MISA STATEMENT REGARDING ARBITRARY ARRESTS AND TORTURE OF MAASAI INDIGENOUS PEOPLES IN NGORONGORO, TANZANIA

27 November 2026

We, the Maasai International Solidarity Alliance (MISA), are deeply concerned about the alarming and ongoing human rights violations against the Maasai communities in Ngorongoro and Loliondo.

We are particularly concerned about the **persistent pattern of arbitrary arrests** of Maasai people in the Endulen ward of Ngorongoro Conservation Area (NCA), associated with instances of **torture and ill-treatment.** There is currently serious surveillance of community members in Endulen ward, creating fear and uncertainty among the residents.

On 28 September 2026, two men were arrested and held for several days without access to their lawyers or relatives. Both men disclosed that they had been severely tortured by police officers in an attempt to force them to confess to the allegations. Both stated that police officers attempted to castrate them during interrogation.

The situation has continued to escalate. On 18 November 2026, in the early morning, a vehicle belonging to the Ngorongoro Conservation Area Authority (NCAA) Task Force invaded Maasai homes in the lowland grazing area of Ngabobok in Ndutu, Endulen, and arrested two herders: Kisiaya Olekudees and Ngilil Olekutale, an elderly man. They were taken to the Ndutu NCA Zonal Office, where they were tortured. Kisiaya Olekudees and Ngilil Olekutale were then transferred to Ngorongoro Police Station, where they were held in custody. Since their arrest, their relatives and lawyers have made repeated attempts to secure their release on bail and provide them with food and water, but the **police has repeatedly denied them access or contact**. There are also reports that the two men have been tortured while in custody.

On 22 November 2026, the Ndoinyo Sub-village Chairperson, Francis Mwasuni Nengiyook, went to Ngorongoro Police Station to try to secure the release of the detained herders. Upon arrival, he was himself arrested and detained on the claim that he had to wait for the task force for interrogation. To date, **his whereabouts remain unknown**, as he has reportedly been moved to an undisclosed location and denied

access to his relatives and lawyer. We are increasingly concerned for the life and safety of Chairperson Francis Mwasuni Nengiyook, as well as Kisiaya Oledudees and Ngilil Olekutale. The way the task force is conducting its operations is illegal and its actions are disproportionate and unjustifiable. We are also concerned that NCAA rangers are using these operations to demolish residents' houses, further increasing the suffering of the community. In a separate but related incident during the same period, Nalarami Ruben, a **breastfeeding mother** from Kakesio, was arrested and held in police custody with her infant for three days.

These incidents are a continuation of systematic human rights violations in Ngorongoro that have persisted since 2022. They reflect an ongoing pattern of arrests and intimidation of community members, by Tanzanian authorities, Ngorongoro Conservation Area Authority (NCAA) rangers and security forces with Endulen ward being the main target area. Since August 2026, when grazing activities in the area were criminalised, arrests have intensified. Between August and November 2026, more than 30 people were arrested in the Ndutu area of Endulen ward alone. Many of those arrested have reportedly been severely tortured by rangers. The crackdown has occurred amid the continued **limitation of social services, the shrinking of grazing areas, and growing pressure on the community to leave Ngorongoro** Conservation Area (NCA) since the new President was elected in 2021.

Tanzanian authorities have attempted to justify this wave of arrests and violence as a response to the deaths of several lions reported in September 2026. On 21 September 2026, MISA issued a public statement **calling for a transparent, independent investigation** into the incident while warning against retaliatory crackdowns on local residents. Protection of wildlife should not be used to justify torture, enforced disappearances, or the suspension of due process. Furthermore, these operations expose a stark double standard: Tanzanian state authorities systematically fail to protect Maasai pastoralists from human-wildlife conflict or adequately compensate them for loss of livestock or humans, while they are ready to mobilize heavily armed task forces to retaliate over wildlife deaths and instrumentalize the poisoning of lions to criminalize our community.

Further, we are deeply concerned about the **weaponisation of non-bailable offences,** which has increasingly become a trend in Tanzania. Serious offences are being used to threaten and intimidate dissenting voices. These offences have become a tool for targeting individuals who speak out and for creating fear within the community.

Lastly, we are highly concerned about the **continued seizure of livestock** and the imposition of exorbitant fines on pastoralist communities in Loliondo in Ngorongoro District. This practice is pushing families into extreme poverty and seriously undermining their livelihoods. The seizure and fining of livestock intensified since 2022, following the establishment of Pololeti Game Reserve, resulting in the loss of the only reliable grazing area available to the community. The situation has become particularly difficult because the community was left without alternative pastureland for their livestock.

