

## **Contribution to the report of the Special Rapporteur on minority issues to the UN General Assembly on institutional arrangements of States that enable minority rights to flourish**

Submission by the World Jewish Congress

The World Jewish Congress (WJC), representing Jewish communities and organizations in more than 100 countries around the world, advocates on their behalf towards governments, parliaments, international organizations, and other faiths. The WJC represents the plurality of the Jewish people and is politically non-partisan. As the “Diplomatic Arm of the Jewish People,” the WJC has been active in countless campaigns since its inception: advocating for justice for Holocaust victims and their heirs and protecting the memory of the Holocaust; obtaining restitution of, or compensation for, stolen Jewish property; countering antisemitism and delegitimization of the State of Israel, as well as the denial of Jewish right to self-determination; and engaging in dialogue with other faith-based organizations, but most of all, the protection and fostering of Jewish minority communities around the world. The WJC has had a Special Consultative status to ECOSOC since 1947, among the first NGOs to do so.

Considering the extensive experience in working with governments to ensure the safeguarding of the rights of Jewish communities and other minority communities, the World Jewish Congress would like to make the following contribution:

1. Do you consider the interests of persons belonging to minority groups appropriately taken into account in your country?

The interests of Jewish communities worldwide are considered in many states. Measures have been put in place to combat antisemitism, promote religious freedom, and foster Jewish life.

The WJC advocates for the implementation of the International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance (IHRA) Working Definition of antisemitism, as well as the National Strategies on Combating Antisemitism. The IHRA definition serves as a valuable resource, illustrating the various forms in which antisemitism manifests and the harm it inflicts on Jewish individuals and communities. With its comprehensive list of eleven examples of antisemitic expressions, the IHRA Working Definition offers a practical tool for identifying and addressing this pervasive issue. Since 2017, the following 43 states have adopted the (IHRA) working definition on antisemitism: Albania, Argentina, Australia, Austria, Belgium, Bosnia, Bulgaria, Canada, Colombia, Croatia, Cyprus, Czech Republic, Denmark, Estonia, Finland, France, Germany, Greece, Guatemala, Hungary, Israel, Italy, Latvia, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Moldova, Netherlands, North Macedonia, Panama, Philippines, Poland, Portugal, Romania, Serbia, Slovakia, Slovenia, South Korea, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland, United Kingdom, United States

and Uruguay. The IHRA definition has also been adopted by various organisations and international and transnational entities. The WJC encourages more states to do so as well.<sup>1</sup>

2. Are there institutional arrangements that guarantee (or facilitate) effective political representation of persons belonging to minorities? For example, a Second Chamber in Parliament, the federal structure of the State, specific “minority institution” (such as a Council of Minorities or a dedicated Ombudsperson, or electoral mechanisms (quotas, separate lists for minorities).

Jewish communities, such as those represented by the WJC, are often included in political deliberations concerning the questions of protection of minorities. Various states have adopted strategies to combat antisemitism and to protect the local Jewish communities in collaboration with the respective Jewish communities. This exemplifies effective political representation of minorities, reflecting best practices. Aligned with the EU Strategy for Combating Antisemitism and Fostering Jewish Life, numerous European Union Member States have been formulated national strategies for combating antisemitism such as Austria, Denmark, Estonia, France, Germany, Italy, Latvia, Luxembourg, Romania, Slovenia, and Spain.<sup>2</sup> These strategies have been in many instances developed with contributions by stakeholders in government and in civil society and through dialogue with Jewish communities, therefore ensuring the participation of minorities and political policy making. The WJC advocates for other states to take similar actions and for aforementioned states to continue funding and supporting the implementation of said strategies.

Proactive engagement with Jewish communities in policy making and the legislative process is paramount for effectively combating antisemitism and ensuring the safety of Jewish minorities. By involving Jewish communities in these processes, policymakers can gain better insights into the unique challenges and concerns faced by the Jewish population. This engagement allows for the development of more informed and targeted policies that address the root causes of antisemitism and implement measures to prevent its escalation.

