

Ugandan faith leaders welcome pledges for peaceful election

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Nairobi, February 14 (ENInews)--Religious leaders in Uganda have welcomed pledges from presidential candidates for a violence-free election, due to take place 18 February. The candidates made the commitment at national prayer rally held at the Kololo independence grounds in Kampala on 13 February.

"It is good they have made the commitment. We shall use this as a performance tool and hold them accountable," Archbishop John Baptist Odama, the Chairman of the Uganda Episcopal Conference, told ENInews.

The Inter-Religious Council of Uganda (IRCU), a grouping of Roman Catholic, Protestant and Orthodox churches, and the Uganda Muslim Supreme Council organized the prayers where the leaders also committed to accept the poll's outcome and find constitutional ways to address any disputes.

"We shall address them (politicians) and say, 'You committed to this, so accept and abide,'" said Odama. Archbishop of the Uganda Orthodox Church Jonah Lwanga said IRCU wished to reiterate its fervent appeal to all citizens to ensure peace prevails.

"Elections are... a means of achieving a unified society where all people peacefully coexist. This necessarily presupposes sacrificing our personal egos and selfish interests," said the chairman of IRCU's Council of Presidents at the rally.

President Yoweri Museveni assured a violence-free country before, during and after the elections at the rally, a commitment that pleased the leaders.

"He has a responsibility to ensure a level playing field ... He must ensure that there is the infrastructure to protect citizens," said Joshua Kitakule, the IRCU's general secretary, in an interview. Retired Anglican Bishop Macleod Baker Ochola II of Kitgum had in February said that while government had the right to protect its citizens, heavy deployment of soldiers before the elections was abnormal and

strange.