

Bishops tell citizens to elect honest candidates

NAIROBI, Kenya – Kenya's bishops, saying the country's future was at stake, have advised citizens to vote for candidates with a track record of honesty in the December general elections.

They also expressed concern that corruption was still a major issue in the government of President Mwai Kibaki, who plans to seek re-election.

"There have been many complaints that when looking for employment, it is not how qualified you are, but who you know and the ethnic group to which you belong," the bishops said in the eight-page pastoral letter, titled "Love God and Love Your Neighbor."

"If a corrupt person is elected to the Parliament, the cycle of deprivation and abuse of office would be prolonged and the moral fiber of the nation would continue to erode," the bishops said.

They expressed concern about a brain drain, in which Kenyans – young and old and sometimes highly educated – were leaving the country en masse for Europe.

"Our country is losing many of its sons and daughters to other countries in search of greener pastures," which hinders the nation's progress, the bishops said.

They urged Kenyans to shun electoral violence and condemned the practice of hiring youths to unleash terror at the polls.

On the poll outcome, the bishops urged the losers to accept the results, saying the December elections should increase the bonds of the country's unity.

Speaking to Catholic News Service, Eldoret Bishop Cornelius Arap Korir urged Kenyans to shun tribalism and work as brothers and sisters for the sake of the development of the country.

"We don't want cases of hatred to continue even as we approach election. Politicians should not take advantage and mislead Kenyans; the church will give direction." Bishop Korir said.

Contributing to this story were Walter Cheruiyot and Francis Njuguna.