Legislative acts that were supported by Jewish groups include the Never Again Act 2020 in the US<sup>3</sup> hate crimes prevention act 2009 in the US. In France state authorities cooperate with the Jewish community to better combat antisemitism.<sup>4</sup> In the United Kingdom the national stakeholders work with Jewish community in several ways to ensure political participation of

---

<sup>1</sup> <https://holocaustremembrance.com/resources/working-definition-antisemitism>

<sup>2</sup> [https://commission.europa.eu/strategy-and-policy/policies/justice-and-fundamental-rights/combating-discrimination/racism-and-xenophobia/combating-antisemitism/eu-strategy-combating-antisemitism-and-fostering-jewish-life-2021-2030/national-strategies-combating-antisemitism\\_en](https://commission.europa.eu/strategy-and-policy/policies/justice-and-fundamental-rights/combating-discrimination/racism-and-xenophobia/combating-antisemitism/eu-strategy-combating-antisemitism-and-fostering-jewish-life-2021-2030/national-strategies-combating-antisemitism_en)

<sup>3</sup> <https://www.congress.gov/bill/116th-congress/house-bill/943/text>

<sup>4</sup> [116b2246 rapport-fond](#)

the Jewish minority.<sup>5</sup> In Germany the Jewish community also engages in proactive participation with the state.<sup>6</sup>

The WJC encourages states to consult their Jewish communities actively in policymaking and passing new legislative to ensure effective participation of the Jewish minority.

We commend states that have named a Special Envoy for combating Antisemitism and/or protecting minorities as an example of good practice. By appointing a Special Envoy, states demonstrate a clear commitment to addressing antisemitism and protecting minority rights. A Special Envoy typically has expertise in combating antisemitism or protecting minority rights. This expertise allows for more effective policy development, implementation, and coordination across government agencies and with external stakeholders such as civil society organizations and international partners. The appointment of a Special Envoy signifies a long-term commitment to combating antisemitism, ensuring continuity and consistency in addressing these issues even as political administrations change. States have established special envoys such as the US The Special Envoy to Monitor and Combat Antisemitism (SEAS)<sup>7</sup>, Germany's the office of Federal Government Commissioner for Jewish Life and the Fight against Antisemitism,<sup>8</sup> France's DILCRAH,<sup>9</sup> responsible for designing, coordinating, and leading the state's policy on combating racism, antisemitism, and anti-LGBT hatred, UK's APPG Against Antisemitism<sup>10</sup> and Canada's Special Envoy on Preserving Holocaust Remembrance and Combatting Antisemitism.<sup>11</sup>

The WJC advocates for states to also designate a focal point of contact between the government and their Jewish and other minority communities in order to solidify the flow of information and encourage cooperation, in addition to the designation of special envoys.

3. Are there institutional arrangements and/or political practices that de facto exclude persons belonging to minorities from effective participation in decisions at the national – and, where appropriate, regional level – concerning the minority to which they belong?

---

<sup>5</sup> [commission-on-racial-inclusivity-completes-oral-evidence-gathering-sessions](#)

<sup>6</sup> <https://www.zentralratderjuden.de/aktuelle-meldung/netzwerkdurchsetzungsgesetz-starkes-instrument-gegen-hate-speech/>

<sup>7</sup> <https://www.state.gov/bureaus-offices/under-secretary-for-civilian-security-democracy-and-human-rights/office-of-the-special-envoy-to-monitor-and-combat-antisemitism/>

<sup>8</sup> <https://www.bmi.bund.de/EN/ministry/commissioners/antisemitism/antisemitism-node.html>

<sup>9</sup> <https://www.dilcrah.gouv.fr/la-dilcrah>

<sup>10</sup> <https://antisemitism.org.uk/the-all-party-parliamentary-group-against-antisemitism/>

<sup>11</sup> [https://www.international.gc.ca/world-monde/issues\\_developpement-enjeux\\_developpement/human\\_rights-droits\\_homme/holocaust\\_antisemitism-holocauste\\_antisemitisme-rep.aspx?lang=eng](https://www.international.gc.ca/world-monde/issues_developpement-enjeux_developpement/human_rights-droits_homme/holocaust_antisemitism-holocauste_antisemitisme-rep.aspx?lang=eng)

Discriminatory discourse perpetrated by far-right parties and instances of antisemitism within certain left-wing political organizations often target Jewish members of parliament, which contributes to the exclusion of Jewish persons from political processes in their respective national legislatures. Despite differences along ideological lines, both sides inadvertently contribute to these challenges. Consequently, addressing these challenges requires ongoing vigilance and reform to ensure the full and equal participation of all communities in political life, regardless of their political affiliation and minority belief.

