



**Maasai International
Solidarity Alliance**

NEWSLETTER APRIL 2025

KEY UPDATES

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Charged with Treason

Fr. Kitima Assaulted After Criticizing Government
Interference

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Usually, we publish content directly linked to the Maasai community. It seems however, the situation in Tanzania is affecting those who have stood with us in the last four years of repression, and we cannot remain silent. Opposition Leader Tundu Lissu and religious leader Fr Charles Kitima have openly challenged the Tanzanian regime in relation to Maasai displacement. Both of them have recently been attacked and criminalized. MISA recalls their passionate statements in defense of the Maasai:

“

“Our Bishops have said that until the last Maasai leaves, we will continue to suffer with the Maasai there.”

Fr Kitima on 11th December 2023

“

“We do not need to persecute the Maasai of Loliondo and Ngorongoro if we want Ngorongoro as income. Humans are more valuable than animals.” Fr Kitima

“

“Our hospital in Endulen shall not be closed. The Priests are in the Parish there; the hospitals are there, the schools are there, the Sisters are there ...Our plan for humanitarian aid shall not be stopped.” “These people are traditional. They believe their God wants them to stay there”.

Fr Charles Kitima 11th December 2023

On his part, Tundu Lissu has been defending and supporting the rights of the Maasai for 30 years. In few of his many statements in solidarity with Maasai he said:

“

“The Maasai of Ngorongoro are opposing forced removal from Ngorongoro. Samia’s government has taken away social services like education, health, water & food. They have been removed in thousands from the Voter Register. Despite this brutality, these citizens have refused to leave their area. Their resistance deserves global solidarity!”

Tundu Lissu on 18th August 2024

“

“The Maasai have been the biggest victims of forced evictions for conservation in Tanzania, for which they’ve never been lawfully and properly compensated. It’s long past time that these wrongs were righted, rather than to repeat old injustices. I stand with the Ngorongoro Maasai!”

Tundu Lissu 7th March 2022

We publish this newsletter in solidarity with all those who suffer for standing on the right side of history. It is evident that Tanzania’s democratic institutions are in freefall. The government has intensified its crackdown on dissent with targeted arrests, political disqualifications, religious repression, and is increasingly using its judicial system to silence critics. The international community must respond urgently.



“

***“Ngorongoro is not a prison
& the Maasai its inmates.
We intend to be in Ngorongoro
tomorrow!”***

Tundu Lissu on 7th September 2023



Photo: Tundu Lissu (Mwanzo TV news)

Opposition Leader Tundu Lissu Arrested, Charged with Treason

Tundu Lissu, chairman of Tanzania's main opposition party, was arrested on 9 April 2025 in what has become a renewed crackdown on dissent in Tanzania. Authorities have charged him with treason, citing his public criticisms of the state and ruling party conduct ahead of elections in October 2025. He is also accused of inciting the public to obstruct the elections while Lissu has been advocating for electoral reforms. Lissu's legal team calls the charges politically motivated and an effort to silence legitimate democratic opposition. The judicial process appears heavily compromised:

- Lissu has been barred from physically appearing in court, a violation of his right to a fair trial.
- Dozens of his supporters attempting to attend the trial were arrested outside the court. Several were stripped naked by police, an act of public humiliation aimed at instilling fear.

- The judiciary has remained silent, failing to condemn or investigate these clear abuses of power and violations of constitutional rights.

This systematic intimidation both inside and outside the courtroom underscores the politicized and controlled nature of Tanzania's judiciary and signals that Lissu is unlikely to receive a fair trial.

Despite his imprisonment, Lissu has not been silenced. While detained, he condemned attacks on Father Charles Kitima and activist Mdude Nyagali. In advocating for his own right to a free trial, he commenced a hunger strike, which appears to have engendered a response: On 6 May, a magistrate ordered his in-person court appearance for 19 May.



READ: [Mwanzo TV News : Lissu condemns the attack against Father Kitima and Mdude while in prison](#)



READ: [The Citizen : Lissu to go on hunger strike in protest of treason case court proceedings](#)

Crackdown on Opposition Party CHADEMA: Leaders Detained, Party Banned

In another blow to democracy, the government escalated its campaign against CHADEMA, Tanzania's main opposition party: John Heche (Deputy Chairperson) and John Mnyika (Secretary General) were arrested without warrant, driven aimlessly around Dar es Salaam for hours, and released late at night without formal charges or being taken to a known police station. CHADEMA has been officially disqualified from participating in the 2025 general elections and all subsequent elections until 2030, under questionable legal grounds. This de facto ban on opposition participation guts the credibility of any future elections and signals the regime's intent to rule unopposed.

