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More than 4,600 Kenyans unite in historic legal action to protect Nairobi National Park

6th July 2026

Thousands of citizens ask the courts to determine whether development inside Kenya's oldest national park can proceed without full compliance with the law and the Constitution.

Sixty-three years ago, Kenya's first President made the following promise to the nation:

"The natural resources of this country - it's wildlife which offers such an attraction to visitors from all over the world. The beautiful places in which these animals live, the mighty forests which guard the water catchment areas so vital for the survival of man and beast – are a priceless heritage for the future. The government of Kenya fully realising the value of its natural resources pledges itself to conserve them for posterity with all means at its disposal."

-Mzee Jomo Kenyatta, September 1963

This week, more than **4,600 Kenyans** from every corner of the country have come together to file what is believed to be **one of the largest citizen-led environmental court actions in Kenya's history**, asking the Environment and Land Court to hold the Government of Kenya accountable to that promise by stopping ongoing development within Nairobi National Park.

The petition, filed under the banner of the **Save Nairobi National Park Campaign**, brings together parents, teachers, tour operators, ecologists, conservationists, business owners, photographers and other ordinary citizens who believe that the world's only national park within a capital city is part of the nation's heritage and deserves the full protection of the law. What brought them together wasn't politics, it was simply the will to protect our green spaces.

And so the petition has been filed in the public interest and on behalf of both present and future generations of Kenyans.

But this case did not begin in a courtroom.

It began with questions. Questions became requests for meetings and information. These requests were met with silence, and that silence led to construction and habitat destruction in the park, which led to protests that were met with state aggression, resulting in public outcry that inspired thousands to join this court case.

When land clearance works began in Nairobi National Park, citizens wanted information. They requested greater public disclosure, questioned the approvals given for the project and called for meaningful public participation. Many voiced concerns that the proposed development could irreversibly change one of Kenya's most important protected landscapes. A number of concerned citizens who asked these questions were even banned from the park indefinitely.

As those concerns grew, Kenyans organised peacefully. Conservation organisations, legal experts and members of the public appealed for dialogue and transparency from both KWS and the ministry. Peaceful demonstrations followed, including a silent procession attended by hundreds of supporters. This demonstration was met with teargas and the arrest of innocent, peaceful protesters holding plants and placards. Despite these efforts, construction continued.

Today, those same citizens, and thousands more have turned to the courts. The judge reviewing the matter has certified it urgent and called for an interpartes hearing on 14th July.

The petition challenges the legality of the ongoing development within Nairobi National Park, and asks the Court to determine whether the proposed works comply with the Constitution, environmental legislation and the legal protections afforded to national parks. The petition argues that the current works are inconsistent with provisions of the park's legally adopted management plan. The petition also seeks to ensure that any development affecting protected public land is undertaken only in accordance with the law and with full public accountability.

At the centre of the proceedings are proposed developments associated with the relocation and expansion of the Nairobi Animal Orphanage together with supporting infrastructure, including a large parking facility and associated works linked to the neighbouring Bomas International Conference Centre.

The petition raises questions about whether the statutory processes required for such development have been fully complied with. It also highlights concerns regarding inconsistencies identified within the Environmental and Social Impact Assessment documentation and argues that these issues warrant judicial scrutiny before irreversible changes occur within the park.

The petitioners emphasise that this case is **not about opposing development**. It is about ensuring that development affecting one of Kenya's most significant protected areas is undertaken lawfully, transparently and in accordance with the relevant laws and the Constitution.

For many of the petitioners, Nairobi National Park represents something far greater than a tourist destination. It is part of Kenya's identity and national heritage, an ecological system supporting biodiversity, helps fight climate change and flooding, supports our health and well-being, and is one of the few places in the world where wildlife continues to exist alongside a modern capital city.

The decision to join these proceedings reflects a growing belief among ordinary citizens that protecting public land is not solely the responsibility of government institutions, but a shared constitutional duty that rests on all of us.

Speaking on behalf of the campaign, a spokesperson said:

> "No generation has the right to steal the inheritance of the next. We did not create Nairobi National Park. We inherited it. Our responsibility is to leave it standing for those who inherit Kenya after us. That is why we have gone to court."

Today's filing represents more than a legal challenge.

It reflects a remarkable act of civic participation by thousands of Kenyans who have chosen to engage peacefully through constitutional processes rather than remain silent. Whatever the outcome, this case demonstrates the growing role of ordinary citizens in shaping the future of environmental governance in Kenya.

The Save Nairobi National Park Campaign calls upon all Kenyans to respect the judicial process, remain peaceful and continue protecting Kenya's natural heritage through lawful and constructive civic engagement.

This petition contains thousands of names and they speak for something that cannot protect itself. Today, over 4,600 Kenyans have simply asked the Court whether a promise still matters.

Case Summary

- **Petitioners:** 4,642 Kenyan citizens.
- **The Case:** ELCEPPET/E037/2026. Initially filed in Kajiado on 29th June 2026, transferred to Nairobi on 1st July 2026. Next court date: 14th July.
- **Matter:** Petition concerning ongoing developments within Nairobi National Park.
- **Primary relief sought:** Orders to protect the park from illegal and unlawful development.

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