



EAST AFRICA INDIGENOUS WOMEN-LED ASSEMBLY (EAIWA)

Voices of Indigenous Women for Land, Culture & Climate Justice

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Date: 09/02/2026 Our Ref: EAIWA/005/2026

Ministry of Interior and National Administration in Kenya,

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RE: Concerns about paramilitary violence and human rights abuses against the Yaaku indigenous communities in Mukogodo Forest Region.

It is with deep concern that we write to express our extreme alarm at the paramilitary violence directed at the Yaaku indigenous peoples in and around the Mukogodo Forest region. We are alarmed that the government response appears to not only be failing, but also adding further detrimental impacts to the victims of this violence

We are aware that on the 27th January 2026, a widely reported raid by a group of individuals resulted in the murder of 2 Yaaku community members and the theft of 1500 livestock.

On the 28th January the so called bandits came back and took a further 80 cows, 52 sheep, and killed 8 people, though this received little to no news coverage.

On the 29th the community reported further theft of livestock from four families. These were retrieved by Yaaku community members, but in retaliation one young community youth was killed by the armed attackers.

There had already been significant indications that an attack on indigenous Yaaku communities might be expected:

- 21st January 2026 there was an attack on the National Police Reserve camp at Wakumbe in which 1200 livestock were reportedly stolen by these groups
- 22nd January 2026 there was a further attack on the Yaaku people in the Mukogodo forest which fortunately did not result in any loss of life or property.

- 23rd January the armed groups continued to harass the Yaaku community, resulting in mass displacement of the community.

Reporting on these events, as well as previous incidents has consistently referred to the perpetrators as ‘bandits’. This serves to obfuscate what is clearly an organised and well resourced group of combatants, which we fear may be better described as a militia. We do not take this view lightly, and would refer to other well documented incidents, and analyses of conflict dynamics (such as <https://climate-diplomacy.org/magazine/environment/violence-spreads-ahead-election-drought-hit-kenya>).

Kenyan security forces did not provide security despite these threats. However, once the theft of Yaaku livestock and murder of Yaaku community members happened at the end of January, the Kenyan Government response has not been to enable the Yaaku to be secure, but has been to add to their suffering by threatening them with eviction.

On February 3rd the Ministry of Interior issued a 48 hour warning for all people ‘...living in the forest...’ to vacate to avoid being affected. On the same day, Francis Olekaparo - former Speaker of the National Assembly of Kenya and Maasai community spokesman - made inflammatory comments to a crowd stating there are only criminals residing in Mukogodo forest.

These moves appear to primarily target indigenous peoples residing in areas where their land rights are contested by more powerful groups and forces. Given the organisation, resources and harm suffered by affected communities, and that the violence may have the intention to displace them from their ancestral lands, this violence might constitute ethnic cleansing, under Article II of the Genocide Convention. The Yaaku have always cared for their ancestral lands and can ensure its continued long-term stability if their community lands are legally recognized under the 2016 Community Land Act, and they are supported to protect and conserve their lands in collaboration with state and non-state actors.

In our view there are clear actions the Kenyan government could be reasonably be expected to take, and to all appearances have not:

1. Ensure government forces distinguish between so called ‘bandits’ and indigenous communities at risk of displacement, ensuring the Kenyan government protects at risk communities and is not colluding in any attempts to ethnically cleanse the Mukogodo Forest.
2. Immediately launch an inquiry into size, location and financial interests sustaining what we believe may constitute paramilitary forces in the region
3. Ensure all forcibly displaced indigenous peoples are able to immediately return to their territories once the immediate is past.
4. Independent human rights monitoring of any security operation in the area
5. Full adherence to the Constitution of Kenya, UNDRIP, and regional human rights obligations- including Free Prior and Informed Consent

The Yaaku Indigenous Peoples have already survived centuries of marginalization. They should not be asked to survive another state-sanctioned displacement.

Yours Faithfully

East Africa Indigenous Women Led Assembly (EAIWA)