

Maasai International Solidarity Alliance (MISA)* Newsletter

March/April 2024

Key updates:

- Massive corruption by Ngorongoro Conservation Area Authority officials uncovered
- Leaked government plans reveal new plan to alienate more Maasai land
- 135 families relocated to Msomera accuse Tanzanian Government of unfulfilled promises
- Protestors rally on 27 February to call for free and fair elections
- Will UNESCO recognise its mistake and meaningfully engage with Indigenous Peoples at Ngorongoro World Heritage Site?
- World Bank starts outreach to Maasai communities for “Land Security Improvement Project”
- MISA calls on USAID to stop funding wildlife corridors in Longido, Simanjiro and Monduli, which are driving more evictions



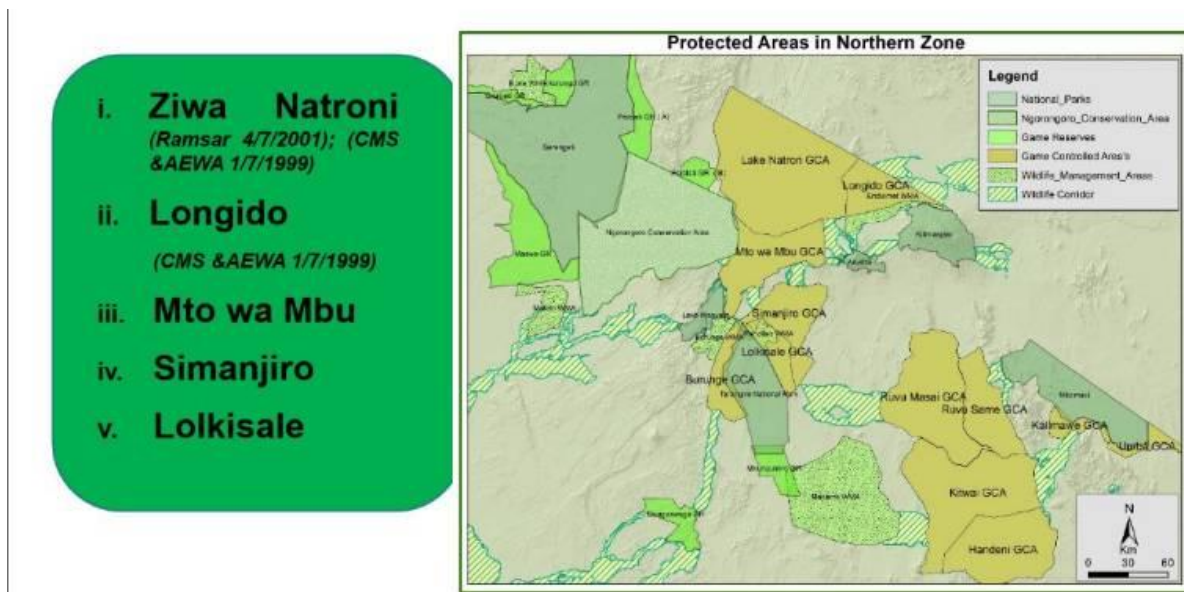
Peaceful demonstration against the lack of transparency and consultation of Indigenous Peoples by UNESCO Advisory Mission to Ngorongoro World Heritage Site

