interests of local communities and help them develop.

Flying Medical Service stopped from delivering treatment to over 100 people in Ngorongoro

On 27 September 2023 in the afternoon, the Flying Medical Service (FMS) was stopped by the Ngorongoro District Medical Officer from providing services to the people at Engopironi near Embakaai Crater. The FMS expected to attend to more than 100 people for treatment, pregnancy examinations and childhood vaccinations.

It was the first visit to Engopironi after 16 months since the FMS was grounded by the government in April 2022. Early September, the government issued the FMS with a month-long flying permit. However, the 27 September incident in Ngorongoro tends to confirm that the previous grounding of this important medical service is part of the ongoing social services blockade in Ngorongoro imposed by the government.

German President visits Tanzania but does not respond to invitation for dialogue with the Maasai

On 30 October 2023, the President of the Federal Republic of Germany, Frank-Walter Steinmeier, conducted a [State visit to Tanzania](#). During his visit, he [asked for forgiveness for colonial era atrocities](#). Despite calls from different German actors, he did not respond positively to the invitation to meet a Maasai delegation.

The German government is one of the biggest international funders of conservation in northern Tanzania and has yet to show a firm commitment to the protection of human rights. The Maasai have repeatedly alerted the German government about its contribution to violations of human rights over the years. In May/June 2023, the Maasai community sent a delegation to engage in dialogue

with different governments including those in Germany, Belgium, Austria and Italy in the hope to address or mitigate the impacts of fortress conservation on their ancestral lands.

Massive World Bank Project said to grab land in Longido

Councillors in Longido District earlier this year bravely rejected a proposed land-use plan elaborated with the support of the World Bank (assumably as part of the 150 million USD World Bank [Land Tenure Improvement Project](#)).

On paper, the project is supposed to enhance land-tenure security but, as it seems, at the cost of giving away vast tracts of village land to wildlife corridors and yet another game reserve (GR, as seen on the map below). Longido District is neighbouring Ngorongoro District but is also populated by Maasai pastoralists who rely on grazing lands for their subsistence. Here also, vital village lands are at constant risk of being expropriated by the government.