Continued Targeting of Activist Mdude Nyagali

Prominent civil rights activist, member of CHADEMA, and government critic, Mdude Nyagali, has once again become a target of state repression. Reports confirm his abduction, torture, and disappearance on 2 April, echoing a disturbing pattern of enforced disappearances aimed at silencing critical voices in Tanzania. Witnesses claim he was taken by plainclothes individuals believed to be linked to state security forces. His whereabouts remain unknown. There has been a circulating video of blood stains from his house to the place where he was bundled into the car indicating a serious injury right from the house. Before this incident, Mdude reported that police were trailing him and plotting to abduct him. Despite widespread concern, the authorities have neither acknowledged his detention nor offered any explanation. The pattern mirrors previous attacks on Nyagali, suggesting long-term targeting and impunity.



Photo: MEP Catarina Vieira, Greens, author of the resolution. (Source: [#LIVE: TUNDU LISSU'S CASE: EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT HOLDS URGENT DEBATE / X](#))

EU Parliament Raises Alarm on Lissu's Case

On May 7, the European Parliament deliberated the arrest and potential threat to life of *Tundu Lissu*. Sources indicate serious concerns that he could face an unfair trial or even extrajudicial punishment. A joint motion for resolution was adopted (P10_TA(2025)0095) on May 8.

The resolution highlights human rights violations and a grave concern over the politically-motivated arrest and possible execution of Lissu. The EU parliament noted that Tanzania's ranking in Freedom House's freedom report was downgraded in 2025 to 'not free' (see below). The resolution:

- Calls on the Tanzanian authorities to reinstate CHADEMA's full participation in the October 2025 elections and to engage with all political parties in transparent and inclusive dialogue on electoral reform.



- Calls on the EU and its Member States to critically engage with the Tanzanian authorities regarding Lissu's case and to closely monitor the trial.
- Reiterates the need for the EU to ensure that its development cooperation with Tanzania, including the Global Gateway initiative, is consistent with the promotion of human rights, freedom of expression and fair trial standards.



WATCH: [Tundu Lissu's case: European Parliament Holds Urgent Debate](#)



READ: [Text of EU Parliament Resolution](#)



READ: <https://www.thecitizen.co.tz/tanzania/news/national/eu-parliament-demands-lissu-s-release-lgbtq-rights-and-end-to-political-repression-in-tanzania-5033350#story>

<https://thechanzo.com/2025/05/08/eu-parliament-debates-the-arrest-of-tanzanian-opposition-leader-tundu-lissu/>

Tanzania Government responds to EU Parliament: No Mention About Lissu

Also on 8 May, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and East African Cooperation of the United Republic of Tanzania wrote a response to the EU resolution. In it, the EU is accused of making statements implying interference by the executive in ongoing court proceedings, which it considers inappropriate. The statement refers to the independence of the judiciary. The response also implies that the EU had formed its opinion on the basis of incomplete or non-independent information. However, the statement does not address the specific case of Lissu or attempt to correct the allegedly false information.

The ministry merely refers to Tanzania's long-standing commitment to democratic values and the rule of law and its commitment to fair and free elections in 2025.



READ: [Tanzania responds to the EU Parliament saying it is a sovereign country governed by rule of law](#)



Photo: Fr Kitima (CIDSE). Source: [Ein Angriff auf die Stimme der Kirche in Tanzania - Misereor-Blog](#)

Fr. Kitima Assaulted After Criticizing Government Interference

On 30 April 2025, Fr. Dr. Charles Kitima, a respected Roman Catholic priest, Secretary General of the Tanzania Episcopal Conference (TEC) and vocal government critic, was violently attacked just hours after he condemned state intrusion into Church affairs and denounced state-sponsored immorality and malpractice in relation to past and future elections in Tanzania. The assault appears to be a direct reprisal for his statements, marking a chilling moment for religious freedom and free speech in Tanzania. Fr. Kitima was attacked at TEC headquarters at Kurasini, Dar es Salaam. He is currently recovering under medical care.



