

## Kenyan church leaders urge government to fix problems before election

Walter Cheruiyot | Sep. 20, 2012

**NAIROBI, Kenya** -- Leaders of Kenya's mainstream Christian churches urged the government to address the many problems the country faces as it prepares for March general elections.

A joint statement issued Thursday cited the recent ethnic violence that left more than 100 Kenyans dead and displaced thousands of people in the Tana River Delta at a time when the government had vowed to enhance security and restore peace.

The government belatedly deployed security personnel, but the church leaders recommended the government find the root cause of the violence. Some observers have accused politicians of exploiting ethnic rivalries before the election, and one government minister has been fired after being accused of inciting violence -- a charge he denied.

The church leaders also raised concern over ongoing strikes by teachers and doctors.

Kenyan teachers have been on strike throughout September, demanding higher wages.

"We are deeply concerned that children and students have had to stay at home when they are supposed to be in school," the statement said, pointing out that national exams are a month away.

"Thus, a lot of anxiety has been created to both parents and the students," the statement said.

With the doctors on strike, the patients suffer the consequences, while dialogue fails to take place, they said.

The church leaders also expressed disappointment with the way the Kenyan Parliament was implementing the new constitution, urging the government to uphold the spirit of the document.

The statement was signed by Nairobi Cardinal John Njue, president of the Kenya Episcopal Conference; Archbishop Eliud Wabukala, head of the Anglican Church of Kenya; the Rev. David Gathanju, moderator of the Presbyterian Church of East Africa; and the Rev. Charles Kibicho, a Presbyterian minister and representative of the National Council of Churches of Kenya.

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