Tanzanian Government plans to alienate more Maasai land

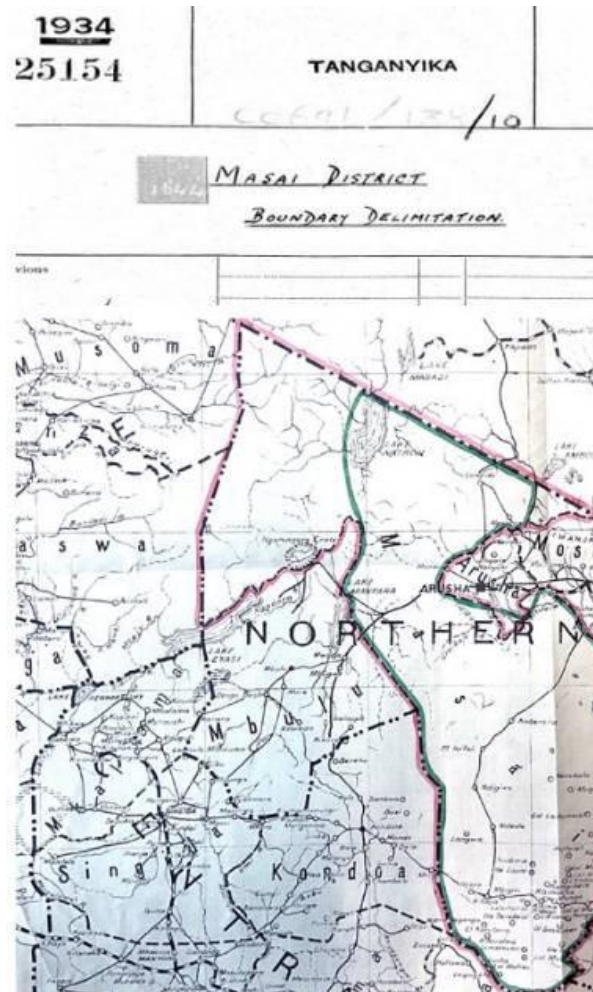
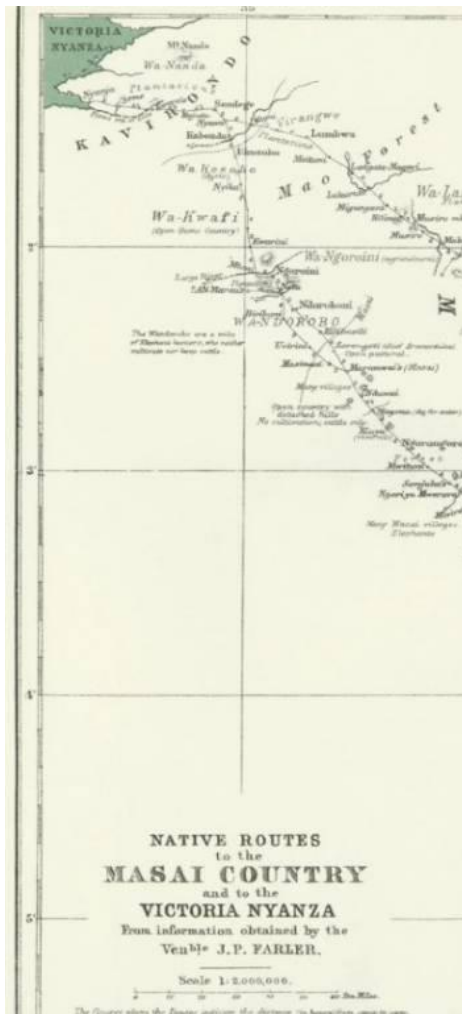
In late February 2024, plans by the Tanzanian Government to further alienate Maasailand leaked to the public from an undisclosed source. The Government intends to alienate more than 70% of all Maasai districts comprising Ngorongoro, Longido, Monduli, Simanjiro and Kiteto District. In fact, it will privatise land by creating 16 hunting blocks in the form of Game Reserve and Game Controlled Areas. It is anticipated that this plan will impact over 390,000 people across over 90 villages, amounting to 15,856 sq. km:

District name	No. Villages	No. community members affected	Proposed land area (sq. km)
Monduli District	21	93,731	15,856
Longido District	26	85,899	
Simanjiro District	26	126,116	
Ngorongoro District	17	85,647	
Total Population	90	391,393	

Table: impacted villages, population and land size in each district



This plan targets areas that are predominantly occupied by the Maasai community. In Simanjiro, farms leased by Arabs and other investors are excluded but Maasai farms and grazing areas are included in the new Game Reserves to be put in place. This is just the latest evidence of concerted efforts by the Tanzania Government to target Maasai community land. MISA understands that both the Maasai advocates Oleshangay and Olesendeka shared part of the content of this plan before being followed by State authorities.



As shown on these maps, the Government plan falls exactly within what the British colonial regime delineated as Maasai District in 1934, which was previously known as Maasai Reserve.

Massive corruption by Ngorongoro Conservation Area Authority officials uncovered

On 26 March, the Ngorongoro Pastoral Council leaders held [a press conference](#) that exposed a spending spree that involved misuse of public funds amounting to 1.6 billion shillings by the NCAA Authority, which include 300 million for NCAA conservator accommodation in a five-star hotel. This happens while defunding and grounding Maasai access to basic services like health, water and education, among others, is being implemented with full force. The Medical Flying Service that was, along with Endulen Hospital, a key provider of health services remain grounded for two years now – a strategy to suffocate the Maasai and force their eviction.