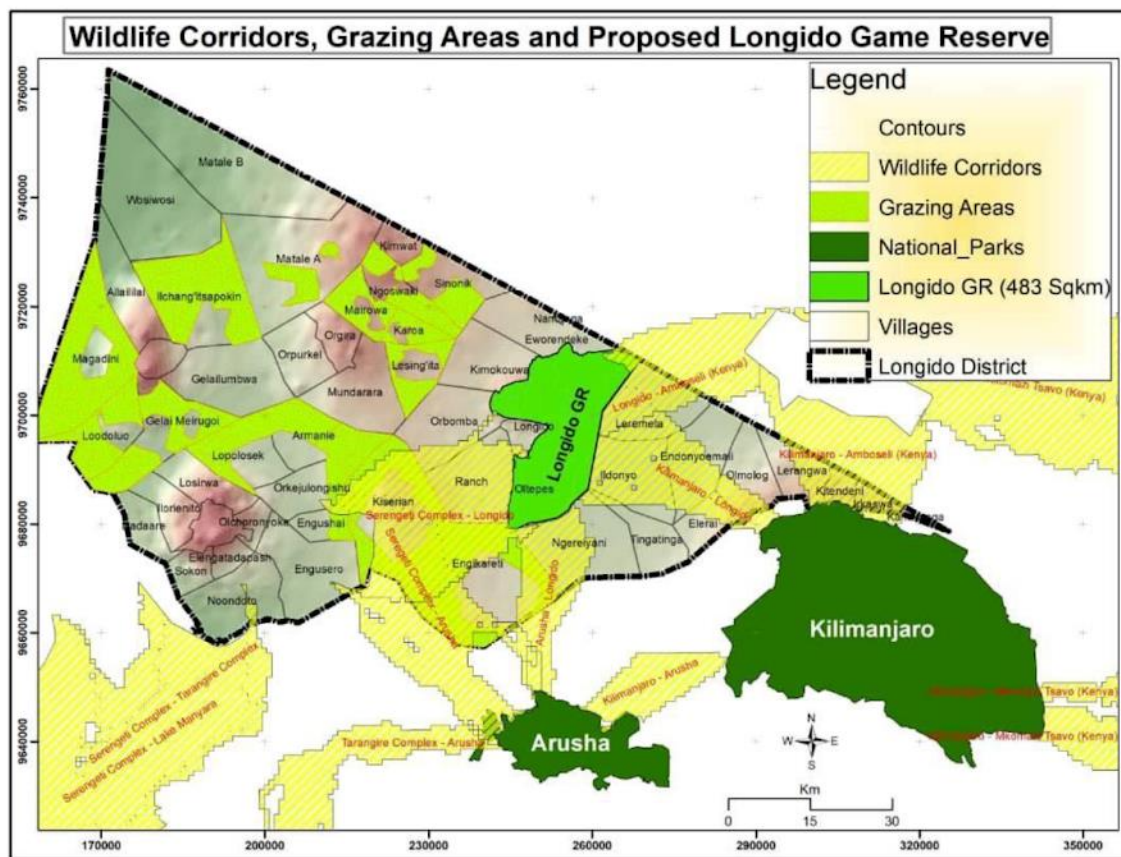


Photo: Excerpt from the proposed land-use plan showing the establishment of a Game Reserve (GR) in Longido advanced by the government

Maasai Elders petition King Charles III, decrying agreements between them and the British Government

Maasai Elders have [petitioned](#) the British Monarch King Charles III, decrying agreements between Kenya Maasai Elders and the British colonial regime that dispossessed Maasailand in both Tanzania and Kenya.

Maasai land dispossession finds its historical roots in the British colonial era and its effects continue to be felt vividly by different African communities and particularly by the Maasai. Maasai elders say the agreements were imposed on them and have led to the loss of their lands, a disruption of their traditional way of life, disintegration of their cultural heritage and forcible displacement.

‘We will not go anywhere’: Maasai resist Tanzanian Government evictions

National Catholic Reporter Doreen Ajiambo writes a poignant and well documented [article on the situation of the Maasai](#) in Ngorongoro.

She documents how the Tanzanian Government suffocates the Maasai by denying them education, health services, water and electricity, and refusing to issue permits for building or renovating any structure in Ngorongoro. She also stresses the difficult situation of Endulen village’s only hospital, which the Catholic Church has run since 1965, and which was downgraded to a clinic, with ambulance and emergency services suspended. The article discusses achievements but also challenges the Church has faced in defending the rights of the Maasai, and the role the international community could play in stopping elite tourism and trophy hunting, which are driving forces behind the evictions.

Other relevant media and research articles

[Investigation launched into killings and evictions on World Bank tourism project](#) (*Guardian*, 28 September 2023)

[New report exposes grave injustice to villagers in the name of expanding tourism and parks in Tanzania](#) (*Counter Currents*, 29 September 2023)

[Unaccountable & complicit: The World Bank finances evictions & human rights abuses In Tanzania](#) (Oakland Institute, 28 September 2023)

[Ngorongoro’s tourism earnings soar to record Sh176 billion in one year](#) (*The Citizen*, 28 September 2023)

[Loliondo land grabbing: history of pain and bitterness in an unaccountable state](#) (Mwanzo TV, 17 October 2023)

*** What is the Maasai International Solidarity Alliance (MISA)?**

The Maasai International Solidarity Alliance (MISA) is an international alliance standing in solidarity with the Maasai of Ngorongoro Conservation Area and Loliondo in northern Tanzania. We bring together faith-based organisations, human rights organisations, international aid and development organisations as well as researchers. Our alliance includes, among others, the Africa Europe Faith Justice Network (AEFJN), Agrecol Association for AgriCulture & Ecology, Coalition of European Lobbies for Eastern African Pastoralism (CELEP), *Coopération Internationale pour le Développement et la Solidarité* (CIDSE, International Cooperation for Development and Solidarity), Food First Information and Action Network (FIAN), *Koordinierungsstelle der Österreichischen Bischofskonferenz* (KOO, Coordinating Office of the Austrian Bishops’ Conference), Gesellschaft für bedrohte Völker, Misereor and Welthaus Graz. Our main objective is to put an end to the human rights violations facing the Maasai of northern Tanzania. In May/June 2023, we jointly organised a lobbying tour to Germany, Austria, Belgium and Italy, which enabled a Maasai delegation to voice their concerns to European decision-makers and trigger international solidarity. We support the voices of grassroots organisations representing the Maasai at the local level, such as PINGO’s (Pastoralists Indigenous Non-Governmental Organisations) Forum, UCRT (Ujamaa Community Resource Team), PWC (Pastoral Women’s Council), First Nation Land Governance (FINAL GOVERNANCE), TEST (Traditional Ecosystems Survival Tanzania), IDINGO (Integrated Development Initiative in Ngorongoro) and PALISEP (Pastoralist Livelihood Support and Empowerment Program). These grassroots organisations are well recognised for their long-standing work in Maasai communities and are in regular contact with affected communities and their representatives, including traditional leaders, women and youth as well as councillors / village chairpersons. We are also supported by Tanzanian lawyers representing the Maasai in the several court cases that have been launched to address the violations of their land rights.