

# Kenyan Christian leaders oppose polygamy bill

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NAIROBI, Kenya (RNS) Christian leaders are appealing to President Uhuru Kenyatta not to sign into law a proposed new marriage bill that legalizes polygamy.

Legislators passed the law last week after an intense debate that saw women members of Parliament storm out in protest. The bill's passage followed an amendment to the existing marriage legislation to allow men to marry as many women as they want. It awaits Kenyatta's signature to become law.

But the National Council of Churches of Kenya, the Kenya Conference of Catholic Bishops and the Evangelical Alliance of Kenya, have rejected it, saying the law will undermine Christian principles of marriage and family.

The Rev. Peter Karanja, general secretary the Kenyan church council, said the bill demeans women and fails to respect the principle of spouses' equality in marriage.

"We urge the president not to sign it until the offensive clauses are removed," Karanja told a news conference on Wednesday (March 26).

Roman Catholic Cardinal John Njue urged Kenyatta to reject it, too.

"I don't think the bishops will accept it," he said.

Meanwhile the Evangelical Alliance warned, if passed, the law will contribute to the erosion of marriage and the continued spread of HIV infections.

"We cannot ensure fidelity with such a law," said Bishop David Oginde, the head of Christ is the Answer Ministries, a member of the alliance. "The Bible is clear that an ideal marriage is between one man and one woman."