

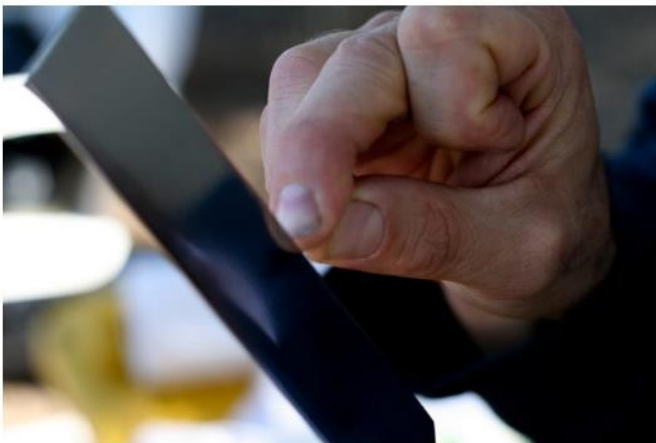


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# Belgium: Jewish and Muslim Communities Unite Against Ban on Ritual Slaughter

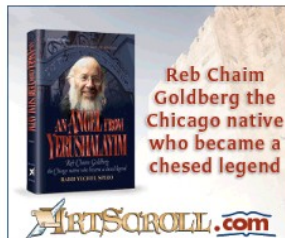
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Jewish and Muslim communities have united in opposition to a **new law in the Flanders region of Belgium, which bans the practices required for both Halal and Kosher meat**. That has meant such products have become harder to find and more expensive in recent months.

With the help of an American legal fund, a group of Muslim and Jewish organizations have taken legal action and hope to overturn the new law. The Belgian Constitutional Court heard their arguments in January and is expected to rule on the case within weeks.

The groups say that the new regulation infringes on their civil rights, preventing them from freely practicing their religion.



Belgian law had long required animals to be stunned before slaughter to prevent unnecessary pain. It did, however, grant an exception for ritual slaughter (Shechitah), a practice in Islamic and Jewish religious laws in which the animals are not stunned first. Both halal and kosher slaughter require the use of a very sharp knife to slit the animal's throat in one stroke and sever the major structures and vessels.

The new law in Flanders came into effect in January removing the religious exception. In the Wallonia region, a similar law will come into effect at the end of August.

Many Muslims feel the laws are a result of Islamophobia rather than a concern for animal rights. For Jews, they are also an uncomfortable reminder of a darker period in European history. In 1933, one of the first laws the Nazis enacted was a ban on kosher animal slaughter.

There are around 500,000 Muslims and 30,000 Jews in Belgium.

Antwerp is home to 60 percent of the country's Jews, one of the largest Jewish ultra-Orthodox populations in Europe.

The Jewish community has long imported beef and lamb from slaughterhouses in France, Hungary and Poland, but the new law forced the closure of a poultry producer just outside of Antwerp.

At the small Moszkowitz kosher butcher in Antwerp, the change in legislation has meant an approximate increase of 50 percent in the wholesale cost of chicken. The shop has absorbed the financial hit, preferring to keep prices the same until after the court verdict comes in.

If the community loses the suit, then the shop will likely increase prices by at least 20 percent.

"If it stays this way it will be a big problem, but hopefully it won't take long for the law to be thrown out," butcher Chaim Goldberg, 32, said.

"Time and again, the Jewish community is told by senior E.U. officials that there is no Europe without the Jews. These bans undermine those statements and put Jewish life at risk," Chief Rabbi Pinchas Goldschmidt, president of the Conference of European Rabbis, said in a statement.

<https://www.theyeshivaworld.com/news/general/1694385/belgium-jewish-and-muslim-communities-unite-against-ban-on-ritual-slaughter.html>

