



B'NAI B'RITH  INTERNATIONAL



June 6, 2011

His Excellency Mark Rutte  
Prime Minister of the Netherlands  
Binnenhof 20  
The Hague  
The Netherlands

Dear Mr. Prime Minister:

As leaders of major national Jewish organizations in the United States, we join to express our deep concern that the bill before your parliament to require stunning of slaughtered animals will cause unacceptable harm to the religious freedom of the Dutch Jewish community.

Kosher slaughter, or *shechita*, does not allow for stunning under any circumstances.

Therefore, a ban on animal slaughter without prior stunning is *de facto* a ban on shechita. Observant Dutch Jews must not be put to the choice of violating a daily observance of our religion, renouncing locally produced meat and becoming vegetarians, or emigrating.

The proposed ban is also based on the false premise that shechita is less humane than slaughter with pre-stunning by electrocution, gassing or a bolt shot to the forehead. A 2004 peer-reviewed paper, "Physiological Insights Into Shechita," by Dr. Stuart Rosen of Imperial College in London, concluded that "shechitah is a painless and humane method of animal slaughter." Other recent scientific studies have similarly shown that shechita is no less humane than other methods. By contrast, the Wageningen University report, which was presented as the scientific underpinning by the bill's sponsor, has been severely criticized as unscientific by world-renowned Professor Joseph M. Regenstein of Cornell University for its many mistakes, misjudgments, and other serious shortcomings.

His Excellency Mark Rutte


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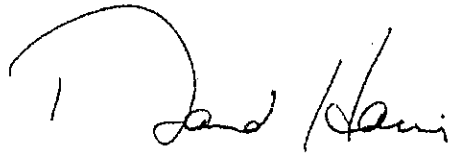
Mr. Prime Minister, without calling into question the intent of the bill's sponsors, you should be aware of the inescapable historical connection in the Jewish community between the banning of shechita and virulent anti-Semitism. Banning shechita was one of the first acts of the Nazi regime and one extended to the countries it occupied, including the Netherlands. Anti-Semitic motivations were also evident in democracies, in the parliamentary debates to ban shechita in Switzerland (1893) and Norway (1929). In the context of rising anti-Semitism in Europe, a *de facto* ban on shechita would inevitably send a message of perceived religious intolerance to the Jewish community.

The intention of the proposed bill may be benign, but its result will be malignant. Its scientific justification is questionable, but its negative consequences are indisputable. We therefore respectfully urge you to join us – secular and observant Jews, united on the need to protect the religious freedom of all Jews, everywhere – in publicly opposing any proposal that would result in such an infringement of religious freedom.

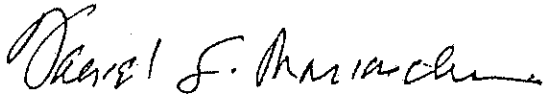
Sincerely,



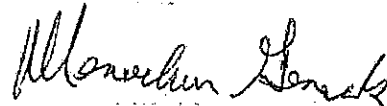
Abraham H. Foxman  
National Director  
Anti-Defamation League



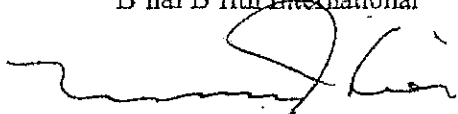
David Harris,  
Executive Director  
American Jewish Committee



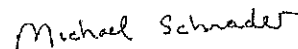
Dan Mariaschin  
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Rabbi Menachem Genack  
CEO  
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Rabbi Marvin Hier  
Dean and Founder  
Simon Wiesenthal Center



Michael Schneider  
Secretary General  
World Jewish Congress

cc: Mr. Stephanus Blok, VVD  
Mr. Job Cohen, PvdA  
Mr. Sybrand van Haersema Buma, CDA  
Mr. Gert Wilders, PVV  
Mr. E.G.M. Roemer, SP  
Mr. Alexander Pechtold, D'66  
Ms. J.C.M. Sap, GroenLinks  
Mr. Arie Slob, Christian Union  
Mr. C.G. van der Staaij, SGP  
Ms. Marianne Thieme, Partij voor de Dieren  
H.E. Renée Jones-Bos, Ambassador of the Netherlands to the United States