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Publication: Jewish News (online)
Date: 01.01.19



Law banning kosher and halal slaughter becomes effective in Belgium

Ban on Jewish and Muslim methods for killing animals for meat begins in the country's Flemish region

January 1, 2019, 2:56 pm |



Kosher slaughter

European Jewish representatives have said Belgium's ban on shechita "puts Jewish life at risk" after the country's law to stop non-stun slaughter took effect.

Rabbis were among those reacting to the implementation of the ban, which came into effect in the region of Flanders on 1 January. It takes effect in the region of Wallonia this summer.

The ban will impact on both the country's Jewish and Muslim communities, and European Jewish figures said it ran counter to public pronouncements from politicians that Jewish life should be protected.

"Time and again, we are told by senior EU officials that there is no Europe without the Jews," said Rabbi Pinchas Goldschmidt, President of the Conference of European Rabbis. "These bans undermine those statements and put Jewish life at risk... Words are weak when actions hurt."

While Jewish leaders have known about the Belgian ban for months, Goldschmidt said it was "with true sadness" that European Jewry were witnessing it take effect, adding that it was "an anti-religious measure and an affront to the European values we all hold so dear".

Belgium has now joined Norway, Denmark, Sweden and Switzerland in banning the slaughter of animals before they have been stunned, and several legal challenges are underway, including one financed by the US-based Lawfare Project.

At the time of the Bill passing, the European Jewish Association said it risked playing into the hands of a resurgent far-right and "sends a message to the Jewish population here, that we really don't respect you or your practices".

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