READ: [Tanzania: Outrage as Catholic Bishops' Secretary General Attacked at Secretariat in Dar es Salaam, Amid Rising Church-State Tensions](#) (Cisa newsAfrica)



READ: ["Horrific, evil attack" on Secretary General of Tanzania's Catholic Bishops "deeply" Saddening](#) (Aciafrica)



Church in Tanzania Responds to Attack of Fr Kitima

The Tanzania Episcopal Conference (TEC) has issued a strong condemnation following the violent attack on its Secretary General, Fr. Charles Kitima, on 30 April, 2025. In a statement dated 1 May, TEC Vice President Bishop Eusebius Nzigilwa expressed deep sorrow over the incident, describing it as a “horrific and evil attack.”

He called upon law enforcement agencies to conduct a swift and transparent investigation to bring the perpetrators to justice. The TEC also expressed gratitude to those who assisted Fr. Kitima and the medical personnel attending to him.

The attack has drawn widespread condemnation from various quarters, including religious leaders, civil society organizations, and international partners.

The Christian Council of Tanzania and the Tanzania Muslim Council (BAKWATA) have both denounced the assault, urging for a thorough investigation. The U.S. Embassy in Tanzania also condemned the violence, emphasizing the importance of justice and human rights.

Alliance of Catholic Social Justice Organisations CIDSE Issues Solidarity Statement with Fr Kitima

On 5 May, 2025, CIDSE, the international alliance of Catholic social justice organizations, issued a statement expressing deep concern and strong condemnation of the violent attack on Fr. Charles Kitima, Secretary General of the Tanzania Episcopal Conference (TEC).

CIDSE, along with its member organizations KOO, Maryknoll Office for Global Concerns, Misereor, and Welthaus, all direct partners of TEC, stand in full solidarity with Fr. Kitima and the Tanzanian Episcopal Conference.

The alliance calls for an urgent investigation into the incident and for those responsible to be brought to justice, emphasizing that violence must never be allowed to silence voices of peace and humanity.



READ: [In Solidarity with Father Charles Kitima \(CIDSE\)](#)



Photo: Ngorongoro people waiting to present their case to the Presidential Commission (MISA)

Ngorongoro & Loliondo: Presidential Commissions Engage with Communities

Following the massive protests by the Ngorongoro community in August 2024, the President decided to form two investigative commissions in December: one to look into land issues and the other to look into the so-called relocation process of NCA residents to Msomera. In April, the two Presidential commissions began formal meetings with local communities in *Ngorongoro* and *Loliondo*.

We understand that substantial consultations have taken place in different localities. We regret, however, that the two commissions



have refused any record keeping by the community. While we wait and hope for a positive outcome, many observers worry these dialogues are superficial and may lead to forced relocations of indigenous groups. It is also unclear when the commissions' reports will be released.





Volkswagen Denies Allegations in MISA Report on Carbon Credits in Maasai Land

After weeks of silence, Volkswagen has issued a formal response to the MISA's report on Soil Carbon Credits in Maasai Land titled, "Another Wave of Land Alienation in Northern Tanzania?". The report (see below) published in March 2025 highlighted serious concerns related to lack of free, prior and informed consent (FPIC), anticipated negative impacts on mobility and pastoralist livelihoods and consequently on food security and human rights. Volkswagen Climate Partner strongly denies all allegations of environmental misconduct and complicity in carbon project greenwashing.

Volkswagen *prefaces its statement with* assurances that it takes MISA's concerns seriously and has a deep respect for the Maasai and our way of life. Yet, throughout their rebuttal, they demonstrate a fundamental lack of understanding of traditional Maasai grazing practices. Worse yet, *Volkswagen* adopts a patronizing stance that they are here to restore the land, which they imply the Maasai have degraded. The "scientific" bases on which the company justifies its carbon project are not fully contextualized, and its statement makes no effort to directly address MISA's specific and detailed report based on scientific literature and on-the-ground surveying. MISA maintains the validity of its findings.

Communities Organise Resistance to Carbon Credit Projects

In April 2025, the Maasai International Solidarity Alliance (MISA) facilitated workshops that involved representatives from Monduli, Longido and Simanjiro districts, bringing together over 100 participants including women, youth, and traditional leaders to discuss ongoing carbon credit initiatives.

Key Resolutions:

- 1. Five-Year Moratorium:** Communities agreed to suspend all carbon credit activities for five years to allow time for thorough understanding and informed decision-making.
- 2. Protection of Ancestral Lands:** A collective stance was taken to protect communal lands against all threats, past and new, such as Wildlife Management Areas (WMAs), wildlife corridors, or game-controlled areas to prevent land encroachment.
- 3. Capacity Building:** Continuous education on land rights and carbon credit contracts will be provided to empower communities in making informed choices.

