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Comments regarding: Þingskjal: 183-114. mál Umsögn um breytingu á almennum hegningarlögum nr. 19/1940 (bann við umskurði drengja)

Submitted by Jonathan Greenblatt, CEO, Anti-Defamation League (New York, USA)

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The Anti-Defamation League (ADL) is one of America's premier human relations and civil rights agencies and is dedicated in purpose and program to combating anti-Semitism and all forms of bigotry, defending democratic ideals and protecting civil rights for all.

We write to offer three compelling reasons against the adoption of a ban on male circumcision.

Religious freedom

The proposal to ban male circumcision is and contrary to basic principles of religious freedom and deeply offensive to Jews and Muslims. The commandment of *brit milah*, circumcision on the eighth day, is a fundamental religious rite in Judaism and universally practiced by all families who identify as Jewish across the broad spectrum of practice. Such a ban would mean that no Jewish family could be raised in Iceland, and it is inconceivable that a Jewish community could remain in any country that prohibited *brit milah*.

Finland's Supreme Court ruled in 2008 that ritual male circumcision is protected under the European Convention on Human Rights by the right to personal autonomy, as part of the right to privacy, (Article 8), the right to family life (Article 8), and the freedom of religion and conscience (Article 9), when "appropriately performed."

Medical benefit

According to the American Academy of Pediatrics, "Evaluation of current evidence indicates that the health benefits of newborn male circumcision outweigh the risks and that the procedure's benefits justify access to this procedure for families who choose it. Specific benefits identified included prevention of urinary tract infections, penile cancer, and transmission of some sexually transmitted infections, including HIV."

(<https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/m/pubmed/22926180/>)

With a U.S. population of over 325 million and a circumcision rate of 81 percent among U.S. males age 14 to 59, the opinion of the American Academy of Pediatrics should be considered more authoritative than European study which asserts the contrary.

Iceland's international standing and negative economic impact

The Anti-Defamation League is the leading monitor of far-right extremism and foremost expert in the United States. Should Iceland ban male circumcision, making it impossible for Jews and Muslims to raise families in your country, we guarantee that Iceland will be celebrated by neo-Nazis, white supremacists, and other extremists. Even though anti-Semitism was surely not the impetus for the proposal, the result of its adoption will be the glorification of Iceland by the most despicable bigots. They will celebrate the ban as the first legislation in Europe since World War II towards making a country *Judenrein*, free of Jews.

ADL has studied the pervasiveness of anti-Semitic content on social media, and we know that a relatively small number of extremists are able to amplify their message quickly and broadly through social media. ADL regularly reports on such phenomena, and we will report on extremist praise for Iceland. We urge you to consider the significant media attention, in the U.S. and internationally, paid to ADL reports on extremism. In the past six months alone, our research and experts have been featured on CNN and other cable TV channels, NBC and other broadcast TV, on *60 Minutes*, the most watched TV news magazine in America, and in leading newspapers, including *The New York Times* and *The Washington Post*.

Given that 28% of Iceland's tourists came from North America in 2016, Iceland's standing in the U.S. should be of great concern from an economic perspective. We are confident that the vast majority of American tourists will avoid a country whose reputation is associated with Nazism, even if that association is not justified.

Individually, any of these three arguments should convince you to oppose a ban on male circumcision. Collectively, they should compel you to make the right decision and oppose the proposed ban.