

## **ODM pact with Muslims denounced**

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The Catholic Church has joined Evangelical churches in denouncing a Memorandum of Understanding signed between a leading presidential candidate and some Muslim leaders to boost his chances for election.

In a statement issued at the Vatican, the bishops of Kenya said it was unacceptable to use religion "as a platform to ascend to power".

The bishops are in the Holy See for their 'ad limina' visit.

"Kenya is a secular state," they said. "No one should be allowed to turn it into a religious state. Promises to give any faith-group special rights and the application of its particular religious laws for governance are contrary to the Constitution."

Mr Raila Odinga of ODM has sparked controversy by signing a pact with some Muslim leaders to get their support in the December 27 General Election.

Mr Odinga, who is leading in opinion polls, has failed to divulge the contents of the MoU, which he has described as "harmless".

### **Recipe for chaos**

The bishops' statement, however, described it as "a recipe for tension and even chaos" and demanded that the MoU be made public.

"No candidate at any level of power or political party has authority to enter into pacts that affect all Kenyans without consulting them," they said.

Last week, the Evangelical Alliance of Kenya said implementation of the pact could lead to division of the country along religious lines and create conflicts.

Former Law Society of Kenya chairman, Mr Abdulahi Ahmednassir, has also dismissed the pact, warning that it could in fact create a backlash against Mr Odinga.

"Quite a number of Muslims find it repugnant a notion that their rights as citizens of this country can find solace only in a private document drafted between two individuals and not in the laws of the land," he said in an article published in a local weekly.