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# Belgium halal and kosher slaughter ban set to test EU law at European Court of Justice

BELGIUM is set to challenge European Union laws on halal and kosher slaughter in a court case that could have massive repercussions across the bloc.

By **JOE BARNES, BRUSSELS CORRESPONDENT**

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The french-speaking region of Wallonia, on September 1, will become the second Belgian authority to ban halal and kosher slaughter in a move to ban killing animals without first stunning them. Flanders first introduced a ban, which came into effect on New Year's Day, on the Muslim and Jewish ways of ritually slaughtering animals. Critics of the ban have suggested the move comes as part of a shift to an anti-immigrant shift across Belgium as the right-wing Flemish nationalists continue to cement themselves in mainstream politics.

Belgium's Constitutional Court has asked the European Court of Justice to issue a judgement on the ban in the Dutch-speaking Flanders region.

While the court could take up to two years, any decision could set a precedent for the whole of the European Union.

A number of EU countries, such as Denmark, Sweden and Denmark, have banned traditional slaughter without stunning.

But the court challenge will test European laws between animal welfare and religious freedoms across the bloc.

Longstanding EU rules have created an exception for halal and kosher slaughter under the need for freedom of religion.

The EU's top court has previously ruled that the bloc's official organic logo must not be used on



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any meat derived from animals slaughtered while still conscious.

The Food Standards Agency estimates that around 88 percent of animals killed through halal methods are stunned beforehand using techniques acceptable under Islamic law.

But a minority of halal food and all kosher meat does not involve any stunning during the ritual slaughter.



Halal and kosher slaughter processes banned in Belgium prompt EU court case (Image: GETTY)

Mohamed Bouezmarni, the head of the Muslim association in the town of Arlon, has warned bans could drive the ritual slaughter underground.

He told Politico: "Everyone will do it at home, or in some corner, hidden from view.

"I think that is not the animal activist's aim."

Pinchas Goldschmidt, the president of the Conference of European Rabbis, warned Jews were left as "collateral damage" while bans targeted the Muslim community.

He said: "I think that the anti-religious slaughter bills are much more to do with two-legged animals, than four-legged animals."





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Carlo Di Antonio, Wallonia's animal welfare minister, insisted the slaughter bans should not impede any religious practices in the region.

He said: "The Walloon decree was finalised in such a way as to respect freedom of religion."

<https://www.express.co.uk/news/world/1167969/EU-news-Belgium-halal-kosher-ban-slaughter-religion-animal-welfare-latest-ecj>

