

PROPOSAL AT NATIONAL LEVEL

After the facts in Lucena and Tárrega, we expressed to the Federation of Jewish Communities of Spain that the protection of ancient cemeteries, mainly due to urban growth, is an urgent topic of national reach.

We shared our experience in Catalunya, offered our close collaboration and to coordinate efforts.

We have learned that JEWISH TRADITION SUSTAINS THAT:

- the cemeteries must be respected forever
- an old cemetery out of use, has the same value and meaning as one in use
- it is forbidden to build on a cemetery or to give it a use other than its own
- it is forbidden to excavate
- it is forbidden to exhume bodies
- in the sad case of exhumations, the bodies must be re buried WITHOUT DELAY

PRESENT SITUATION

Since 1492, cemeteries have been left completely unprotected, except in Vitoria (Basque country) thank to a commitment signed that year between the Jewish communities leaving and the local authorities.

With the construction of the beltway in Lucena and prior a real estate developement in Tárrega, both Jewish cemeteries from the Middle ages have been destroyed, ausing irreversible damage and great pain to the Jewish people around the world. The same has happened before in other cities: Barcelona, Gerona, Sevilla, Valencia, Menorca, etc.

Due to urban growth and development, there is an increasing chance of finding a Jewish cemetery, of not respecting it, and of causing damage that cannot be repaired.

We PROPOSE:

at legal level

- that there is attention and respect to the criteria of our tradition and that the contradictions existing between heritage law and that of freedom of faith be solved

at technical level

- to identify and inventory all the Jewish cemeteries in the territory of the state
- create an inventory with the most accurate information including extension and limits
- to identify the location of the bodies exhumed in past excavations (when it applies)
- to name a mixed commission –that should include representation of the Jewish communities- to develop this task in joint collaboration and with the best results
- to establish appropriate procedures for cases of public or private ownership, ALWAYS with the respect due to Jewish own criteria
- to guarantee the protection and maintenance of all these spaces
- define how to procede in case of finding a necropolis not included in the inventory, or during the process of its elaboration

Notes

Generalitat de Catalunya: autonomous Catalan government

Ajuntament: municipal government (Barcelona, Tarragona, ...)