

6/1/26 Sivan/16/5786

His Excellency Bishop of Antwerp:

Most Reverend Johan Bonn

Bishop of Antwerp

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Your Excellency,

Subject: Urgent appeal for support of religious freedom (circumcision) and condemnation of antisemitism

I am writing to you with a sense of deep concern regarding the increasing pressure on the religious freedom of the Jewish community, particularly concerning restrictions or bans on traditional religious circumcision (b'rit milah). This development is unfortunately taking place within a climate where we are witnessing a disturbing wave of antisemitism globally, and specifically across Europe.

As the Bishop of Antwerp, you lead a diocese interwoven with a city that historically and culturally shares a profound bond with a thriving Jewish community. Antwerp has repeatedly served as a beacon of peaceful coexistence and interfaith dialogue.

You are recognized both nationally and internationally as a church leader with a deep sense of justice, a pastor who does not hesitate to display moral courage in defending human dignity and protecting individual conscience. Given your years of extensive experience in Rome working in ecumenical relations and international interfaith dialogue, you understand uniquely how crucial the unconditional protection of fundamental religious rights is. Precisely because of your progressive and courageous vision regarding human rights and societal development, we hope that you will demonstrate this same decisiveness when the fundamental rights of a minority community are under threat.

The b'rit milah is not a mere outward tradition, but the foundational sign of the covenant between God and the Jewish people, a practice maintained uninterrupted for thousands of years. Attempts to criminalize or ban this practice strike at the very heart of Jewish religious identity and the right to practice their faith freely.

Precisely in times when international and geopolitical tensions dominate public discourse, we bear a duty to remain vigilant. We therefore explicitly ask you to completely separate the complexities of global politics from the fundamental rights and the physical and spiritual safety of the local Jewish community right here in Antwerp. Local faith communities must never bear the burden of international conflicts; they have a right to the unconditional protection of their ancient religious traditions within our diverse society.

In light of Catholic teaching since *Nostra Aetate*, which centers on the recognition of the Jewish faith as the legitimate senior root of the covenant, and your own esteemed commitment to dialogue and human rights, I respectfully ask you to:

1. Issue a public statement supporting the defense of religious freedom for the Jewish community, including the right to traditional circumcision.
2. Explicitly speak out against the current wave of antisemitism and prejudice polarizing our society.

Your moral authority and your voice as a church leader can send a powerful signal of solidarity, mutual respect, and the inviolability of freedom of conscience and religion for all.

Thank you very much for your time and your consideration, and I look forward to your ongoing pastoral care and moral leadership for harmony within Antwerp's society.

Sincerely,



הרב אליעזר שמחה וייס

Rabbi E S Weisz

The Chief Rabbinate Commission for relations with the Catholic Church