

Kenyan clergy protest new government rules

by [Fredrick Nzwili](#) in the [February 17, 2016](#) issue

Christian and Muslim leaders are protesting a government plan to regulate religious groups, saying it tramples on religious freedom.

The government published a set of rules in January that require religious leaders to have theological degrees and religious groups to submit a statement of faith.

The rules come amid concerns that some pastors were fleecing followers and some mosques were becoming centers of radicalization.

Roman Catholic bishops said the rules would impede evangelization.

“Similar attempts to regulate the procedures for Christian marriage have led to a major drop in young people coming to church to celebrate the sacrament,” said Philip Anyolo, chairman of the Kenya Conference of Catholic Bishops.

At a meeting in Nairobi attended by at least 1,000 pastors, Mark Kariuki, a bishop and chairman of the Evangelical Alliance of Kenya, said that churches are not opposed to reasonable regulation after proper consultation.

“Requiring pastors to obtain a theological degree is presupposing that all ministers of the gospel are learned,” he said. “There are some who are called and yet do not have the benefit of formal education.”

The government is also seeking to stop a new and voluntary trend in which Christians send offerings or “seed money” to pastors via mobile phones, describing it as fraud. The government also seeks to control preaching on television through new rules governing broadcasting.

“The church is in the business of spreading the gospel,” Kariuki said. “It is offensive to tell us we cannot invite people to make decision for Christ” on television.

Adan Wachu, chairman of the Supreme Council of Kenya Muslims, said that the regulations violate freedom of worship.

Peter Karanja, general secretary of the National Council of Churches of Kenya, spoke of the church's electoral power.

"Christians are voters," Karanja said. It would it "be tragic to provoke the church into asking whether they voted for the right government." —Religion News Service

*This article was edited on February 2, 2016.*