

Withdrawal/Redaction Sheet

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DOCUMENT NO. AND TYPE	SUBJECT/TITLE	DATE	RESTRICTION
001. memo	John Prendergast to Melanne Verveer (1 page)	02/13/1999	P1/b(1)

COLLECTION:

Clinton Presidential Records
First Lady's Office
Melanne Verveer
OA/Box Number: 20040

FOLDER TITLE:

Kenya

2013-0534-S

rc1556

RESTRICTION CODES

Presidential Records Act - [44 U.S.C. 2204(a)]

- P1 National Security Classified Information [(a)(1) of the PRA]
- P2 Relating to the appointment to Federal office [(a)(2) of the PRA]
- P3 Release would violate a Federal statute [(a)(3) of the PRA]
- P4 Release would disclose trade secrets or confidential commercial or financial information [(a)(4) of the PRA]
- P5 Release would disclose confidential advice between the President and his advisors, or between such advisors [(a)(5) of the PRA]
- P6 Release would constitute a clearly unwarranted invasion of personal privacy [(a)(6) of the PRA]

C. Closed in accordance with restrictions contained in donor's deed of gift.

PRM. Personal record misfile defined in accordance with 44 U.S.C. 2201(3).

RR. Document will be reviewed upon request.

Freedom of Information Act - [5 U.S.C. 552(b)]

- b(1) National security classified information [(b)(1) of the FOIA]
- b(2) Release would disclose internal personnel rules and practices of an agency [(b)(2) of the FOIA]
- b(3) Release would violate a Federal statute [(b)(3) of the FOIA]
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- b(7) Release would disclose information compiled for law enforcement purposes [(b)(7) of the FOIA]
- b(8) Release would disclose information concerning the regulation of financial institutions [(b)(8) of the FOIA]
- b(9) Release would disclose geological or geophysical information concerning wells [(b)(9) of the FOIA]

Withdrawal/Redaction Marker

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CO-FOUNDER & FORMER PRESIDENT
 Bella Abzug (1920 - 1998)
 U.S.A.



Women's Environment and Development Organization

VIA FACSIMILE

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Dr. Wangari Maathai
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 KENYA

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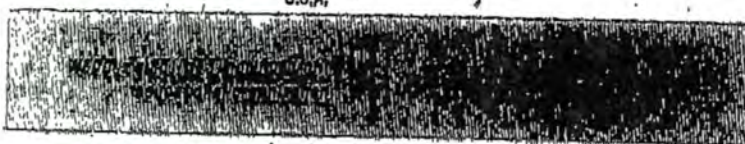
Faye Wattleton
 President, Center for Gender Equality
 U.S.A.

Dianna Dillon-Ridgley
 Interim Executive Director
 U.S.A.

To: Melanne Verveer, Chief of Staff to the First Lady
From: Mim Kelber, Secretary to the Board
 Rosa G. Lizarde, Executive Assistant
Date: February 2, 1999
RE: Threat of arrest of Dr. Wangari Maathai

9 pages including cover page

*To: Erica Barker-Puggles
 Scott Busby
 From: Melanne Verveer
 We need advice
 on a response to
 this. Can you
 guys help?
 Thanks*





Women's Environment and Development Organization

CO-FOUNDER & FORMER PRESIDENT

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February 2, 1999

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Melanne Verveer
Chief of Staff to the First Lady
Office of the First Lady
The White House
1600 Pennsylvania Avenue, NW
Washington, DC 20500

Dear Ms. Verveer,

We want to call your attention to a situation involving Dr. Wangari Maathai, a WEDO board member and well-known Kenyan environmentalist, who is currently under the threat of arrest in her home in Nairobi.

For the past several months, Dr. Maathai and members of her organization, the Greenbelt Movement, have been involved in efforts to prevent the destruction of a public forest on the outskirts of Nairobi. Last month on January 8th during a peaceful demonstration at the Karura forest, Dr. Maathai and her supporters were brutally attacked by hired private security guards. This was the third attack on her in recent years, resulting in head, neck and back injuries.

