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Belgium shechita ruling 'offends human rights'

UK Jewish leaders this week warned that Belgium's shechita ban "offends against the human right of religious freedom" as the country's law to stop non-stunned slaughter took effect.

The implementation of the ban, which came into force in the region of Flanders on 1 January, will have an impact on both the country's Jewish and Muslim communities, and European Jewish figures say it "puts Jewish life at risk" and runs counter to public pronouncements from politicians that Jewish life should be protected.

Marie van der Zyl, president of the Board of Deputies, said: "This is a deeply illiberal move, which offends against the human right to religious freedom and is a setback to Belgium's reputation as a progressive country."
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added: "The very premise of our religious laws is to ensure that animals slaughtered for food have as little pain as possible. We support efforts to overturn this in the Belgian courts and are in contact with our Belgian counterparts on how we can help."

Rabbis were among those in Europe reacting to the ban. "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."

Belgium has now joined four other countries - Norway, Denmark, Sweden and Switzerland - in banning the slaughter of animals before they have been stunned.

The trend has resulted



UK anti-meat protesters have targeted butchers and other shops

in several legal challenges, including one financed by the US-based Lawfare Project.

Meanwhile, a Channel 4's *Dispatches* programme, *The Truth About Vegans*, on Wednesday showed anti-meat protesters chanting: "It's a Holocaust. It's a Holocaust, you Nazis."

Shimon Cohen, campaigns director of Shechita UK, told the programme: "This changed into something a little bit more troubling when the people started to scrawl antisemitic graffiti on our buildings using Holocaust imagery, as though we are performing a Holocaust of the chickens."

