

Maasai International Solidarity Alliance (MISA)* Newsletter

November – December 2024

Selection of key updates

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Photo: President meets with Maasai community representatives in Arusha on 1 December.

President meets with 150 Maasai community representatives amid displacement crisis

On 1 December, 150 Maasai delegates from Ngorongoro, Loliondo and Sale met with President Samia Suluhu Hassan at the State House in Arusha. Over the last two years, different actors have been urging the Government of Tanzania to create space for dialogue between the Government and Maasai communities living in Ngorongoro and Loliondo to find durable solutions to the land disputes and threats of evictions in their areas. The six days of peaceful demonstration organised by people from Ngorongoro between 18 and 23 August triggered the Government to create a space for dialogue over the land conflicts in Ngorongoro District.

The meeting focused on the current situation in Ngorongoro Conservation Area (NCA) and the impacts of the June 2022 operation that displaced thousands of people in Loliondo to establish the Pololeti Game Reserve. Community representatives presented a [detailed account of the human rights crisis](#) in Ngorongoro, including lack of adequate school, education and health services, and requested that a process be initiated to return to them the 1500 sq.km of land taken from them to allow for hunting in the Pololeti Game Reserve.

They requested the President to halt ongoing forced relocation to Msomera and to ensure participation of the community in addressing issues related to conservation in Ngorongoro. They also urged the President to stop using the cutting of social services as a weapon to enforce relocation and to reinstate the operation of the Flying Medical Service (FMS). To avoid future mismanagement, community representatives recommended the President to appoint a Maasai representative in the Board and management of NCA. For Loliondo, the President was asked to repeal Pololeti Game Reserve and to allow unconditional access to grazing for livestock in the area until a permanent solution is found.

The President committed to forming two inquiry teams: one to investigate the complaint of the community in Ngorongoro in relation to the relocation programme and its associated problems, and another to assess the impact to the community brought by the establishment of Pololeti Game Reserve.

While the meeting with the President marks a step towards addressing the community's grievances, significant skepticism remains about how to hold accountable those responsible for the ongoing human rights violations, including the President herself. The promise to form inquiry teams, while they could yield positive results, raises concerns about impartiality and genuine intent to find long-term solutions to the current conflict. Without clear assurances that the commissions of inquiry will work in ways that guarantee independence and transparency, it is unlikely that perpetrators of dispossession, forced relocations and abuses will face justice. MISA is also concerned that the President appeared hesitant to address clear and obvious issues which do not require feedback from the inquiry teams, such as: the restoration of the FMS, restoration of all the social services that have been denied for the last four years (e.g. medicines in hospitals, renovations of schools and budget allocations for education) and free entry for locals through the gates. MISA is worried that the dialogue could lead to a strategic deflection rather than provide a pathway to accountability, leaving the affected communities wary of yet another political manoeuvre that prioritises appearances over genuine restitution and reform.

For news coverage on the dialogue, see:

“Tanzania’s President takes on forced evictions of Maasai community”:

<https://www.hrw.org/news/2024/12/05/tanzanias-president-takes-forced-evictions-maasai-community>

“Samia forms two commissions to address Ngorongoro issues”:

<https://www.thecitizen.co.tz/tanzania/news/national/samia-forms-two-commissions-to-address-ngorongoro-issues-4843044>

“Ngorongoro Maasai Community meets with President of Tanzania”:

<https://www.celep.info/ngorongoro-maasai-community-meets-with-president-of-tanzania/>

National Electoral Commission reinstates voting rights for Ngorongoro Maasai

The National Electoral Commission (NEC) has reinstated voter registration in Ngorongoro, abandoning its previous decision in June to exclude Ngorongoro as part of areas in Tanzania eligible for voter registration and voting in Tanzania. This decision made a second U-turn by different government departments in relation to democratic rights of the Maasai in Ngorongoro following the Minister President Office Local Government reinstatement of villages that were delisted in August 2024.



Photo: Several people at Nasipooring’ Voters Registration waiting to be registered as voters on 16th December 2024 after an initial attempt by NEC to disenfranchise them.

