

Maasai International Solidarity Alliance (MISA)* Newsletter

June - August 2024



Photo: Maasai of Ngorongoro Conservation Area hold peaceful protest for 5 days, 18-23 August 2024

Key updates:

- **Maasai of Ngorongoro denied the right to vote**
- **Thousands of Maasai block Serengeti road and protest peacefully to claim their rights**
- **Tanzanian bishops speak out against Maasai forced evictions**
- **Opposition Leader Tundu Lissu and other opposition party leaders abducted ahead of Youth Day rally**
- **EU excludes Tanzania from EUR 18 million call for conservation projects**
- **German bank KfW allocates EUR 9 million to conservation projects with Tanzania National Parks (TANAPA) and Frankfurt Zoological Society (FZS)**
- **Indigenous Peoples censored at UNESCO World Heritage Committee when delivering Ngorongoro statement**
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- **Pololet Game Reserve case now pending for judgement**
- **Maasai hold right-of-passage ceremonies at Ngorongoro Crater**

Maasai of Ngorongoro denied right to vote

On 29 July, MISA was shocked to learn that the [Tanzanian Government had decided to exclude people](#) from Ngorongoro from participating in the ongoing voters registration process in Tanzania. The exclusion impacts over 100,000 people, residing in 25 villages across 11 Wards within the Ngorongoro Division of Ngorongoro District, and mostly affects Maasai citizens. This means that these community members are unjustly denied their right to vote and elect the leaders of their choice.



Photo: Maasai of Ngorongoro Conservation Area block the Serengeti road on 18 August

The right to vote is not merely a privilege but a fundamental democratic right enshrined in the Tanzanian Constitution and upheld by laws designed to protect it. Voting is a cornerstone of any democracy, as it helps ensure that every citizen has a voice in shaping the future of their nation. Denying this right to certain citizens undermines the principles of equality and justice that are essential to any democratic society. MISA publicly denounced this measure, which we consider akin to apartheid against the Maasai community. The denial of the right to vote is one of the key injustices that has triggered massive people's mobilisations in NCA since 18 August.

See MISA press release of 14 August [here](#).

Thousands of Maasai block Serengeti road and protest peacefully to claim their rights

On 18 August, thousands of Maasai in Ngorongoro [blocked](#) Tanzania's busiest tourism road linking Ngorongoro-Serengeti, demanding respect of their human rights. They reacted to systematic attacks on the Maasai livelihoods system by the Tanzanian Government including denial of social services for three years, disenfranchisement of Maasai from national polling register and lawfare, and harassment at Loduare Gate when entering NCA from Karatu.



Photo: Tourist cars are stuck as Maasai of NCA block the Serengeti road on 18 August

Over 25,000 Maasai gathered at the Oloirobi and Lemara areas blocking both the highway and the Crater exit road, demanding that the Tanzanian Government listen to their demands. After six days, the Government promised to reinstate social services, stop rangers' harassment of villagers or in any means doing police work. The Government also promised to reinstate villages delisted from the register by the Minister President Office, Regional Administration and Local Government (PO-RALG) vide Government Notice No. 673 of 2024. This is a huge victory of the people, and MISA will monitor if these promises are kept.



Photo: Maasai of NCA block the Serengeti road on 18 August



Photo: Maasai of NCA block the Serengeti road on 18 August

While the demonstration was underway, on 19 August, the Government published Government Notice No. 673 of 2024 that delisted from the village register all villages in Ngorongoro Division, as a way to legalise the plan to exclude Maasai from participating in the elections or in any policy that would affect their lives. After public pressure, the Government deleted the government notice No. 673 of 2024 from its website and filed a case in the Arusha High Court against its own Government notice using a name of a person who is not aware of such action and affidavit resulted from perjury. The objective of this wicked move, we believe, was to ensure the people could not take any legal action against the Government for delisting Ngorongoro villages, as only one case can be filed at a time for a similar action. The Court promptly acted in the case filed by the Government and issued a temporary order to stop operation of Government Notice No. 673 of 2024 that delisted villages as part of normalising the situation. There are fears from the Maasai community that the Government can easily manipulate judicial systems to deny people's constitutional rights.

See MISA press release of 19 August [here](#).

More media coverage is provided at the end of the newsletter.