Despite MISA calling for a 5-year moratorium on carbon credit deals, companies like "Soils for the Future" have continued to approach and make proposals to the villages. In some cases, they have suggested 5 year contracts in an attempt to trap villages into accepting while the full expected project duration is 40 years. We call again on all carbon proponents to freeze their engagement with communities.

Meanwhile, Maasai are resisting carbon credit projects in Kajiado (Kenya) on the other side of the border, by the same company, Soils for the Future:



WATCH: [Protest erupts in Kajiado over 68,500 ha carbon credit deal](#)



READ: [Kajiado Communities Resist Carbon Offset \(Greenpeace\)](#)



READ:
MISA carbon credit report in ENG:
<https://afsafrica.org/wp-content/uploads/2025/03/misa-carbon-report-full-eng.pdf>

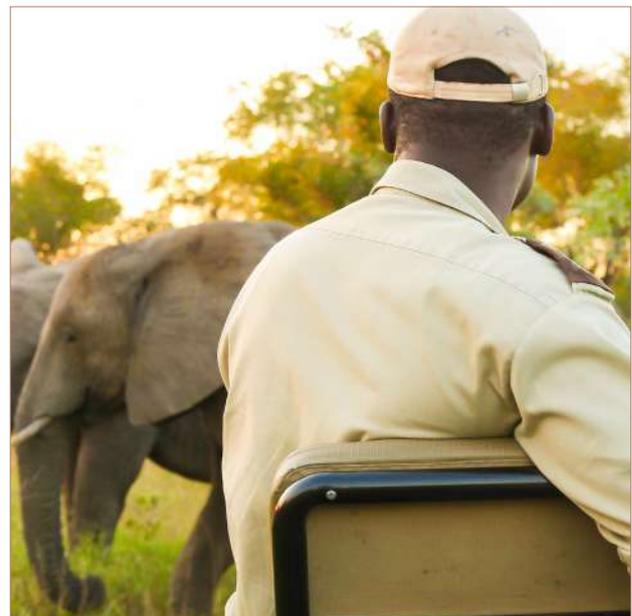
MISA carbon credit report in Swahili:
<https://afsafrica.org/wp-content/uploads/2025/04/misa-carbon-report-v6-swl-v6.pdf>

MISA carbon report on German (short version)
<https://afsafrica.org/wp-content/uploads/2025/03/misa-carbon-report-short-german.pdf>

Volkswagen Climate Partner's response to our report:
<https://volkswagen-climatepartner.com/misa-report/>

EU MEP Carola Rakete Raises Written Question on Trophy Hunting to the European Commission

Members of the European Parliament (MEPs), on 1 April, submitted a question to the European Commission for a written answer (E-001333/2025). The submission highlights the Tanzanian government's current actions to evict an additional 150,000 Maasai from the Ngorongoro Conservation Area and links the pattern of evictions to the trophy hunting industry. In light of this newest wave of evictions, the MEPs asked the Commission to reconsider its current stance that endorses trophy hunting as potentially beneficial to local, indigenous populations and reinstate a ban or suspension of the import of hunting trophies from Tanzania.



READ: [Trophy hunting of Amboseli's super-tuskers in Tanzania sparks outrage, calls for a ban \(Mongabay, 2024\)](#)



Photo: Delegates at UN Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues (Source: This are official photos from the event - <https://www.flickr.com/photos/unpfii/albums/72177720316426393/with/53674210984>)

MISA Delegates Participate in UN Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues in NY

At the Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues which took place in New York (22nd April to 2nd May), Indigenous Peoples continued to fiercely defend their positions with regards to different state and corporate practices that deny them enjoyment of the rights provided to them by the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples.

Indigenous representatives insisted that the government of Tanzania has been violating the rights of Indigenous Peoples, particularly the Massai, through evictions and violation of human rights in Ngorongoro, Loliondo, Kimotorok and other parts of the country.

In response, the Tanzanian government made a statement claiming that “all Tanzanians are indigenous and that there is no specific community that can claim to be distinct from others”.

