
[Kenya: Ogiek people's fight to protect their forest](#)

The Ogiek people are a hunter-gatherer people, famed as harvesters of honey, which they consume themselves and exchange with their neighbours, and who have lived from time immemorial in the forests of the Mau escarpment in Kenya.

Tinet Forest is part of their territory, and the Ogiek are their guardians. But since 1961, when the colonial government in 1961 declared it a government forest, they have lived there as squatters subject to constant harassment in their own lands. In 1991 the Kenyan government legally allocated five acres of the forest per family to 5,000 members of the Ogiek community, who began farming and constructing schools, while still using the forest and gathering honey.

But powerful interests wish to occupy the forest with the aim of using it for logging. Faced with renewed harassment and threats of eviction, as in colonial times, the Ogiek community went to the court for protection, but last May the Nakuru District Commissioner tried to preempt the case by giving the Ogiek community 14 days notice to leave the forest, threatening to use force if they resist.

The affected indigenous people reacted and community leaders met and vowed never to leave Tinet Forest until the Government allocates them land. They obtained an order of injunction from the Kenyan High Court to restrain the local government from evicting them until their case is heard in court.

The Ogiek's territorial rights must be respected as well as their traditional way of life in harmony with the environment. Eviction would deprive them of their livelihood while at the same time causing the degradation of the forest.

Those willing to support their struggle please send messages to:

Mr. John Litunda , District Commissioner
Nakuru District
PO Box 81, NAKURU Kenya
or c/o Office of the Attorney General,

The Chief Conservator of Forests
Forest Department
PO Box 30513
NAIROBI, KENYA

Source: Virginia Luling, Survival International