Tanzanian bishops speak out against Maasai forced evictions

The President of the Tanzanian Episcopal Conference (TEC), Bishop Wolfgang Pisa, [spoke](#) in support of the Maasai of Ngorongoro on 22 August. Bishop Pisa reiterated the importance of a listening government anchored on justice and responsibility. He called on the Government of Tanzania to dialogue with the elders and representatives of the Maasai in the Ngorongoro Conservation Area.

He insisted: "There is no truth that the people are moving voluntarily, but they are being forced out and they are raising their voices about the denial of their rights... Good governance is a legitimate way to be responsible and good governance comes from the people themselves... The Government should sit at the same table with the people of Ngorongoro; don't force them to move," Bishop Pisa said to much applause from the congregation present.



Photo: Maasai of NCA hold peaceful protest for 6 days on 18-23 August

The TEC president intervention came out barely four days after its Secretary General, Fr. Kitima, [spoke](#) in a similar manner urging the government to respect the right of Maasai in Ngorongoro. A MISA webinar organised on 23 May showed how pastoralism contributes to national economies, food security, environment and cultural heritage and how it is linked to Pope Francis's social encyclical *Laudato Si'*. Watch the [recording here](#).

Tanzania police stopped CHADEMA from holding political rallies in NCA

CHADEMA (Swahili acronym for Party for Democracy and Progress), the largest opposition party, has been denied the right to hold political rallies in Ngorongoro Division. CHADEMA planned to hold a series of political rallies in Ngorongoro District on 27 August. The reason given by the police was that Ngorongoro Division is not safe and not suitable for political rallies, despite the fact that it is the leading tourist destination in the country. This is the third time the police denied CHADEMA the right to hold political activities in Ngorongoro, the last two times being in June 2024 and October 2023, when police blocked Tundu Lissu from entering Ngorongoro.

Opposition Leader Tundu Lissu and other opposition party leaders abducted ahead of Youth Day rally

On 12 August, Tanzanian opposition party leaders [were arrested by the police](#) and held for several hours in custody before being released on bail. CHADEMA was planning a big youth rally, which was [banned by the Tanzanian Government](#). Over [500 people were arrested](#), a move which was [internationally condemned](#).

UN says pastoralists are key to conserving rangelands and should receive more support

In May, the [United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification \(UNCCD\) released its](#)

[“Global Land Outlook,” report](#) which focused on the role that pastoralism can play in conserving rangelands. Rangelands, which include deserts, grasslands and savannas, cover 54% of the planet’s terrestrial surface. Pastoralist communities have often been framed as a threat to wildlife and conservation; in East Africa, many still face harsh grazing restrictions or eviction from their traditional landscapes. But the UNCCD report said that sustainable grazing practices can boost both carbon storage and soil fertility, and that pastoralism is vital to protecting the world’s rangelands.

FAO and EU sign 47 million Euro programme to support pastoralism in East Africa

End of July, the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) and the European Union (EU) signed a four-year 47 million Euro programme designed to strengthen the resilience of pastoralists in Eastern Africa. The initiative, named [“Pastoralism and Livestock Adaptation to Climate Change in Eastern Africa Programme \(PLACE\),”](#) is designed to address the challenges in developing sustainable, climate-resilient pastoral systems in the face of a rapidly changing climate. A cross-border area covering the Mara-Serengeti ecosystem in Kenya and Tanzania has been included in the project, designed to benefit some 20,000 people.



Photo: Maasai of NCA block the Serengeti road on 18 August

EU excludes Tanzania from 18 million Euro call for conservation projects

On 5 June, the European Commission (EC) removed Tanzania from the list of countries eligible for its 18 million Euro conservation grant to be launched in East Africa as part of its NaturAfrica initiative. This decision sends a strong message, as it comes after the [World Bank](#) decision to suspend its funding for a big conservation project in April 2024 and after the [German Development Cooperation](#) halted its projects in Loliondo in the second half of 2023. MISA has been engaging with EU institutions and member states, especially Germany, over the last year, alerting them about their complicity in human rights abuses. Under the pretext of conservation, millions of Euros are poured into northern Tanzania for the creation of “protected areas” and the expansion of national parks, wildlife corridors and game reserves. Conservation groups like the Frankfurt Zoological Society (FZS) and World Wide Fund for Nature (WWF), institutions like USAID, the World Bank and trophy-hunting company Royal Safaris Conservation Co. L.L.C. formerly known as Otterlo Business Corporation (OBC), have all been complicit in funding and legitimising state violence against Indigenous Peoples.

