



First Amendment topics >



The First Amendment to the U.S. Constitution
 Congress shall make no law respecting an establishment of religion, or prohibiting the free exercise thereof; or abridging the freedom of speech, or of the press; or the right of the people peaceably to assemble, and to petition the Government for a redress of grievances. [ABOUT THE FIRST AMENDMENT >](#)

News Story

N.Y. jail reaches deal on meals for Muslim inmates

By The Associated Press
 03.25.08

VALHALLA, N.Y. — A county jail has agreed to provide Muslim inmates with meats prepared according to Islamic law, ending a three-year legal fight.

Under a settlement approved by a federal judge in Manhattan on March 12, the Westchester County jail is serving four halal meat dishes a week for Muslim inmates who request them. "Halal" is an Arabic word that means lawful or permitted.

The change will cost the county about 15 cents per serving, said Richard Cohen, a lawyer representing nine Muslim inmates. Their lawsuit, which dates to 2005, claimed religious bias.

The inmates noted that the jail offered kosher meats for observant Jews, but generally only vegetarian meals for devout Muslims. Halal meat was served twice a year on religious occasions.

The jail's imam, John Nashid, called the discrepancy "a discriminatory practice against the Muslim inmate population."

County spokeswoman Victoria Hochman said the jail started offering halal meats in September. Like kosher meats, the halal dishes are served four times a week.

"We're happy to have reached a settlement on this issue," she said.

The inmates sought monetary damages but received none in the settlement. None of the plaintiffs are still in the Westchester jail.

New York City's Rikers Island jail already serves halal meat, as do some other jails and prisons around the country.

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No specially prepared meat for Islamic inmates, 3rd Circuit says

Three-judge panel finds that providing vegetarian meals instead is a reasonable accommodation of prisoners' religious beliefs. 09.12.03

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