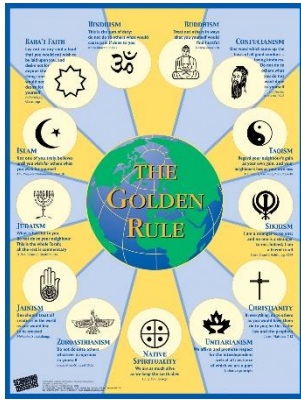


# Oslo's Rings of Peace and Solidarity



As a child during the middle of the last century, I learned The Golden Rule: do unto others as you would have them do unto you. I assumed it was the only Golden Rule.

However, when attending a meeting of the interfaith Story Circle, I was surprised to learn that many religions have a Golden Rule. According to goldenruleproject.org, the Muslim Golden Rule is: None of you truly believes until you wish for your brother what you wish for yourself.

Here's a story of some Muslims who followed their Golden Rule.

Copenhagen



Oslo



In February 2015, an Arab extremist killed two Jews and wounded five others outside a synagogue on Copenhagen, Denmark. This attack caused a number of Jews in Oslo, 600 miles away, to grow fearful.

**Norway 5 million**

**Muslims 150,000 3%**

**Jews 1,000**

Jews make up a tiny minority in Norway – there are only 1,000 Jews in a total population of 5 million.



A group of eight Muslims, between the ages of 17 and 37, used a 21<sup>st</sup> century tool, Facebook, to organize a demonstration of support for the Jews in Oslo. Consequently, a few days later on a Friday night, 1,000 Muslims and other Norwegians formed a human chain – a ring of peace - around the **only synagogue in Oslo**. They wanted the Jews leaving the synagogue after the Sabbath service to see this ring of peace.

It was dark and freezing cold. People were bundled up in their winter coats and scarves, holding hands and chanting

**“No to anti-Semitism, no to Islamophobia.**

**No to anti-Semitism, no to Islamophobia.**

**No to anti-Semitism, no to Islamophobia.”**



Zeeshan Abdullah, one of the Muslim organizers, said, “We 150,000 Muslims are a small minority in Norway – only 3% of the population. We knew that the much smaller minority, the 1,000 Jews, must feel really vulnerable after that attack in Copenhagen. We came together outside their synagogue to show the Jews that they are not alone.

**Islam means protecting our brothers and sisters, regardless of their religion.”**

This statement kept repeating in my head:

“Islam means protecting our brothers and sisters, regardless of their religion.”

I finally realized that it was a different way of expressing the Muslim Golden Rule:

None of you **truly** believes until you wish for your brother what you wish for yourself.

However, these Muslims did more than wish – they acted.



A week later, the Jewish community reciprocated by organizing a ‘Solidarity Ring for Muslims’ around a mosque in Oslo.



Many people were there, including the president of the Jewish Community of Oslo, the secretary general of the Islamic Council of Norway, and a priest who spoke at the event.

Those two rings – the ring of peace and the ring of solidarity – were demonstrations of Interfaith support and solidarity.

<https://www.goldenruleproject.org/formulations>

<https://newint.org/features/web-exclusive/2015/03/03/norway-solidarity-religion>

## NORWAY'S RING OF PEACE

*3 March 2015*

In Norway, Jews and Muslims stand in solidarity against hate speech, writes **Ryan Rodrick Beiler**.

Following recent incidents of violence targeting Jewish people across Europe, young Norwegian Muslims decided to make a public and proactive response to these attitudes.

Calling on members of their community, they formed a symbolic human shield, the 'Ring of Peace', around Oslo's main synagogue, in a show of solidarity and in defiance of extremism.

'Our fellow Jewish minorities are facing difficulties, as we have recently seen in Paris and Copenhagen,' said Hassan Raja, one of the event's organizers. 'The "Ring of Peace" is our show of solidarity with the Jewish minority, to express that we won't allow anyone to harm us as a multicultural and multi-religious society.'

Some 1,300 supporters filled the street outside Oslo's only functioning synagogue. The number of supporters was roughly equal to that of the entire Jewish population of Norway, who remain a tiny minority due to historic anti-Semitism that barred Jewish people from entering Norway until the mid-1800s, followed by deportations during the Nazi occupation.

Members of the Jewish community who were present at the 'Ring of Peace' expressed their appreciation for the show of support. 'I have been very impressed,' said Michael Gritzman of the Jewish Community in Oslo. 'I hope this will spread to other countries.'

One week later, a crowd of Norwegians stood in front of an Oslo mosque in another ring of solidarity, this time protesting against Islamophobia.

Dubbed the 'Solidarity Ring' by organizers, the event sought to counter negative impressions of Muslims resulting from media coverage of recent violence in France and Denmark. With these recent episodes and large numbers of refugees and asylum seekers emigrating to Norway and other northern European countries, anti-immigrant, and especially anti-Muslim sentiment, has risen.

'Last week it was the Muslim youth who took the initiative, which was beautiful,' said Mehtab Afsar, secretary general of the Islamic Council of Norway. 'This Saturday, non-Muslims took the initiative to stand in front of a mosque in solidarity, to show that we are against hate and violence against Muslims.'

