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NEWS

6 June 2023

Tanzania: Authorities brutally violated Maasai amid forced evictions from ancestral lands

The Tanzanian authorities have repeatedly resorted to ill-treatment, excessive use of force, arbitrary arrests and detentions, and forced evictions against members of the Maasai Indigenous community, Amnesty International said in a new [report](#) released today.

The report, [We have lost everything: Forced evictions of the Maasai in Loliondo, Tanzania](#), details how the Tanzanian authorities forcibly evicted the Maasai community from Loliondo, a division in Tanzania's northern Ngorongoro district in Arusha region, on 10 June 2022. Security forces violently and without due process removed the Maasai community from their ancestral lands in Loliondo, leaving 70,000 people without access to the grazing lands that their livelihoods depended on.

"This crucial report reveals how Tanzania's security forces resorted to the use of brutal force when evicting the Maasai from 1,500 square kilometres of their ancestral lands in Loliondo. It

also highlights total disregard for due process and free prior and informed consent of the affected Maasai people in the decision-making process that was used to justify the forced evictions,” said Tigere Chagutah, Amnesty International’s Regional Director for East and Southern Africa.

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This report reveals how Tanzania’s security forces resorted to the use of brutal force when evicting the Maasai from 1,500 square kilometres of their ancestral lands in Loliondo

Tigere Chagutah, Regional Director, Amnesty International, East and Southern Africa

Mass arrests, brutal forced evictions

On 7 June 2022, hundreds of security personnel from numerous government agencies travelled to Loliondo in a fleet of motor vehicles, before setting up camps in Ololosokwan village and beginning to demarcate 1,500 square kilometres within Maasai territory. On 10 June, they violently dispersed members of the Maasai community who had gathered to protest against the demarcation exercise.

The security forces shot and teargassed members of the Maasai who resisted forced eviction, injuring at least 40 people. One police officer, Garlus Mwita, was killed by as yet, unidentified persons, while 84-year-old Oriaisi Pasilance Ng’iyo, a member of the Maasai, is still missing. He was last seen by his family lying on the ground after being shot by the security forces in both of his legs. The authorities denied holding him.

Many community members fled from their homes to hide in the wilderness. They hid for weeks with their relatives in the forest and national park, not in any specific place since they were constantly moving as they grazed their livestock. Many fled the country to Narok, southern Kenya. The forced evictions and resulting movement caused a disruption to education that could have severe effects on learning. As of May 2023, about 60 families were still living in Narok, Kenya. They are living in impoverishment and lack access to livelihoods. The violations are now, everyday life for those that were forced to leave their homes.

In early July 2022, 27 Maasai were detained and unfairly charged in relation to the killing of Mwita. Ten individuals were arrested on 9 June, the day before the alleged murder took place, and later charged in relation to his death. The authorities also arrested 132 individuals in Loliondo for allegedly being in the country illegally.

The 27 Maasai charged in connection with the murder case and the 132 individuals charged for being in the country illegally have since been discharged due to a lack of evidence. Some of them, however, had to sell their livestock to pay for legal fees.

The authorities have restricted access of the community and their animals to their traditional grazing land. Livestock belonging to community members gets impounded by the authorities whenever they stray to the demarcated land and the owners are forced to pay exorbitant fines to have them released. Those who are unable to pay the fines have their animals auctioned off by the authorities, leaving them impoverished.

During and after the forced evictions in June 2022, the Tanzanian authorities prevented media outlets and NGOs from accessing affected areas of Loliondo or reporting on the evictions.

Conservation and human rights

The report also challenges the Tanzanian authorities' claim that their actions are necessary in order to conserve the land and biodiversity. It calls on them to ensure Indigenous peoples are offered leadership roles in conservation, allowing them to protect the land by using their traditional knowledge, as they have done for generations.

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Tanzania authorities must urgently recognize and fulfil the rights of the Maasai to their ancestral lands, territories, and natural resources

Tigere Chagutah

“The Tanzania authorities must urgently recognize and fulfil the rights of the Maasai to their ancestral lands, territories, and natural resources. They should abide by their international and national obligations to protect the rights to adequate housing, peaceful assembly, free prior and informed consent, and non-discrimination. Instead, what we have seen is that they have forcibly evicted the Maasai from their ancestral lands and offered no compensation,” said Tigere Chagutah.

“The Tanzanian authorities must conduct thorough, impartial, independent, transparent and effective investigations into all alleged human rights violations, including the killing of police officer Garlus Mwita, the enforced disappearance of Oriaisi Pasilance Ng’iyo, and the mass arbitrary arrests and indiscriminate killings of Maasai community members.” They should also probe the role corporations played in the forced evictions in Loliondo and provide access to justice and effective remedies to victims.”

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Background

In 2009, without gaining consent from the Maasai as required by international human rights standards, the Tanzanian authorities restricted human activities, including settlements and livestock grazing, in a network of so-called “Protected Areas”. These areas include 1,500 square kilometres of villages where the Maasai have lived for generations, using the land for livestock grazing, food production and as a source of water. The restrictions left more than 70,000 Maasai with insufficient land for their livestock as well as water shortages, leaving their cattle at risk of death.

The forced evictions in Tanzania are rooted in the country’s land governance policies, which fail to provide thousands of people with the right to land. Since 1959, when the Maasai were moved from the Serengeti National Park to Loliondo, the Maasai have been repeatedly evicted from their traditional pastoral lands by the government. The authorities said the evictions were necessary for wildlife conservation, yet the land was later used for tourism activities, including trophy hunting.

The Maasai were subjected to forced evictions in 2009, 2013, 2017 and 2022 by numerous state security forces, who were accompanied by representatives of a private company licensed to operate tourism activities, including trophy hunting, in Loliondo.

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