Far from protecting nature, such business-based and militarised conservation interventions promote hunting and large-scale tourism, while violating the rights of the Indigenous inhabitants of these territories. They ignore peoples’ ability to manage and care for their environment using their indigenous knowledge. MISA advocacy efforts resulted in a [European Parliament resolution](#) in December 2023 calling on the Tanzanian Government to stop the evictions. The [corrigendum in the call for proposals published by the EC](#) is a clear sign that the EU acknowledges the negative impacts of exclusive conservation on Maasai rights and on pastoralism as a livelihood and a [highly valuable land-management system](#) in the context of the climate crisis. Ana Pisonero Hernandez, an EU spokeswoman, informed [Al Jazeera](#) that Tanzania was removed after an internal review process. “The decision to amend the call was made to ensure the project’s objectives in terms of human rights protection and environmental concerns are achieved given recent tensions in the region” she said. Al Jazeera reported that this was withheld as a result of the Tanzania Government’s standoff with minorities in the country in its desire to expand tourism.

Statement from MISA:

- <https://www.survivalinternational.org/documents/misa-statement-eu-funding/>

Other media coverage:

- [Tanzania conservation plan takes another hit as EU withdraws funding](#) (East African)
- [Fortress Conservation: Tanzania now ineligible for European Union conservation grant over Maasai evictions](#) (Down to Earth)

German bank KfW allocates 9 million Euro to conservation projects with Tanzania National Parks (TANAPA) and Frankfurt Zoological Society (FZS)

Despite reactions of international donors over several human rights concerns linked to conservation projects in Tanzania (e.g. [suspension of funds by the World Bank](#) or [cancel of tender by the EU](#)), state-owned German development bank KfW reports a 9 million Euro budget increase for its controversial [Serengeti Ecosystem](#) project. As reported in this newsletter series, the project partners TANAPA and FZS have frequently been involved in problematic activities that undermine the rights of the Maasai in the project area. Based on

the critique, a specific part of the project has even been stopped (see January/ February 2024 edition of this newsletter). Against this backdrop, the massive extra funding raises substantive concerns. But the secrecy of this project makes it impossible for the Maasai to understand and assess its impact on the ground. Maasai representatives have frequently demanded the German Government to publish project details in a way that makes it possible to hold it and its project partners to account.

The following written parliamentary question (No. 167) was raised by German Member of Parliament Cornelia Möhring:

To the best of the Federal Government's knowledge, what specific and additional "[top-up](#)" measures will be funded as part of the EUR 9 million increase in the project announced at the beginning of 2024 (please provide a table, broken down into "infrastructure measures" and "measures to improve livelihoods in the Ngorongoro District" and provide the key details for these, e.g. implementation location, number of people to be reached, budget amount, implementing organisation, etc.)? and what are the specific reasons for this financial increase in the nature reserve project instead of its termination or review, while, for example, the World Bank has terminated funding for Tanzanian nature reserve projects due to human [rights violations](#) and expulsions against the local Maasai population (please give reasons, e.g. by citing findings, studies, expert consultations, hearings of affected persons on compliance with project-related human rights, etc.)?"

The answer dated 8 August 2024 by the State Secretary was (MISA's translation):

"The additional increase of EUR 9 million in financial cooperation will enable the infrastructure measures planned in the project to be carried out as planned and sustainably against the backdrop of price increases for petrol, building materials and labour costs. An amount of EUR 5.5 million has been budgeted for this purpose. The remaining EUR 3.5 million will be used to finance additional investments in socio-economic infrastructure and local livelihoods". According to the response, 2.5 EUR million will be affected to villages and livelihoods in Loliondo, the rest in Serengeti. As of 8 August, the implementing partners are still under review.

Indigenous Peoples censored at UNESCO World Heritage Committee session when delivering Ngorongoro statement