This morning our office received a fax (attached) from Dr. Maathai stating that the crisis over Karura Forest had intensified with the arrest of three of her colleagues and, as she put it, policeman "camped at my gate waiting to arrest me." As dear friends of Dr. Maathai's, we are gravely concerned about her personal safety. She, along with past president Bella Abzug, was a founding member of WEDO, and continues to be a guiding force for women, human rights and environmentalists throughout the world.

We are appalled by the on-going grabbing of public lands in Kenya and are distressed by the government's failure and inaction to put an end to the practice or to bring the responsible parties to justice.

We ask you to inform the First Lady about Dr. Maathai's immediate danger and request your assistance in promoting visibility around this issue in an effort to prevent her arrest and any further abuse. We would greatly appreciate any effort on the part of the First Lady and will keep you apprised of any developments.

Sincerely,

Mim Kelber

Mim Kelber
Secretary, WEDO Board of Directors



the green belt movement

a project founded by
the national council of women of kenya



Nairobi, 2nd February, 1999

To: Friends of all Forests and of the Green Belt Movement

P.O. Box 67545
Tel: 571523, 891679
Tel /Fax: 504264
Nairobi
Kenya.

ARRESTS OVER KARURA FOREST

As the crisis over Karura Forest intensifies, we wish to inform you that Hon. James Orengo, Hon. David Mwenje and Dr. John Makanga were this morning arrested by the Kenyan Police. This is shortly after President Moi spoke yesterday and supported the privatisation of the forest by land grabbers! Dr. Makanga was picked in town as he prepared to come to take me to UNEP for the on-going 20th Governing Council at its Headquarters in Nairobi's Gigiri area. Unfortunately, our cars were destroyed at Karura and are still under repairs, making us immobile.

I am now informed that policemen are camped at my gate waiting to arrest me. I am staying put inside the house. In 1993 they broke into the same house and arrested me. They might try the same thing again. I am hoping that they will not succeed this time round.

Our position is that, with the highest respect to our President, we must inform him that from an environmental point of view, he is completely wrong and out of touch with the wishes of the Kenyan people. This is because in pursuit of a better quality of life, human beings undertake various developmental projects which initially appear progressive. However, as the level of environmental awareness increases, such development initiatives may have detrimental effects on the environment. Examples abound: When Chlorofluorocarbons (CFCs) were first discovered, scientists were unaware of the damage that they would cause to the ozone layer but as environmental awareness increased, many of those using CFCs, including companies, became sensitized and have now discontinued the manufacture and use of such products. The same is true of other chemical pollutants such as DDT and other agro-chemicals.

Further, at the turn of the century, hunting of wildlife in Kenya was a great sport, especially for Europeans who perceived the rich African wildlife as a limitless resource. Yet, a number of years ago, President Moi set on fire ivory worth millions of shillings in an effort to have ivory trade banned. This was because increased environmental awareness showed that hunting and extensive poaching had reduced elephants to an endangered species. It is this concern that has today driven the Kenya Wildlife Service (KWS) to conduct

a census of all the elephants in Kenya as it continues to ban hunting of endangered species.

Today, Kenya still maintains one of the highest population growth rates with a high level of rural-urban migration, Nairobi is the industrial capital, has a large number of vehicles emitting pollutants in the air and a growing number of slums. For it to remain a city capable of sustaining such industrial activities and, at the same time, remain a habitable place for its residents, development planners must consider all the components required to continue to make it a city fit for people. Karura forest is one such component because it acts as a carbon sink. Let Nairobi expand in the southeasterly direction where it will not interfere with the limited and much needed forests and prime agricultural land. With our knowledge now, we do not intend to continue acting as if we are ignorant or succumb to greed and corruption.

To-day, it would be wrong to jeopardize catchment areas, the local bio-diversity, water systems, agriculture and tourism by continuing the destruction of forests in the name of development. As for UNEP, it is a public utility which was built on the site where the original owners of the forest, Mbari ya Kihara, had their homestead. No trees were sacrificed. Indeed Karura was a sacred forest for the local indigenous community.

