



Conference of
European Rabbis

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CER urges European Court over shechita ban



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The President of the Conference of European Rabbis (CER) has issued a plea to judges ahead of the hearing at the European Court of Justice, which is expected next month, into the legality of measures adopted by Belgium's Flanders and Wallonia regions banning religious slaughter.

Chief Rabbi Pinchas Goldschmidt said that "the supply chain for kosher meat is not secure enough for the community to have to rely solely on imports. In recent months, and particularly over Pesach, 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."

The Chief Rabbi added that "the experience of Pesach served as a stark reminder that Jewish communities cannot rely entirely on the international supply chain. If the aim is to limit religious slaughter, then there are

far more proportionate solutions. 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. 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."

With regard to the freedom of religion which is enshrined in the EU Charter, Chief Rabbi Goldschmidt concluded: "It is a fundamental concern of the EU and since its inception, the EU has fought to preserve a society where all faiths are welcomed. Any ban may deprive Jews of being able to eat meat – a right that all other citizens of Europe enjoy. The message would be clear: Jews are not welcome. 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."

