

Abstract

The Maasai ethnic minority has lived in the Loliondo Game Controlled Area (NGCA) and Ngorongoro Conservation Area (NCA) for over six decades. They were evicted to these areas in 1959 from the area currently known as Serengeti National Park by the British colonial power, which claimed that the Maasai population overburdened the Serengeti ecosystem. Nevertheless, in the newly resettled areas of LGCA and NCA, the Maasai ethnic minority has been facing continuous eviction by the state using degradation and conservation narratives. In 2017, for example, the government issued eviction notices for villages in Loliondo, saying it wanted to protect 1,500 sq km from human activity, and the official demarcation of this land was carried out in 2022. Efforts by the Maasai people to protect their land ended in confrontation with the police officers, with one police officer killed and some wounded. In contrast, many of the Maasai people were injured, and several of them were arrested. In August 2024, the government issued a decree to delist several villages in Loliondo. The Maasai ethnic minority uses the ‘nature guardianship’ narrative as a way for them to assert their land rights and align their struggle with powerful international allies. The study advocates for more participatory approaches that include the voices of the Maasai people, government, and other stakeholders, ensuring that conservation strategies do not undermine their rights and livelihoods.