

Ugandan 'polygamy' bill protest

By Will Ross

BBC News, Kampala

More than 1,000 Muslims have demonstrated in the Ugandan capital, Kampala, against a proposed law which they say contradicts the Koran.



There were lots of Muslim women at the demonstration

The Domestic Relations Bill, which is due to be debated in parliament, is designed to harmonise family relations and protect the rights of women.

But the Muslim community say aspects of the bill contravene Islamic law.

Some protesters stood outside the gates of parliament holding placards urging MPs to leave the holy book alone.

They see the bill as an attempt to rewrite the Koran.

'No compromise'

One of the contentious issues in the bill concerns polygamy. It states that a husband should seek permission from his first wife before taking a second.

On the issue of inheritance, the proposed law calls on women to be given a fair share of a husband's wealth.

The Muslim community reject this noting that the Koran stipulates what women may inherit if their husband dies.

There were plenty of Muslim women also at today's demonstration. Some held four fingers in the in support of the Islamic law which allows a man to have four wives.

One of the key aims of the bill is to protect the rights of women.

Parliamentarians will be debating whether to end cultural practices such as wife inheritance and the paying of dowries or bride price.

But for some, the bill does not go far enough, for example, it does not in its present form condemn marital rape.

Although this demonstration was peaceful, some Muslims say they are prepared to use violent means to resist the proposed law.

Muslim leaders have called for the law to exempt Muslims as they say Islamic law cannot be compromised.

Muslims account for more than 10% of the country's population.