With no alternative grazing areas, community members are being forced to enter prohibited areas in search of pasture for their livestock, putting their own lives and livestock at risk. Seizure of livestock often results in payment of substantial fines. The process is costly and burdensome, affecting Maasai livelihoods and their ability to sustain their families and leaving them in serious economic hardship

MISA calls on the Tanzanian authorities to take the following immediate actions:

1. Immediately release all the people who have been arbitrarily detained and ensure that those who remain in custody be granted access to their relatives, legal counsel and medical treatment.
2. Immediately halt to all human rights violations against communities in Ngorongoro district, ensuring fulfilment of the right to personal liberty**,** ending arbitrary arrests and detentions, torture, intimidation and illegal demolition of residents' houses.
3. Disclose the whereabouts of all detainees and immediately reveal the locations of detainees held in undisclosed facilities so that they are reachable to their families and lawyers.
4. Conduct an investigation and hold accountable government officials, police officers and NCAA rangers responsible for torturing, assaulting and violating the rights of community members.
5. Impose a moratorium on the seizure of livestock and suspend the excessive fines in Loliondo.
6. Stop the illegal grabbing of grazing areas that has placed pastoralist communities in this situation.

MISA calls on the international community to take the following immediate actions:

1. The **European Parliament** should follow up on its 14 December 2023 Resolution on the Maasai Communities in Tanzania (2023/3024(RSP)) and urgently conduct a parliamentary inquiry, including a detailed report scrutinizing and conditioning the European -Commission’s renewed €156 million funding package (2026 Annual Action Plan) to Tanzania, considering the persistent and deteriorating human rights situation on the ground

2. **UNESCO, IUCN and ICOMOS** should ensure the prompt conduct of its reactive monitoring mission in Ngorongoro World Heritage Site and ensure the rights of Indigenous Peoples are protected and safeguarded at all times, including through proper documentation of human rights abuses. This mission should be fully independent, transparent and conducted in consultation with the inhabitants of Ngorongoro Conservation Area directly.
3. The **EU Special Representative (EUSR) for Human Rights** should undertake an urgent official visit to Tanzania to initiate high-level dialogue with Tanzanian authorities regarding the deteriorating human rights situation in the country - specifically demanding an immediate halt to arbitrary arrests, torture, enforced disappearances, and forced displacement of Maasai communities in Ngorongoro and Loliondo, as well as direct engagement with affected Indigenous communities and human rights defenders.
4. The **Office of the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR), the OHCHR Human Rights Adviser in Tanzania and the OHCHR Regional Office for Eastern Africa**, as well as regional **UN presence** in Nairobi, should deploy urgent monitoring missions to Ngorongoro Conservation Area and Loliondo, systematically document ongoing allegations of torture, arbitrary detention, and property destruction, provide protection support to local human rights defenders, and publicly report on Tanzania's non-compliance with international human rights standards and recent UN Universal Periodic Review (UPR) and CERD recommendations.
5. **United Nations (UN) agencies** particularly **the UN Special Rapporteur on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, the Special Rapporteur on Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment, UN Committee Against Torture, UN Subcommittee on Prevention of Torture, the Working Group on Arbitrary Detention, the Working Group on Enforced or Involuntary Disappearances, and the UN Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination (CERD)** to immediately issue a joint urgent appeal and public statement condemning the escalating crackdown in Ngorongoro Conservation Area and Loliondo, and conduct an official country visit to Tanzania to investigate and document the human rights situation of the Maasai and other Indigenous Peoples.
6. **Diplomatic Missions (EU Member States, Canadian, and US Embassies)** in Tanzania to conduct immediate diplomatic interventions with the Tanzanian government—including observing court proceedings, demanding access to detained community leaders, and publicly condemning state-sponsored abuses in Ngorongoro Conservation Area and Loliondo. Any current or future funding for Tanzanian projects should be carefully assessed against human rights conditionalities, through

independent human rights assessments and verification that corrective action is taken by the Tanzanian government.

7. **Bilateral and multilateral donors** must urgently review and audit their ongoing conservation, tourism, and development programs in Tanzania to ensure zero financial or technical complicity in forced evictions, militarized conservation, or human rights violations against the Maasai, and suspend any funding linked to implicated state agencies.
8. **Private sector investors and financial institutions** should exercise strict human rights due diligence in line with the UN Guiding Principles on Business and Human Rights and immediately halt capital investments, lodge developments, and commercial partnerships in the Ngorongoro District and Conservation Area and reconsider any projects that fuel land dispossession, forced evictions, and abuses against Indigenous Maasai communities.
9. **Tourists and the global travel industry,** including tour operators and travel agencies should consider suspending travel to the Ngorongoro Conservation Area and Loliondo until the Tanzanian government ends its violent crackdown and puts in place safeguards to protect Maasai land and human rights. In line with the recently published MISA Report on the impacts of tourism, tourism revenues are being used to finance repressive operations, displace Indigenous custodians, and undermine fundamental human rights.