'When a Christian does something bad they don't talk about their religion,' said organizer Gitte Myhre. 'It's the individual that does something bad – not the religion.'

'It's important to focus on the new illness in Europe, which is hate against Muslims and minorities – the Jewish minority as well,' said Afsar. 'We stand together against all forms of hate, violence, terrorism and extremism – they have no room in our society.'



Ryan Rodrick Beiler

Advert

Flowers in front of the Oslo Synagogue memorialize Dan Uzan, who was shot and killed while guarding a synagogue in Copenhagen, Denmark, February 21, 2015.



Ryan Rodrick Beiler

Young Muslim women stand hand-in-hand with more than 1,000 Norwegians of all faiths, in front of the Oslo Synagogue, during the 'Ring of Peace' vigil, February 21, 2015. The vigil was organized by Muslim youth in solidarity with Norway's Jewish community following anti-Jewish attacks in Denmark and other parts of Europe.



*Ryan Rodrick Beiler*

A young Muslim embraces a member of the Oslo Jewish community following the 'Ring of Peace' vigil, February 21, 2015.



*Ryan Rodrick Beiler*

*Advert*

Hundreds of Norwegians of all faiths and ethnicities link hands to form the 'Solidarity Ring for Muslims', in front of an Oslo mosque.



*Ryan Rodrick Beiler*

A woman draped in a Palestinian flag holds hands with others forming the 'Solidarity Ring for Muslims' at an Oslo mosque.



*Ryan Rodrick Beiler*

Mehtab Afsar, secretary general of the Islamic Council of Norway greets Ervin Kohn, president of the Jewish Community of Oslo, at the 'Solidarity Ring for Muslims'. The previous week, Muslim youth had organized a 'Ring of Peace' at Kohn's synagogue in Oslo.



*Ryan Rodrick Beiler*

Member of the Muslim community listen as a local priest speaks to those gathered for the 'Solidarity Ring for Muslims'.

*Ryan Rodrick Beiler is a freelance photojournalist and a member of the Activestills collective.*

<https://frittord.no/en/news/freedom-of-expression-foundation-tribute-to-the-ring-of-peace>

Freedom of Expression Foundation Tribute to the Ring of Peace

April 17 2015

The young Muslim initiators behind the Ring of Peace are awarded the Freedom of Expression Foundation Tribute for their unique demonstration that mobilised a large number of citizens to form a protective ring around the country's Jews.



Photo: Ingar Storfjell, Scanpix

The initiators, consisting of a group of eight individuals between the ages of 17 and 37, are **Zeeshan Abdullah, Hajrah Arshad, Ali Chishti, Atif Jamil, Morad Jarodi, Mudassar Mehmood, Thomas Holgersen Daher Naustdal** and **Hassan Raja**.

The Freedom of Expression Foundation Tribute recognises remarkable efforts to promote free speech, often in connection with current events. Tributes are accompanied by a cash award of NOK 100 000.

The Tribute will be awarded at an event in the Fritt Ord Foundation's premises at Uranienborgveien 2 in Oslo on Friday, 17 April 2015, at 1.00 p.m. Guri Hjeltnes, Trustee of the Fritt Ord Foundation, will award the Tribute. Hajrah Arshad will give an acceptance speech on behalf of the Ring of Peace initiative.

In the wake of the terrorist attacks in Paris and Copenhagen, the group behind the Ring of Peace has taken a stand against anti-Semitism, which they felt was gaining disquieting momentum. "Islam means protecting our brothers and sisters, regardless of their religion. Islam means being above hatred and never sinking to the same level as those who hate. Islam means defending each other. Muslims want to show that we are strongly opposed to all forms of anti-Semitism, and that we are there to support the Jews. We will therefore form a human ring around the synagogue on 21 February," the group wrote on Facebook, urging everyone to come join them. Between 1.00 and 3.00 p.m., a multitude of people turned up to participate in this historic demonstration at the synagogue in Oslo. The initiative attracted a great deal of national and international attention.

The Fritt Ord Foundation is a private non-profit foundation that aspires to promote freedom of expression and public debate.

The Fritt Ord Foundation's Board is comprised of Georg Fr. Rieber-Mohn (Chair), Grethe Brochmann (Deputy Chair), Christian Bjelland, Liv Bliksrud, Alexandra Bech Gjørnv, Guri Hjeltnes, Frank Rossavik and Sigrun Slaggard.



See the list of previous recipients of the Freedom of Expression Foundation Tribute at: [www.frittord.no/priser/fritt-ords-honor](http://www.frittord.no/priser/fritt-ords-honor)

**Contact:**

Hajrah Arshad, Ring of Peace, Mobile: +47 970 25667

Guri Hjeltnes, Trustee of the Fritt Ord Foundation +47 464 10683

Bente Roalsvig, Project Director and Deputy Executive Director of the Fritt Ord Foundation, mobile: +47 916 13340

[News](#)