

# Jerusalem to permit first non-Orthodox cemetery: Court had ordered change years ago

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Non-Orthodox Jewish groups are praising the decision of Jerusalem municipal officials to approve the establishment of the city's first non-Orthodox cemetery.

All Jewish cemeteries in Jerusalem have been maintained by ultra-Orthodox burial societies that conduct burials according to the strictest standards of Jewish law. Jerusalemites seeking another type of burial have had to find a cemetery outside the city.

Jerusalem's Orthodox cemeteries do not permit burial in a coffin and prohibit the burial of non-Jews—including first-degree relatives of a Jew buried in the cemetery. Nor do they permit women to say Kaddish, the memorial prayer, out loud, or Reform and Conservative Jews to conduct burials according to their respective religious practices.

The municipality's decision comes a decade after the Israeli High Court ordered the government to provide pluralistic options. Since then, non-Orthodox Jews have tried, unsuccessfully, to force the city's ultra-Orthodox mayor and other religious officials to allot land for this purpose. Non-Orthodox cemeteries are already operating in several other Israeli cities.

Mayor Uri Lupolianski appeared to welcome the decision, saying, "Jerusalem is a pluralistic city that has a duty to allow people to choose their way of life and their burial."

But Rabbi Andy Sacks, director of the Rabbinical Assembly in Israel, said he was perturbed by Lupolianski's statement. "It's incredible that he's being praised for what the court demanded of him," Sacks said. "It's not like he came around and understood the needs of the non-Orthodox community." *-Religion News Service*