The Government's current action stems from the community's taking action against ongoing impunity that reached its tipping point when the Maasai community took over the road linking Serengeti and Ngorongoro, thus blocking access to Tanzania’s leading tourist areas. The controversy arose after the NEC had revoked Ngorongoro as an area eligible for voter

registration, sparking widespread public response demanding the restoration of the local people's democratic rights.

A lawsuit was subsequently filed against NEC's actions that had violated constitutional guarantees of universal suffrage and democratic participation. The legal challenge emphasised the lack of transparency and procedural fairness. In response to the mounting pressure and judicial scrutiny, the NEC reviewed its policies and reinstated the voting rights of those affected. This move is welcomed by MISA as a victory for democracy and civic engagement, highlighting the power of collective action and legal advocacy in protecting fundamental rights.

For more on this issue, see:

“Attempted disenfranchisement of Maasai in Ngorongoro proves that Tanzania's election management bodies are neither free nor fair”:

<https://thechanzo.com/2024/12/10/attempted-disenfranchisement-of-maasai-in-ngorongoro-proves-that-tanzanias-election-management-bodies-are-neither-free-nor-fair/>

Ballot staffing and fraud in Ngorongoro local elections

On 27 November, local elections were organised in Tanzania to elect new village and hamlet chairpersons. After fearing that they would not be able to vote, as all their villages had been delisted ([see previous MISA newsletter](#)), Ngorongoro residents were satisfied to see elections happening. However, in many places, the Government made a coordinated effort to disqualify opposition candidates in order to give the ruling party *Chama cha Mapinduzi* (CCM) a clear winning streak. MISA was informed of several instances of election fraud, candidates' intimidation, vote buying and ballot tampering.



Photo: Ballot box for the election of chairpersons in Nasipooring village already half full with ballot papers before the actual opening of the vote.

This happened particularly in areas where the ruling party failed to even hold a campaign for lack of voting support and where it had a clear indication that it would lose the elections, as in the case of Nasipooring village, where a [ballot box](#) for Ndoinyo sub-village was brought in with hundreds of ballot papers already filled before voting started. These practices undermine democratic principles, leaving communities frustrated and skeptical about the legitimacy of elected leaders.



Photo: Police cars outside Ndoinyo polling station guarding ballots cast before commencement of election in November 2024.

Church condemns election fraud

The Catholic Church, through the *President of the Tanzania Episcopal Conference (TEC) Rt Rev. Wolfgang Pisa OFM Cap*, issued a [strong statement](#) on 15 November condemning fraud in the recent elections. Clergy leaders called for integrity and accountability, urging citizens to demand a system free from manipulation and corruption.

Maasai file a case against National Electoral Commission (NEC) disenfranchisement

On 13 November, six Maasai residents of Ngorongoro filed a case in court complaining about the fact that they had been affected by the decision of the National Electoral Commission to delist, in July, Ngorongoro as an eligible area for voter registration and election. They also contested the subsequent decision by the Government to manipulate the voter register and transfer the registered voters from Ngorongoro to Msomera without their knowledge and consent. NEC shared a document with 40,126 registration stations countrywide but excluded Ngorongoro Division as one of the eligible polling districts. The decision to disenfranchise Ngorongoro community was made by NEC just two months before another decision by the

Ministry President office to delist all villages in Ngorongoro Division. The case has been scheduled for hearing in February 2025 in the Arusha High Court. After filing the case, the Commission publicly made an announcement on 29 November that it has annulled its decision to decline voters registration in Ngorongoro division and will now undertake voters registration in 44 registration stations of the Ngorongoro division. Nevertheless, the residents want to go forward with the case to finality in order to ensure a clear legal position that all people have a right to vote.

Protests erupt in Msomera over allocation of land to community relocated from Ngorongoro

On 29 November, the residents living in Msomera, the relocation site for communities relocated from Ngorongoro, staged [protests](#), accusing authorities of dispossessing their land and assigning it to people migrating from Ngorongoro. Since June 2022, the Government has established a so-called voluntary relocation programme for people willing to leave Ngorongoro because of acute poverty, malnutrition and lack of adequate livelihood opportunities. The relocation programme has created a land dispute and acute tensions between Msomera residents and newcomers. Several original residents of Msomera have filed lawsuits challenging the idea that there is an empty land in Msomera ready for anyone who wishes to relocate.

