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Swedish centrist party in vote to ban circumcision

BY JC REPORTER

► A SWEDISH political leader has expressed disappointment in her own party after it voted to support a ban on circumcision.

Delegates from the Centre Party voted 314-166 at an annual meeting to adopt a policy of opposition to non-medical circumcision for boys.

Leader Annie Lööf said on Sunday that she regretted the decision: "This isn't something we plan to write a motion on."

She told TheLocal.se website that her next step would be for the party's board to examine the best way for the party to "work towards" such a ban.

The Centre Party is not currently in government but is part of a four-party deal to keep the Social Democratic-Green coalition in power. There is no indication that the government plans to adopt the policy.

Around 20,000 Jews live in Sweden and one community leader said the move would make life in the country "impossible". Muslim groups in the country have also expressed opposition to the motion.

"I am very surprised and very disappointed," said Aron Verständig, chairman of the Official Council of Swedish Jewish Communities.

"This means, if the proposal becomes reality, that it will be completely impossible to live as a Jew or a Muslim in Sweden."

The policy position was also criticised by Jewish groups outside Sweden. "We see this decision as the beginning of a new wave of legislation against circumcision in Europe," said Pinchas Goldchmidt, president of the Conference of European Rabbis.

"This is part of the evil wind of legislative initiatives against religious commandments in Europe. We will enlist the international community, as we did in Iceland and other countries, in order to fend off this attack."

Swedish law has ruled since 2001 that boys must be circumcised by a qualified medical practitioner or a licensed individual. It also requires that the boy is given "as much information as possible" and that his wishes are clarified so that the procedure is not carried out against his will.

The Swedish party's move followed a bill proposed in Iceland last year to outlaw circumcision for non-medical reasons. The legislation proposed a six-year prison sentence on anyone found guilty of "removing part or all of the child's sexual organs".



Annie Lööf

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