Paul Makonda appointed as Arusha Regional Commissioner

On 31 March, President Samia Suluhu Hassan appointed Paul Makonda as Arusha Regional Commissioner. Makonda replaces John Mongela, who was one of the key architects of the Maasailand crisis in the last three years. Mongela and Prime Minister Majaliwa led a violent operation in Loliondo in 2022 and a demeaning campaign against Maasai in Ngorongoro.

Makonda's appointment as Arusha Regional Commissioner brings more fear for anyone concerned with human rights and basic freedoms. Makonda was known for his controversial tactics, policies and politics, with serious allegations and reports of violence and human rights abuses that sparked criticism both domestically and internationally for its notoriously heavy-handed approach. Makonda is barred from entry to the US because of human rights abuses. Despite open violation of human rights, Makonda enjoyed protection of the State from facing the law. MISA fears further human rights backlash to the Maasai upon Makonda's appointment as Arusha Regional Commissioner.

Tanzanian state repression targets Maasai human rights defender Joseph Oleshangay

On 11 March, a long text from an unknown person started circulating in Tanzanian media as an alarm to the government of President Samia Suluhu to take stern measures against Maasai lawyer and human rights defender Joseph Oleshangay on the pretext of his having created a rebellious group in the Maasai community. Two days later, state operatives in plain clothes followed Joseph from Arusha to Endulen, without his knowledge. Only just before midnight of 13 March, he learned of a plot to abduct him. From 14 to 18 March, Tanzanian police conducted eight raids into his house, searching for him without disclosing the purpose of his intended abduction/arrest. The Legal and Human Rights Centre (LHRC), Joseph's employer, issued a public [alarm](#) on apparent insecurity of its staff and of the LHRC, which was mentioned in the original threat as an enabler of Joseph's anti-government movement.



Maasai instate Joseph Oleshangay as a traditional leader

On 16 March, the Maasai in Ngorongoro held a cultural event instating Maasai human rights activist and lawyer as a traditional Maasai leader. The Maasai traditional leader "Alaigwanani " is obligated to mediate and resolve conflict within the community and to ensure a just decision-making process for the members of the community. Despite the backdrop of state interference, the event was successfully undertaken. Oleshangay was instituted in the post to further boost his advocacy undertakings on different fronts.

Richard Kiiza, NCAA Commissioner, says NCAA promotes Maasai relocation to Msomera because of dangerous wild animals

The most recent conservator for Ngorongoro repeated the common government propaganda that Maasai eviction out of Ngorongoro is on humanitarian grounds. He says “The NCA environment is unfriendly to foster social services like education because of dangerous wild animals. This is different from Msomera, which provides a good environment for children to access education. If you want to know Ngorongoro better, don't listen to social media, just go yourself and observe, to face the reality of why people are being relocated”. Ironically, the leaked document by the Ministry of Natural Resources and Tourism (NRT) in January shows that Ngorongoro has the lowest incidence of human–wildlife conflict in northern Tanzania, making the claim of dangerous wild animals a false narrative to justify Maasai displacement.

Simanjiro Member of Parliament survives assassination



On Good Friday, the evening of 29 March, Christopher Olesendeka, a Maasai Member of Parliament for Simanjiro Constituency, survived an assassination attempt while he was enroute from Dodoma back to his constituency. Multiple times, his car was shot at close range by yet unidentified gunmen, who followed him for some time before opening fire. Both Olesendeka and his driver did not sustain any injuries despite several bullets penetrating into the car.

On 30 April, police collected 15 cartridges of SMG/AK-47 in the place where the shooting took place. Olesendeka has been critical of the Tanzania Government's unprecedented wave of alienation of Maasai land throughout the country. Olesendeka was blocked by State operatives from attending a Maasai ceremony on 3 March in Endulen, Ngorongoro.

135 families relocated to Msomera accuse Tanzanian Government of unfulfilled promises

On 10 April, the [135](#) households previously vacated from Ngorongoro Conservation Area and relocated to a place known as Msomera village in Handeni District in Tanga Region held a press release complaining that the Government had not fulfilled its promises to provide them with the agreed compensation to vacate Ngorongoro, including a house, piece of land for grazing, settlement and agriculture.

NCA leaders denounce harassment at Loduare Gate

Since January 2024, the Government has started malicious harassment of the Maasai in the Loduare Gate: no Maasai is allowed to enter Ngorongoro without showing a Voter Identification Document (ID). No other document such as birth certificate, National Identification Card or any introductory letter from local area leadership is accepted. Several people who travelled to the neighbouring district of Karatu for medical reasons – given the limited access to health services in the area – were not allowed to go back to their home in Ngorongoro. NCA leaders issued a public statement condemning such mistreatment as a means to further complicate the already dire situation in the area. Such restrictions intimidate persons without Voter ID from accessing services outside Ngorongoro for fear of being subjected to such harassment.

