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# Anti-Semitic disguises during carnival parade in Aalst, Belgium

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Nazi uniforms, Jews as insects or as caricatures with hooked noses, tresses and gold bars – the carnival parade in Aalst, Belgium, once again attracted attention with anti-Semitic and insulting disguises.

"The carnival in Aalst has nothing to do with this foolish spirit and must be condemned very strongly," said Vice President of the European Parliament and chair of the working group against anti-Semitism, Nicola Beer (FDP), on Monday in Brussels. Anti-Semitism should also not be tolerated under the "cover" of the carnival.

In December, Unesco had removed the street carnival in Aalst from the list of intangible cultural heritage because the city itself had asked for it. The reason given was: "In recent years, floats with racist and anti-Semitic depictions have repeatedly participated in the street carnival."

The Mayor of Aalst, Christoph D'Haese (NVA), defended his city. The carnival season is a "special" one. There is neither racism nor anti-Semitism in Aalst. Belgian Prime Minister Sophie Wilmes (MR), who is of Jewish descent herself, called for dialogue and empathy. "Stereotypes that stigmatize communities and populations because of their origins lead to division and put living together at risk," said Wilmes.

The Conference of European Rabbis criticized the carnival parade as hostile to the Jews and insulting. He abused "the power of free speech, which is such an integral part of any liberal democracy," said President Pinchas Goldschmidt. This type of anti-Semitism is reminiscent of "dark moments in the European past". For example, since the 30 years no Jews have been seen who are marked with a yellow star of David.

## International protests against the disguises

"We can not pretend that these pictures are a kind of joke or do not cause fear," says Goldschmidt. It is



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unacceptable that leading politicians such as the king of Belgium last declared "never again" for a week at the Holocaust commemoration and then "watch idly when anti-Semitic symbols appear on their streets only weeks later".



The carnival in Aalst was removed from the list of intangible cultural heritage by Unesco. photo: Juliette Bruynseels / AFP

Even before the start of the carnival parade in Aalst on Sunday there had been international protests against the disguise of some participants. Israeli Foreign Minister Israel Katz had asked the Prime Minister of Belgium to ban the "hideous move."

Israel's ambassador to Belgium Emmanuel Nahshon emphasized that the issue was not a ban on carnival as such, but a ban on anti-Semitic ones cartoons. For him here, a limit was crossed. The EU Parliament's working group against anti-Semitism had also called on the Aalster authorities in advance to prevent any form of anti-Semitism, racism and hatred during this year's train. ( CBA )

<https://www.bccourier.com/anti-semitic-disguises-during-carnival-parade-in-aalst-belgium/>

