



# PINGO's Forum

25.05.2023

## MAASAI IN TANZANIA REPLY TO THE TANZANIAN GOVERNMENT'S FALSE STATEMENTS ON THEIR RIGHTS

The Maasai of Ngorongoro and Loliondo have responded to the Tanzanian government's recent publication entitled "A Rebuttal of Claims about the so-called Indigenous Peoples in Tanzania". In their response, they affirm that what the government is claiming about them is incorrect, which seriously undermines their human rights in Tanzania.

The government publication disputes the existence of Indigenous Peoples in the country, describing the Maasai as just one of 120 ethnic groups. However, the African Commission on Human and Peoples' Rights considers the Maasai, Barabaig, Hadzabe and Akie communities as Indigenous Peoples, based on criteria such as self-identification, non-dominant societal status, a history of severe discrimination and a land-based culture.

The government's claim that the Maasai enjoy the same rights as other citizens is disputed by the Maasai. The Maasai explain that they have been marginalised and denied access to essential services such as health care and education, and to have suffered discrimination, loss of land and disregard for their traditional knowledge and practices.

The Tanzanian government claims that the concept of Indigenous Peoples is a colonial construct designed to demean local communities. In contrast, the Maasai point out that the African Commission on Human and Peoples' Rights recognises the uniqueness of the culture and the historical injustices suffered by Indigenous Peoples in Africa, including the Maasai. As Indigenous Peoples, the Maasai demand redress for historical injustices and enjoyment of the same rights as other citizens.

The government's argument that the Loliondo Game Controlled Area was unoccupied before 1961 and that the Maasai have no customary rights to this land is refuted by the Maasai. The Maasai argue they have been present in the Ngorongoro, Serengeti and Loliondo areas for a long time, thus underlining their deep connection to these lands.

The Maasai also object to the government's claim that they have not been the main community in Ngorongoro for centuries. They point out that the law establishing the Ngorongoro Conservation Area recognises the Maasai as the exclusive social group in the area.

The Tanzanian government claims that the presence of the Maasai is incompatible with wildlife conservation and environmental protection. The Maasai argues that big game hunting, not conservation, was the reason for the evictions in Loliondo. As in other parts of the world, conservation is being used as a pretext to dispossess Indigenous Peoples of their lands, resulting in human rights violations and the destruction of livelihoods.

The government blames the growing Maasai population and livestock for the conflicts and destruction of wildlife. The Maasai community rejects this view, explaining that the permitted hunting in neighbouring areas has pushed elephants into Ngorongoro, creating conflict. They also explain that the government's failure to address poverty and provide social services exacerbates these problems.

The Maasai community argues that the government's promise to provide food to the people of the Ngorongoro Conservation Area has not been fulfilled, and that poverty and food insecurity persist due to inadequate support and resource allocation.

The Maasai also dispute the government's claim that the Maasai resettlement programme in Msomera is voluntary and has been developed in consultation with them. The Maasai argue that genuine consultation has not taken place and that the Maasai are being pressured and coerced to move. The Maasai argue that the government's relocation package, which includes housing, land and services, is inadequate. The land provided is insufficient for pastoralism and the promised services have not been adequately provided. They feel that relocation to Msomera disrupts the Maasai way of life and challenges their cultural practices. In addition, the Maasai of Ngorongoro fear that the forced relocation will generate new conflicts with the Maasai of Msomera.

Questions about the government's openness to visits by the UN Special Rapporteur on Indigenous Peoples and the UN Special Rapporteur on Adequate Housing were also raised. The Maasai point to past actions by the Tanzanian government that have undermined previous attempts by the UN Special Rapporteur to visit the country, suggesting a lack of genuine willingness to address their human rights concerns.

While the government awaits the recommendations of the African Commission on Human and Peoples' Rights mission, the Maasai are urging the Commission to thoroughly investigate the historical injustices and current violations of their rights. They hope that the Commission will provide recommendations that will address their long-standing grievances.

In conclusion, the Maasai of Ngorongoro and Loliondo are challenging the Tanzanian government's claims concerning their rights. They demand recognition and respect for their

land rights, as guaranteed by the Tanzanian Constitution. They call on the government to respect international human rights instruments, including those protecting the rights of Indigenous Peoples, to end the violence and human rights violations against the Maasai people and to engage in meaningful dialogue and consultation to address the historical injustices they have suffered.

The Maasai remain determined to defend their rights, lands and welfare. They call on the international community, including international donors, human rights organisations and concerned individuals, to support their cause and oppose the injustices they face.

The full text of the Maasai response is available [here](#).

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The [Indigenous Pastoralist Non-Governmental Organisations](#) Forum ([PINGO's Forum](#)) is an advocacy coalition of 53 indigenous peoples' organisations working in Tanzania for the rights of marginalised indigenous pastoralist and hunter-gatherer communities. It was formed in 1994 by six pastoralist and hunter-gatherer organisations as part of their struggle for land rights and development.