
[Kenya: violence against forest activists](#)

Last January Prof. Wangari Maathai, one of the most inspiring ecofeminists and pro-democracy advocates in all of Africa, and other Kenyan activists were attacked by thugs while they were peacefully demonstrating outside Nairobi against the privatization of the Karura Forest. On February 2nd Hon. James Orengo, Hon. David Mwenje and Dr. John Makanga were arrested by the police. The day before, President Moi had spoken in favour of the privatisation of the forest. The three men were arraigned in Court by the end of the day and charged with incitement and released on personal bonds of Ksh. 100,000 each. They were ordered to appear again before the same Magistrate on February 16th.

This is not the first time that Kenyan ecologists are victims of such kind of abuses. In 1993 armed policemen had broken into Ms. Maathai's home to arrest her.

Kenya has suffered the destruction of its forests in the name of "development". Karura Forest has been a traditional site of the Mabari ya Kihara indigenous people and the whole area is considered sacred. Nowadays it is menaced by the uncontrolled expansion of Nairobi, capital of the country, since the forest land is to be privatized. Kenya maintains one of the highest population growth rates with a high level of rural-urban migration. By means of a fax addressed to civil organizations worldwide, on February 2nd. Ms. Maathai, President of the Green Belt Movement denounces that "the government has become the greatest enemy of the environment" and claims that "the battle for Karura has nothing to do with hatred and ethnicity. On the contrary it has everything to do with love, compassion, concern and responsibility for life on this planet."

Social, environmental and religious organizations all over the country have expressed their opposition to the project. The head of the Anglican Church of Kenya Archbishop David Gitari and his Catholic Church counterpart Raphael Ndingi Mwana a Nzeki are some of the top mainstream religious leaders who have said they will soon lead protestors to Karura to express their disapproval over the allocation to private individuals.

Those interested in expressing concern for the fate of the arrested environmentalists and their support to Ms. Maathai and the Kenyan people can address the Ambassador of Kenya in their respective countries and:

His Excellency, President of Kenya
Daniel Arap Moi
Daily Nation
Sunday Newspaper
People Daily
International Press
KTN (Broadcasting Line)

Sources: The Green Belt Movement, 2/2/99; World Civil Society Conference (WOCSOC) 5/2/99; Jubilee 2000 Kenya Campaign, 22/2/99; Gaia Foundation, 24/2/99