Protestors rally on 27 February to call for free and fair elections

On 27 February 2024, in a peaceful protest organised by the largest Tanzania opposition party Chama Cha Demokrasia na Maendeleo (CHADEMA), thousands of people marched in the streets waving placards with key messages about the need for constitutional and electoral reforms, Maasai rights and the role of international agencies in being complicit in the repression of the Maasai people in Tanzania. A high-profile Tanzania politician and supporter of the Maasai struggle for land rights attended and [spoke](#) about Maasai rights.



Photos from the 27 February peaceful protests and key messages

Delivery complication claimed the lives of Maasai women and infants because of inability to access urgent medical facilities

Grounding of the Flying Medical Service since 2022 has brought a health crisis in Ngorongoro District due to the limited availability of physical health infrastructure and decreased access to emergency healthcare in remote areas where air transport is the only available option. Without an air ambulance, medical emergencies become a life and death issue. MISA has learned of four birth-related cases that claimed the lives of three women and their infants in Loliondo: Namano Ngoyo (her baby survived), Emily Letura and her baby and Sambei Mbunito and both her twins. Tiyalo Ng'enai survived but lost both of her twins. These fatalities occurred while the women were awaiting means to go to hospital given the ongoing flooding. All cases occurred in the place where an air ambulance could have landed and saved them. These cases echo another case on 27 July 2023, when Naalarami Kunyinyi and her infant died because they could not access an air ambulance, stayed in Endulen for days before getting a car to Arusha only to die at the entrance gate of the hospital in Arusha. The Government does not follow up on issues related to failures of health services, as this is part of its strategy to force people out of Ngorongoro.

Will UNESCO recognise its mistake and meaningfully engage with Indigenous Peoples at Ngorongoro World Heritage Site?

Following the Joint World Heritage Site/ICOMOS/IUCN Advisory Mission to Ngorongoro that was conducted on 3–9 February 2024 in a non-participatory and non-transparent fashion, MISA has continued to engage with UNESCO to raise its concerns. In a second letter to the institution, MISA rejected the proposal by UNESCO to conduct ex-post online consultations and requested that UNESCO return to Tanzania to conduct a truly transparent and participatory mission. MISA also stated that it stands with local leaders of NCA who have said that they consider the mission as null and void since it was fully controlled by the Tanzanian Government and did not consult with them nor the affected people. MISA is ready to meet with UNESCO to discuss what such a mission should look like to fully respect the human rights based principles of participation and consultation. MISA once again called on UNESCO to delist Ngorongoro as a World Heritage Site if UNESCO is not able to ensure that this classification no longer contributes to human rights violations. UNESCO should publicly denounce the human rights violations inflicted on the Maasai by the Tanzanian Government and state that in no way should conservation be associated with the eviction of Indigenous Peoples from their lands.

World Bank starts outreach to Maasai communities for “Land Security Improvement Project”

The \$150 million World Bank Land Tenure Improvement Project (LTIP) implemented by the Ministry of Lands, Housing and Human Settlements Development targets 14 regions, covering approximately 40 districts, and runs from 2022 to 2027. [According to the WB](#), it supports the issuance of one million Certificates of Right of Occupancy (CROs), 500,000 Certificates of Customary Right of Occupancy (CCROs) and one million Residential Licenses (RLs). Longido is one district in which this project has been implemented to support pastoralists' land tenure security, which includes communal grazing areas under CCROs. While this project was intended to undertake village land-use planning with the good intention of improving tenure security, it has been diverted to meet the interests of the Ministry of NRT by converting pastoralists' grazing land into Game Control Areas and Game Reserves (see above entry on the new land-grabbing plan).

The agenda proposed by the Ministries of Land and NRT for approval of the new land-use plan was instantly refuted unanimously by the Longido District Council and Maasai pastoralists. The

Ujamaa Community Resource Team ([UCRT](#)) has been facilitating the establishment of village land-use plans for almost 35 villages in Longido, in collaboration with the National Land Use Planning Commission and the Longido District Council. The *Ujaama* approach developed by UCRT is meant to support both livelihoods and conservation interests that highlight tensions between the directions pushed by the Ministries of Land and NRT. MISA calls on the World Bank to support the Maasai by ensuring that the programme it is funding a) supports the indigenous conservation model rather than fortress conservation and b) does not lead to more displacement and forced evictions of the Maasai from their territories.

