Recent regulations introduced by the Rwanda Governance Board (RGB) necessitate that faith-based organizations meet several requirements, as authorities warn these groups are particularly vulnerable to radicalization and misuse of foreign funding.

The rules, discussed Wednesday in a meeting with religious leaders in Kigali, require organizations to show that their places of worship comply with local construction laws and to collect at least 1,000 signatures from residents in their district of operation.

Legal representatives and their deputies must also hold recognized theology degrees or equivalent certifications, especially if obtained abroad.

RGB Chief Executive Officer Doris Uwicyeza Picard said some suspended or revoked groups have shifted activities online to evade oversight. “The reason they are moving online is they believe it is a lawless space, and that is not true. We will be assessing online preaching, and those found in violation of the law will be held accountable,” she said.

Doris Uwicyeza Picard, RGB Chief Executive Officer

The meeting also focused on compliance with the National Policy on Anti-Money Laundering, Countering Terrorism and Proliferation Financing (AML/CFT) and other regulations. RGB stressed that no cases of radicalization or terrorist activity have been identified within Rwanda’s churches or mosques.

Religious leaders welcomed the initiative. Kandema July, deputy leader of the Presbyterian Church in Rwanda, said the warnings encouraged vigilance.
“Being warned that such activities exist and could target churches makes us reflect on how to better protect ourselves,” he said.

Kabanda Mignonne, director of the Women Foundation, urged faith groups to act as “gatekeepers.”
“Some organizations receive money from offerings and foreign donations. We must protect our country and identify anyone trying to involve us in radicalization or terrorism,” she said.

Sheikh Mushumba Yunusu, Rwanda’s deputy mufti, praised RGB’s awareness campaign, saying it would help faith groups strengthen vigilance.

Rwanda has 2,366 registered nongovernmental organizations, including 577 faith-based groups.