Following this statement from the Tanzanian government, a coalition of Indigenous Peoples in East Africa issued a counter state-

ment reminding it that UNDRIP Article 33 affirms the right of Indigenous Peoples to define and control their identity and institutions and that the African Commission Working Group already recognized distinct communities like the Maasai, Barbaig, Akie and Hadzabe as Indigenous Peoples.

Maasai representatives demanded more accountability of UN institutions, especially UNESCO and urged that UNESCO should uphold Indigenous Peoples’ rights in World Heritage Sites governance. They also demanded that UNPFII reject Tanzania’s denial claims intended to facilitate land grabbing, militarized conservation and extractive projects.

Indigenous Peoples called the UN Special Rapporteur on the Rights of indigenous issues to revive the planned visit to Tanzania which was cancelled in 2023. Further, they called for the Expert Mechanism on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (EMRIP) to make an official visit to Tanzania to witness and report on the gross violations of Indigenous Peoples’ rights in the country.



READ: [IWGIA Indigenous World Report 2025 and its Tanzania chapter](#)



Photo: Pope Francis meeting Indigenous Leaders (2023). Source: Vatican Media

In Loving Memory of Pope Francis: A Shepherd of Justice and Compassion

We mourn the passing of Pope Francis and celebrate his life as a shepherd of the people and unwavering voice for the marginalized. We are grateful for his solidarity with the Maasai. We will never forget the fact that, in 2024, he gave our message to President Samia to stop Maasai eviction in Tanzania. In word and deed, he stood with those who suffered. May his legacy continue to guide us in the fight for dignity and justice.

“He has sent me to proclaim good news to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim liberty to the captives and recovery of sight to the blind, to set at liberty those who are oppressed.”

— Luke 4:18

Habemus Papam: Pope Leo XIV and Hope for Continuity in Compassion

We join the world in welcoming the new pope Leo XIV and pray that he carries forward the

mission of compassion, justice, and defense of the marginalized and act as a voice for the voiceless and those who suffer at the hands of the repression system of this world.

As President Samia sends her congratulations to the Vatican, we remind her of the importance of listening to the church’s prophetic voice at home, especially when it calls for the protection of the vulnerable. We call on the President and her government to stop attacking the church leadership who criticize abductions, malpractices in elections, and other immorality by public leaders.

We hope the church in Tanzania will remain a steadfast ally of those who suffer and struggle for a better life regardless of the pressure put by the repressive Tanzanian government. Jesus spoke truth to repressive systems and was crucified for speaking truth to power, and this is what the church should always be doing.

“Speak up for those who cannot speak for themselves, for the rights of all who are destitute. Speak up and judge fairly; defend the rights of the poor and needy.”

— Proverbs 31:8–9

Tanzania Downgraded to “NOT FREE”: The Maasai Crisis as a Bellwether

FREEDOM IN THE WORLD 2025


Tanzania

35
/100

NOT FREE

Political Rights	11 /40
Civil Liberties	24 /60

LAST YEAR'S SCORE & STATUS 36 /100 ■ Party Free

A country or territory's Freedom in the World status depends on its aggregate Political Rights score, on a scale of 0-40, and its aggregate Civil Liberties score, on a scale of 0-60. See the methodology.

Share



Status Change

Tanzania's status declined from Party Free to Not Free because the authorities altered the voter registrations of ethnic **Maasai** citizens as part of a repressive campaign to expel their communities from a planned game reserve.



On Tanzania

See all data, scores & information on this country or territory.

See More >

Overview

Tanzania has held regular multiparty elections since its transition from a one-party state in the early 1990s, but the opposition remains weak. The ruling Chama cha Mapinduzi (CCM) has retained power for over 60 years. Samia Suluhu Hassan became president in 2021 upon the death of President John Magufuli, who had cracked down on critics in the opposition, media, and civil society. After a period of some liberalization, President Hassan has begun to resort to similarly repressive tactics.

Key Developments in 2024

- A wave of violent, enforced disappearances of political activists took place during the year. President Hassan rejected calls for an independent inquiry into the disappearances.
- The government continued efforts to forcibly evict Indigenous **Maasai** communities living in Ngorongoro, cutting off access to public services altering people's voter registrations. Resistance was violently repressed. After thousands of **Maasai** held a sit-in to block important tourist roads, the government pledged to restore their rights to vote and access services.
- While large-scale protests were tolerated at the start of the year, protests and rallies later on were met with mass arrests and repression.

