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**NEW YORK POST**

## Belgium sparks outrage after banning halal, kosher slaughter

By Felix Allen, The Sun

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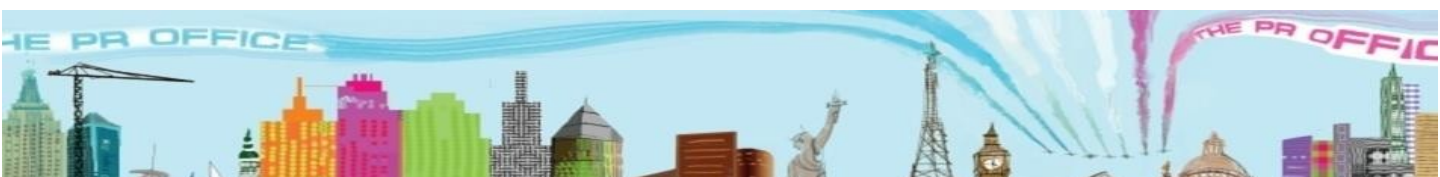


Butchers inside the Kasap Mehmet butchery near the Annasr Mosque in Vilvoorde, Belgium.

Getty Images

A ban on ritual slaughter in Belgium has sparked a furious backlash from Muslims and Jews who say it is an assault on their religious freedom.

Hardline nationalist politicians drove through new laws that make it illegal to produce halal and kosher meat in most of the country.





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Ritual slaughter of animals was outlawed on Jan. 1 in Flanders, the region that is historically home to most Belgian Jews.

A similar law will come into effect in August in Wallonia, the French-speaking south.

Only the Brussels region, which has a large Muslim population, escaped the ban, [reports the Times](#).

A survey last year found most butcher shops in the Belgian capital sell only halal meat.

The laws — initiated by Flemish nationalist minister Ben Weyts — are seen as a crackdown on unregulated Muslim slaughterhouses.

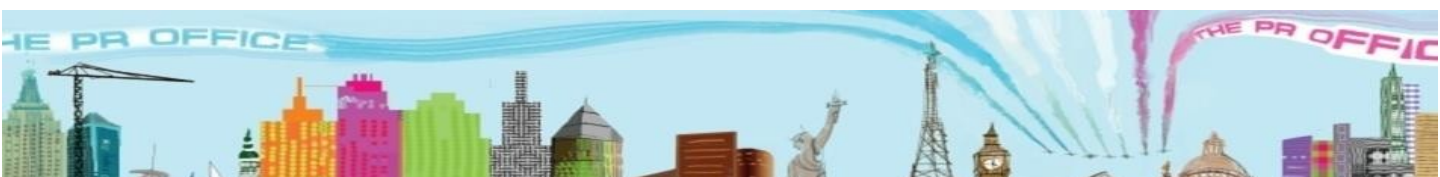
Islamic groups launched a failed court appeal against the ban, branding it an attack on “one of the most basic alimentary stipulations of the Muslim faith □ the obligation that animals must be subjected to ritual slaughter.”

Jews have also been caught up in the law. A kosher meat plant in Antwerp, which used to process 80,000 chickens a month, has been forced to close.

Pinchas Goldschmidt, president of the Conference of European Rabbis, said: “It is a sad day for religious freedom in Europe. We are in the midst of an attack on the freedom of religion.”

Halal and kosher meat will still be available in shops across Belgium, but with added costs to transport it from farther afield where the slaughter is still legal.

Nechemia Schuldiner, a leader of the Shomre Hadas Orthodox Jewish community of Antwerp, told the Times of Israel: “The problem is the message it sends. It tells Jews: ‘We don’t want you here.’”





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Defenders of the law insist it is motivated purely by animal welfare.

Belgian campaign group Gaia wants the Brussels region to join the ban.

Its president, Michel Vandebosch, said: "We are not seeking the prohibition of ritual slaughter, simply that an end is put to the suffering that is technically avoidable."

Much of Europe's halal meat comes from animals that are stunned before their throats are slit.

But stricter Muslims and Jews say their faith demands the animals be in perfect health at the moment of death.

Sweden, Denmark, Finland, Lithuania, Slovenia, Switzerland, Norway and Iceland already ban ritual slaughter.

The European Court of Justice has upheld the right of member states to require that all slaughter be carried out under officially approved conditions.

<https://nypost.com/2019/01/07/belgium-sparks-outrage-after-banning-halal-kosher-slaughter/>

