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Goldschmidt warns European Rabbis about far-right dangers



Chief Rabbi Goldschmidt, President of the Conference of European Rabbis

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BY NAAILIE ASH

Chief Rabbi Goldschmidt, President of the Conference of European Rabbis warned delegates about the dangers of the far-right at the organisation's biennial convention taking place in Antwerp. His comments come just days before Europeans vote in European Parliamentary Elections.

"Some populist parties offer appeal to the Jewish communities of Europe, either because the Jewish community feels like it does not like the status quo or because Jews feel that the Party would offer them protection from the dangers posed by Islamic extremism," he explained.

"However, once you move away from mainstream parties, the alternative is often far-right parties, some of which have a rotten core of politically-correct anti-Semitism, which soon comes to the fore."

The Chief Rabbi noted that such 'politically-correctness' had many faces including attacks on religious practice like religious slaughter and religious circumcision or causing subtle changes fostering an atmosphere of extremism. He added, "Going into the European elections, we have to encourage our communities to understand the wider context of this European vote.

"It is not just a chance to protest against mainstream politics or an opportunity to

endorse a fringe position, we need an effective European Parliament that is going to protect minority communities." Chief Rabbi Goldschmidt said that the Jewish community must vote in these elections and had stressed this message to Rabbis.

"Right now, European Institutions can do more to protect the Jewish community and this vote is a good way of holding decision makers to account," he said. Around 250 Rabbis around from 35 countries attended conference. The opening day of talks began with addresses by two Chief Rabbis of Israel, Rishon LeTzion, Rabbi Yitzhak Yosef and Chief Ashkenazi Rabbi, Dovtad Lau. Both offered words of support to Europe's Jewish communities.

At a gala dinner, Elan S. Carr, United States Special Envoy to Monitor and Combat anti-Semitism, spoke about how bans on religious slaughter were tantamount to 'forced expulsion' of Jewish communities.

The convention looked at other issues affecting Europe's Jewish communities including security at synagogues, the role of Jewish leadership and religious freedoms.

Speaking about the importance of the convention, Chief Rabbi Goldschmidt commented, "This is the 31st time we have brought Europe's Rabbis together to discuss the issues of the day. It is an honour and a privilege to bring them together"

