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1/2

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Rabbi Joins Faith Leaders to Express Concern as European Commission Abolishes Office of Special Envoy for Religious Freedom

 by Algemeiner Staff



European Union flags in front of the European Commission building in Brussels. Photo: Amio Cajander via Wikimedia Commons.

Leaders in Europe of all three major religions expressed concern over the weekend following the European Commission's decision to abolish the office of its special envoy for religious freedom.





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2/2

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The post was created in 2016 in response to the mass slaughter of religious minorities by the Islamic State terrorist group, but the Commission decided to discontinue the office last month. The role of promoting religious freedom will now be split between the Commission's vice president and its special representative for human rights.

Pinchas Goldschmidt, president of the Conference of European Rabbis, told German broadcaster *Deutsche Welle* that the move is “the wrong signal” and comes at a time when “Jews and other religious minorities are increasingly being targeted online and offline by extremists, and the free exercise of religion is being undermined.”

Aiman Mazyek, the chairman of the Central Council of Muslims in Germany, expressed similar views, saying that religious freedom is being eroded, even in Europe, and it is “all the more important that the voice of such an envoy is not silenced, particularly now.”

Metropolitan Augustinos, Europe's top representative of the Orthodox Church, concurred, saying that the envoy could stand up for religious minorities outside the EU, such as in the case of the current attempts by the Turkish government to reconvert the Sancta Sophia church — currently a museum — into a mosque.

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