On 23 July, a Maasai representative from the Pastoralists Indigenous Non-Governmental Organization's Forum (PINGOs Forum) attended the World Heritage Committee (WHC) session in Delhi, hoping to ensure a satisfactory decision is made on the future of the Ngorongoro World Heritage Site. In February, UNESCO and its advisory bodies ICOMOS and IUCN undertook an advisory mission to NCA without informing and consulting Maasai representatives from communities living in NCA. This led to serious complaints by local communities, including by Maasai civil society organisations and by the Ngorongoro Pastoral Council. Local communities, supported by MISA, demanded that a new mission be organised that would follow international guidelines on how to properly engage with Indigenous Peoples. They also insisted that the report of the February mission should not be published, as it was not legitimate. During the 46th session of the WHC, our MISA representative prepared a statement insisting on these points, which was to be read through the International Indigenous Peoples' Forum on World Heritage (IIPFWH). The Indigenous representative was told to delete the sentence with the reference to the February report; otherwise, it would not be allowed to read the statement. MISA wrote a complaint letter about this act of censorship and coercion by the Bureau and is preparing to meet the WHC Director in September to dialogue further on this issue. The meeting will also be an opportunity to discuss how to best implement Decision 46 COM 7B.48 of the WHC requesting a Reactive

Monitoring Mission to take place in Ngorongoro.

For more on this issue, see:

- <https://news.mongabay.com/2024/06/unesco-accused-of-supporting-human-rights-abuses-in-african-parks/>
- <https://www.etvbharat.com/en!/international/unesco-slammed-for-its-silence-on-human-rights-violations-in-world-heritage-sites-enn24072204758>
- <https://www.tourismupdate.co.za/article/world-heritage-ngorongoro-relocations-be-further-investigated>
- <https://assets.survivalinternational.org/documents/2608/original-8dd0942b4b2cd0096e3a9612c855ba15.pdf>

UNESCO experts assess Ngorongoro Lengai Geopark without meeting any Maasai representatives

In the week of 22-26 July, a team of UNESCO experts composed of Dr Sophie Justice and Dr Christian Ciobanu came to Tanzania to assess and revalidate the Ngorongoro-Lengai UNESCO Global Geopark. Maasai communities were not informed about this mission and [learned about it through the media](#). The mission did not meet any Maasai representatives. MISA wrote to the expert team as well as to the Geopark Secretariat and Committee and UNESCO Director General to complain about this lack of transparency and participation and insisted that no free, prior and informed consent was obtained from Maasai Indigenous Peoples when the Geopark was established in 2018. Other sources of concern include: 1) the fact that Geopark promotes tourism, which is already reaching unsustainable levels in Ngorongoro and is not benefiting local communities; 2) the fact that some of the key featuring attractions of the Geopark are sites with highly significant spiritual and cultural value for the Maasai, such as Ngorongoro Crater and Ormoti, which are places used for rites of passage; this is totally disregarded by the Tanzanian Government, which is promoting tourism and now planning to develop canoeing; 3) the fact that the Ngorongoro Lengai Geopark is benefiting from Chinese investment for the construction of museums and additional infrastructure without consent of the local people; 4) that Geopark bodies are completely ignoring the human rights violations reported in the property and failing to engage with affected communities. MISA has not received any response from Geopark representatives so far, despite sending several reminders.

Tanzanian Government defends decision on Ngorongoro resettlement at World Heritage Committee session

Speaking at the WHC session in Delhi, where the situation of Ngorongoro World Heritage Site was to be discussed, Mr Soraga, Head of the Tanzania delegation, [denied any allegation](#) that there were human rights violations associated with the so-called voluntary relocation undertaken in NCA. He further denied the existence of any Indigenous Peoples in Tanzania, completely disregarding the opinion of the African Commission on Human and Peoples' Rights on this matter, which recognises Maasai as meeting the criteria set for Indigenous Peoples. The recording of this intervention can be watched [here](#) (session of Thursday, 25 July 2024, 15-18 h). Background documents can be found [here](#).

MISA strongly disagrees with the idea advanced by the Tanzanian Government of “balancing heritage conservation, human rights, socio-economic development and livelihoods of our citizens in the NCA”. Human rights should not be balanced with anything and should always be respected. MISA further rejects the claim that “a consensus was reached through a participatory and transparent process for a *voluntary eviction program*”. How can an eviction be voluntary?

The Arusha Regional Commissioner Makonda meets the UAE ambassador to launch a water project in Loliondo without involving the local people

On 1 July, the Arusha Regional Commissioner Mr Paul Makonda made a trip to Loliondo to join the United Arab Emirates (UAE) ambassador for the purpose of launching water projects financed by Otterlo Business Corporation (OBC). OBC has been at the heart of one of the biggest land conflicts in Loliondo over the last 30 years. Makonda went to Loliondo without informing the local communities and their leaders. One of Loliondo leaders argued: "Who are the beneficiaries of this project if the leaders and communities are not involved?". This visit took place two years after the forceful eviction of 16 villages of Loliondo following the demarcation of the village lands to establish an illegal Pololet Game Reserve that affected over 105,000 people. Recently, OBC has been [accused](#) of transporting life animals from Tanzania to the UAE.