Our generation and our children in the universities are environmentalists now and that is why they are enraged by the plunder of forests and other natural resources. They feel that the government has failed them as a trustee of public resources. Instead, the government has become the greatest enemy of the environment and their future: as ministers and government officers apportion themselves and their children parts of forests and public land, and subsequently sell pieces to foreigners. Furthermore, some forests like in Mt. Kenya, bhang (marijuana) is being grown with full knowledge and protection of government officers. This undermines not only our environment but also the health of those children.

The battle for Karura has therefore, 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. Therefore, the President cannot have the final word on those resources. He is only the head of the trusteeship which has with all due respect to our President, failed the people.

We hope that those arrested will not be harmed by the police and will be promptly released because they are innocent.

Wangari Maathai, Co-ordinator.

Wangari Maathai

Press Release

The Board of Directors and the staff of the Women's Environment and Development Organization (WEDO) condemn the brutal attack on our colleague noted Kenyan ecologist Wangari Maathai and her supporters in Nairobi last week which left Dr. Maathai and two others hospitalized. It was the third attack on her in recent years, resulting in, head, neck and back injuries.

The attack by hired private security guards armed with truncheons, whips, swords and bows and arrows took place as Members of Parliament, Dr. Maathai and other members of the public were demonstrating peacefully at a controversial construction site in the Karura forest on the northern outskirts of the Kenyan capital. In the past, the Kenyan police have been present at such demonstrations and have sometimes given Dr. Maathai and other members of the public access to the forest to plant seedlings. This time however, they withdrew just as Maathai's team arrived but not before conversing with the hired guards who later pounced on the demonstrators. It is clear that the police and the hired guards connived so that the guards rather than the policemen would carry out the assault. Indeed, Maathai and her team were unable to get police assistance after the attack.

Since October Dr. Maathai and members of her world renowned tree-planting Green Belt Movement have been leading grassroots efforts to prevent the destruction of an indigenous forest by replanting saplings to replace trees felled by real estate developers.

Destruction of the forest has provoked widespread debate and condemnation of the Moi government's policy of selling prime public land to his supporters at minimal cost to construct high-income housing. The forest is situated close to some of the Kenyan capital's most affluent neighborhoods.

Ironically the world headquarters of the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) is also located nearby. UN Secretary General, Kofi Annan and UNEP Executive Director, Dr. Klaus Toepfer issued strong statements condemning the attack, as did the United States embassy in Nairobi.

While the immediate concern appears to be merely an environmental one, Dr. Maathai, who along with past President Bella Abzug was a founding member of WEDO, has always maintained that it has much more to do with larger issues of high-level corruption, inequity, undemocratic governance and disrespect for environmental rights.

Of special concern is the fact that some forests are cut to make way for growing of marijuana (*cannabis sativa*) deep in the forest, away from the public eye. Therefore, not only are these people destroying the forests but also the youth who are now using drugs

with alarming frequency. This has made Kenya not only a conduit for drugs from Asia but also a producer of the same.

"This is a case of a government that blatantly ignores the will of its citizens while flying in the face of international conservation accords that President Moi himself has signed," she said in a phone conversation with her WEDO colleagues on Monday soon after her release from hospital. "In the face of such gross inequity, we are morally obliged to take care of forests for future generations, just like our forefathers did.

Sustainable planning and development for Nairobi should allow for the expansion of the city without destroying the very resources on which its future depends.

WANGARI MAATHAI

Her Women's Army Defies an Iron Regime

ONE MORNING TWO MONTHS AGO, 30 HELMET-CLAD RIOT police wielding automatic rifles were arrayed in front of a hastily erected steel gate that barred the way into Karura Forest, on the outskirts of Nairobi. They stood guarding the site of what many Kenyans were calling an environmental outrage. More than a third of the 2,500-acre forest had been sold to land developers for a luxury housing project backed by President Daniel arap Moi, and 50 acres had already been cleared—less than half a mile away from Nairobi's world headquarters of the United Nations Environment Program. A week earlier, protesters had invaded the site and burned \$1 million worth of bulldozers and tree-cutting equipment. Another demonstration had been scheduled, and the police were ready for trouble.

