

Protest targets rail line over Kenya's oldest wildlife park

September 16 2016, by Khaled Kazziha



Kenyans hold up signs as they attend a protest to protect the Nairobi National Park in Nairobi, Friday, Sept. 16, 2016. Dozens of angry people have marched in the Kenyan capital Nairobi to protest plans to build a railway line over a national park. The protesters included conservationists and others who wore T-shirts and carried banners saying "don't rape our park." (AP Photo/Khalil Senosi)

Angry protesters marched in Kenya's capital on Friday against plans to build an elevated railway line over the country's oldest national park,

saying the project will threaten wildlife that includes lions, leopards and giraffes.

The Chinese project would cross six kilometers of Nairobi National Park. Dozens of conservationists and others carried banners saying "Don't rape our park."

World-renowned paleontologist Richard Leakey, the current chairman of the Kenya Wildlife Service, earlier this week said the elevated railway will not harm animals and was the best option.

"From a housefly to a giraffe, there will be free passage once this construction is completed," he said.

But environmental and other groups have vowed to fight the plan.

"It's our heritage," Nkamunu Patita Masaai, a community activist, said Friday.

The chairman of a coalition for [wildlife](#) conservation handed the director of the Kenya Wildlife Service, Kitili Mbathi, a petition demanding an alternative route for the railway line.

Mbathi said he welcomes "alternative proposals."

The [railway](#) line would be built by China Communications Construction Company Limited and the China Road and Bridge Corporation.



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Before construction can proceed, the Kenya Railway Corporation must secure the agreement of the National Environment Management Authority. An environmental and social impact assessment is needed.

"They are doing this in ways that are very unbecoming, in ways that are flouting people's rights, basically, so there will be opposition to this both privately, communally and nationally, yes, definitely," conservationist Kamweti Muto with the Conservation Alliance of Kenya said earlier this week.



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