



June 24, 2022

To: Lazare Eloundou Assomo, Director UNESCO World Heritage

CC: Audrey Azoulay, UNESCO Director General

Tim Badman, Director, IUCN World Heritage Program

Muhammad Juma, Chief of Africa Unit, UNESCO World Heritage

ICOMOS Secretariat

Subject: Call to Sever Ties with Tanzanian Government Over Latest Human Rights Abuses Against the Maasai

Dear Director Lazare Eloundou Assomo,

We are writing in light of the latest violence unleashed on the Maasai communities living in the Loliondo division of Ngorongoro district by the Tanzanian security forces. On June 8, 2022, the Tanzanian government initiated the demarcation of 1,500 km² of land that it intends to turn into a game reserve, which would trigger mass evictions of Maasai living in legally registered villages within Loliondo. This action has led to widespread violence against the Maasai by security forces, which has left at least 31 people wounded by live ammunition and other injuries while one police officer was allegedly killed by an arrow. A total of twenty-three citizens (including 9 ward councilors) have been arraigned before the Resident Magistrate's Court of Arusha and charged with the murder of the policeman.

Injured Maasai, including high numbers of women and children, have fled to Kenya to seek medical treatment and the government continues to crack down on those who are attempting to share information regarding the violence. Despite this resistance from local communities living on this land, Prime Minister Majaliwa announced the demarcation exercise had been completed.

This latest travesty is a continuation of past efforts to evict Maasai from their ancestral lands in Loliondo for safari tourism and trophy hunting. The United Arab Emirates (UAE)-based [Otterlo Business Company](#) (OBC) – which runs hunting excursions for the country's royal family and their guests – will reportedly control commercial hunting in the area despite the company's [past involvement](#) in several violent evictions of the Maasai, including in 2017, burning of homes, and the killing of thousands of rare animals in the area.

There has been extensive condemnation of this violence and forced evictions of the Maasai by numerous organizations and coalitions. On June 13, 2022, the African Commission on Human and Peoples' Rights strongly [condemned](#) the violence and urged the government to halt the eviction and open an independent

investigation. On June 14, the United Nations Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues [expressed](#) “its profound concern” over the ongoing evictions” and called “on the government of Tanzania to comply with the provisions recognized in the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, and other relevant international human rights instruments, and ensure the right of the Maasai to participate in decision-making, considering that their land in Loliondo for safari tourism, trophy hunting and “conservation” will affect their lives and territory.”

On June 15, nine United Nations Special Rapporteurs [called](#) on the Tanzanian government to “immediately halt plans for relocation of the people living in Loliondo and the Ngorongoro Conservation Area and begin consultations with the Maasai Indigenous Peoples, including direct contact with the Ngorongoro Pastoral Council, to jointly define current challenges to environmental conservation and best avenues to resolve them, while maintaining a human rights-based approach to conservation.” Finally, on June 19, [IUCN issued a statement](#) on the human rights violations in Loliondo, sharing that it was “deeply concerned.”

Given these developments are occurring alongside the threat of eviction faced by tens of thousands of Indigenous residents of the Ngorongoro Conservation Area, the government’s shocking display of violence against its own citizens and patently false denial of responsibility cannot be ignored. We have previously written to your office warning of [plans to evict Maasai from the NCA](#) and the [inadequacy of relocation sites](#). These latest rights violations in Loliondo demonstrate that the government does not hesitate to resort to violence, in violation of its national and international obligations, towards the realization of its plans.

The government’s blatant disregard for Indigenous lives and international human rights law calls for immediate and decisive action from the UNESCO WHC and IUCN. Continued inaction on your part makes you complicit. The UNESCO WHC has failed to ensure respect for the rights of Indigenous residents. Therefore, Ngorongoro should be delisted as a World Heritage Site and all ties between the UNESCO WHC and IUCN with the government should be immediately severed.

Sincerely,



Anuradha Mittal
Executive Director
The Oakland Institute



Fiore Longo
Director, France & Spain
Survival International