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An affront to European values

Shechita ban in Belgium

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Most Jews living in Belgium will face major difficulty in obtaining kosher meat starting this week. Shechita is being outlawed in the Flanders region of Belgium. The law, passed in June 2017, requires that all animals be stunned prior to slaughter, which is

forbidden under shechita.

This means there will be no kosher meat available to observant Jews in Flanders, home to Antwerp, where at least 60 percent of the country's Jewish community make their home.

A second region in Belgium, the Walloon region, passed a similar law in 2017 as well; that law takes effect in August.

In response to the legislation, Chief Rabbi Pinchas Goldschmidt, President

of the Conference of European Rabbis, issued a statement:

"While we have known about these measures for many months, it is with true sadness that this first ban comes into effect. 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. 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. We urge EU leaders to address this directly to the Governments of Member States. Words are weak when actions hurt. We will continue to make those points to officials when we bring together hundreds of Rabbis for our biennial conference in Belgium this spring.

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"This week's ban needs to act as a wake-up call to communities all over Europe that they must build ties with Government at every level and set up dedicated task forces to protect religious practice. We await the results of the legal cases in Belgian with interest and continue to let the local community know that they have our support."

