

## European Rabbis Protest Israeli Persecution against Orthodox Jews

Tuesday 2 July, 2013

Representatives of the Orthodox Jewish community from the UK, France, Austria and Belgium demonstrated in front of the European Union Commission's headquarters in Brussels on Monday to protest against Israeli treatment of Orthodox Jewish people.

Most of the speakers of the 2,000 led demonstrators claimed that the true goal of the recent draft legislation by the Israeli government is to eradicate religious observance and to recast the Jewish people in a new, nationalistic mould. "The Israeli's say that they need the Orthodox to share the burden, but that is only to camouflage their true goal, which is to integrate the Orthodox into their anti-religious society" stated Rabbi Stauber.

During the demonstration a delegation led by Rabbi Jacob Schapiro, Rabbi Joseph Wosner and Rabbi Jacob Domb were met by Mr Krassimir Nikolov Secretary-General of the Bulgarian European Community Studies Association and Mr Leonello Gabrici EU Commission, External Relations at the EU headquarters where they appealed that the European nations bring pressure to bear on the State of Israel to change the draft plan and allow the religious Jews in the Holy Land to continue living and practicing their faith in peace.

The demonstrators also appealed that those of the Orthodox community who flee Israel be provided international protection and be recognised by all European member states as refugees and political asylum seekers.

"Israeli generals have freely admitted that they have no need and do not even know how to deal with a large influx of religious soldiers - belying the share-the-burden argument".

"The founders of the State of Israel intended for the army to be one of the major forces to educate the young generation. It is clear that Israeli leaders see the army as the ideal environment where they can efficiently carry out mass transformation of the Orthodox community, and therefore they now want to force them to join the army. The army has always been the state's melting pot, where religious Jews from traditional communities all over the world were transformed into secular Zionists" declared Rabbi Stauber.

Orthodox rabbinic leaders in Israel have stated clearly that complying with this new draft is a violation of the Jewish religion and their community will resist this decree by all means necessary. Their young men will rather go to prison than join the Israeli army.

"The Israeli state is now using unprecedented tactics of intimidation to transform the Jewish religion; its hatred towards religious observance knows no boundaries and has grown to a degree as never seen before" declared Rabbi Stauber.

In Jerusalem and New York, massive demonstrations were held in the past weeks, attended by tens of thousands of Orthodox Jews, to cry out against the decree.

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