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1/2



'They are violating the religious rights of Belgian Jews'

Belgium's Chief Rabbi tells Arutz Sheva about the fight against law prohibiting kosher slaughter in two of the country's three provinces.

Contact Editor Nitsan Keidar, 02/09/19 05:40



פוגעים בזכויות הדת של יהודי בלגיה" צילום: Istock

A ban on kosher slaughter [went into effect](#) on Sunday in the French-speaking Wallonia province of Belgium, after it had already been adopted in a different province.

Rabbi Avraham Gigi, the Chief Rabbi of Belgium and the Conference of European Rabbis (CER) representative in the EU institutions, told *Arutz Sheva* that there is only one district in Belgium - Brussels - where kosher slaughter is allowed.

"For the Wallonian and Flemish parliaments, this





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2/2



decision is final. We challenged it in the Belgian Constitutional Court, because we must exhaust all possibilities. But the Constitutional Court decided not to rule on this and passed the hearing to the Court of Human Rights in Luxembourg. This was done because our argument is that the Belgian law is contrary to European laws, which prohibit countries from banning kosher slaughter," explained Rabbi Gigi.

He expressed concern over a situation in which the law will be approved and then Brussels will try to enact it as well. "Today, the Brussels district is awaiting the ruling of the Court of Human Rights in Luxembourg. If it repeals the law - kosher slaughter will be allowed throughout Belgium. If the court decides that slaughter is prohibited - it will be difficult for us to defend similar legislation in Brussels and they will argue that there is no violation of religious rights here."

"Today there is sensitivity to everything related to awareness of the suffering of animals. They have a big lobby and I don't think Brussels can withstand the pressure, especially if the Luxembourg court will not allow kosher slaughter and support the Belgian law," he continued.

Rabbi Gigi stressed that there is a great deal of hypocrisy among the animal welfare organizations. "We say this law is illegal, because their whole purpose is to show that slaughter is harmful to the animals. This means that the animal suffers more in our slaughter method than in their slaughter method."

"We presented scientific evidence to explain our case, but they don't care. We wondered how they prohibit slaughter and violate our rights but freely allow hunting, which is a thousand times more painful for the animals and is not essential and only meant for 'pleasure'."

While the decision does not prohibit the importing of kosher meat into Belgium, Rabbi Gigi is concerned that this will be the next step. "Our problem is not just the slaughter in Belgium, but the fundamental issue. There is a violation of the religious rights of the Jews in Belgium and we fear it will continue from here and snowball to other places and in the end we will not have from where to import meat."

"We are fighting for our rights in Europe and do not want to allow the opening of a doorway which will lead to the prohibition of kosher slaughter in other places as well."

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