

'Patients should be confined'

Advocate calls for law on Aids

By **KWENDO OPANGA and IRUNGU NDIRANGU**

A Nairobi advocate on Saturday called for legislation to confine Aids patients.

Mr A.D.O. Rachier told an Aids symposium in Nairobi the law would be in the interest of public health and would be similar to the one that covers leprosy and small pox patients.

He said the law could allow the prosecution of those who knowingly pass on Aids to unsuspecting partners.

It should also require foreigners coming into Kenya to produce medical certificates showing they are free of the Aids virus, he added.

Under the law, all expectant women should mandatorily attend ante-natal clinics and undergo Aids tests, and if mothers are positively identified as either carriers or victims, the law should allow abortion, Mr Rachier said.

He said the measures should minimise the spread of Aids and protect bio-medical researchers. But the legislation should be sup-

plemented by educating the people on natural prevention of Aids, he said.

A senior micro-biology lecturer at the University of Nairobi, Dr Ndinya-Achola, told the symposium that by last May, Kenya had reported over 1,800 Aids cases to the World Health Organisation (WHO).

He estimated that the figure may rise to 2,500 by the end of this year.

The symposium is organised by the Association of Physicians of East and Central Africa (APECA) in conjunction with the Kenya Medical Association and the Ministry of Health.

He said WHO estimates that between five and 10 million people have the disease and that up to 500,000 infected people are either showing or about to show signs of Aids.

Dr Ndinya-Achola said that in Kenya promiscuity was the main cause and that the disease is spread through heterosexual contact, unlike in the United States, western Europe and Brazil where homosexuality, drug abuse and multiple transmissions, are the main causes.

Whereas in those countries, the

infection ratio of male to female is 13 to one, he said that in East and Central Africa, the ratio is one to one.

He said two hospitals have recorded cases where children whose parents showed negative in HIV tests showed symptoms of the disease.

About six to eight per cent of prostitutes in Nairobi are exposed to the HIV virus, Dr Ndinya-Achola said.

If the current transmission rate continues, then, within the next two years the number of Aids cases will have tripled, he concluded.

In her contribution, Dr K.M. Bhatt of Kenyatta National Hospital, said that from a group of 124 patients, it had been found out that the high risk group included long distance truck drivers, single individuals with multiple partners and those previously treated of sexually transmitted diseases.

She said some of the major symptoms of Aids were diarrhoea, vomiting, weight loss, abdominal pains, cough, fever and tuberculosis.