UN Special Rapporteur on Indigenous Peoples receives inputs from MISA on human rights situation of the Maasai of Tanzania

The Special Rapporteur will dedicate his upcoming report to the human rights of mobile indigenous peoples. In preparation, he held a virtual consultation with leaders of mobile indigenous peoples, their organisations, other CSOs and academics. The consultation was attended by representatives from, among others, India, Jammu and Kashmir, Jordan, Brazil, Cameroon, Kenya, Mali, Iran and Nigeria. Edward Porokwa made a brilliant presentation highlighting the consequences of the new land-grabbing plan by the Tanzanian Government and the recent attack on human rights defender Joseph Oleshangay. MISA also submitted written documentation on the four areas of interest of the Special Rapporteur, i.e. land rights, civil and political rights, identity and culture, and good practices.

Michael Brand, Member of the German Bundestag, writes a letter to President Samia

On 25 March, Michael Brand, Member of the German Bundestag and Spokesman on Human Rights and Humanitarian Aid of the CDU/CSU parliamentary group in the German Bundestag, wrote a letter to President Samia in relation to State political persecution of Mr. Joseph Oleshangay. Part of the letter read: “It would be of great significance for German politics that our friendly partner, the Republic of Tanzania, does everything within its power to dispel such concerns. Above all, this should be done by halting the persecution of human rights defenders like Joseph Oleshangay and protecting the legal and constitutional rights through government action”.

American Bar Association holds webinar on “Forced Evictions of the Maasai: Whither the Rule of Law?”

On 15 March, the International Law Section's Africa Committee and International Criminal Law Committee of the American Bar Association held a [virtual webinar](#) titled “Forced Evictions of the Maasai: Whither the Rule of Law?” Maasai activists Lucas Oleyamat and Joseph Oleshangay were speakers. The webinar shed light on Maasai land dispossession under pretext of conservation. It also explored the efforts made by the Maasai community through legal fronts to mitigate the impact of such dispossession. The webinar explored forces behind Maasai eviction throughout Tanzania, and key drivers both locally and internationally.

Maasai delegation meets with British High Commission

On 22 February, a Maasai delegation met with the British High Commission to provide an update on the situation of pastoralists and the human right violations they are facing. The meeting discussed the historical responsibility of the British state that established protected areas in colonial times. For MISA, the British state has a moral obligation to address the consequences of its past actions on the Maasai people.

Maa elders call on British Ambassador to Kenya to find just and equitable solution to the enduring consequences of the colonial Maasai agreements



Maa elders with the British Ambassador to Kenya

On 28 February, Maasai elders met with the British Ambassador to Kenya. In their petition, they highlighted that their history has been marked by a series of events, two of which are the Maasai and British Colonial Agreements of 1904 and 1911, made between Kenyan Maasai elders and the British Colonial Government. These have had a profound and enduring impact on the Maasai community in Kenya and Tanzania, especially for those living in Serengeti and Ngorongoro including Loliondo. These agreements, entered into without proper representation and consent from the Maasai people, led to the dispossession of significant portions of their ancestral lands, resulting in displacement and severe socio-economic challenges for the community. The loss of lands disrupted their traditional way of life, disintegrated Maasai cultural heritage, and weakened their capacity to sustain themselves and future generations.

The petition sought the following: to stop the dispossession of the Lands of Ngorongoro, a legacy left behind by the colonial government that dispossessed the Maasai of lands such as Serengeti and parts of Ngorongoro; a comprehensive land restitution and compensation plan to rectify the dispossession of their ancestral lands; the return of any spiritual or other artefacts; support and resources to revitalise and preserve Maasai traditions, language and practices; economic development initiatives and educational opportunities such as scholarships that will empower the Maasai community to thrive in the modern world while respecting their cultural values; and acknowledgment of the historical injustices inflicted upon the Maasai people as a result of the one-sided Maasai agreements in both Kenya and Tanzania. Following the above, an acknowledgement followed by an apology is expected.

MISA delegation meets representatives of German and Austrian Environment Ministry in Nairobi



MISA representatives with German and Austrian Federal Government representatives in Nairobi

On the occasion of the UN Environment Assembly (UNEA-6) in Nairobi in March, a delegation from MISA met representatives of the German and Austrian Federal Governments (BMUV and BMK). The aim was to draw attention to human rights violations in the context of nature conservation projects. Particular attention was paid to the role of German development funds and Germany's role in the World Heritage Convention.

