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THE TIMES OF ISRAEL

## Jews join fight against Swedish party's call to ban circumcisions

After Center Party votes to back legislation barring practice, Jewish leader warns 'it will be completely impossible to live as a Jew or a Muslim in Sweden'

By TOI STAFF  
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Illustrative image of a circumcision. (yoglimogli, iStock by Getty Images)

Swedish Jews joined the country's Muslim community this week in protesting the call by a major political party to ban all non-medical circumcisions.

The vote in favor of banning male circumcisions for minors was held at the annual conference of the Swedish Center Party, held in the city of Karlstad on Saturday. The party's commissioners voted 314 to 166 in favor of the ban, overturning previous decisions by the party's top leadership rejecting support for the measure.



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“This means, if the proposal becomes reality, that it will be completely impossible to live as a Jew or a Muslim in Sweden,” warned Swedish Jewish leader Aron Verständig in an interview with the Expressen newspaper.

The vote drew condemnation over the course of the week, including from the party’s own leader Annie Lööf.

Saying she regretted the party conference’s vote, she insisted the Center Party, which holds 31 out of 349 seats in the Riksdag, the Swedish parliament, was committed to “standing up for minorities in Sweden and their opportunity to live here,” according to Expressen.



The Swedish Riksdag (CC-BY-SA Janwikifoto/Wikimedia Commons)

“This isn’t something we plan to write a parliamentary motion on,” she added.

The party’s deputy leader, Anders Jonsson, was quoted by The Local as insisting the move was not directed at Jews and Muslims. “This was not a decision that the party leadership wanted,” he said, adding that the debate in the party conference focused on children’s rights, not religious practice.



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Nevertheless, Verständig, the Jewish leader who heads the Council of Swedish Jewish Communities, said he was “very surprised and very disappointed” by the decision.

Moscow-based Rabbi Pinchas Goldschmidt, president of the Conference of European Rabbis, echoed the Swedish Jewish leader in his own condemnation of the move.

“The Swedish Center Party’s decision to promote a ban on religious circumcision is a request for Jews to leave Sweden, the most liberal of EU states. We mourn the lack of tolerance and loss of diversity in today’s Sweden,” he said.

Mohamed Tamsamani, president of the United Islamic Associations in Sweden and a former politician, warned such a ban would amount to a narrowing of religious freedom in the country.



Illustrative: A brit, or Jewish circumcision ceremony, in Berlin, Germany. (Sean Gallup/Getty Images via JTA)

Lööf told Swedish media the party leadership would examine the decision before determining its next course of action.

Circumcision has come under attack throughout Europe from right-wing politicians who view it as a foreign import associated mostly with Muslim immigration, and from left-wing liberals and atheists who denounce it as a primitive form of child abuse.

In Scandinavia especially, the non-medical circumcision of boys under 18 is the subject of a debate that pits arguments for the autonomy and rights of children against the rights and freedoms of minority cultures and religions. The children’s ombudsmen of all Nordic countries — Finland, Iceland, Denmark, Sweden and Norway — released a joint declaration in 2013 proposing a ban, though none of these countries has yet enacted one.





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In October 2018, the right-wing populist Sweden Democrats party submitted a draft motion to parliament calling for a ban on nonmedical circumcision of boys, which the text described as “backward” child abuse.

<https://www.timesofisrael.com/jews-join-fight-against-swedish-partys-call-to-ban-circumcisions/>