Photos: Regional Commissioner Paul Makonda in Loliondo

Hadzabe communities complain that government and tour operators are using their areas for tourism activities without sharing benefits

An unnamed Hadza man from Eyasi within the NCA recorded a video speaking in Swahili complaining against the government and tour operators about unilateral decisions on tourism business in their areas. The Tanzanian Government decided that tourists must pay only \$10 to Hadza who work as guides in their area while government and tour operators charge tourists thousands of dollars. The man said: "We are not going to agree. If the government cannot listen, then let them come and act as guide".

Arbitrary arrests continue in Ngorongoro Conservation Area

In May, seven women from Alaitole were arrested by NCAA rangers and arraigned to Court allegedly for collecting firewood around their settlements. Among the seven women, two are pregnant and two are breastfeeding. This case is now ongoing at the Primary Court in Ngorongoro. Cases of arbitrary arrest and trumped up charges have become common in Ngorongoro Division for the last three years when the Samia administration initiated Maasai relocation out of Ngorongoro.

NCA communities file a case against unlawful livestock seizure and compounding interest by NCAA authorities

On 6 May, Ngotieti Kokoyo from Endulen filed a case at the High Court of Tanzania challenging seizure of his livestock on 5 April. His livestock were released after payment of the compounding fee to the NCAA. The livestock were seized by the NCAA rangers for crossing the Eyasi/Endamaga Gate. The court case is based on the fact that the NCA laws allow coexistence between wildlife, people and livestock. As a result, seizure of livestock within the NCA is contrary to the law and to the founding objective of establishing the NCA. The NCA uses laws that do not apply in Ngorongoro to seize livestock from Maasai as part of exerting pressure on Maasai to give up and relocate out of Ngorongoro. The case was scheduled for hearing on 12 August but was postponed because the government lawyer did not show up in Court.



Photo: Display of the bill of compounding interest charged on livestock in NCA

Pololet Game Reserve case now pending for Final Judgement

The Tanzania High Court has now scheduled October 2024 as the date for delivery of the Final Judgement in the case filed by eight villagers challenging Government Notice No. 604 of 2022 issued by President Samia declaring their village and home as a Game Reserve. In August 2023, the Court had issued Preservatory orders against the Government of Tanzania directing Maasai to be allowed to access the disputed area pending final determination of the case, but the Government is openly disrespecting the Court orders and continues seizing livestock. The presidential declaration that affected 1502 square kilometres impacting 15

villages was preceded by the ministerial declaration that declared the same area as a Pololeti Game Controlled Area. The High Court has already held that the Minister acted contrary to the law. On 28 July, the Government seized another 130 livestock belonging to the Ormutendei Kaiyia family.

Leaked massive land grabbing plan discussed in the Parliament

On 3 June, the Simanjiro Member of Parliament (MP), Christopher Olesendeka, [spoke out in Parliament](#) against the Ministry of Natural Resources and Tourism's proposal to convert nearly 80% of Maasai village land into Game Reserves. His strong objections led to a heated debate, with the Minister of Natural Resources unable to confirm or deny the Ministry's involvement in the proposal. The Speaker of the National Assembly responded to Ole Sendeka's concerns and directed the Minister to provide a detailed response.

MP from Kiteto District questions the Government about security agencies threatening local communities

In June, the MP for Kiteto constituency, Edward Lekaita, put a motion to the Speaker of the Tanzania Parliament to direct the Government to stop the ongoing harassment of the villagers by the police officers at Irkiushi Oibor Village. The Minister of Land agreed that there is a border conflict between Manyara Region (Irkiushi Oibor in Kiteto District) and Dodoma (Mkungunero Game Reserve in Kondo District). The speaker of the National Assembly directed the two ministers, the Minister of Natural Resources and Tourism and the Minister of Land, to sit together and bring sufficient details about this conflict during the next parliamentary session. Further, the police officers should leave the village until the matter is solved in the next parliamentary session in September 2024.

Msomera residents complain their land is grabbed for relocation

In June, the occupants of Msomera Village [complained that they were displaced by the Tanzanian Government](#) without either being consulted or compensated when their land was taken to build houses for people relocated from Ngorongoro. They also lamented that they witnessed security forces supervising the erection of beacons on the land they had used for years. However, they had to keep silent, as whoever dared to speak would end up in police custody.

