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European Jewish and Muslim leaders team up to protect religious freedom



Left to right: Imam Sheikh Mohammad Ismail, DL of Sheffield University, Shimon Cohen, Shechita UK, Prof. Muhammad Abu-Nimer, Muslim Jewish Leadership Council

Jewish and Muslim leaders from fifteen European countries gathered in Matera, southern Italy this week to attend a Muslim Jewish Leadership Council event focusing on the dialogue and partnership between the two communities.

The Conference of European Rabbis (CER) sent a ten-strong delegation led by Rabbi Lody van der Kamp of the Netherlands, together with rabbis from the UK, France, Switzerland, Germany, Italy and Sweden.

Shechita UK's Campaign Director, who also serves as an adviser to the CER, Shimon Cohen was invited to join the Council to lead discussions on Shechita and Milah issues. Cohen also represents the Union of Mohelim of Europe.

Whilst recognising shared concerns, Mr Cohen urged participants to follow the Jewish community's lead and to improve training and seek regulation for practitioners in both circumcision and the religious

slaughter of animals for food. 'Recognising our differences can help us help each other,' Cohen said.

During the intensive three-day meeting, during which time the rabbis, muftis and imams shared the ancient narrow streets of Matera with the filming of the latest James Bond film, the Muslim Jewish Leadership Council resolved to:

Produce background documents detailing the links between Muslim and Jewish faiths in matters of common concern, which should provide a basis for collaboration and advocacy for policy change where appropriate and necessary;

Form two commissions on kosher/halal and religious freedoms, consisting of members with expertise in these fields, who can offer advice, review data and produce communications on emerging issues;

Conduct outreach to European institutions and seek opportunities to collaborate to protect European religious minorities.

