



SUOMEN JUUTALAISTEN
SEURAKUNTEN REKISTERINEUVOSTO
CENTRALRÅDET FÖR DE JUDISKA
FORSAMLINGarna I FINLAND
CENTRAL COUNCIL OF JEWISH
COMMUNITIES IN FINLAND
הוּא קָרְבָּן יִשְׂרָאֵל
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JUDiska CENTRALRÅDET I SVERIGE
THE OFFICIAL COUNCIL OF SWEDISH JEWISH COMMUNITIES

Det Mosaiske Trossamfund

7th of February 2018

JOINT STATEMENT BY NORDIC JEWISH COMMUNITIES CONCERNING PROPOSED ANTI-CIRCUMCISION LEGISLATION IN ICELAND

Open letter to Icelandic MPs

We, the Jewish Communities in the Nordic countries strongly protest the proposed legislation banning brit mila, the Jewish tradition of neonatal circumcision of boys.

Iceland would be the only country to ban one of the most central, if not the most central rite in the Jewish tradition, in modern times. But not so in the long tradition of The Jewish people. More than one oppressive regime has, through history, tried to suppress our people and eradicate Judaism by prohibiting our religious practices.

Iceland does not have an organized Jewish Community today. Banning brit mila will be an effective deterrent and will guarantee that no Jewish community will be established.

This letter might be perceived as meddling in Iceland's internal affairs. And why should we care? The reason is that you are about to attack Judaism in a way that concerns Jews all over the world. If any country with next to no Christian inhabitants would ban a central rite in Christianity, like communion for instance, we are certain that the whole Christian world would react as well.

We urge you to vote against the bill banning Brit mila and rather look to Norway's legislation effective from January 2015 protecting the the Jews' right to brit mila.

Sincerely,

Dan Rosenberg-Asmussen
President
The Jewish Community in Denmark

Ervin Kohn
President
The Jewish Community of Norway

Yaron Nadbornik
President
Central Council of Jewish Communities in Finland

Aron Verständig



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Det Mosaiske Trossamfund

7th of February 2018

President
Council of Swedish Jewish Communities

The Prime Ministers Office
Her Excellency, The Prime Minister
Stjornarradhusid vid Laekjartorg
101, Reykjavik
Iceland

Friday, February 9, 2018

Her Excellency, Prime Minister Katrín Jakobsdóttir,

We, the undersigned rabbis of Jewish Communities in the Nordic countries are deeply concerned about the law proposal pending in the Icelandic Parliament to outlaw and penalise male infant circumcision.

This law proposal would make Iceland the only country in the world where male infant circumcision is illegal.

We would like to remind you of the deep historical implications that such a law would hold. Laws against circumcision have been used throughout history to erase Jews and Judaism: such as under Seleucide empire under king Antiochus IV in 175 B.C.E and later under the Roman Empire. Under the Spanish Inquisition circumcision was used as one indication to identify "conversos", Jews, who had been forced by threat of expulsion to convert to Catholicism, but held on in secret to Judaism and Jewish tradition. Later on in European history circumcision was often made difficult in an attempt to force Jews to assimilate or to leave. Despite those dark chapters in history Jews have always stood up to defend this right of religious freedom. Male infant circumcision is a central religious requirement in Judaism and is also deeply rooted in the cultural identity even of secular Jews. It binds us together as a people and with our history.

To propose that circumcision to be postponed until the age of consent goes against medical research that again and again show that the optimal time for circumcision is within the first month of a male infants life. Postponing it to a later point makes circumcision into a major surgical procedure with risk of unnecessary complications and can hardly be seen as in the child's interest.

But, most of all, it would send a clear message to Jews and the international community that Jews are not welcome Iceland and that their basic fundamental and constitutional rights of freedom of religion, backed by the 1948 Universal Declaration of Human Rights, are not upheld by the Icelandic society.

We call on you and your government to oppose this proposed legislation and instead to introduce legislation that safeguards the right to freedom of religion and the right of parents to raise children in their religious tradition.

Respectfully,

Rabbi Jair Melchior
Jewish community of Copenhagen

Rabbi Joav Melchior
Jewish community of Oslo

Rabbi Ute Steyer
Jewish Community of Stockholm

Rabbi Simon Levinson
Jewish Community of Helsinki

Rabbi Amram Maccabi
Jewish Community of Stockholm

Rabbi Moshe David HaCohen
Jewish Community of Malmö

Rabbi Uzi Levian
Jewish Community of Gothenburg

Cc

Her Excellency, The Ambassador of Iceland to Sweden, Estrid Brekkan