



PRESS RELEASE

STATEMENT ON RIVER MARA WATER CONTAMINATION

23RD March 2022

On 8th March 2022 different media outlets in the country reported of environmental contamination that caused water contamination in Mara River. This contamination led to dead fish being spotted floating dead on the river.

Based on those reports, the Legal and Human Rights Center (LHRC) and the Lawyers' Environmental Action Team (LEAT) decided to follow up and see how environmental and human rights victims can be supported in case their rights had been violated.

For that purpose, LHRC and LEAT followed up and visited some of the villages and hamlets that appeared to have been affected to find out the source of the effects caused by that contamination.

From 17th to 20th March 2022, they visited areas that surround and depend on the services and use of the water from Mara River. Areas visited and investigated are Kirumi and Bisarwi villages that were reported to have been affected more. The investigative team from these two institutions conducted interrogations with people in different hamlets including Makora, Burongo, Bisarwi kati and Kwikoma in Manga ward, Tarime district, Mara region and discovered the following:

1. There have been reports of death of domestic animals belonging to the residents in those areas due to drinking water from the Mara river basin passing through those villages. It was discovered that in the period between 2018 and 2022, more than 800 animals died from drinking water believed to be poisonous passing through the Mara River basin.
2. Also, in the period between 1st to 15th March 2022, more than 54 cattle were reported to have died due to drinking water from that river.
3. Also, in the period between 2020 and 2021, three deaths of fishermen were reported in that area, which occurred in similar circumstances where victims would vomit blood for 2 to 3 days before dying.

On the other side, LHRC and LEAT closely followed the reports issued by the special investigative team formed by the Minister to investigate the contamination and the Lake Victoria Basin Water Board and discovered the following:

1. On 12th March 2022, the Lake Victoria Basin Water Board reported that from its investigation, it had discovered the presence of high amounts of oil and grease, beyond the acceptable amount on Tanzanian standards and the lack of oxygen in the water.
2. On 19th March 2022, the team formed by the Minister reported that the contamination in the river was caused by the presence of high amounts animal feces and decomposed invasive weeds which led to reduction of oxygen in the water.

However, LHRC and LEAT collectively say that the report is full of highly misleading information and a mockery to Tanzanians' minds. It is clear that the committee was formed to hide the truth and clear the polluters of any wrong doing. The team formed by the minister did not interview the victims but instead chose to do its work in a very secretive manner.

On those grounds, the LHRC and LEAT demand the following:

1. The Vice president, who is the de facto minister of the environment should form an investigative commission to investigate the contamination. The commission should include credible environmentalists from within and outside the country;
2. The government should take the responsibility to clean at once the contaminated area and claim compensation of those costs from the responsible contaminator
3. Immediate compensation for all the victims