European Parliament discusses opportunities & challenges of the green transition for pastoralism and Indigenous Peoples in Africa

On 19 March, [a workshop organised as part of the regular Development Committee meetings \(DEVE\)](#) of the European Parliament focused on the impacts on the green transition on African pastoralists. A comprehensive study was presented by Jonathan Davies, expert in sustainable land management, pastoralism, rangelands and sustainable agriculture. His conclusions and recommendations led to a lively debate with members of the committee. Green Member of European Parliament (MEP) François Thiollet made a [powerful intervention](#) calling on the EU to stop funding organisations that criminalise and expel indigenous peoples, as in [#Tanzania](#) with the [#Massai](#). Thiollet called on Tanzania to protect and stop attacking human rights defenders like Joseph Oleshangay.

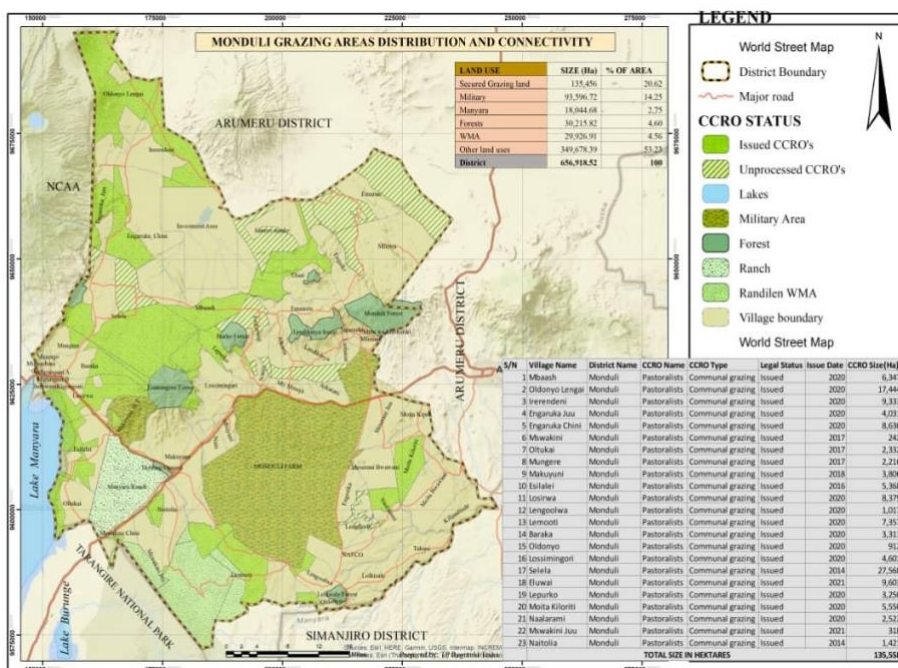
What can Church actors do to protect the human rights of Maasai?

On 5 March, MISA organised a webinar with the Union of Superior Generals (USG) and International Union of Superior Generals (UISG) – Justice, Peace and Integrity of Creation (JPIC) to brief the representatives of the different Catholic religious congregations on the Maasai's human rights situation. This event was an opportune moment to present the status of MISA's advocacy and the actions taken so far by the local Church to mitigate the situation in Tanzania. It also discussed the Maasai's struggles brought on by government propaganda that portrays Maasai as 'backward people' and its restriction of social services in their local communities, resulting in a humanitarian disaster. Attended by some 68 participants, the

leaders of the religious congregations were invited to provide initial suggestions on what further actions can be taken to alleviate the suffering of the Maasai through humanitarian aid and public statements. It is planned that a follow-up webinar on pastoralism will be organised to challenge the misconceptions of pastoralism.