Msomera residents also complained that the Government took their farms, pasture, graveyards and homes and constructed houses for people from Ngorongoro. They also said the reason given to them by the Government was that they are intruders on that land, as the area is a GCA. However, it should be noted that there has never been any restriction of human activities and settlement in this GCA before 2009. In 1951, the British colonial government established 49 GCAs along with human settlement and township areas. Establishment of GCAs has nothing to do with land ownership but seeks to regulate hunting in such places. Even with the coming into force of the Wildlife Management Act of 2009, the GCAs are the ones to be discontinued and not the village land.

MISA analyses key contributors of Ministry of Natural Resources and Tourism's [2023/24 budget](#)

The Ministry of Natural Resources and Tourism receives its budgetary aid from foreign countries including Canada, China, UAE, South Korea, United States of America, Morocco, Namibia, Norway, Belgium, France, Finland, Germany, Switzerland and the European Union.

The largest share comes from international conservation, tourism and banking institutions that include African Development Bank (AfDB), Frankfurt Zoological Society (FZS), Global Environmental Facility (GEF), African Wildlife Foundation (AWF), African World Heritage Fund (AWHF), Enabel (Belgium Development Agency), Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit (GIZ), International Centre for the Study of Preservation and Restoration of Cultural Property (ICCROM), International Council of Museum (ICOM), International Council on Monuments and Sites (ICOMOS), International Monetary Fund (IMF) and International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN).

Other actors include Kreditanstalt für Wiederaufbau (German Development Bank KfW), Norwegian Agency for Development Cooperation (NORAD), USAID, HoneyGuide Foundation, PAMS Foundation, Trade Aid, United Nations Development Programme, World Bank, WildAid, World Travel Market (WMF), and World Wildlife Fund (WWF).

The Ministry of Natural Resources and Tourism is over-financed compared to other ministries that directly touch the lives of the people such as the Ministry of Livestock, the Ministry of Land or the Ministry of Health. This creates an imbalance in power between various ministries and in their ability to implement laws and policies or influence decisions. Funding continues to flow despite the terrible human rights violation records of the Ministry of Natural Resources over the years.

Ministry of Natural Resources and Tourism unveils new tourism products in NCA

On 19 July, the Permanent Secretary of the [Ministry of Natural Resources and Tourism \(NRT\)](#), Nkoba Mabula, directed the [Ngorongoro Conservation Area Authority \(NCAA\)](#) to develop new products to attract more tourists. The stated objective is to reach 5 million tourists by developing and launching new attractions including bicycle tourism in Olduvai, canoeing in Empakani, night game drives and zipline tourism. MISA is highly concerned about these developments, noting that no free, prior and informed consent has been obtained from Maasai Indigenous Peoples living in NCA, that these developments are affecting spiritual sites of prime importance and that tourism levels have already reached unsustainable numbers, with direct impacts on the residents in terms of limited access to water and firewood. The Ministry of NRT also intends to develop an [online booking platform](#) for safari to capture more revenues from the tourism sector. According to an article published in the Citizen, the government plan is to earn 6 billion USD from 5 million tourist arrivals by 2025, a sharp increase from the 3,4 billion USD earned from around 1,8 million tourists in 2023. Aside from increasing the number of tourists, the objective is to capture a bigger share of tourism income. Currently, many tourists make travel arrangements via global tour companies and stay in hotels owned by global investors. It is estimated that only 20-45% of that money stays in African countries, according to the Africa Project Research Institute. How the online platform will address this issue is still unclear.

Maasai hold right-of-passage ceremonies at Ngorongoro Crater

On 22 June, over 4000 young Maasai boys aged 9 to 17 gathered in Ngorongoro Crater to celebrate their initiation ceremony known as [Enkipaata](#). Enkipaata is the first of three Maasai rites of passage that every Maasai man must go through. As per the tradition, the boys were blessed by elders in circles in round natural water pools in the crater. They sang solidarity songs throughout the night, perpetuating the bond that has existed between the Maasai community and Ngorongoro Crater from time immemorial.

Ngorongoro Crater is a major custodian of Maasai culture. All known Maasai age groups find their ritual bases within the Ngorongoro caldera. As a rule, no Enkipaata can be undertaken in a place other than in a natural round water reserve and Ngorongoro Crater has for centuries been the base of Maasai cultural and spiritual elements.