Kenyan Catholic Bishops reject Presidential funds – a call for a similar decision by Tanzania Bishops

In a bold move, the Catholic Church in Kenya [declined financial](#) support from the President, citing concerns that accepting this money would compromise its moral authority. In Tanzania, the President has been allocating substantial amounts of money to church institutions in a manner that undermines the ability of the Church to speak with one voice against non respect of the rule of law and human rights violations by the Government, sometimes with the involvement of the President.

By receiving money from an administration notorious for human rights abuses, the Church risks compromising its moral authority and becoming complicit in the very injustices it should oppose. This is happening despite the Government's deliberate obstruction of the Church's delivery of vital services, such as healthcare including by the FMS, to vulnerable communities. The fact that the Church continues to accept money from the Government partly explains the silence of the Church over the displacement of Maasai community members. It also alienates the communities it claims to serve, eroding trust and credibility. MISA urges Tanzanian Bishops to follow the example of the Kenyan Church and preserve the ethical independence of the Church.



(---) Onesmo Mushi ✓

@EduTalkTz

Mhe. “Rais” @SuluhuSamia , hakika wewe ni “MAMA WA IMANI.” Hii “kazi tukufu” unayoifanya, imezidi hata ile iliyofanywa na Mwl. Nyerere. ↓

1. Millions 20 kwa Askofu Massangwa
2. Milioni 150 kwa KKKT Hai
3. Milioni 50 kwa Kanisa Katoliki Musoma
4. Milioni 50 kwa Kanisa Katoliki Dodoma
5. Millions 100 kwa Kanisa Katoliki Arusha
6. Milioni 100 kwa Kanisa Katoliki Babati
7. Milioni “X” kwa Kanisa la Mwamposa
8. Milioni 100 kwa Kanisa la AICT - DSM
9. Milioni 50 Kanisa la Wasabato Singida
10. Milioni 10 Kanisa Pentekoste Jimbo la Mashariki
11. Milioni 5 Kanisa KKKT Mafinga
12. Millions 50 Kanisa KKKT Dayosisi ya Tanganyika
13. Millions 30 Kanisa la Anglikana Kagera
14. Millions 50 Kanisa la KKKT Dodoma
15. Millions 50 Kanisa la KKKT Mennonite DSM
16. Millions 30 Kanisa Katoliki Musoma
17. Millions 40 Kanisa Katoliki Mufindi
18. Millions 100 Kanisa Katoliki Zanzibar (via Mwinyi).

Figure: Millions of Tz shillings provided by President Samia to the Church between July 2023 to November 2024 in her effort to clean her image.

Government responds to decaying properties in Ngorongoro

After the community protests in August over human rights violations, abandoned school properties and neglected social services in Ngorongoro, the Government has initiated an assessment of derelict buildings that have been decaying especially over the last four years. Beyond this symbolic move to evaluate decaying infrastructure, there is little evidence of tangible progress, with schools, for instance, still in a state of neglect. Such delays reinforce the Maasai community's perception that these assessments are superficial gestures aimed at quelling immediate public pressure rather than addressing systemic issues. The Maasai community remains skeptical, viewing the Government's inaction as a continuation of its disregard for their basic needs. Until concrete measures, such as the renovation of schools and improvement of essential services, are undertaken, this proposed assessment risks being dismissed as yet another hollow response to legitimate grievances.

For more on this issue, see:

President Samia Suluhu Hassan Donates 100m/- for Construction of St Karoli Lwanga Parish Church in Arusha

<https://africa24.it/en/2024/06/05/president-samia-suluhu-hassan-donates-100m-for-construction-of-st-karoli-lwanga-parish-church-in-arusha/>

Samia donates 100m/- at Dar's AICT Golden Jubilee

<https://www.ipppmedia.com/the-guardian/news/local-news/read/samia-donates-100m-at-dars-aict-golden-jubilee-2024-10-28-104956>

Jinsi Rais Samia anavyotoa mamilioni ya sadaka kwa Mkanisa (How Samia distribute millions to church)

<https://www.jamiiforums.com/threads/jinsi-rajs-samia-anavyotoa-mamilioni-ya-sadaka-kwa-mkanisa.2271682/>

