

Resolution PA 2105 - 1
Freedom of Religious Practices

THE 16th PLENARY ASSEMBLY OF THE WORLD JEWISH CONGRESS,

RECALLS previous resolutions dealing with Freedom of Religious Practices including: GB1008-7 Shechita, GB1106-5 Shechita, 1510gb-4, Freedom of Religious Practice, Resolution EC 170910 -1 Shechita, and Resolution EC 170910 -5 Brit Mila;

NOTES that according to Article 18 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, "everyone has the right to freedom of thought, conscience and religion; this right includes freedom to change his religion or belief, and freedom, either alone or in community with others and in public or private, to manifest his religion or belief in teaching, practice, worship and observance;"

STRESSES that the right to religious freedom is enshrined in the constitutional order of European states and in Human Rights treaties. This is what the European Convention on Human Rights (ECHR) defines as the right to freedom of religion which includes freedom, either alone or in community with others and in public or private, to manifest one's religion or belief, in worship, teaching, practice and observance. Given the above, Jews have the right to express this freedom not only in faith and in prayer, but also in the fulfilment of religious commandments such as in the humane slaughter of animals (Shechita) and male circumcision (Brit Mila);

UNDERScores the confirmation of the world's pre-eminent animal welfare scientist and veterinarian, Dr. Temple Grandin, that "shechita" achieves the most humane approach to animal slaughter;

NOTES WITH GREAT CONCERN that restrictions on religious observances placed or contemplated by governments or legislatures threaten the viability of Jewish communities and cause real hardship to their members, who may be forced to leave their countries in order to practice their Jewish religion;

APPLAUDS the fact that many European governments have committed to protecting and supporting a strong and vibrant Jewish life in Europe as recently reaffirmed in the 2020 "EU Council Declaration on mainstreaming the fight against antisemitism across policy areas"; and yet

STRONGLY DEPLORES the recent decision by the Court of Justice of the European Union allowing the ban of religious ritual slaughter and other restrictions of religious practices and traditions observed by both Jews and Muslims;

MAINTAINS that such a decision is a violation of Article 10(1) of the EU's Charter of Fundamental Rights which guarantees the protection of religious minorities and the freedom to manifest religion;

CALLS UPON all governments to ensure that Jewish life in their respective countries is preserved and able to thrive by guaranteeing the fundamental human right for Jews to practice their religion freely, consistent with the 2020 EU Council Declaration previously referenced;

ENCOURAGES members of all faith groups and other members of civil society to work together to protect the basic human right of freedom of religion and belief;

CALLS UPON all WJC-affiliated communities to lend their support in defending the free and unencumbered exercise of their religion in Europe and throughout the world and to request their governments undertake formal representations to the EU in support of fundamental religious freedoms, including shechita and mila.

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Approved by the 16th WJC Plenary Assembly, 25 May 2021