

HUMAN RIGHTS | TANZANIA

Tanzania: Plan for Maasai removal putting people at risk

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A new report outlines how the Tanzanian government is cutting essential services to force the relocation of Maasai living in a conservation area.

The Maasai people in Ngorongoro Conservation Area, Arusha, Tanzania face eviction

Image: Huax Hongli/Xinhua/IMAGO

A [new report](#)  released Wednesday by Human Rights Watch (HRW) reveals some of the consequences of a plan from the [Tanzanian](#) government to force the Maasai to relocate from their ancestral lands in the Ngorongoro Conservation Area in northern Tanzania.

With over 82,000 Maasai being evicted, the rights watchdog has said that the government had violated the Maasai's rights to land, education, and health without providing fair consent.

"The Maasai are being forcibly evicted under the guise of voluntary relocation," said Juliana Nnoko, HRW senior researcher on women and land.

The HRW report said that "government-employed rangers assaulted and beat residents with impunity," with community members reporting 13 alleged incidents of beatings between September 2022 and July 2023.

The government has said that relocating the Maasai aims to protect the Ngorongoro Conservation Area, a UNESCO World Heritage site, from human encroachment.

What does the report say?

HRW argued that the Tanzanian government wants to "[use the Maasai lands for conservation and tourism purposes](#)."

To pressure the community into relocating, Tanzanian authorities have cut funding for schools and health centers, which restricts access to essential care and increases travel distances.

HRW reported that the service cuts have had severe consequences, with one woman giving birth to premature twins in a car, both babies dying from delayed care.

Additionally, three women died from pregnancy-related complications between April and May last year due to a lack of timely medical help.

Controversy over the relocation scheme has led to the World Bank in April suspending \$150 million worth of conservation funding, and the EU also removing Tanzania's eligibility for around \$19 million in similar funding.

Government denying Maasai voting rights - expert tells DW

"In the past three years, the government of Tanzania has been inflicting social and economic restrictions on the Maasai in Ngorongoro," Denis Oleshangay, a lawyer and activist from Ngorongoro told DW.

He has been advocating for the Maasai in several cases, both in Tanzanian courts, and in the East African Court of Justice.

"The community is denied rights to access important social services, like education, health and essential places for pasture, water and salt links," Oleshangay added.

He said that the government, through the Ngorongoro Conservation Area Authority (NCAA), has denied building permits for the renovation of collapsed structures, including classrooms, health facilities, and residential homes.

"Recently, the community has been complaining that the government is now stripping them of their voting rights and disenfranchising them, to facilitate their removal from Ngorongoro," he added.

Oleshangay pointed out that, while the government listed polling stations nationwide, the villages in Ngorongoro were notably absent from the list.

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