Register us now, Safina group says

By SYLVIA MIJDASIA

Dr Richard Leakey and other founding members of Safina yesterday pressed for the registration of the party, charging that the delay was a sign of the Government's continued political repression.

Despite assurances, they said, the Government had not registered the new party although the necessary documents were filed 28 days ago.

"From the beginning, we stated we did not wish to be needlessly confrontational. In the present situation we feel we might soon be forced to invite the people themselves to demonstrate their support for the registration of Safina."

And they warned: "This step would not be taken lightly because of the probable intimidation and force that the Government would unleash against those who would be doing no more than showing their stand on a matter of their rights."

The statement was read to the Dr Leakey: Read statement.

Press by Dr Leakey, the party's secretary general and also a former Kenya Wildlife Service Director.

The statement said: "This indecision and delay is a blatant example of the Kanu government's continuing suppression of rights. The people of Kenya are entitled to choices in the political arena and to deny them this is contrary to the foundations of democracy."

Recently, the Attorney-General said the application to register the party was being considered under the existing law.

The members and officials, who included Ms Njeri Kabeberi (treasurer), founder members Paul Muite, Kiraitu Murungi, Kimani Rugendo and Robert Shaw, also called on the Government to withdraw and abandon the political parties bill.

They said there was considerable support for their party in the country and challenged the Government to let the people decide on which was the most popular in the country instead of sitting on their registration.

They accused the Government of turning a deaf ear to real issues like corruption, indiscriminate spending of public funds and the increasing lawlessness and in

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- Withdrawal of the Political Parties Bill (1990).
- The reform of the Electoral Commission in order to create a fair, politically impartial and independent one.
- The repeal of repressive laws like the Public Order Act, the Chief's Authority Act, Sedition Laws and the Preservation of Public Security Act and delinking the provincial administration and the police force from the political process.
- The freeing of the airwaves by allowing fair access to the existing media and the fair and impartial licensing of new radio broadcast and television channels.

They said it was foolish for opposition parties to go into the next elections with the present political status quo and called for:

They said the Government to resolve the problem of acquiring identity cards, saying that more than 4 million people were unable to get them although they had registered the correct age. They also called for the release of political prisoners - among them Koigi Wa Wamwere and Mr Odhiambo Apiny."

The officials also denied receiving funds from donor countries to destabilise the nation. Their party, they said, was not yet registered and it would therefore be illegal to start fundraising.

They said they met the expenses of running their secretariat through the Harambee effort.