

What made news in the land sector in 2023

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Revocation of Galana-Kulalu Settlement Scheme

Year 2023 opened with mixed expectations following the swearing into office of Lands Cabinet Secretary (CS) Mr Zachariah Mwangi Njeru in late 2022. As we ushered in January, President William Ruto revoked the subdivision of Galana-Kulalu land into settlement plots. This was followed by news on the suspension of the subdivision of some 2800 acre community land parcel in Kibiku, Kajiado West Sub-County, following grabbing allegations. Not much has been heard about these since. The new CS held consultative meetings with stakeholders following threats of public demonstrations by the Law Society of Kenya over delays, inefficiencies and collapse of services in land registries. The CS subsequently put in place measures, such as the manual registration of transactions to properties not yet converted to the Land Registration Act, to ensure that land transactions continued even as digitization proceeded.

Farm invasions

February opened with news that Nandi County government and multinational tea firms had settled on the payment of a new rate of Ksh5000 per acre, away from previous Ksh100 per acre. On a different account, Kajiado County rebuffed efforts by the national land commission to adjudicate over discussions on rates payable by the multinational Tata Chemicals over land around Lake Magadi. In related developments, there was news that Del Monte company had ceded parts of its land to Kiambu and Murang'a counties as part of a deal to have its land leases renewed. Clearly, Counties were seizing powers under the new constitution to revisit contracts to land under their jurisdictions. News on the invasion of Northlands farm in Ruiru, and the subsequent invasion of farms in Nakuru, Bomet and Kilifi Counties in March and April rattled landowners. On the flipside, there was good news as government issued title deeds to residents in places like Maweni, Mtwapa, in Kilifi; Rwiri in Meru; Etoro Ltungai and Ngaremara in Isiolo; and Kagundu Tharaka in Mwingi North within the year.

Moi Beach Plot: Supreme Court Ruling

The Supreme Court made a landmark ruling that will precedent many land cases. Kenya's premier court ruled that a title deed conveyed to Dina Management Limited was invalid since the original title issued to former President Daniel Arap Moi along the beach in Mombasa was illegal and irregular on grounds that it had been derived from an open space reserved for a public road. Towards mid-year, President Ruto pronounced intent to transfer powers to value land compulsorily acquired by government from the national land commission to the lands ministry. An enabling amendment Bill, which is facing opposition by stakeholders, has since been tabled before parliament for enactment.

Mavoko demolitions

As demolitions in Mavoko EAPC land made big news in October, CS Zachariah Njeru quietly left the Lands Ministry. Alice Wahome took over. The Mavoko demolitions gave way to news of the looming demolitions of the developments illegally erected on Kirima land in Nairobi. The year closes with a blitzkrieg of proposed amendments to existing land laws, and the proposed increase to costs of services offered by the Lands Ministry.

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