



Jews, Muslims outraged after German court rules that religious circumcision of minors is against the law

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German Jews and Muslims have reacted with outrage at a ruling by a Cologne appeals court which had found that a doctor in the city who had circumcised a four-year-old Muslim boy on his parents' wishes had acted unlawfully.

A few days after the operation, the boy's parents took him to hospital as he was bleeding heavily. Prosecutors then charged the doctor with grievous bodily harm. A lower court had judged that the medic had acted within the law as the boy's parents had given their consent to the circumcision.

However, the state court of Cologne now ruled that the "fundamental right of the child to bodily integrity" outweighed the fundamental rights of the parents and added: "The religious freedom of the parents and their right to educate their child would not be unacceptably compromised, if they were obliged to wait until the child could himself decide to be circumcised." The court nonetheless also acquitted the doctor, but for different reasons.

"The body of the child is irreparably and permanently changed by a circumcision," the court said. "This change contravenes the interests of the child to decide later on his religious beliefs." The judges specified that circumcision was not illegal if carried out for medical reasons.

Unlike female circumcision, there is no law prohibiting circumcision of boys, and the ruling isn't binding for other courts. However, it sets a precedent that would be taken into account by other German courts when ruling on similar cases.

The decision has caused outrage among the Muslim and Jewish communities in Germany. The president of the Central Committee of Jews, Dieter Graumann, said the ruling was "an unprecedented and dramatic intervention in the right of religious communities to self-determination". He called the judgment "an outrageous and insensitive act. Circumcision of newborn boys is a fixed part of the Jewish religion and has been practised worldwide for centuries," added Graumann. "This religious right is respected in every country in the world."

Ali Demir, chairman of the Islamic Religious Community, said: "I feel the decision is discriminatory and counters efforts to promote integration." Circumcision was "a harmless procedure that has thousands of years of tradition and a high symbolic value," he said in a statement.

The impact of this ruling is unclear. Jewish and Muslim leaders, as well as jurists, have already called for clear guidelines to be established that allow the circumcision of boys on religious grounds.

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Source: [World Jewish Congress](#)