RAIS MHE. DKT. SAMIA ACHANGIA MILIONI 50 KANISA LA MENNONITE
<https://www.utumishi.go.tz/news/rais-mhe-dkt-samia-achangia-milioni-50-kanisa-la-mennonite>

Police harassment at livestock market in Loliondo

On 9 November, the District Executive Director of Ngorongoro, Mr Murtallah Mbillu, [held](#) a meeting with the livestock businessmen at Ololosokwan Primary School to hear their complaints about the harassment they are undergoing from the police force that is collecting tax on market days other than the Tanzania Revenue Authority (TRA), who is supposed to collect those taxes. This meeting focused on how good and friendly cooperation could be restored amongst stakeholders. It came after one of the police officers was thoroughly beaten for intimidating people in the market.

Livestock confiscation in Loliondo

On 4 December, 77 cattle belonging to Simat Rotiken Ololosokwan residents were seized by rangers and taken to Klein's gate and a sum of 6 million Tsh was paid as ransom fee for their release. On 6 December, cattle of Mure Mboye Ololosokwan residents were again confiscated and arraigned at the same Klein's gate and the owner paid a ransom fee of 20 million Tsh. The confiscation of cattle in Loliondo is becoming rampant as NCA tries to defend itself that it is capable of managing Pololeti by seizing livestock outside the Game Reserve. There have been ongoing wrangles between the Tanzania Wildlife Authority (TAWA) and NCA management over the high-stake Pololeti Game Reserve, as there is an unaccounted flow of funds from Royal Safari, previously known as Otterlo Business Corporation. Seizure of livestock is one of the means NCA justifies that it is capable of managing Pololeti. In law, NCA does not have a mandate to manage any place beyond NCAA boundaries and they are operating illegally in areas such as Pololeti.



Photo: Cheque worth 6,000,000 Tsh paid by Simat Rotiken for his cattle.

New set of UN human rights principles aims to end evictions and abuse of Indigenous Peoples through “fortress conservation”

The UN Environment Programme has introduced a new set of human rights principles aimed at conservation organizations and funders. The guidelines emphasize respecting Indigenous land rights, integrating human rights into conservation and ensuring accountability for violations. Titled *Core Human Rights Principles for Private Conservation Organizations and Funders*, the guidelines set minimum standards such as:

- Ensuring respect for Indigenous Peoples' rights to self-determination and to their lands;
- Conservation organisations and funders should never undertake or support actions that adversely affect the rights of Indigenous Peoples without first consulting and

cooperating with them in good faith, and obtaining and maintaining their free, prior and informed consent (FPIC);

- Every conservation organisation and funder should prevent potential adverse human rights impacts that it may cause or to which it may contribute and immediately cease any actual adverse impacts that it causes or to which it contributes;
- Conditioning support for anti-poaching and other law enforcement activities on compliance by those activities with international human rights norms and standards.

These principles were prompted by repeated revelations that big conservation organisations are responsible for grave human rights abuses against Indigenous Peoples linked to conservation initiatives. These principles have been endorsed by more than 70 organisations and individuals, including the UN Special Rapporteur on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples and the UN Special Rapporteur on the Human Right to a Healthy Environment. MISA supports standards aimed at ending the evictions and human rights violations of Indigenous Peoples from the land they have shaped for generations.

For more on this issue, see:

“New set of human rights principles aims to end displacement and abuse of Indigenous people through ‘fortress conservation’”:

<https://theconversation.com/new-set-of-human-rights-principles-aims-to-end-displacement-and-abuse-of-indigenous-people-through-fortress-conservation-242891>

“UN publishes landmark guidelines to combat human rights abuses in conservation”:

<https://www.survivalinternational.org/news/14114>

“Launch of another guidance document: Conservation & human rights: an introduction”:

<https://iucn.org/blog/202410/launch-major-new-guidance-document-conservation-and-human-rights-introduction>

MISA delegates insist on the role of traditional knowledge at Biodiversity COP16

Maasai representatives took centre stage at the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD) COP16 in Cali, advocating for climate action grounded in traditional knowledge in an event co-organized with the Alliance for Food Sovereignty in Africa (AFSA). Their contributions underscored the need for inclusive policies addressing both environmental and social justice. [AFSA's reflection on COP16](#) highlights a mix of progress and challenges in advancing traditional knowledge, agroecology and food sovereignty. The conference brought together global partners to advocate for sustainable African food systems. Agroecology emerged as a significant victory, gaining formal recognition in the Global Biodiversity Framework's Target 10 and as a holistic approach cutting across all 23 targets. The launch of the "Boosting Biodiversity Action Through Agroecology" guide offers a roadmap for integrating agroecology into National Biodiversity Strategies. However, challenges remain in ensuring community-centred policy development and implementation and fully including pastoralism and agroecology as key responses to the biodiversity crisis.

