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The violent eviction of the Maasai community in Loliondo, Tanzania

Who: After several months of threats, the government of Tanzania is forcefully evicting Maasai community members living in Loliondo (Ngorongoro District), purportedly to make way for a game reserve to be operated by Otterlo Business Corporation, a hunting tourism enterprise linked to the UAE royal family.

What: Starting on 8 June 2022 with serious escalation on 10 June, the government of Tanzania has used violent and unlawful force to enter, demarcate and start to evict Maasai community members from a 1500-km^2 area in their customary lands that is slated for an exclusionary game reserve. These evictions violate the individual and collective rights of the Maasai pastoralists and contravene a 2018 East African Court of Justice injunction that should have prevented the same. At the time of publication (12 June), grassroots organizations operating in the area have so far identified at least 31 people seriously injured by security forces and admitted to various hospitals across the border in Kenya. This number of casualties was acknowledged publicly by the Member of Parliament for Ngorongoro, Emmanuel Shangai – discounting the government narrative that the situation is peaceful. Information continues to be gathered about the number of affected people, but accurate reporting is hindered by the government's intimidation of journalists, lawyers and civil society organizations and suppression of freedom of speech and independent media.

When: The ICCA Consortium (a membership-based association dedicated to supporting Indigenous Peoples and local communities who conserve their collective lands and territories of life) released an urgent alert on 12 June 2022 based on information provided by its Member organisations in northern Tanzania and other reputable sources: https://www.iccaconsortium.org/index.php/2022/06/12/tanzania-maasai-loliondo-ngorongoro-conservation-eviction/.

Where: ICCA Consortium Members, Honorary members and personnel in Tanzania have expressed concern about being publicly identified, but contact with journalists can be made confidentially through the two people listed above. International support with independent media coverage is urgently needed to help document the situation as it unfolds.

Why: The Indigenous Maasai have deep relationships with their ancestral lands, coexisting with wildlife for generations in the face of many threats and challenges, including from exclusionary protected areas and economic policies, and climate change. Earlier in 2022, the government of Tanzania threatened to evict over 70,000 Maasai from Loliondo and relocate them in the Ngorongoro Conservation Area to make way for safari tourism and trophy hunting. If the government follows through with these evictions, these Maasai will lose their ancestral land, which is central to their identities, cultures and pastoral ways of life. Despite a groundswell of recognition of the central role of Indigenous Peoples and local communities in sustaining a healthy planet and the interlinkages between human rights and nature conservation, these violent evictions in northern Tanzania are yet another manifestation of unjust fortress conservation.

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