

**RELIGIOUS
SLAUGHTER
IN THE UK
& BEYOND**

Introduction

Halal food, food prepared according to sharia law, has become a staple of the Western diet – and much of this food is sold unlabelled. Halal is a multi-billion dollar global industry involving agriculture and farming, food processing, catering, manufacturing, pharmaceuticals, tourism and trade.

Halal slaughter involves cutting the throat of a conscious animal – “unstunned slaughter”. British law maintains that animals should be stunned to unconsciousness; this is often carried out with a bolt of electricity to the head prior to slaughter. The animal therefore does not feel the pain of slaughter and is unconscious throughout. Unstunned slaughter means the animal is conscious while its throat is cut – a method used in both halal and kosher animal slaughter.

A long series of legislative provisions over the last century prohibit the unstunned slaughter of animals in the UK. This stretches all the way back to the Slaughter of Animals Act 1933, which introduced the requirement to stun animals before killing. However, then, as now, a religious exemption applied and both Jews and Muslims were permitted to continue with conscious slaughter.

In a statement to the House of Commons in 2014, George Eustice, Agriculture Minister, said the “UK Government recognises and respects the needs of religious communities, so has always maintained the limited exemption, *which is to be used only for meat produced for Jewish and Muslim communities.*”¹ This was a reiteration of the requirement that religiously slaughtered meat is provided only for those religious groups. This is dramatically not the case in relation to halal.

A Mail on Sunday investigation² in 2010 found that schools, hospitals, pubs and sporting venues throughout Britain are routinely serving halal meat unlabelled. Iconic arenas named included Ascot, Twickenham and Wembley Stadium. NHS hospitals serving halal meat, without informing patients, include London’s largest Trust - Guy’s & St Thomas.

In 2013, an East London newspaper reported³ that three quarters of schools in the London Borough of Waltham Forest were serving halal meat to all pupils. These schools were under the control of the Borough Council. The same report referred to a school in Chingford which informed parents that meat served there would be replaced by an all-halal menu, prompting protests

¹ HC Deb 4 November 2014 c168WH

² <https://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-1313303/Britain-goes-halal---tells-public.html>

³ [https://www.guardian-series.co.uk/news/10334813.Halal meat served in three-quarters of schools in Waltham Forest](https://www.guardian-series.co.uk/news/10334813.Halal%20meat%20served%20in%20three-quarters%20of%20schools%20in%20Waltham%20Forest)

from some. A council spokesperson is reported to have said “All meat provided to local schools is certified by the Halal Food Authority.”

Various reports of people being fired from their jobs for accidentally serving non-halal meat have also emerged. A dinner lady was fired from a Birmingham school in 2013 for serving non-halal meat at a supposed multi-faith school.⁴ The subsequent news reports confirmed that 1,400 pupils at Moseley school were routinely being served halal meat, regardless of religion and without being informed. The head-teacher apologised for the unintentional error of allowing non-halal meat to be supplied, but many Muslim parents demanded punishment. A Birmingham City Council spokesperson also apologised.

Critics of halal, or even those who raise questions or call for labelling, have been accused of ‘picking on religious minorities’. Those who attest that they are acting out of concern for animal welfare are dismissed as liars – meaning they are in a lose-lose situation. In 2014, Conservative MP Philip Davies tabled a motion in the House of Commons arguing that religiously slaughtered meat should be labelled as such, but his proposals were defeated. Davies had quoted Oxfordshire Imam Taj Hargey, who has stated that halal imposition amounts to “covert religious extremism and creeping Islamic fundamentalism making its way into Britain by the backdoor”.⁵

In response to his proposals, Conservative MP Jonathan Djanogly asked of Davies, “Why is he picking on religious communities in his new clause?”⁶ The fact that it is religious communities requiring the exemption to unstunned slaughter is of course the reason religious communities are being discussed.

More recently, in October 2018, councillors on Lancashire Council voted to stop supplying the county’s schools with unstunned halal meat.⁷ The Lancashire Council of Mosques objected to this, and “threatened to ask Muslim families across the county to boycott all school meals”.⁸ Abdul Hamid Qureshi, the chief executive officer, called the move “hugely discriminatory.”

⁴ <http://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-2281855/Dinner-lady-sacked-servi...>

⁵ <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-politics-27402428>

⁶ <https://www.politics.co.uk/news/2014/05/14/mps-block-compulsory-halal-meat-labelling>

⁷ <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-england-lancashire-45907431>

⁸ <https://www.lancashiretelegraph.co.uk/news/16597497.unstunned-halal-meat-back-on-school-menu-for-now/>

He said "It could be categorised as Islamophobic, it could be categorised as a racist approach. It's not sensible action but offensive action to me."⁹

Similarly, in Kirklees, West Yorkshire, councillors attempted to debate the provision of unstunned halal meat to schools, but the debate was shut down under accusations of 'targeting sections of the community'. Labour's council leader Shabir Pandor shut down any debate, saying "I'm closing the debate on halal at full council. Diversity is our strength. Those questioning our provision of halal don't have animal welfare at heart. They have targeted sections of the community which had caused fear [sic]. Our policy on halal will remain in place."¹⁰

In effect therefore, according to some members of Kirklees Council, people are no longer permitted to raise concerns about animal welfare in relation to unstunned slaughter, and their concerns will be dismissed as lies or hatred.

Non-Meat Certification

The halal certification of non-meat products is also a fast-growing business. The Halal Food Authority (HFA) is perhaps the most prominent halal certification provider in the UK. Companies pay for their products to be certified halal in order to appeal to the rapidly expanding Muslim market. On its website, the HFA boasts of having provided certification to food giants including Mars, KFC, Kingsmill, Warburtons, and McCain.¹¹ The Guardian has reported that Subway, Nando's, and Pizza Express serve halal food at many of their outlets.¹²

Furthermore, much has suggested that some funds raised through halal certification is being used to fund Islamist organisations, and even terrorist groups.