A rickety bus rattled up the road, halted at the edge of the forest and disgorged 28 passengers—all of them old women. Then came a pickup truck carrying their weapons—not clubs or rifles but gardening tools and watering cans. Finally a small car pulled up, and out strode their leader, Wangari Maathai, an imposing 5-ft. 8-in. woman in a long blue dress and a red-and-black polka-dot head scarf. She picked up a pot containing a 2-ft. Meru oak seedling, but the police refused to let her carry it into the forest. In a soft but determined voice she spoke directly to Chief Inspector Paul Muluma: "Since you are illegally preventing us from planting trees in the forest and I do not want this one to die, I am going to plant it at the gates of the U.N. Environment Program. Do you think you can stop me?" As Muluma just shook his head, Maathai led her troop of grandmothers in a procession to the UNEP gate and ceremoniously planted and watered the tree. UNEP executive director Klaus Toepfer, meanwhile, issued a statement condemning the clearing of Karura Forest and let it be known that his staff would water the young Meru oak every day.

Only a strong person would defy the iron regime of Kenya's President Moi, and Maathai, 58, fits the bill. An anatomy professor at the University of Nairobi and the first Kenyan woman to receive a Ph.D., she founded the women's Green Belt Movement, which has planted 7 million trees in Kenya and inspired similar efforts around the globe. In 1989 her protests forced Moi to abandon a personal plan to erect a 62-story office tower in a Nairobi park. And in 1991 her activism became a political force when she helped start an opposition group called the Forum for the Restoration of Democracy. Once she was teargassed and clubbed unconscious by police. Another time she was arrested and put in a jail cell overnight with no mattress. Always her popularity and idealism have stayed intact.

This time, though, she may have gone too far. No one is saying whether Maathai encouraged the burning of the bulldozers or overzealous followers acted on their own initiative. She claims that thugs were hired to beat up members of her movement and then destroyed the machinery in a fit of anger when they were not paid what they were promised.

Whatever the truth, Moi has made no move to punish the influential Maathai, who has won environmental awards from countries all over the world. In an October speech at National Stadium on Kenyatta Day (honoring Kenya's first



President, Jomo Kenyatta, and other independence heroes), Moi declared, "There are mothers in this country who have no respect for public property. They burn other people's property." But when Kenyatta's daughter Beth Mugo, who was taking part in the ceremony, tapped the side of

TREE PLANTER
She was incensed that woodland was being cleared for luxury housing not far from the doorstep of United Nations officials

her head with her forefinger and grimaced at Moi, the crowd roared its approval.

Since then police have given up trying to stop Maathai's indefatigable followers from planting tree seedlings in the cleared portion of Karura Forest. And because most people rich enough to buy a home in the proposed development would now be embarrassed to do so, the project is expected to collapse.

While Maathai appears victorious, she has received threats since the bulldozer destruction. "A man called to say that I would pay for the damage with my life," she says, "but so far nothing has happened." So far.

—By Clive Muriu/Nairobi

ON THE WEB

For more on saving forests:

CONSERVATION
INTERNATIONAL

www.conservation.org

RAINFOREST ACTION
NETWORK

www.ran.org

WORLD WILDLIFE FUND

www.worldwildlife.org

WORLDWATCH INSTITUTE

www.worldwatch.org

WORLD RESOURCES

INSTITUTE

www.wri.org

News
Saturday, January 9, 1999

FRONT PAGE
NEWS
COMMENT
LETTERS
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CARTOON
CUTTING
EDGE
FEEDBACK

MPs, Maathai beaten at forest

By STEPHEN MUIRURI

Protesters were whipped and beaten when they tried to plant seedlings at the gates to Karura forest yesterday.

Violence flared after a three-hour confrontation during which security men refused to allow the demonstrators into the forest, parts of which have been allocated to private developers.

The attack came after Professor Wangari Maathai, coordinator of the Green Belt Movement, who had arranged the demonstration, tried to plant a seedling at the gate.

The protesters, who included Mr Joseph Muchara and Mr James Kamau Mwirigi were beaten with rubber whips, clubs and stones.

