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Newsweek : “In some European states, the assault on religious rights is an existential threat to the Jewish community”

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(May 15, 2019) The United States envoy against anti-Semitism has condemned the spread of legislation in Europe that limits the slaughter of animals according to Jewish religious tradition as “disgraceful” and “intolerable,” claiming such laws are forcing the expulsion of Jewish communities.

Elan Carr, President Donald Trump’s anti-Semitism ambassador, made the comments, also decriing the rise of anti-Semitism around the globe, while speaking at the Conference of European Rabbis in the Belgian city of Antwerp, Monday.

“In the midst of it all we have these disgraceful, these disgraceful pieces of legislation that ban shehitah,” Carr told the gathered Rabbinical conference, using the Hebrew term that refers to slaughter of livestock as it is sanctioned according to rabbinic law, within the Jewish faith.

“This is nothing but a forced expulsion of Jewish communities from the countries that adopt such legislation. A forced expulsion and it is intolerable,” Carr said.





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The Times of Israel reported the conference had specifically chosen Antwerp to bring attention to local legislation enacted in Belgium's Flemish region banning slaughter according to Jewish religious doctrine.

The law, enacted in the Flanders region of the Western European nation, has required animals be stunned before they are killed, ostensibly on the grounds of animal welfare. The law is soon to be expanded to a second Belgian province. The rule contradicts both Jewish and Muslim teachings, which require animals to be fully conscious when they are killed.

European Jewish Congress President Moshe Kantor told Newsweek in a statement that anti-Kosher laws represented an existential threat to Europe's Jewish communities. "Laws that make long-standing Jewish practice illegal are stating that Jewish tradition is illegitimate and is one small step away from saying that the Jewish community is unwelcome".

"European law and basic human rights protects the right to freedom of religion, so if this is harmed then it will send a chilling message to Jews locally and internationally," he said.

"In some European states, the assault on religious rights is an existential threat to the Jewish community, and we call on political parties and civil society to oppose all attempts to restrict our right to live a Jewish life in Europe," Kantor added.

Denmark, Switzerland, Sweden, Norway and Iceland have national bans on religious slaughter, citing animal welfare as the impetus behind the legislation. In July last year, a local council in England's North banned meat from animals that had not been stunned from meals supplied to schools in the area. According to reports in The Guardian at the time, a local Muslim group called the law not only Islamophobic but also anti-Semitic.

Carr also used his speech in Belgium to praise the Trump administration's efforts to fight anti-Semitism. He elaborated, explaining the United States would be exporting that fight around the world.

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