

7 June 2024 – Press statement

## **European Commission removes Tanzania from its conservation funding plan in light of human rights violations of Maasai**

On 5 June 2024, the European Commission (EC) removed Tanzania from the list of countries eligible for its 18 million EUR conservation grant to be launched in East Africa as part of its NaturAfrica initiative. This decision sends a strong message, as it comes after the [World Bank](#) decision to suspend its funding for a big conservation project in April 2024 and the [German Development Cooperation](#) halted its projects in Loliondo in the second half of 2023. The Maasai International Solidarity Alliance (MISA) has been engaging with EU institutions and member states, especially Germany, over the last year, alerting them about their complicity in human rights abuses. The Tanzanian Government is systematically targeting Maasai communities, using conservation and tourism development as a pretext to evict people from their lands. The Government's violent policies towards its own citizens receive important financial backing from states and organizations in the Global North.

Under the pretext of conservation, millions are poured into Northern Tanzania for the creation of “protected areas” and the expansion of national parks, wildlife corridors and game reserves. Conservation groups like the Frankfurt Zoological Society (FZS) and World Wide Fund for Nature (WWF), institutions like USAID, the World Bank and trophy hunting company Royal Safaris Conservation Co. L.L.C. formerly known as Otterlo Business Corporation (OBC), have all been complicit in funding and legitimizing state violence against Indigenous Peoples. Far from protecting nature, such business-based and militarized conservation interventions promote hunting and large-scale tourism, while violating the rights of the Indigenous inhabitants of these territories. They ignore peoples' ability to manage and care for their environment using their indigenous knowledge.

In May 2024, MISA expressed concerns to the EC about its Biodiversity Conservation and Sustainable Community Livelihoods: Eastern Rift Savannas and Watersheds (ERiSaWa) call for proposals, because of the impossibility of guaranteeing the implementation of a human-rights based approach (HRBA) in the current Tanzanian context. As documented in [MISA newsletters](#) over the last year, the rule of law is not respected in Tanzania, where numerous court decisions have recognized Maasai rights but have not been enforced. This means that money going to conservation is at high risk of supporting ongoing land grabbing of Maasai land. MISA advocacy efforts resulted in a [European Parliament resolution](#) in December 2023 calling on the Tanzanian Government to stop the evictions. The [corrigendum in the call for proposals published by the EC](#) is a clear sign that the EU acknowledges the negative impacts of exclusive conservation on Maasai rights and on pastoralism as a livelihood and a [highly valuable land-management system](#) in the context of the climate crisis.

The Tanzanian Government intends to [alienate more than 70% of all Maasai districts](#) comprising Ngorongoro, Longido, Monduli, Simanjiro and Kiteto, in fact privatizing land by creating 16 hunting blocks. Maasai communities protested against this plan in large numbers on World Heritage Day, 18 April 2024, highlighting the link between fortress conservation, tourism and evictions. The Government ignored them, and pursued its plan to evict over 20,000 Maasai around Kilimanjaro Airport. The EC decision sends a strong message and is a source of hope for Maasai communities. MISA defends an alternative to violent conservation and displacement – an alternative conservation grounded in human rights, land rights, dialogue and co-existence between humans and non-humans.

---

## The Maasai International Solidarity Alliance (MISA)

The **Maasai International Solidarity Alliance (MISA)** is an international alliance standing in solidarity with the Maasai of Ngorongoro Conservation Area and Loliondo in northern Tanzania. We bring together faith-based organisations, human rights organisations, international aid and development organisations as well as researchers. Our alliance includes, among others, the Africa Europe FaithJustice Network (AEFJN), Agrecol Association for AgriCulture & Ecology, Coalition of EuropeanLobbies for Eastern African Pastoralism (CELEP), Food First Information and Action Network (FIAN), *Koordinierungsstelle der Österreichischen Bischofskonferenz* (KOO, Coordinating Office of the Austrian Bishops' Conference), Misereor, Survival International and Welthaus Graz. Our main objective is to put an end to the human rights violations facing the Maasai of northern Tanzania. In June 2023, we jointly organised a lobbying tour to Germany, Austria, Belgium and Italy, which enabled a Maasai delegation to voice their concerns to European decision-makers and trigger international solidarity. We support the voices of grassroots organisations representing the Maasai at the local level, such as PINGO's (Pastoralists Indigenous Non-Governmental Organisations) Forum, UCRT (Ujamaa Community Resource Team), PWC (Pastoral Women's Council), First Nations Land Governance (FINAL GOVERNANCE), TEST (Traditional Ecosystems Survival Tanzania), IDINGO (Integrated Development Initiative in Ngorongoro) and PALISEP (Pastoralist Livelihood Support and Empowerment Program). These grassroots organisations are well recognised for their long-standing work in Maasai communities and are in regular contact with affected communities and their representatives, including traditional leaders, women and youth as well as councillors / village chairpersons. We are also supported by Tanzanian lawyers representing the Maasai in the several court cases that have been launched to address the violations of their land rights.