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Swedish Center Party Leader ‘Regrets’ Endorsement of Male Circumcision Ban Amid Jewish, Muslim Protests

 by Algemeiner Staff



A brit milah ceremony. Photo: Wikimedia Commons.

The leader of one of Sweden’s main political parties has said that she “regrets” last week’s annual conference vote in favor of a ban on male circumcision — a decision that was criticized by one prominent European rabbi as a “request for Jews to leave Sweden.”

Annie Lööf — leader of the liberal Center Party, which governed the country from 2006-14 — was reported by Swedish news outlet *The Local* on Wednesday to have expressed “regrets” at the vote for the ban, emphasizing that the 18-member party board on which she sits had earlier rejected the proposal unanimously. At the party’s annual conference in the city of Karlstadt last weekend, that board’s decision was overturned, resulting in an overwhelming vote of 314 to 166 delegates in favor of the ban.

“This isn’t something we plan to write a motion on,” said Lööf on Sunday.





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The next step, she said, is for the party board to analyze the decision made at the meeting and work out the best way for the party to “work towards” such a ban, in line with the decision, *The Local* reported.

Chief Rabbi Pinchas Goldschmidt, president of the Conference of European Rabbis (CER) said that the party’s decision should be “mourned.”

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

Both Jewish and Muslim groups have criticized the party’s decision.

Aron Verständig, chairperson of The Official Council of Swedish Jewish Communities, told the *Expressen* newspaper: “I am very surprised and very disappointed. This means, if the proposal becomes reality, that it will be completely impossible to live as a Jew or a Muslim in Sweden.”

Lööf said she “understood” the criticism and had been in contact with both Jewish and Muslim leaders in Sweden.

“For us, it’s an important question to protect freedom of religion and we stand behind that 100 percent,” she said.

Over the last decade, attempts to ban male circumcision have emerged in Denmark and Germany as well as in Sweden, and in the US state of [California](#).

Lööf said that her opposition to male circumcision was a consequence of her wish to make 2007 legislation in the Swedish parliament concerning female genital mutilation (FGM) — illegal in many countries, but still widely practiced to the detriment of thousands of women and young girls — “gender-neutral.” She explained that she later changed her mind on this aspect of the matter.

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