On the downside, COP16 witnessed increased corporate influence, masking profit-driven agendas under conservation rhetoric. Concepts like synthetic biology and biodiversity credits were criticised for commodifying nature and sidelining Indigenous stewardship. Activists warned against the CBD's shift toward a market-based approach, raising concerns about deepened environmental injustices. Despite setbacks, MISA remains resolute. MISA emphasises the importance of protecting African ecosystems and traditions from exploitative forces. Building alliances and advocating for agroecology at local and national levels are seen as pivotal steps. As COP16 concludes, MISA renews its commitment to advancing agroecology – including pastoralism as a form of agroecology suited to the drylands – as the cornerstone of Africa's response to biodiversity loss, climate change and food insecurity, striving for a future rooted in dignity and sustainability.

In 2022, almost 200 countries made a renewed commitment to follow a human rights-based approach in conservation when they adopted the Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework at 15th Conference of the Parties (COP) to the CBD. On 29 October at CBD COP16, a major new guidance document on conservation and human rights was launched. The document offers a comprehensive overview of international human rights instruments and frameworks, and of their application.

MISA delegates demand solutions for pastoralist communities at Climate COP29 at Azerbaijan

At the Climate COP29 convened in Azerbaijan, MISA representatives amplified the voices of pastoralist communities, who are guardians of some of the world's most vital ecosystems. Pastoralist systems are uniquely adapted to arid and semi-arid regions, sustaining livelihoods in fragile ecosystems while conserving biodiversity, yet they remain underrepresented in global climate discussions. MISA representatives presented some of the challenges facing pastoralism in Africa and Tanzania in particular, such as land grabs for the establishment of hunting reserves, tourism businesses and carbon offsetting businesses. MISA highlighted that climate-induced droughts and competition for resources exacerbate vulnerabilities, making it critical to address the needs and rights of pastoralist Indigenous Peoples in global climate policy.

MISA supported calls for adoption of the following measures to secure the future of pastoralist communities:

1. Enact policies that recognise and secure pastoralist land tenure, ensuring access to grazing areas, water sources and migratory routes.
2. Recognise pastoralists as key stakeholders in ecosystem management, integrating their knowledge into national and global biodiversity strategies.
3. Establish platforms for pastoralist voices in climate negotiations, ensuring their participation in decision-making processes at all levels.
4. Reject market-based schemes and industrial solutions that threaten pastoralist livelihoods and instead invest in community-led, nature-based approaches.

MISA insisted that pastoralists are not relics of the past, but vital actors in creating a sustainable future. By supporting their resilience and championing their rights, we can address multiple global crises, from biodiversity loss to climate change and food insecurity.

COP29 offers an opportunity to forge partnerships and policies that empower pastoralists as agents of change.

KfW provides controversial ranger vehicles

In December, [TANAPA received machinery and trucks](#) worth 6.4 billion Tsh. (some 2.5 million Euros) to improve the infrastructure of Serengeti and Nyerere national parks.



Photo: Vehicle provided by KfW to operate in Serengeti and Nyerere national parks.

The vehicles were provided by the German development bank KfW in the framework of its "Emergency and Recovery Support for Biodiversity Tanzania (ERB)" project, jointly operated by Frankfurt Zoological Society, TAWA and TANAPA (Tanzania National Parks). Earlier in November, the German development bank KfW had supplied [new vehicles to Tanzania Wildlife Agency \(TAWA\)](#) for a value of 600 million Tsh. to operate in the Selous Forest Reserve. Support by the German development bank continues despite wide accusations of TANAPA's involvement in human rights violations and repeated calls from the Maasai community for KfW to end supporting such institutions. Indeed, illegal mass confiscation of Maasai animals by TANAPA have been verified through [court rulings](#). MISA believes such continued international support legitimises harmful practices by TANAPA, which should be held accountable for the lives and properties lost due to the actions of its rogue rangers.