Prof Maathai was later taken to Nairobi Hospital and treated for a deep cut to the head, which needed four stitches. It was caused by a blunt object, like a club, said Dr Daniel Gikonyo.

Other demonstrators, who included MP Mr James Orengo, took to their heels when the violence began and were chased 200 metres from the gates.

Some journalists, who had their equipment damaged, were also whipped and sustained bruises.

The windscreens of three vehicles were smashed: a BBC Isuzu Trooper, a Green Belt Movement Land Rover and a Pajero.

About 20 protesters led by Prof Maathai, Mr Orengo, and MPs Peter Kamande, Moses Mwihia, Njehu Gatabaki and former Kiambaa MP Kamau Icharia, had gone to the forest to try to plant seedlings on the land that has been allocated for development.

They were faced by about 200 security men who were armed with bows and arrows, swords, pangas, clubs and metal bars.

Police later said they were not to blame for the attack, adding that Prof Maathai's group had wanted to invade private land.

Before the protesters had arrived, five policemen drove in and briefly conversed with the security men.

Apart from the policemen, no body else was allowed near the steel gates.

The MPs left as Prof Maathai, journalists and other casualties drove to Gigiri police station to lodge a formal complaint.

The injured were then driven to hospital, where they announced they would return to the forest to plant the seedlings on another day.

Prof Maathai will need to be kept in hospital for observation for two or three days because she had lost a lot of blood, said her doctor, Daniel Gikonyo.

Divisional police boss Mr Francis Munyambu and other officers later visited the scene of the attack and left without talking to anyone.

The security men said they had been given clear instructions not to allow anyone onto the land.

Their leader shouted to the protesters, "We have a court order barring strangers from coming here. We are ready for a bloody fight if you want to force your way in. We will crush you like rats!"

Referring to the court order issued by a High Court judge against interfering with the allocated land, Prof Maathai said:

"It is unfortunate that courts are being used to legitimise grabbing of public land. Grabbers are now hiding behind court orders which we will never recognise."

MP Mr Orengo asked why the police refused to arrest the attackers for being in possession of offensive weapons, contrary to the law.

He blamed Police Commissioner Duncan Wachira for the incident, saying his officers were aware of the impending attack and "that is why they refused to arrest the attackers".

Mr Mwihia challenged President Moi to issue a public statement on the Karura saga.

Mr Gatabaki said the forest belonged to Kenyans and they would not allow it to be grabbed.

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*file Kenya
human rights*

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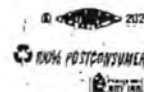
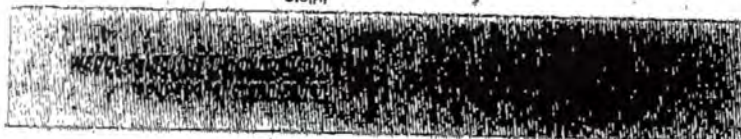
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From: Mim Kelber, Secretary to the Board
Rosa G. Lizarde, Executive Assistant
Date: February 2, 1999
RE: Threat of arrest of Dr. Wangari Maathai

9 pages including cover page



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Nairobi, 2nd February, 1999

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Nairobi
Kenya.

As the crisis over Karura Forest intensifies, we wish to inform you that Hon. James Orengo, Hon. David Mwenje and Dr. John Makanga were this morning arrested by the Kenyan Police. This is shortly after President Moi spoke yesterday and supported the privatisation of the forest by land grabbers! Dr. Makanga was picked in town as he prepared to come to take me to UNEP for the on-going 20th Governing Council at its Headquarters in Nairobi's Gigiri area. Unfortunately, our cars were destroyed at Karura and are still under repairs, making us immobile.

I am now informed that policemen are camped at my gate waiting to arrest me. I am staying put inside the house. In 1993 they broke into the same house and arrested me. They might try the same thing again. I am hoping that they will not succeed this time round.

