



HUMAN RIGHTS SITUATION OF INDIGENOUS PEOPLES IN TANZANIA

Agenda Item 4: Human Rights Situation in Africa

Honorable Chairperson, Vice Chairperson, and Members of the African Commission. All Protocols observed.

We welcome the opportunity to address this 89th Ordinary Session of the African Commission. Kindly receive our heartfelt congratulations as you mark the 40th anniversary of the entry into force of the African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights.

We draw the Commission's attention to reports that the criminal justice system in Tanzania is increasingly being used to intimidate, threaten, silence, and dispossess Indigenous Peoples. Community members and leaders defending their ancestral lands have reportedly faced arbitrary arrests, prolonged detention without trial, enforced disappearances, torture, fabricated criminal charges, denial of legal representation, and other due process violations. These allegations raise concern that criminal proceedings are being used not only against individuals, but also to weaken resistance to land dispossession, and forced evictions.

One of the most alarming examples, concerns three Hadza Indigenous men, sentenced to death in connection with the 2016 helicopter shooting incident in Mwiba Wildlife Ranch and remain on death row. Security forces conducted mass arrests of Hadza community members, who were tortured and denied access to lawyers and family members. Serious fair-trial concerns have also been raised regarding the men's legal representation, interpretation and language access during proceedings, and inconsistencies in the prosecution case. No appeal was filed. The continued incarceration of these men raises profound concerns regarding the right to a fair trial, access to justice, and protection from arbitrary deprivation of life.¹

The situation facing Maasai communities in Ngorongoro, and Loliondo is also of grave concern. In 2022, Maasai communities in 14 villages in Loliondo and Sale were reportedly forcibly evicted from approximately 1,502 square kilometres of land used by Otterlo Business Corporation (OBC) for trophy hunting. Community leaders were reportedly arrested before the evictions and detained for around six months, being released after the process had concluded.

Between August and October 2026, 30 Maasai Peoples were arrested in Ngorongoro and two criminal cases remain ongoing in court and many of those arrested reported being harassed and beaten by rangers. On 6 October, during the Inter-Parliamentary Union (IPU) session in Arusha, security officers arrested five Maasai human rights defenders and staff members of a local organization. They were detained without access to their relatives or lawyers. These developments occur amid continuing restrictions on access to ancestral lands, traditional grazing areas and cultural sites, as well as concerns about the

¹ Criminalization of Indigenous Peoples in Tanzania, <https://iprights.org/2026/08/05/criminalization-of-indigenous-peoples-in-tanzania/>

availability of essential social services. Livestock seizures and reported fines of approximately US\$55 per cow further threaten pastoralist livelihoods.

Restrictions on grazing in Pololeti and the reported seizure of livestock also raise concerns under the African Union Policy Framework for Pastoralism in Africa² and Articles 14 (right to property), 21 (right to freely dispose of wealth and natural resources) and 22 (right to development) of the African Charter.³ The concerns also call to mind the Commission's Endorois decision, which affirmed the importance of Indigenous communities' land, resource and development rights.⁴

Considering these concerns, we respectfully call on the Commission to:

- Undertake a country visit to the United Republic of Tanzania, in consultation with the Government and affected Indigenous communities, to assess the human rights situation of Indigenous Peoples, including in Ngorongoro, and Loliondo. The visit should examine allegations of forced evictions, restrictions on access to ancestral lands and grazing areas, criminalization of Indigenous defenders, arbitrary detention and fair-trial violations; facilitate confidential engagement with affected communities, defenders, lawyers and civil society; and result in public findings and practical recommendations, with follow-up on their implementation.
- Urge Member States to formally recognize Indigenous Peoples in domestic law, drawing on the Commission's approach to identifying Indigenous communities and ensuring that distinct and marginalized groups are protected
- Urge the United Republic of Tanzania to implement CERD Recommendations (2026), halt forced evictions affecting Maasai communities in Ngorongoro and Loliondo, investigate allegations of arbitrary arrest and detention, and restore social services in Ngorongoro, including health care, schools, and water projects.
- Call on Tanzania to ensure effective judicial review and adequate legal representation for the three Hadza men sentenced to death, including access to interpretation and any available appeal or review procedures, consistent with the Commission's standards on the death penalty.
- Call on Tanzania to respect the rights of Indigenous Peoples in decisions affecting their lands and resources, and to ensure that that projects, including mining activities, do not proceed on Indigenous lands without the free, prior and informed consent of the affected communities and their meaningful participation.
- Urge Tanzania to implement the African Union Policy Framework for Pastoralism in Africa, including by protecting pastoral mobility and recognizing customary land tenure.

Thank you!

² POLICY FRAMEWORK FOR PASTORALISM IN AFRICA: Securing, Protecting and Improving the Lives, Livelihoods and Rights of Pastoralist Communities, <https://achpr.au.int/en/node/866>

³ Articles of the African Charter, https://www.oas.org/en/sla/dil/docs/African_Charter_Human_Peoples_Rights.pdf, Article 14, 21, and 22

⁴ Landmark ruling provides major victory to Kenya's Indigenous Endorois, <file:///Users/ipri-rd/Downloads/download-1009-download-full-briefing-paper.pdf>