Designation of Special Envoys to combat antisemitism and foster Jewish life, as well as of liaisons between the governmental structures and the Jewish communities could help curb these phenomena.

4. Are there legal, administrative or other barriers that prevent persons belonging to minorities to participate effectively in cultural, religious, social, economic or public life?

The World Jewish Congress (WJC) has expressed deep concern following the European Court of Human Rights' decision to uphold the ban on traditional Jewish way of slaughter in Belgium's Flemish and Walloon Regions. Maram Stern, WJC's Executive Vice President, has voiced strong disapproval of the ruling, highlighting its negative impact on the religious freedoms of Jewish and Muslim communities across Europe. Stern condemns the decision as perpetuating discrimination and infringing upon religious liberty, rather than addressing legitimate animal welfare concerns. He underscores the broader consequences of the ruling, emphasizing its imposition of undue burdens on religious communities and its undermining of the fundamental right to freedom of religion enshrined in the European Convention on Human Rights. WJC calls on European governments to recognize the gravity of the ruling and to enact legislation that upholds freedom of religion and respects the importance of ritual slaughter in Jewish and Muslim practices. Stern stresses the necessity of preventing actions that compromise the right to worship freely and urges against imposing further restrictions that marginalize religious communities.<sup>12</sup>

The ban of Shechita directly infringes upon the right of freedom of religion or belief of Jewish communities. By outlawing this practice, governments are limiting the aforementioned human right and sets a dangerous precedent of discriminatory policies against Jews and Muslims sets a dangerous precedent.

States where a ban is currently in force: Belgium (regionally), Sweden, Slovenia, Greece, Denmark, Iceland, Liechtenstein, Norway, Switzerland, New Zealand. Some states like the United States and the United Kingdom have implemented laws safeguarding shechita.

---

<sup>12</sup> <https://www.worldjewishcongress.org/en/news/world-jewish-congress-executive-vice-president-maram-stern-condemns-european-courts-decision-on-ritual-slaughter-ban-in-belgium>

Ronald S. Lauder  
President

David de Rothschild  
Chairman

Chella Safra  
Treasurer



Some states have also made moves to ban male circumcision, likening it to female genital mutilation. Although no ban has been implemented, laws have been proposed in Iceland and Denmark, and six Danish political parties support a ban on circumcision.<sup>13 14</sup> 82% of European Jewish respondents to a study in 2018 said that a ban on circumcision would cause problems in their lives.<sup>15</sup>

---

<sup>13</sup> <https://www.theguardian.com/society/2018/feb/18/iceland-ban-male-circumcision-first-european-country>

<sup>14</sup> [https://migrant-integration.ec.europa.eu/news/denmark-renewed-debate-circumcision-boys\\_en](https://migrant-integration.ec.europa.eu/news/denmark-renewed-debate-circumcision-boys_en)

<sup>15</sup> <https://www.timesofisrael.com/how-the-eu-antisemitism-warrior-became-a-defender-of-kosher-slaughter-circumcision/>

**Budapest**  
Rumbach Sebestyén u. 11-13,  
1075 Budapest, Hungary  
+32 2 552 0922

**Brussels**  
Rue de Stassart 84, 1050  
Brussels, Belgium  
+32 2 552 0900

**Buenos Aires**  
Larrea 744 - C1030AAP  
Buenos Aires, Argentina  
+54 11 4962 5028

**Geneva**  
Rue de Varembe 1, 1202  
Geneva, Switzerland  
+41 22 734 1325

**Jerusalem**  
4 Washington Street, 9418704  
Jerusalem, Israel  
+972 2 633 3000

**New York**  
501 Madison Avenue  
New York, NY 10022, USA  
+1 212 755 5770

**Stockholm**  
Wahrendorffsgatan 3b, 111 47  
Stockholm, Sweden  
+468 510 500 30

**Sydney**  
80 William Street, Sydney,  
New South Wales 2000, Australia  
+61 2 8353 8500

**Washington DC**  
1120 20th Street NW  
Washington, DC 20036, USA  
+1 202 898 2500

**Zagreb**  
Đorđićeva 11, Zagreb 10000  
Croatia  
+ 385 1 775 70 00

**wjc.org**  
contactus@wjc.org