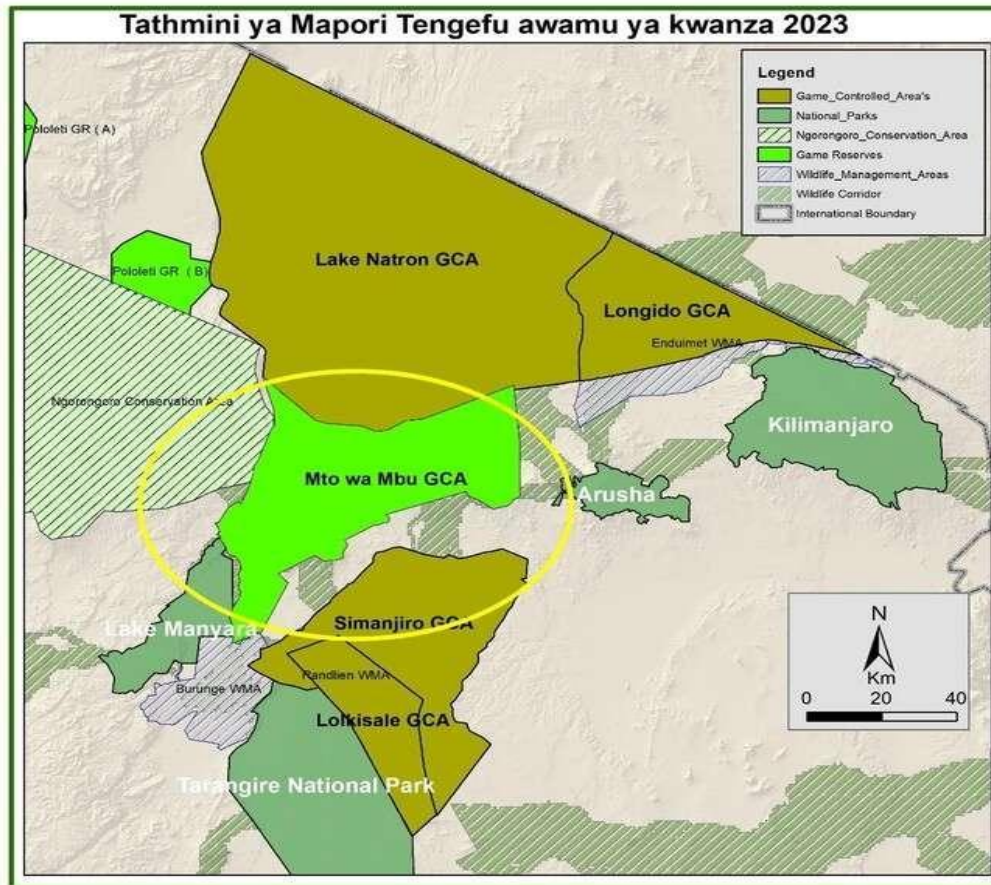
MISA calls on USAID to stop funding wildlife corridors

The USAID wildlife project “TUHIFADHI MALIASILI (TMA)” in collaboration with the Ministry of NRT is aimed at enhancing the connectivity between protected areas (National Parks, Game Reserves, Game Controlled Areas, Wildlife Management Areas/WMA) by establishing wildlife corridors. The project encourages a wider partnership including private sectors for “protecting, securing, and sustaining wildlife corridors”. The greater Tarangire–Lake Natron ecosystem, Kwakuchinja corridor is one of the major targeted areas, which is constituted by more than 27 Maasai villages.



This map shows co-existence between communal grazing land and wildlife corridors before the restrictive USAID–TMA funded project.

The USAID–TMA project uses a very wrong strategy of establishing wildlife corridors within pastoralist communal grazing areas. While 122,289 hectares of land were secured under CCROs and gazetted as communal grazing lands, this project now converts them into exclusively wildlife corridors, preventing access for pastoralism. The USAID–TMA project should understand that safeguarding pastoralist livelihood is an innovative solution for holistic landscape management that promotes both wildlife conservation and pastoralist livelihoods development. MISA is very concerned that the alteration of traditional land use and expansion of wildlife corridors and the creation of protected areas with support from USAID to the Ministry of NRT on grazing territory will lead to countless evictions of Maasai pastoralists and violation of their fundamental human and land rights. The land grabbing and evictions are triggering more conflict, poverty and violence in pastoralist territories in the country.



This map shows the Monduli District land-use framework after the start of the restrictive USAID–TMA-funded project.

MISA calls on USAID to:

- Stop fueling the evictions resulted from forceful mapping of corridors without ground verification and respect to Free, Prior and Informed Consent (FPIC) principles in line with international human rights standards
- Respect pastoralists’ Holistic Rangeland Management under CCROs and the gazettement of grazing lands
- Promote and abide by the principle of coexistence between wildlife, livestock and pastoralist Maasai people
- Support the review of corridor regulation to respect and integrate communal land rights and existing CCROs.

