Maasai International Solidarity Alliance

MISA CALLS FOR INDEPENDENT INVESTIGATION INTO THE DEATH OF TEN LIONS IN NDUTU, NGORONGORO CONSERVATION AREA

21 September 2026

The Maasai International Solidarity Alliance (MISA) is deeply concerned about the death of ten lions in the Ndutu area of the Ngorongoro Conservation Area (NCA), a multiple land-use area that is the ancestral home of pastoralist communities. **We condemn the killing of the lions and advocate for a conservation vision that supports the coexistence of humans and wildlife.**

On 18 September, it was reported that ten lions were found dead, though the cause of death remains unknown. On 19 September, the Ngorongoro Conservation Area Authority (NCAA) released a public notice saying the lions may have ingested poison, suggesting local pastoralists are responsible. **However, there is no toxicology results, suspects, or evidence linking the deaths of the lions to livestock owners.**

Since then, several media outlets have suggested in their reports of this event that local residents poisoned the lions in retaliation for human-wildlife conflict. Such framing, without supporting evidence and one highly biased source, constitutes irresponsible journalism as it may be used to incite or provoke violence to an already volatile situation on the ground. Reports on the cause of death of the lions and the source of the alleged poison have been inconsistent, with some media reporting the lions fed on domestic livestock, while the NCAA reports they fed on a giraffe. **It is therefore premature and irresponsible to imply community culpability.**

We call for a **prompt, transparent, independent, scientific and participatory investigation** into the deaths of the ten lions. The investigation should objectively examine and establish all possible causes of death and should not be guided by predetermined assumptions or allegations against the local communities. The investigation should ensure that the evidence and scientific findings are transparently disclosed to the public and relevant stakeholders. Importantly, communities living in the area must be meaningfully involved in the process. Their traditional ecological knowledge and long-standing experience of living alongside wildlife can provide valuable information regarding

wildlife behaviour, environmental changes, possible causes of mortality, and the circumstances surrounding the deaths. **Their participation would also contribute to the credibility, impartiality and legitimacy of the investigation.**

The deaths of the ten lions must be understood within a highly contested and tense context. The NCAA has been undertaking extralegal action against the Maasai community to restrict access to the Oldupai/Ndutu area, which is a crucial destination for grazing in the current dry season and is essential to the survival of almost half of the residents of Ngorongoro. However, it has been under immense pressure for tourism development and herders have been subjected to severe forms of harassment in recent weeks. **The attempts of the NCAA to restrict access to key grazing areas are part of a wider agenda to forcefully relocate pastoralists out of the NCA.**

The tragic killing of these lions is likely to have been organized to set ground to justify restricting access to Oldupai. For last two months, there have been signs that the government is intending to block us from grazing in Oldupai/Ndutu. Today in Endulen, before any investigation is conducted, the District Commissioner announced that access to Oldupai would be prohibited with immediate effect, although he has no authority to prohibit access under the NCA law. **We oppose any form of restrictions and relocation from our lands.**

We callson media practitioners and the international community to:

- Exercise responsibility and restraint in communicating about the incident until the facts have been scientifically and independently established.

We therefore urge the NCAA, relevant government authorities and conservation stakeholders to:

- Refrain from imposing any kinds of restrictions preventing us from accessing our grazing areas in Oldupai;
- Refrain from using any kind of violence or harassment against pastoralist herders and residents.

Contact: maasaiinternationalsolidaritya@gmail.com