

Maasai International Solidarity Alliance (MISA)

supports the Ngorongoro movement

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The Maasai International Solidarity Alliance (MISA) stands in full solidarity with the Maasai of Ngorongoro who have bravely blocked the Ngorongoro-Serengeti road on Sunday 18 August 2024. Thousands of protesters demonstrated peacefully, sharing their plight with the world: “We are evicted so rich people change our homes into hotels”, “We are experiencing apartheid practices from Tanzanian government”, “It is sad to witness women suffering of oppression led by a woman President” or “Prisoners vote but Maasai of Ngorongoro not allowed to register as voters”. MISA is deeply impressed with the courage, determination and unity of the Ngorongoro Maasai, and fully supports their demands. It is high time their right to live and stay on the land is recognised, and their human rights as Tanzanian citizens are respected.

MISA calls on the Tanzanian President to:

- Immediately initiate a dialogue process with legitimate and elected Maasai leaders;
- Respect the right to peaceful demonstration and refrain from any form of violence;
- Uphold the right of all Tanzanian citizens, including the people of Ngorongoro, to vote and select their elected representatives by allowing them to participate in the ongoing voters’ registration;
- Restore all social services that have been blocked for almost three years, to respect and fulfill the human rights to food, education and health;
- Put an end to any attempt to displace the Maasai from Ngorongoro Conservation Area (NCA);
- Develop a sustainable strategy to address the acute food insecurity and humanitarian crisis in NCA, including lifting the ban on subsistence farming, ensuring full access to grazing areas and supporting pastoralism as a viable and resilient livelihood;
- Ensure full participation of the people living in NCA in the management of the area and obtain free, prior and informed consent (FPIC) for any decision impacting their lives and livelihoods;
- Ensure local communities substantially benefit from tourism operations in NCA including through benefit-sharing, decent employment and participatory management of tourism activities to ensure tourism levels remain sustainable;
- Stop all forms of anti-Maasai discrimination, confiscation of livestock and the alienation of land across all Maasai districts.

Recognising the historical and shared responsibilities of the European Union and its Member States (including Germany), the United Kingdom and the United States in the current crisis, MISA calls on the international community to:

- Openly condemn the decision to deny the Maasai of Ngorongoro the right to vote; donors funding good governance and the democratisation of Tanzania should insist that the rights of Maasai must be respected like those of any other Tanzanian citizen;

- Address the current food security crisis in NCA, including by making funding available for pro-pastoralist programmes to advance people's right to feed themselves, and by providing urgent humanitarian assistance;
- Stop funding conservation projects that separate humans from nature and lead to the displacement of Indigenous Peoples from their lands; Frankfurt Zoological Society (FZS) should immediately stop all its activities in Maasai land, especially in Loliondo where it is complicit in the grabbing of land (Pololet).

Noting that Ngorongoro was recognised as Natural World Heritage in 1979, Biosphere Reserve in 1981, Cultural World Heritage in 2010 and as Ngorongoro-Lengai Global Geopark in 2018, MISA calls on UNESCO, the World Heritage Committee (WHC) and advisory bodies ICOMOS and IUCN to:

- Recognise that its recommendations have, over the last 20 years, had a negative impact on the human rights of people in NCA, including their right to food, by encouraging a cultivation ban and prohibiting access to essential grazing areas such as the Ngorongoro, Olromti and Embakaai craters; all these restrictions should be lifted;
- Stop facilitating the displacement of Maasai from NCA including by recommending that incentives be set up to relocate people;
- Recognise that Maasai people, their culture and pastoralist practices are contributing to the integrity and conservation of the site and should be protected;
- Condemn the removal of social services in NCA and demand that people's right to education, health and housing be respected
- Review the nomination status of NCA in light of the fact that Indigenous Peoples have the right to FPIC and that Maasai were never consulted
- Condemn the lack of involvement, participation and consultation of the Maasai in the management of the World Heritage Site, which is contrary to UNESCO rules of procedures, and demand immediate action to ensure co-management by Indigenous Peoples;
- Ensure full participation, involvement and consent of the Maasai in UNESCO and WHC decision-making processes including reactive missions and all decisions about Ngorongoro.

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The Maasai International Solidarity Alliance (MISA) is an international alliance standing in solidarity with the Maasai of Northern Tanzania. We bring together international faith-based organisations, human rights organisations, international aid and development organisations, as well as grassroots organisations, individual activists, researchers and lawyers representing the Maasai in several land cases. 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), CIDSE - International family of Catholic social justice organisations (International), Indigenous Movement for Peace Advancement and Conflict Transformation (IMPACT), FIAN International, FINAL GOVERNANCE, KOO (*Koordinierungsstelle der Österreichischen Bischofskonferenz* (Coordinating Office of the Austrian Bishops' Conference), *Gesellschaft für bedrohte Völker* (Society for Threatened Peoples), Misereor, PINGO's Forum (Pastoralists Indigenous Non-Governmental Organisations), PWC (Pastoral Women's Council), TEST (Traditional Ecosystems Survival Tanzania), UCRT (Ujamaa Community Resource Team) and Welthaus Graz. Our main objective is to put an end to the human rights violations facing the Maasai of northern Tanzania.