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Belgium Curbing Religious Freedom With Ban on Kosher Slaughter, Top European Rabbi Says

 by Algemeiner Staff



Meat at a kosher butcher shop.. Photo: Wikimedia Commons.

One of Europe's top rabbis has warned that Jews on the continent may no longer be able to consume kosher meat because of legislation targeting "*shechita*" – the Jewish method of slaughtering animals for human consumption.

"Shechita is a vital religious practice within the Jewish faith that forms an inherent part of our religious identity, without which Jews would be deprived of the ability to eat meat," Rabbi Rabbi Pinchas Goldschmidt – president of the Conference of European Rabbis





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(CER) — said in a statement on Monday.

Goldschmidt was speaking ahead of a hearing at the European Court of Justice in July that is expected to rule on the legality of the ban on Jewish and Muslim slaughter methods adopted by Belgium in January 2019.

The hearing had originally been scheduled for April 21, but was postponed because of the coronavirus pandemic.

Goldschmidt said that the supply chain of kosher meat in Europe was not strong enough to rely solely on imports.

“In recent months, and particularly over the recent Passover holiday, which of course came at the height of the pandemic in Europe, the supply chain was simply not robust and many communities in Belgium — and indeed throughout Europe — suffered a shortage of meat due to the lack of supplies,” he stated. “The experience of Passover served as a stark reminder that Jewish communities cannot rely entirely on the international supply chain ... Quite frankly, the option to import kosher meat into Belgium is unsustainable and the ban on the practice of religious slaughter is ultimately too restrictive.”

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If the ban was to be upheld, Goldschmidt remarked, the “message would be clear: Jews are not welcome.”

He continued: “Such a notion is abhorrent and so I implore the judges to look at the evidence in front of them and do not allow the processes to be hijacked by intolerance under the guise of a concern for animal welfare regulations.”

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