

Statement on Kosher and Halal Meat Release from Joseph Interfaith Foundation

For immediate release: 09-03-14

The National Council of Imams and Rabbis of the Joseph Interfaith Foundation takes strong exception to the comments made by John Blackwell of the BVA as reported in The Times of 6 March.

This is, in effect, an attack on religious freedoms. Secular efforts to mitigate the suffering of animals when taking their lives for food should not be made at the expense of denying religious people the freedom to do so in their own way.

Given the fact that up to 9% of animals in this country are mis-stunned on the first occasion it is disingenuous to focus on the religious practices of the Jewish and Muslim who conduct slaughter under strict welfare standards.

The process of halal & kosher slaughter itself acknowledges the animal as a trust and a gift from God, the mention of the name of the Divine before commencing the action serves as a reminder of this. The aim is to make the death of the animal as quick and painless as possible. The kosher and halal methods of slaughter with an extremely sharp knife cause a rapid loss of consciousness which is indeed equivalent to the stunning of the animal.

The true spirit of eating Halal and Kosher (permissible) meat, and food in general, inherently and necessarily includes the idea of "pure and wholesome", a broad concept which takes a holistic approach to the processes of rearing and consumption of animals. The welfare and treatment of animals is central to this so that the whole supply chain should be underpinned by ethical principles.

In British society, where there is generally high respect between vegetarians and meat eaters and likewise between people of different faiths, the conflicting necessities of people's freedom and compassion for animals needs to be balanced. It is true that a discussion around how we as a society treat animals and consume meat is needed, but this discussion must be sincere and requires contribution from all sections of the society. Targeting specific religious communities is not helpful and misses the very point that such a discussion should be addressing.

National Council of Imams & Rabbis

Qari Muhammad Asim MBE; Senior Imam, Makkah Mosque, Leeds
Mufti AK Barkatullah; Islamic Shari'a Council, Layton
Dayan Binstock; Dayan, London Beth Din; Senior Rabbi, St John's Wood United Synagogue
Rabbi Colin Eimer; Senior Rabbi, Sha'arei Tsedek North London Reform Synagogue
Imam Asim Hafiz OBE; Islamic Advisor to the Chief of the Defence Staff & Service Chiefs
Imam Abdullah Hasan; Senior Imam, Masjid Khadijah & Islamic Centre, Peterborough
Sheikh Muhammad Ismail; Senior Imam, Birmingham Central Mosque
Rabbi Dr Margaret Jacobi; Senior Rabbi, Birmingham Progressive Synagogue
Rabbi Yosi Jacobs; Senior Rabbi, Birmingham Hebrew Congregation
Sheikh Ezzat Khalifa; Senior Imam, London Central Mosque and Cultural Centre
Rabbi Jason Kleiman; Senior Rabbi, Bet Hamidrash Hagadol Synagogue, Leeds
Rabbi David Lister; Senior Rabbi, Edgware United Synagogue, London
Rabbi Ian Morris; Senior Rabbi, Sinai Synagogue, Leeds
Imam Mokhtar Osman; York Way Mosque and Education Centre, London
Imam Shahid Raza CBE; Senior Imam, Central Mosque, Leicester
Rabbi Danny Rich; Chief Executive of Liberal Judaism, UK
Senior Imams; East London Mosque and Cultural Centre
Imam Mohammad Shafiq; Senior Imam, Darul Ummah Jamme Mosque, London
Rabbi Reuven Silverman; Senior Rabbi, Manchester Reform Synagogue
Rabbi Daniel Smith; Senior Rabbi, Edgware & District Reform Synagogue, London
Rabbi Alexandra Wright; Senior Rabbi, Liberal Jewish Synagogue, London
Rabbi Jonathan Wittenberg; Senior Rabbi, New North London Masorti Synagogue
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For information: www.josephinterfaithfoundation.org

If you wish to support the statement, please send your name to info@josephinterfaithfoundation.org to be added to the accompanying page.

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