On 5 December, [TANAPA rangers killed](#) a pastoralist in Katavi allegedly for grazing livestock in the Wildlife Management Area (WMA). Under Tanzanian law, WMAs are established outside core protected areas (over which TANAPA has a mandate) within the village land and in areas to which local communities have rights of access.

The murder happened just days after KfW handed over cars to TANAPA. Repeatedly presented with evidence of abuses including forced evictions, violence, seizure of livestock,

dispossession and killing, KfW's choice to ignore these reports demonstrates a troubling disregard for the suffering of those living within or near the conservation areas it supports. By providing vehicles and other resources, the KfW indirectly enables the perpetuation of these violations, undermining the credibility of its conservation efforts. This behaviour reflects a broader failure to reconcile ecological preservation with social justice.

Tanzania President promotes tourism amid human rights violations

The President launched two tourism promotion films, a move that was celebrated by the Ngorongoro Conservation Area Authority (NCAA). The tourism sector was awarded a prestigious recognition by other actors in the sector. The President's continuous efforts to promote tourism mask ongoing human rights abuses in major tourist areas such as Ngorongoro.

Tanzania tries to stop UK trophy hunting ban

The UK Parliament is debating a proposed ban on trophy hunting imports, with opinions divided between conservation and ethical concerns. In a recent letter, the Tanzanian Government, together with other African states (Zambia, Botswana, South Africa, Namibia, Zimbabwe), called on the UK to not move forward with this initiative, insisting that the six governments speak in defense of trophy hunting. The Maasai community has long suffered from the adverse effects of the hunting industry, which include evictions, violence and livestock confiscations. MISA fully supports the ban as a means to stop dirty money from the hunting sector from fueling land dispossession.

For more on this issue, see:

<https://www.voanews.com/a/southern-african-countries-in-fresh-bid-to-fight-uk-anti-hunting-ban/7878054.html>

German Parliament discusses conservation issues

Conservation challenges tied to human rights abuses have been [under review in the German Parliament](#). The debate also revealed an overall German public funding related to conservation in Tanzania of 118 million Euro since 2015. Northern Tanzania including Serengeti, Ngorongoro and Loliondo are “beneficiaries” of this funding, which includes fortress conservation that endangers lives and properties of local inhabitants of these and adjacent areas. Striking in the debate is the fact that none of the long list of the conservation projects funded by the German Government is categorised as funding the “protection and strengthening of land rights of indigenous and local populations in and surrounding protected areas”.

MISA engages with UK Foreign Office on human rights violations in the name of conservation

Survival International and a Maasai representative held a discussion on 4 December with members of the East Africa Department in charge of Tanzania at the UK Foreign Office,

addressing the violations of the Maasai's rights in Northern Tanzania. The discussions focused on recent updates about the situation, on ways to ensure that conservation funding and development aid do not fuel human rights violations and on the Maasai's crucial role in fostering and preserving the biodiversity on their lands.

UNESCO Geopark Council revalidates Ngorongoro Lengai in spite of MISA complaints about disinformation and mismanagement

The Ngorongoro Lengai Global Geopark was awarded a Green card status during the online meeting of the UNESCO Global Geopark Council on 10 December 2024. As covered extensively in our previous newsletter, a revalidation mission was undertaken by two international experts in July 2024. MISA had reached out to the two experts offering to meet and share concerns about the mismanagement and lack of participation and inclusion of Indigenous Peoples in decisions about the Geopark, as required by UNESCO statutes regarding Indigenous Peoples. While MISA's letter is mentioned in the mission report, the two experts declined the proposal for a meeting and dismissed the concerns raised by MISA about the violations of Indigenous Peoples' rights. In October, a MISA delegation met with UNESCO representatives in Paris, including from Global Geoparks. While the meeting created an opportunity for dialogue, MISA regrets that no efforts were made by Global Geoparks to further investigate the serious concerns raised by MISA.



Photo: Mount Lengai (MISA credits)