Country Facts

Population **65,500,000**

Region **Africa**

Global Freedom Score **35/100** ■ Not Free

Other Years

2024 ▼

Freedom House has downgraded Tanzania to “Not Free” in its latest report, citing worsening human rights conditions. A key factor in the decline is the government’s treatment of the Maasai, who face forced evictions from ancestral lands in Ngorongoro and Loliondo to make way for tourism, hunting and conservation projects. The report noted that these evictions have been marked by violence,

denial of services, and the suppression of Maasai along with enforced disappearance, murder and lawfare of government political critics and suppression of meaningful political opposition.

These actions reflect broader concerns about the rule of law, political exclusion, and restrictions on freedom of expression.



The real image of President Samia Suluhu Hassan has been exposed as a repressive government with deep-rooted authoritarian practices. The Maasai crisis has become a stark symbol of Tanzania's declining civil liberties and shrinking democratic space.

Here are some examples of how the Maasai crisis negatively impacted key Freedom House political rights and civil liberties indicators:

a. Rule of Law: The government's use of police and military forces to displace indigenous communities without due process highlights a breakdown in legal protections for minority rights. **Score 1/4**

b. Freedom of Expression & Assembly: Suppression of Maasai from organizing and intimidation of local journalists and activists working with Maasai curtailed civil liberties. **Score 1/4**

c. Political Pluralism: Removal of Maasai from voter register and transfer of voters to Msomera while the actual persons are in Ngorongoro 700km away from Msomera as a means to limit political inclusiveness in Tanzania for people or communities that are at odd with the ruling system ahead of election. **Score 1/4**

Here are some key questions included in the Freedom House report, that feature the Maasai crisis:

B4: Do various segments of the population have full political rights and electoral opportunities?

Freedom House Score Change: The score declined from 2 to 1 because the authorities altered the voter registrations of ethnic Maasai citizens as part of a repressive

campaign to expel their communities from a planned game reserve. **Score 1/4**

D1: Are there free and independent media?

Answer by Freedom House: Self-censorship remains prevalent, especially around the forced evictions of Maasai people and enforced disappearances. **Score 1/4**

E1: Is there freedom of assembly?

Answer by Freedom House: This shift followed a period of high political tension marked by violence towards demonstrators from both opposition parties and from the Maasai community. **Score 1/4**

F3: Is there protection from the illegitimate use of physical force and freedom from war and insurgencies?

Answer by Freedom House: Human right abuses against pastoralists like Maasai as mentioned in reports from Amnesty International and Human Rights Watch (HRW) on ill-treatment, excessive use of force including gunfire, sexual violence, arbitrary arrests and detentions, and forced evictions by authorities against Maasai communities. **Score 1/4**

F4: Do laws, policies, and practices guarantee equal treatment of various segments of the population?

Answer by Freedom House: Pastoralist ethnic groups do not enjoy equal treatment. The government has engaged in heavy-handed treatment of those who refuse to comply with government directives to move. In 2024, the government continued its attempts to forcibly evict Maasai people living in Ngorongoro, including by seizing livestock and cutting off the communities'



access to water and to public services like schools and health care clinics. After large-scale protests, the government provisionally agreed to restore public services and voting rights. **Score 1/4**

G1: Do individuals enjoy freedom of movement, including the ability to change their place of residence, employment, or education?

Answer by Freedom House: The government's forced removals of pastoralist communities have reportedly resulted in the displacement of thousands. Officials and politicians from both the CCM and opposition parties face arrest for participating in protests objecting to the mass evictions of Maasai and public service closures in Ngorongoro. **Score 2/4**



READ: Tanzania Freedom House Country Report [Tanzania: Freedom in the World 2025 Country Report | Freedom House](#)



Samia Suluhu Hassan drops the pretence of reform [Samia Suluhu Hassan drops the pretence of reform | ISS Africa](#)



Additional Media Resources

German documentary on green colonialism

<https://www1.wdr.de/radio/wdr5/sendungen/dok5/gruener-kolonialismus-100.html>

Indigenous Peoples and carbon rights Report by Rights and Resources:

<https://rightsandresources.org/publication/2025-carbon-rights-report/>

Oakland report on climate wash:

<https://www.oaklandinstitute.org/report/climatewash>

Article by Carola Rakete on carbon credits (in German):

<https://www.fr.de/wirtschaft/carola-rakete-kohlenstoffhandel-ist-nicht-die-loesung-fuer-die-klimakrise-93684659.html>