The Tanzanian Government tried to use the occasion to further its anti-Maasai campaign, claiming Maasai are saying goodbye to Ngorongoro. Some statements on social media also claimed that the people gathering in the ceremony had agreed to relocate to Msomera, which is false. In reality, this event – more than any other – shows Ngorongoro is a backbone of Maasai culture and spirituality.

For video images, check [here](#).



Photos: Maasai boys at the Ngorongoro crater for the Enkipaata ceremony

Major tourist players to meet in Arusha in September

The event is expected to attract over 450 participants and is organised by [Rethinking Tourism Africa](#) on 26 and 27 September. Guest speakers include US celebrity Michael Ruggiero and World Tourism Organisation representative Marcel Leizer, who will speak on tourism and peace.

For more information see:

- <https://www.thecitizen.co.tz/tanzania/news/national/tourism-players-to-meet-in-arusha-in-september-4706404>
- <https://dailynews.co.tz/us-celebrity-to-grace-ea-indoor-tourism-fair-in-arusha/>

Coming up:

- EU lobby tour between September 10 and 20, two Maasai representatives will be meeting decision-makers in Austria, Belgium (European Commission), France (UNESCO and EU Parliament in Strasbourg) and Germany.
- [Workshop 28 at Tropentag conference](#): “Nature Conservation, Land Grabbing, and Indigenous Peoples’ Rights: Maasai in Northern Tanzania are defending their own vision for conservation and sustainable livelihoods”, 11/09/2024, 08:45 – 11:45 h (CEST); Panel discussion with: Joseph Moses, Maasai International Solidarity Alliance (MISA); Tina Timan, Pastoral Women Council; Lerato Thakholi, Sociology of Development and Change Group, Wageningen University, and Institute for Poverty, Land and Agrarian Studies, University of the Western Cape, South Africa; Erwin

Künzi, Austrian Development Agency (ADA); and Ann Waters Bayer, International Year of Rangelands & Pastoralists (IYRP) and German Institute for Tropical & Subtropical Agriculture (DITSL). To register: andreas.bauer@boku.ac.at

Useful reports and documentaries:

- [“It’s Like Killing Culture”, Human Rights Impacts of Relocating Tanzania’s Maasai, Human Rights Watch report launched on July 31.](#)
- [Documentary screening and panel discussion organized by Amnesty International African on World Day of Indigenous Peoples \(9 August\) hosted by the Alliance Francaise](#)

Selected media coverage of NCA protests:

<https://panafricanvisions.com/2024/08/tanzanias-maasai-protest-sparks-major-disruptions-and-criticism-over-government-eviction-plan/>

<https://www.context.news/climate-justice/tanzanias-maasai-protest-eviction-in-the-name-of-conservation>

https://www.context.news/newsletter?id=959266834d1146ac13e5b19f9e821f0f&utm_source=newsletter&utm_medium=email&utm_campaign=context-climate

<https://reddmonitor.substack.com/p/like-apartheid-maasai-in-ngorongoro>

<https://thechanzo.com/2024/08/20/tanzania-delists-all-wards-and-villages-in-the-contested-ngorongoro-area-stakeholders-warn-the-plan-is-unconstitutional/?s=09>

<https://www.rfi.fr/fr/afrique/20240818-tanzanie-des-membres-de-la-communaut%C3%A9-maassa%C3%AF-manifestent-pour-leurs-droits> (in French)

<https://www.downtoearth.org.in/africa/maasai-situation-in-tanzania-reminiscent-of-bantustans-and-pass-laws-in-apartheid-south-africa-claims-activist-as-community-blocks-key-highway>

General articles on Maasai land grabbing:

<https://news.mongabay.com/2024/06/forced-evictions-suppress-maasai-spirituality-sacred-spaces-in-tanzania/?s=09>

<https://news.mongabay.com/2024/08/luxury-hunting-firm-linked-to-decades-of-poaching-in-tanzania-whistleblowers-say/>

<https://www.aljazeera.com/opinions/2024/8/9/tanzanias-conservation-concerns-do-not-excuse-violations-of-maasai-rights>

<https://www.aljazeera.com/features/2024/8/5/tanzania-wants-to-evict-maasai-for-wildlife-but-theyre-fighting-back>

<https://www.thecitizen.co.tz/tanzania/news/national/tanzania-human-rights-commission-accuses-makonda-of-power-abuse-4696666>

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