

German court rules circumcision is 'bodily harm'

 [bbc.com/news/world-europe-18604664](https://www.bbc.com/news/world-europe-18604664)

A court in Germany has ruled that circumcising young boys for religious reasons amounts to bodily harm.

In a decision that has caused outrage among Jewish and Muslim groups, the court said that a child's right to physical integrity trumps religious and parental rights.

The case involved a doctor who carried out a circumcision on a four year-old that led to medical complications.

Thousands of Muslim and Jewish boys are circumcised in Germany every year.

Although male circumcision - unlike female circumcision - is not illegal in Germany, the court's judgement said the "fundamental right of the child to bodily integrity outweighed the fundamental rights of the parents".

Circumcision, it decided, contravenes "interests of the child to decide later in life on his religious beliefs".

'Protect religious freedom'

The doctor involved in the case was acquitted and the ruling is not binding, but correspondents say it sets a precedent that would be taken into account by other German courts.

The president of Germany's Central Council of Jews, Dieter Graumann, called it "an unprecedented and dramatic intervention in the right of religious communities to self-determination".

He urged the country's parliament to clarify the legal situation "to protect religious freedom against attacks".

Male circumcision is part of the ancient religious rituals of both the Jewish and Muslim faiths, as well as the traditions of some tribal groups.

In some countries, such as the United States, it is also not uncommon for parents to request that young boys are circumcised for health reasons.



Male circumcision is part of both Jewish and Muslim religious rituals

The BBC's Stephen Evans in Germany says it is unclear what the next legal step will be, but this issue is a moral and political minefield.