

Report Highlights Ongoing Abuses in Tanzania's Ruaha Park

July 16, 2025

– Categories: Human Rights



[Download IPFS](#)

A new report has found that Tanzanian authorities continue to restrict the rights of local communities living near Ruaha National Park, despite earlier commitments to provide remedies for human rights violations linked to conservation projects.

The Oakland Institute, a United States-based human rights organization, released findings stating that the Tanzania National Parks Authority (TANAPA) has persisted in blocking

villagers from grazing livestock and cultivating land inside an area targeted for park expansion. Ruaha National Park, already the nation's largest at roughly 20,000 square kilometers (7,700 square miles), is slated to nearly double in size. This expansion has affected an estimated 80,000 residents, many of whom rely on small-scale farming and herding to survive.

The dispute drew international attention when the World Bank, formally known as the International Bank for Reconstruction and Development, funded a project intended to boost tourism in Ruaha and other reserves. However, after two villagers filed complaints, the bank's inspection panel determined in 2023 that policies safeguarding human rights and resettlement had not been properly followed. The project was ultimately canceled earlier this year, and a management action plan was approved.

Under this plan, approximately \$2.8 million was designated to help affected communities develop alternative livelihoods, such as improved water access and support for small farmers. An additional \$110 million was allocated to broader climate initiatives that include communities near Ruaha. Nathan Belete, World Bank division director for Tanzania, Malawi, Zambia, and Zimbabwe, told Mongabay that the funding aims to directly benefit about 10,000 vulnerable residents.

Nevertheless, the Oakland Institute's director, Anuradha Mittal, criticized the plan as inadequate and dismissive of the severity of past harms. "The management action plan is a shameful, carelessly patched together plan that fails to respond to the severity of the Inspection Panel's findings," Mittal stated.

Tensions have escalated further, as the report alleges TANAPA rangers have shot and killed two individuals since spring. Authorities have reportedly detained four rangers following these incidents, though TANAPA has not commented publicly.

Mittal added that the World Bank holds substantial influence over Tanzania's government decisions and should insist that the park's boundaries be restored to their original limits while ensuring communities receive proper compensation.

Ruaha National Park, known for its significant elephant and buffalo herds and about 10% of Africa's remaining lion population, attracts fewer tourists than Tanzania's more famous Serengeti National Park. Still, the park remains a crucial revenue source, fueling debate over

how conservation can balance economic priorities with the rights and livelihoods of local people.