Our position is that, with the highest respect to our President, we must inform him that from an environmental point of view, he is completely wrong and out of touch with the wishes of the Kenyan people. This is because in pursuit of a better quality of life, human beings undertake various developmental projects which initially appear progressive. However, as the level of environmental awareness increases, such development initiatives may have detrimental effects on the environment. Examples abound: When chlorofluorocarbons (CFCs) were first discovered, scientists were unaware of the damage that they would cause to the ozone layer but as environmental awareness increased, many of those using CFCs, including companies, became sensitized and have now discontinued the manufacture and use of such products. The same is true of other chemical pollutants such as DDT and other agro-chemicals.

Further, at the turn of the century, hunting of wildlife in Kenya was a great sport, especially for Europeans who perceived the rich African wildlife as a limitless resource. Yet, a number of years ago, President Moi set on fire ivory worth millions of shillings in an effort to have ivory trade banned. This was because increased environmental awareness showed that hunting and extensive poaching had reduced elephants to an endangered species. It is this concern that has today driven the Kenya Wildlife Service (KWS) to conduct

a census of all the elephants in Kenya as it continues to ban hunting of endangered species.

Today, Kenya still maintains one of the highest population growth rates with a high level of rural-urban migration, Nairobi is the industrial capital, has a large number of vehicles emitting pollutants in the air and a growing number of slums. For it to remain a city capable of sustaining such industrial activities and, at the same time, remain a habitable place for its residents, development planners must consider all the components required to continue to make it a city fit for people. Karura forest is one such component because it acts as a carbon sink. Let Nairobi expand in the southeasterly direction where it will not interfere with the limited and much needed forests and prime agricultural land. With our knowledge now, we do not intend to continue acting as if we are ignorant or succumb to greed and corruption.

To-day, it would be wrong to jeopardize catchment areas, the local bio-diversity, water systems, agriculture and tourism by continuing the destruction of forests in the name of development. As for UNEP, it is a public utility which was built on the site where the original owners of the forest, Mbari ya Kihara, had their homestead. No trees were sacrificed. Indeed Karura was a sacred forest for the local indigenous community.

Our generation and our children in the universities are environmentalists now and that is why they are enraged by the plunder of forests and other natural resources. They feel that the government has failed them as a trustee of public resources. Instead, the government has become the greatest enemy of the environment and their future: as ministers and government officers apportion themselves and their children parts of forests and public land, and subsequently sell pieces to foreigners. Furthermore, some forests like in Mt. Kenya, bhang (marijuana) is being grown with full knowledge and protection of government officers. This undermines not only our environment but also the health of those children.

The battle for Karura has therefore, 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. Therefore, the President cannot have the final word on those resources. He is only the head of the trusteeship which has with all due respect to our President, failed the people.

We hope that those arrested will not be harmed by the police and will be promptly released because they are innocent.

Wangari Maathai, Co-ordinator.

Wangari Maathai

Press Release

The Board of Directors and the staff of the Women's Environment and Development Organization (WEDO) condemn the brutal attack on our colleague noted Kenyan ecologist Wangari Maathai and her supporters in Nairobi last week which left Dr. Maathai and two others hospitalized. It was the third attack on her in recent years, resulting in, head, neck and back injuries.

The attack by hired private security guards armed with truncheons, whips, swords and bows and arrows took place as Members of Parliament, Dr. Maathai and other members of the public were demonstrating peacefully at a controversial construction site in the Karura forest on the northern outskirts of the Kenyan capital. In the past, the Kenyan police have been present at such demonstrations and have sometimes given Dr. Maathai and other members of the public access to the forest to plant seedlings. This time however, they withdrew just as Maathai's team arrived but not before conversing with the hired guards who later pounced on the demonstrators. It is clear that the police and the hired guards connived so that the guards rather than the policemen would carry out the assault. Indeed, Maathai and her team were unable to get police assistance after the attack.

Since October Dr. Maathai and members of her world renowned tree-planting Green Belt Movement have been leading grassroots efforts to prevent the destruction of an indigenous forest by replanting saplings to replace trees felled by real estate developers.

Destruction of the forest has provoked widespread debate and condemnation of the Moi government's policy of selling prime public land to his supporters at minimal cost to construct high-income housing. The forest is situated close to some of the Kenyan capital's most affluent neighborhoods.

