

Global development

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Tanzania's Maasai appeal to west to stop eviction for conservation plans

Thousands of Indigenous people sign letter to UK, US and EU protesting at appropriation of land for tourist safaris and hunting



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Thousands of Maasai pastoralists in northern [Tanzania](#) have written to the British and US governments and the EU appealing for help to stop plans to evict them from their ancestral land.

More than 150,000 Maasai people face eviction by the Tanzanian government due to moves by the UN cultural agency [Unesco](#) and a safari company to use the land for conservation and commercial hunting.

“We are asking for your help to let our government know that our land is not for sale and that we will continue to resist this longstanding assault on our rights and the ecological integrity of our land. We are therefore calling on your organisation to speak out against these abuses and help us prevent the extinction of our people,” read [the letter](#).

“You can keep providing funding to those responsible for appropriating our land in the name of profit or you can make it clear to our government that you will not stand by as our right to live peacefully on and conserving our land is denied to make space for elite tourism and ‘trophy’ hunting.”

The Maasai say their lives are at stake, as their capacity to keep livestock and provide food for their communities will be destroyed if they are evicted.

“We have nowhere else to go,” they wrote. “Losing this land will mean the extinction of our community. Over 70% of our homelands has been taken for conservation and investment reasons.”

The government plans to evict Maasai in the Ngorongoro conservation area, which is designated a world heritage site by Unesco, and Loliondo, near the Serengeti national park. Both are famous for luxury safari tourism. The Tanzanian government and Unesco believe Ngorongoro is overpopulated to the detriment of wildlife.

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the area over the next five years under plans drawn up by Tanzania's national commission for Unesco in 2019 to expand the conservation area.

The Maasai already face restricted use of the land because of Unesco listing. They are not allowed to grow crops, which has led to food shortages. The situation has worsened with **drought** in the region. The International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies, **reported** on Tuesday how prolonged dry spells had meant pasture and water shortages for livestock in the northern Maasai region and more than 60,000 animals had died.

Farther north in Loliondo, near the Kenyan border, 70,000 Maasai face eviction to make way for the expanding operations of Otterlo Business Corporation (OBC), a United Arab Emirates-owned hunting company.

Eviction notices were issued last year but were halted when allegations of intimidation of Maasai emerged. The evictions are expected to go ahead any day.

"They [the authorities] deny people access to water, electricity. They want to create an uncomfortable situation for the people," said Denis Moses Oleshangai, a lawyer and resident of Ngorongoro.

"People are worried. They are concerned about the impact of the eviction and how their life will be," said a Maasai community leader from Loliondo, who also asked not to be named.

In February this year, Tanzania's tourism minister, Damas Ndumbaro, said the Maasai did not have a claim to their homeland as all land belonged to the president.

Anuradha Mittal, executive director of the Oakland Institute thinktank, said: "This is all for conservation. to create these pristine environments for

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OBC did not respond to requests for comment.

The Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office was approached for comment.

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