



**Press release (for immediate release)**

February 7, 2024

UNESCO has secretly started its monitoring mission in Ngorongoro Conservation Area (hereinafter NCA) Tanzania by deliberately and maliciously keeping the Maasai unaware. The mission arrived in the country on February 3, 2024 and will end on February 9, 2024. The mission was triggered by pressure from the outcry of the Maasai and human rights organizations from around the country and across the globe concerning allegations of gross violation of human and land rights of the Maasai residents of 25 legally registered villages.

The Government is driving and controlling the joint mission which involves UNESCO and its Advisory Bodies namely IUCN and ICOMOS. Members of the mission were picked up by vehicles of the Government of the state party and driven in fancy hotels in Arusha. The Government diverted the mission from hearing from the Maasai of NCA and instead hears from imposters arranged in order to perpetuate spinning against the residents Maasai people.

On February 5<sup>th</sup>, the mission held meeting at the office of Arusha Regional Commissioner. The Minister for Natural Resources and Tourism, Angellah Kairuki, presided over the meeting. Thereafter, it met with stakeholders agitating for forceful eviction of the Maasai from their ancestral land to pave way for tourism. Frankfurt Zoological Society made an unsubstantiated allegation about human population explosion. On February 6<sup>th</sup>, the mission went to NCA for a single day and only engaged with some 40 households from Kapejiro village who have agreed to be relocated. No interaction took place with legitimate Maasai representatives of NCA, including councilors, village chair persons and women leaders.

The Government has attempted, time and again, to evict the Maasai altogether from NCA. In 2021 it started the so-called voluntary relocation of the community from the area to Msomera Village. To be sure, Msomera is a legally registered village inhabited predominantly by Maasai pastoralists in Handeni District of Tanga Region about 500km from Ngorongoro. The Maasai of Msomera did not give consent for this relocation which is displacing them.

The human rights of the Maasai in NCA, which was inscribed World Heritage Site in 1979 together with the world famous Serengeti National Park to the West, is turning into a human tragedy. The Government has paralysed social services in the area such as education, health, water, roads and others. This is a systematic way in which the state is forcing them out.

UNESCO has been making very hostile recommendations against the Maasai residents of the property. The ban on subsistence cultivation in 1998, which is partly responsible for acute hunger and starvation, for example is a direct result of such irresponsible recommendations.

The Government has been covering allegation of violations of human and land rights in Ngorongoro. It has, in the recent past, prevented several independent human rights monitoring visits to take place, including by European Parliament, UN Special Rapporteur on Indigenous Peoples, African Commission and UNESCO itself.



On February 6<sup>th</sup>, over 20 councilors, village chairpersons and women leaders from Ngorongoro wrote to UNESCO and the Ministry of Natural Resources to express their discontent and ask to be formally and adequately consulted.

Echoing their concerns, we call upon UNESCO, IUCN and ICOMOS to halt this mission which cannot deliver independent and legitimate outcomes since it was not able to hear the rights holders and affected Maasai communities of Ngorongoro and Msomera.

We also request that Ngorongoro be delisted as World Heritage Site if this inscription is not compatible with upholding the human rights of the people.

End.