Ironically the world headquarters of the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) is also located nearby. UN Secretary General, Kofi Annan and UNEP Executive Director, Dr. Klaus Toepfer issued strong statements condemning the attack, as did the United States embassy in Nairobi.

While the immediate concern appears to be merely an environmental one, Dr. Maathai, who along with past President Bella Abzug was a founding member of WEDO, has always maintained that it has much more to do with larger issues of high-level corruption, inequity, undemocratic governance and disrespect for environmental rights.

Of special concern is the fact that some forests are cut to make way for growing of marijuana (*cannabis sativa*) deep in the forest, away from the public eye. Therefore, not only are these people destroying the forests but also the youth who are now using drugs

with alarming frequency. This has made Kenya not only a conduit for drugs from Asia but also a producer of the same.

"This is a case of a government that blatantly ignores the will of its citizens while flying in the face of international conservation accords that President Moi himself has signed," she said in a phone conversation with her WEDO colleagues on Monday soon after her release from hospital. "In the face of such gross inequity, we are morally obliged to take care of forests for future generations, just like our forefathers did.

Sustainable planning and development for Nairobi should allow for the expansion of the city without destroying the very resources on which its future depends.

WANGARI MAATHAI

Her Women's Army Defies an Iron Regime

ONE MORNING TWO MONTHS AGO, 30 HELMET-CLAD RIOT police wielding automatic rifles were arrayed in front of a hastily erected steel gate that barred the way into Karura Forest, on the outskirts of Nairobi. They stood guarding the site of what many Kenyans were calling an environmental outrage. More than a third of the 2,500-acre forest had been sold to land developers for a luxury housing project backed by President Daniel arap Moi, and 50 acres had already been cleared—less than half a mile away from Nairobi's world headquarters of the United Nations Environment Program. A week earlier, protesters had invaded the site and burned \$1 million worth of bulldozers and tree-cutting equipment. Another demonstration had been scheduled, and the police were ready for trouble.

A rickety bus rattled up the road, halted at the edge of the forest and disgorged 28 passengers—all of them old women. Then came a pickup truck carrying their weapons—not clubs or rifles but gardening tools and watering cans. Finally a small car pulled up, and out strode their leader, Wangari Maathai, an imposing 5-ft. 8-in. woman in a long blue dress and a red-and-black polka-dot head scarf. She picked up a pot containing a 2-ft. Meru oak seedling, but the police refused to let her carry it into the forest. In a soft but determined voice she spoke directly to Chief Inspector Paul Muluma: "Since you are illegally preventing us from planting trees in the forest and I do not want this one to die, I am going to plant it at the gates of the U.N. Environment Program. Do you think you can stop me?" As Muluma just shook his head, Maathai led her troop of grandmothers in a procession to the UNEP gate and ceremoniously planted and watered the tree. UNEP executive director Klaus Toepfer, meanwhile, issued a statement condemning the clearing of Karura Forest and let it be known that his staff would water the young Meru oak every day.

Only a strong person would defy the iron regime of Kenya's President Moi, and Maathai, 58, fits the bill. An anatomy professor at the University of Nairobi and the first Kenyan woman to receive a Ph.D., she founded the women's Green Belt Movement, which has planted 7 million trees in Kenya and inspired similar efforts around the globe. In 1989 her protests forced Moi to abandon a personal plan to erect a 62-story office tower in a Nairobi park. And in 1991 her activism became a political force when she helped start an opposition group called the Forum for the Restoration of Democracy. Once she was teargassed and clubbed unconscious by police. Another time she was arrested and put in a jail cell overnight with no mattress. Always her popularity and idealism have stayed intact.

This time, though, she may have gone too far. No one is saying whether Maathai encouraged the burning of the bulldozers or overzealous followers acted on their own initiative. She claims that thugs were hired to beat up members of her movement and then destroyed the machinery in a fit of anger when they were not paid what they were promised.

