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## Belgium's ban on kosher slaughter begins in Flanders and will widen later this year

Rabbis slam ban by Flemish assembly, which took effect on January 1, for putting 'Jewish life at risk'



Members of the Jewish community in Antwerp, Flanders, where shechita was banned on the first day of 2019 (Photo: Flash 90)

A ban on kosher slaughter has taken effect in parts of Belgium after regional parliaments introduced prohibitions for animals that have not been pre-stunned.

Shechita is banned in Flanders as of January 1, while similar restrictions will be in place in the French-speaking Walloon region from September 2019.

Local rabbis said it was in direct contradiction to Jewish law, which requires that an animal be uninjured and in optimal health before slaughter.

One added that the Belgian measures were putting Jewish lives "at risk"

Muslim ritual slaughter for halal products will be similarly curtailed by the new arrangements.

"This is very unfortunate for us," said Rabbi Menachem Margolin, a Belgian resident who chairs the Europe Jewish Association.

He told the *JC* that his community was still able to import kosher meat from the Netherlands and Hungary, but that it set a bad precedent and could lead to the prohibition of brit milah, or circumcision.

"To have the government interfere in this way is damaging to the reputation of the Jewish people as a community. It implies that we as a group are irresponsible with the welfare of animals and need government supervision which is, of course, a very negative view of us," Rabbi Margolin said.

Ritual slaughter of animals without prior stunning of is outlawed in several European countries, including Denmark, Norway, Sweden and partially in Switzerland.

"That provinces within Belgium, the law-making capital of Europe, have passed this type of anti-religious measure is an affront to the European values we all hold so dear," said Pinchas Goldschmidt, president of the Conference of European Rabbis.

"Time and again, the Jewish community is told by senior EU officials that there is no Europe without the Jews. These bans undermine those statements and put Jewish life at risk."

Legal challenges against the legislation passed by the Flemish and Walloon parliaments is underway, including by the Lawfare Project, which campaigns against antisemitic discrimination.

The Flemish restrictions do not prevent people living in Belgium from importing halachically slaughtered meat from European Union countries in which it is not outlawed, such as Britain, France or Ireland.

<https://www.thejc.com/news/world/flanders-belgium-ban-on-kosher-slaughter-begins-1.477865>

