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# Outrage as Kashrut ban extended in Belgium

BY HOWARD LAWRENCE

A ban on kosher slaughter has been extended in Belgium. The sanction affects Flanders but is now operative in French-speaking Wallonia as of last Sunday. Only Walloon and Brussels are unaffected by the restriction.

Wallonia has a population of 53 million.

Some 30,000 Jews and 500,000 Muslims have criticised the move.

Antwerp boasts one of the largest Jewish ultra-Orthodox communities in Europe. Around 60 percent of the country's Jews live in the city. Jewish leaders are now concerned the law could affect the capital city of Brussels.

Rabbi Avraham Gigi, Chief Rabbi of Brussels, said forces were afoot to pass a similar law to the one implemented in Wallonia. "We are worried about the effect that this will have on the rest of Europe," he noted. "We held elections in Brussels only three months ago and hope that those elected will have an effect on the outcome of this law.

"We need to remember that Brussels is the De Facto capital of the European Union and the biggest metropolis in Belgium."

Rabbi Pinchas Goldschmidt, Head of the Conference of European Rabbis said the attack on religious freedom in Belgium was a concern to European leadership. "The European capital has once again painted a dark

stain on the darkening skies of Europe," he explained. "Jews gave their lives in the past during the dark days of history in order to eat kosher food and to circumcise their children.

Rabbi Goldschmidt added, "Only 75 years have passed since the Third Reich in its most racist and violent fashion prohibited, in the name of humanity, the Jewish laws of ritual slaughter. They then slaughtered millions of Jews and decimated Europe.

"We will fight with every weapon that we have in our arsenal and together with the Jewish community of Belgium and Europe we will fight these despicable decisions."

Shechita was banned in Flanders earlier this year after being passed by politicians in June 2017. The law states that all animals should be stunned prior to slaughter on humanitarian grounds. Belgium's Jewish community, organisations across Europe and World Jewish Congress, have appealed against the law on a basis that it violates EU law, the European Convention on Human Rights and Belgian Constitution. The trio of bodies cite a freedom of religion being breached by making Jewish shechitah illegal.

Yohan Benizri, President of the Belgian Federation of Jewish Organisations, said legislators had given Belgian Jews a worrisome political signal, by trumping a right to practise their faith.

