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1/4

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## Aalst parade features cross-dressing hassids with big noses

Aalst lost its UNESCO honors last year because it refused to stop perpetuating negative stereotypes of Jews, and has gone even further with the displays this year.



The carnival in [Aalst](#), Belgium, featured blatant antisemitic displays in its parade on Sunday.

Aalst lost its UNESCO honors last year because it refused to stop perpetuating negative stereotypes about Jews. It has gone even further with the displays this year, as a reaction to being stripped of its status.





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2/4

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Among the displays at the parade were a float with Jesus on the cross and the message "don't touch my Jew."

Other parade-goers were dressed as insects, but wearing the fur-lined hassidic *streimel* hats and fake *peot* (sidelocks). There were also clowns with *streimels* and *peot*.

The parade also featured a fake Western Wall, known by many non-Jews as the Wailing Wall, with the message: "Well, you would also complain if they'd cut your penis."

Another fake Western Wall showed cartoons of hassidic men with exaggeratedly large noses, along with a bare-breasted woman wearing a *streimel* and *peot*, saying "I'm just jealous" and "I don't have a big nose."

Other parade revelers wore blue vests with the UNESCO logo and the message: "UNESCO puts an end to the Aalst carnival."

The Aalst carnival has long been a site of bigoted displays in general, including participants in blackface and displays mocking Muslims; usually much of the imagery is specifically antisemitic. Last year, it included a float featuring oversized dolls of Jews with rats on their shoulders, holding banknotes. In 2013, JTA reported carnival revelers in Nazi uniforms held canisters labeled "Zyklon B" while walking with other participants dressed as concentration camp prisoners.





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3/4

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The festival lost its place on UNESCO's Representative List of the Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity in 2019 after its mayor refused to remove antisemitic imagery from the parade.

Ambassador to Belgium Emmanuel Nahshon tried to prevent the antisemitic displays, saying last week that "Aalst is the only city in Europe where such a carnival is allowed. We call upon Belgian authorities, including city authorities of Aalst, to change their mind."

If the parade goes as planned, "it will be a moral blot on Belgium," Nahshon added.

Though Belgium, with a population of 11 million, has around 30,000 Jews, the Jewish community did not demonstrate against the carnival, with a source saying they are worried about calling negative attention to themselves and possibly provoking violence by going against the dominant culture.

In addition, a legal fight against the parade would have been a challenge. According to Belgian law, one can only be indicted for racial incitement if he or she targeted and harmed a specific person.







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4/4

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Last week, three Belgian professors who are experts in antisemitism – Vivian Liska, Didier Pollefeyt and Klaas Smelik – wrote in a much-quoted op-ed in the Brussels Flemish-language daily *De Morgen* that the media should not display the antisemitic images from the parade.

“We do not want to commit censorship, but we do want to point out the danger of [spreading this type of anti-Jewish caricature](#),” Smelik said on Belgium’s Radio 1. “In the past, it has become apparent what kind of influence they can have on the opinions of ordinary people.”

In December, Aalst Mayor Christoph D’Haese of the Flemish nationalist N-VA Party said the parade mocks many different groups and should not be censored.

“We are neither antisemitic nor racist, and anyone who says that is acting in bad faith,” he said.

<https://www.jpost.com/Diaspora/Aalst-parade-features-cross-dressing-hassids-with-big-noses-618501>