Whatever the truth, Moi has made no move to punish the influential Maathai, who has won environmental awards from countries all over the world. In an October speech at National Stadium on Kenyatta Day (honoring Kenya's first



President, Jomo Kenyatta, and other independence heroes), Moi declared, "There are mothers in this country who have no respect for public property. They burn other people's property." But when Kenyatta's daughter Beth Mugo, who was taking part in the ceremony, tapped the side of her head with her forefinger and grimaced at Moi, the crowd roared its approval.

Since then police have given up trying to stop Maathai's indefatigable followers from planting tree seedlings in the cleared portion of Karura Forest. And because most people rich enough to buy a home in the proposed development would now be embarrassed to do so, the project is expected to collapse.

While Maathai appears victorious, she has received threats since the bulldozer destruction. "A man called to say that I would pay for the damage with my life," she says, "but so far nothing has happened." So far.

—By Clive Mugo/Nairobi

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www.conservation.org

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NETWORK
www.ran.org

WORLD WILDLIFE FUND
www.worldwildlife.org

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News
Saturday, January 9, 1999

FRONT PAGE
NEWS
COMMENT
LETTERS
BUSINESS
SPORTS
EDITORIAL
CARTOON
CUTTING
EDGE
FEEDBACK

MPs, Maathai beaten at forest

By STEPHEN MUIRLURI

Protesters were whipped and beaten when they tried to plant seedlings at the gates to Karura forest yesterday.

Violence flared after a three-hour confrontation during which security men refused to allow the demonstrators into the forest, parts of which have been allocated to private developers.

The attack came after Professor Wangari Maathai, coordinator of the Green Belt Movement, who had arranged the demonstration, tried to plant a seedling at the gate.

The protesters, who included Mr Joseph Muchara and Mr James Kamau Mwirigi were beaten with rubber whips, clubs and stones.

Prof Maathai was later taken to Nairobi Hospital and treated for a deep cut to the head, which needed four stitches. It was caused by a blunt object, like a club, said Dr Daniel Gikonyo.

Other demonstrators, who included MP Mr James Orengo, took to their heels when the violence began and were chased 200 metres from the gates.

Some journalists, who had their equipment damaged, were also whipped and sustained bruises.

The windscreens of three vehicles were smashed: a BBC Isuzu Trooper, a Green Belt Movement Land Rover and a Pajero.

About 20 protesters led by Prof Maathai, Mr Orengo, and MPs Peter Kamande, Moses Mwihia, Njehu Gatabaki and former Kiambaa MP Kamau Icharia, had gone to the forest to try to plant seedlings on the land that has been allocated for development.

They were faced by about 200 security men who were armed with bows and arrows, swords, pangas, clubs and metal bars.

Police later said they were not to blame for the attack, adding that Prof Maathai's group had wanted to invade private land.

Before the protesters had arrived, five policemen drove in and briefly conversed with the security men.

Apart from the policemen, no body else was allowed near the steel gates.

The MPs left as Prof Maathai, journalists and other casualties drove to Gigiri police station to lodge a formal complaint.

The injured were then driven to hospital, where they announced they would return to the forest to plant the seedlings on another day.

Prof Maathai will need to be kept in hospital for observation for two or three days because she had lost a lot of blood, said her doctor, Daniel Gikonyo.

Divisional police boss Mr Francis Munyambu and other officers later visited the scene of the attack and left without talking to anyone.

The security men said they had been given clear instructions not to allow anyone onto the land.

Their leader shouted to the protesters, "We have a court order barring strangers from coming here. We are ready for a bloody fight if you want to force your way in. We will crush you like rats!"

Referring to the court order issued by a High Court judge against interfering with the allocated land, Prof Maathai said:

"It is unfortunate that courts are being used to legitimise grabbing of public land. Grabbers are now hiding behind court orders which we will never recognise."

MP Mr Orenge asked why the police refused to arrest the attackers for being in possession of offensive weapons, contrary to the law.

He blamed Police Commissioner Duncan Wachira for the incident, saying his officers were aware of the impending attack and "that is why they refused to arrest the attackers".

Mr Mwihi challenged President Moi to issue a public statement on the Karura saga.

Mr Gatabaki said the forest belonged to Kenyans and they would not allow it to be grabbed.

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