USAID ecological performance criteria for Wildlife Management Areas (WMAs) are biased against pastoralists

USAID is one of the key funders of WMAs in Tanzania Northern circuit. The WMAs financed by USAID include those in Enduimet and Randilen. Beside Game Controlled Areas and Game Reserves now established with noticeable speed by the Tanzanian Government in Maasai areas, there are already existing WMAs which by character operate more or less as core conservation areas, contrary to the spirit of Wildlife Conservation Area, which requires WMAs to be established within village land, without exclusive land-use mandate. While WMAs should enable communities not to lose the land for pastoralism, the USAID-sponsored WMA habitat assessment for determination of ecological performance uses the following criteria:

- Sign of livestock grazing (physical presence of cattle and cow dung); the presence of signs of livestock grazing within a WMA is assessed as below 50% efficiency level.
- Sign of wildfires
- Percentage of vegetative ground cover, which is calculated by subtracting the level of ground bareness from the total area of the WMA
- Amount of canopy cover of both trees and shrubs
- Average canopy height of both trees and shrubs
- Extent of presence of huntable species
- Functional level as permanent wildlife corridor
- Extent to which the WMA has less habitat fragmentation (indicated by % of fragmentation of farms and settlement).

These assessment criteria have made many WMAs depend more on hunting and fines as its source of income. Some WMA fines contribute to over 70% of its revenue, mainly from pastoral and local hunting communities. These criteria also make the fight against pastoralism a priority for WMAs, rather than focusing on vegetation cover.

MISA supports the ban on trophy hunting campaign

There has been an ongoing [Trophy Hunting debate](#) over the killings of elephant super tuskers in Tanzania. MISA has taken key interest in this debate resulting from the reality; the Tanzania Government has always framed Maasai displacement in conservation rhetoric that includes broader protection of animal welfare. Ironically, the displaced Maasai are replaced by hunting businesses that endanger the same animals the Government purports to protect. It is MISA's conviction that better management of resources is only possible if the community co-exists with wildlife as it used to do before the formation of the modern state. In Ngorongoro, there is 0% poaching despite the area being inhabited by around 100,000 Maasai.

Trophy hunting in pastoral communities' areas, particularly those of the Maasai, has brought complex and multifaceted problems. It started with the Otterloo Business Corporation (OBC) sponsoring terror in Loliondo, which has led to violent annexation of 1502 square kilometres and the plan to set up more hunting areas in all Maasai Districts throughout Tanzania. MISA does not believe an animal should pay for its life to contribute to "human development". Trophy hunting is associated with high levels of corruption by the persons issuing hunting licences and the powerful hunting groups, thus violating the laws and human interest.

New video documentary: "If Ngorongoro Could Speak: The Maasai, the Land and the Government"

In the wake of Tanzania's plans to relocate the Maasai from the Ngorongoro Conservation Area and the ongoing land demarcation activities in the Loliondo Division, this documentary brings out community voices, the government's take and also the historical perspective of the two exercises. Ngorongoro Conservation Area and Loliondo are all part of the Ngorongoro District. Watch it [here](#).

New podcast: Tanzania's Maasai and the Threat of Genocide with Joseph Moses Oleshangay

"Conversations on Genocide" is a podcast that brings together legal experts, historians, human rights activists, and survivors to explore the complexities of genocide. Through engaging discussions, it aims to deepen understanding of this grave issue and foster global commitment to preventing future atrocities. In this episode of Conversations on Genocide, Maasai human rights lawyer Joseph Moses Oleshangay discusses the historical and current

factors responsible for the forced displacement of the Maasai people and its impact on the community's culture. Listen [here](#).

News articles and reports:

https://www.theatlantic.com/magazine/archive/2024/05/maasai-tribe-tanzania-forced-land-evictions-serengeti/677835/?gift=pZfHllgAApB9aJif_u2FmNJOMU-RpuzjKO8F8APCRrY&utm_source=copy-link&utm_medium=social&utm_campaign=share

<https://www.oaklandinstitute.org/capitalizing-on-chaos>

<https://www.oaklandinstitute.org/pulling-back-the-curtain>

<https://www.thecitizen.co.tz/tanzania/news/national/uk-opens-office-in-dodoma-announces-investment-boost-4580262>

<https://justconservation.org/politics-maasai-people-from-ngorongoro-yearn-for-rights-their-fellow-tanzanians-enjoy>

<https://www.thecitizen.co.tz/tanzania/news/national/tanzania-now-targets-chinese-tourists-with-amazing-tanzania-documentary-4577708>

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<https://www.thecitizen.co.tz/tanzania/magazines/sound-living/women-led-safari-programme-helps-combat-workplace-stress--4579844>

<https://apnews.com/article/carbon-credits-africa-communities-protests-92f99dfd488c80e1b5a4cae69c07e6fd>