(As with many matters involving the Islamic faith, accurate and reliable information is difficult to find. We can therefore only inform you of some of the most common beliefs and statements surrounding this issue).

⁹ <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2018/jul/12/lancashire-council-bans-non-stunned-halal-meat-from-schools>

¹⁰ <https://www.secularism.org.uk/news/2019/01/council-leader-silencing-debate-on-schools-non-stun-meat-nss-says/>

¹¹ <https://www.halalfoodauthority.com/>

¹² <https://www.theguardian.com/lifeandstyle/2014/may/07/halal-meat-restaurant-menus-humane-slaughter>

In the United States and Canada for example, some foods have been receiving halal certification from the Canadian Islamic Society of North America (ISNA-Canada).¹³ The Canada Revenue Agency (CRA) issued a suspension and fine to ISNA-Canada in 2018 after an audit raised concerns that it had provided resources “to support armed militancy”.¹⁴

According to the CRA, “the society’s resources may have, directly or indirectly, been used to support the political efforts of Jamaat-e-Islami and/or its armed wing Hizbul Mujahideen.” The group’s halal certification scheme was reportedly described as “essentially a business”.

In France, the revenue of the halal food industry has been estimated at around \$7 billion. It is believed that halal certification in France is often provided by “experts”, themselves certified by the UOIF, or Union of the Islamic Organizations in France, which according to the Simon Wiesenthal Centre has strong ties to the Muslim Brotherhood. French journalist and author Alexandre del Valle was threatened with violence when he investigated the extent of halal food in France. His investigation concluded “Nearly 60 percent of halal food is controlled by organizations belonging to the Muslim brotherhood.”¹⁵

Campaigns

The halal preparation of meat consists of cutting the throat of a fully conscious animal while uttering an Islamic prayer, and then allowing the animal to bleed to death. This procedure can only be carried out by a Muslim.

The Royal Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals (RSPCA) has stated that “Evidence clearly indicates that slaughter without pre-stunning can cause unnecessary suffering.”¹⁶ The RSPCA launched a campaign against religious unstunned slaughter in 2019, but it has had little success in persuading authorities to take action on this issue.¹⁷

The Government advisory body, the Farm Animal Welfare Council (now Committee) argues that the practice should be banned because animals

¹³ <http://www.isna.ca/1/programs-services/isna-halal-certification-services>

¹⁴ <https://globalnews.ca/news/4490892/cra-suspends-fines-major-islamic-charity-over-concerns-it-may-have-provided-resources-to-armed-militants/>

¹⁵ <https://moneyjihad.wordpress.com/2011/01/06/muslim-brotherhood-nets-halal-tax-revenues/> (NOTE: The original CBN report is no longer available on the CBN site)

¹⁶ <http://www.rspca.org.uk/allaboutanimals/farm/slaughter/religiouslaughter>

¹⁷ <https://www.rspca.org.uk/getinvolved/campaign/slaughter/england>

experience "very significant pain and distress" ¹⁸ before they become unconscious.

According to the National Secular Society, "the Government no longer keeps statistics on religious slaughter and said in October 2010 that it did not know the number of halal slaughterhouses."¹⁹

On top of the above, there are further concerns surrounding employment; only a Muslim can carry out the ritual slaughter demanded of halal, and as such, as the market grows, a *de facto* discrimination against non-Muslims emerges in the abattoir employment field. The law potentially allows for exemptions to discriminatory employment laws for reasons such as these (if it can be argued, legally, that there is a "genuine occupational requirement"), however this merely compounds the advantage of Muslims in employment terms in the meat market as halal continues to expand.

Kosher

While significantly smaller, and not imposed in public places, kosher slaughter (prepared according to Jewish law) also requires the unstunned killing of animals. There is however no suggestion or evidence that funds from kosher certification are used for political or terrorist activity. However, on animal welfare grounds, both practices must be considered impermissible.

For Britain's Position

For Britain is fully committed to our long-standing proposal to repeal the religious exemption to unstunned slaughter in the United Kingdom. Unstunned slaughter carried out within the UK's borders should not be permitted.

Both Denmark²⁰ and Belgium²¹ have banned religious slaughter, and so there is no reason that the same can't be done in the UK. What is required to implement such laws is the ability to withstand and dismiss false accusations of 'hate' and 'bigotry' (etc.) and to insist that animal welfare is prioritised over and above the requirements of religious minorities.

¹⁸ <http://www.fawc.org.uk/reports/pb8347.pdf>

¹⁹ <https://www.secularism.org.uk/uploads/ritual-slaughter-of-animals-briefing.pdf>

²⁰ <https://www.independent.co.uk/news/world/europe/denmark-bans-halal-and-kosher-slaughter-as-minister-says-animal-rights-come-before-religion-9135580.html>

²¹ <https://www.standard.co.uk/news/world/belgium-ban-on-kosher-and-halal-slaughter-methods-which-see-animals-killed-without-being-stunned-a4032451.html>

Any import of halal or kosher (or unstunned meat of any kind) must be carefully labeled and its sale geared towards to relevant religious communities as originally intended. No schools, or hospitals, or sporting venues, or other public places should serve meat from animals slaughtered without stunning.

We will continue to campaign on this vital issue and will not be deterred by false smears. Animals have no voice of their own, so For Britain is committed to being a voice on their behalf.

<https://www.forbritain.uk/halal>