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OCEANIA/PAPUA NEW GUINEA - Christians: a legislative action against polygamy is urgent

Goroka (Agenzia Fides) - Polygamy is not just an anti-Christian practice and against the moral law, but it is also a social threat. This is why a law to prevent it is urgent. With these arguments the Christian communities of Papua New Guinea, through their leaders, meetings, public speeches, are leading a campaign to outlaw polygamy in the nation. As reported to Fides by the local Church, recently a legislative action to ban polygamy was proposed by the governor of the province of Eastern Highlands, Julie Soso. Already in 1982, another political leader, Peter Peipul, demanded the banning of polygamy, calling it "disgusting" and "unconstitutional." Although in later years the reform of family law and the prohibition of polygamy was discussed, the practice remains legal.
"In areas where polygamy is still practiced, there are increasing cases of women accused of the murder of another of the wives of their husbands. Women's rights will always be trampled until polygamy remains in force. Every human being, male or female, has equal rights under the Universal Declaration of Human Rights," explains in a note sent to Fides, Paul Harricknen, a Catholic lawyer and consultant to the Catholic Bishops' Conference of Papua. The Bishops, he remarks,want "the elimination of all forms of discrimination against women." "Usually polygamy is imposed on the first wives, who succumb due to their economic and social disadvantage, or simply choose to maintain their fidelity to marriage." And it is a practice that "causes chaos and abuse in society." For this reason, he concludes, "polygamy is no longer suitable for Papua New Guinea." (PA) (Agenzia Fides 21/12/2012)

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