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The Rt. Hon. Caroline Spelman MP,
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Tuesday 12th July 2011

Dear Secretary of State,

We write in consideration of the ban on the unanaesthetised slaughter of animals by the Dutch parliament as reported last month.

Though the measure will not come into force unless backed by the upper legislative chamber of the Dutch parliament, the Senate, it marks a dark day in history for Dutch Muslim and Jewish communities, and British Muslims warily watch as developments unfold in the EU that threaten the right of certain religious groups to freedom of religion.

As you will be aware, the ritual slaughter of animals rendering them permissible for Muslim consumption (*halal*), is a fundamental Islamic principle and Muslims are commanded to consume only that meat which has undergone slaughter according to religious method.

Islamic scholarly opinion on the stunning of animals before slaughter is divided though the majority opinion is certainly that the stunning of animals is inconsistent with the requirements of ritual slaughter.

We are alarmed at the passage of such legislation in an EU Member state known for its staunch defence of liberty and illustrious record of tolerance. It is indeed a grave reflection on the anti-religious and particularly, anti-Muslim, orientation of policy in EU member states in recent years. The French niqab and headscarf bans, the ban on the building of new minarets in Switzerland, and the recent acquittal of the Dutch politician, Geert Wilders, on charges of inciting hatred against Muslims are just a few examples of steps that, cumulatively, are sirens of a foreboding future for European Muslims.

Secretary of State, we write to express our deep concerns at the initial endorsement by Dutch politicians of a ban on ritual slaughter and to seek assurances that Her Majesty's Government will do all she can to convey to her Dutch counterparts the impact of such a move on Muslim communities in the Netherlands. The move is, in our assessment, discriminatory and violates Article 9 of the European Convention on Human Rights. We hope you are able to raise with the Dutch Government the wider, negative implications of this piece of draft legislation.

I look forward to your reply.

Yours sincerely,

Mohammed Asif
CEO

Cc: Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs, The Rt. Hon, William Hague, MP