



Press Release

“The generation that destroys the environment is not the generation that pays the price.” – Prof. Wangari Maathai

On Wangari Maathai Day, questions mount over ongoing tree clearing and construction inside Karura Forest

Nairobi, 3 March 2026 – Today we mark *Wangari Maathai Day* and *Africa Environment Day*, but as we honour the legacy of Kenya’s first Nobel Peace Prize laureate Prof. Wangari Maathai, her beloved Karura Forest is once again under threat.

Nearly three decades after Prof. Maathai led the courageous struggle to protect Karura from developers, the forest is now facing new and deeply troubling developments.

On 25 February, the Kenya Forest Service (KFS) announced plans to house National Youth Service (NYS) teams in metal container barracks within the Rangers’ Village, approximately one kilometre inside the forest. Within just ten days, the area was cleared of trees, levelled by heavy machinery and reduced to a field of mud.

There was no consultation at all with the Friends of Karura Forest (FKF), despite FKF being a full partner in the management and conservation of the forest under a legally binding joint Forest Management Agreement with KFS running until 2041.

Friends of Karura Forest is calling for an immediate halt to the ongoing works, a full and transparent public explanation of the plans for this site, and the undertaking of a comprehensive Environmental Impact Assessment. The surrounding communities, who have played a critical role in safeguarding and sustaining the forest, must be meaningfully included in any decision-making process.

The NYS teams are expected to work in a tree nursery at the Kenya Forest Service headquarters, contributing to the Government’s ambitious target of planting 15 billion trees, a goal which Friends of Karura fully supports and has already contributed to by planting thousands of indigenous trees. However, the NYS personnel should be accommodated within the 136-acre KFS headquarters or remain at their own nearby headquarters.

Successive joint Management plans have included an agreement to relocate the rangers currently residing in the Rangers’ Village to the KFS headquarters, allowing the area to be reforested. Concerns were already raised in August last year when KFS tarmacked a quarter of the 800-metre track leading to the Rangers’ Village.

Friends of Karura Forest calls upon the relevant authorities to demonstrate, through concrete action, their commitment to shared governance of public forests and other natural resources. On this Wangari Maathai Day, we honour her vision and reaffirm our determination to protect the forest she fought so hard to preserve.

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