



Ministry of Culture

Action plan

# Action plan to combat discrimination and hatred towards Muslims

2020-2023





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2020-2023

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# Preface

Equality, inclusion, and diversity are important core values in Norwegian society. The Norwegian population is one of the populations in Europe with the most positive attitudes towards religious minorities.

However, surveys show that hostility, prejudice and negative attitudes towards Muslims are a real and growing problem in Norway. This is also the case in many other parts of the world, which have experienced an increase in discrimination against and attacks on Muslims. Several terrorist attacks abroad and in Norway, such as the attack on the Al-Noor mosque in Bærum in August 2019, have led to many Muslims feeling unsafe. The Norwegian Police Security Service's (PST) threat assessment in recent years has shown an increase in the threat from right-wing extremists in Norway.

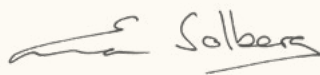
The government therefore decided to devise this action plan to combat discrimination and hatred towards Muslims. The aim of the action plan is to prevent and deter racism and discrimination against Muslims and persons believed to be Muslims. Norway must be a safe and good country to live in, regardless of religious affiliation. Facilitating dialogue and exchanges of views is one of the Norwegian government's key goals. Among other things, we will continue the dialogue with Muslim organisations about the situation for Muslims in Norway. The government would like to thank civil society for the positive dialogue and input to the action plan.

Freedom of speech is a basic human right and is enshrined in Section 100 of the Norwegian Constitution. The right to express oneself is a prerequisite for democracy and for the freedom of individuals. A free and good society therefore depends on the successful facilitation of a positive exchange of views where all parties show mutual respect for each other. The significant increase in the diversity of religion or belief in Norway in recent years is enriching for our society, but it will also entail criticism of religion, and this discourse is important. The rights of the individual are inviolable, and we must not tolerate any form of oppression. Discrimination is forbidden, and racism and hatred must be addressed.

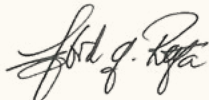
Most people in Norway support the Norwegian model of society. Democracy, equality and participation are values that have helped to create the Norway we know today. These dimensions are not constant, but must be created and recreated as part of a joint endeavour.

Everyone should be safe in their local environment, on the street, in the workplace, and online. Parents should be able to trust that their children are safe in the classroom, in the schoolyard, and when they participate in leisure activities. Individuals must be able to practise their faith within a safe framework.

Racism and discrimination rob people of the opportunity to live free lives, but we also know that our society has a strong resilience to hatred and discrimination. Through this action plan, the government wants to ensure security and equality for all members of society.



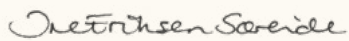
**Erna Solberg**  
*Prime Minister*



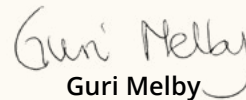
**Abid Q. Raja**  
*Minister of Culture and Equality*



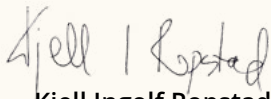
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**Guri Melby**  
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**Kjell Ingolf Ropstad**  
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# Introduction



Norway is a diverse society, and Muslims are part of this diversity. Statistics Norway has estimated that Muslims make up about four per cent of the Norwegian population.<sup>1</sup>

Islam consists of several different denominations, interpretations, practices, and forms of observance. Muslims in Norway, as in the rest of the world, have different backgrounds and live their lives in different ways when it comes to religious interpretation and practices. This diversity means that there are different understandings among Muslims in Norway of how they should live their lives, and how the Muslim identity can be combined with the Norwegian identity. The majority of Muslims are well integrated with Norwegian society and support the Norwegian model of society, where aspects such as freedom of speech and equality are crucial.<sup>2</sup>

Internationally, we are seeing a growing trend of discrimination and hatred towards various minority groups. Surveys show that Muslims face hostility, negative attitudes, and intolerance, and that this is a growing problem in Norway and many other parts of the world.<sup>3</sup> The public debate on Islam and Muslims has centred around topics such as international counter-terrorism and freedom of speech, especially in the wake of the terrorist attacks in the United States of America in 2001 and the cartoon controversy in 2005 and 2006.

In addition, inequality, negative social control, forced marriage, female genital mutilation, honour-related violence, negative attitudes towards the LGBTIQ community in conservative Muslim circles, and radical Islamism have been highlighted. The Norwegian government is working to combat criminality, such as violence, forced marriage, and extremism, and one of its goals is that everyone can live their life free from negative social control and that others respect how

individuals choose to live their life.

Muslims as a group are more complex than the public debate suggests, and one-dimensional debate can reinforce prejudice against and suspicion of Muslims. Being subject to negative prejudices and discrimination can lead to someone not wanting to participate in important arenas, such as in the public discourse. Consequently, society risks losing important voices and perspectives, and the debate becomes less nuanced.

### **The Norwegian Government's Action Plan against Racism and Discrimination on the Grounds of Ethnicity and Religion**

Several of the measures in *The Norwegian Government's Action Plan against Racism and Discrimination on the Grounds of Ethnicity and Religion (2020-2023)* are relevant to the work to combat discrimination and hatred towards Muslims. This applies in particular to the measures related to knowledge development, debate and democracy, and the establishment of meeting places. This action plan will strengthen the government's overall efforts to combat and prevent discrimination and hatred towards Muslims.

In the spring of 2020, racism and discrimination became a hot topic of debate both internationally and in Norway. Many shared their experiences of negative attitudes, racism, and hatred in various areas of society. The debate shows that there is a vast and vibrant commitment to combating negative discrimination and racism. This is also reflected in the Integration Barometer, which is the most comprehensive survey of attitudes to immigration and integration in Norway.<sup>4</sup> This survey shows that a large proportion of the population (84 per cent) believe that discrimination occurs to a large extent or to some extent in Norway. It also shows that eight out of ten

1 Statistics Norway 2017.

2 Nordseth and Klungtveit 2017.

3 Hoffmann and Moe 2017.

4 Brekke et al. 2020.

people support the claim that racism is unacceptable. This provides a good basis for a change in negative attitudes towards the Muslim population in Norway.

#### **UN resolution on religious intolerance**

In 2011, the UN adopted a resolution to combat intolerance, discrimination and incitement to violence against persons based on religion or belief. Religious intolerance is addressed through promoting the interrelated and mutually reinforcing rights to freedom of speech, freedom of religion or belief, and non-discrimination. From a human rights perspective, it is people who should be protected, not religions.

#### **UN Sustainable Development Goals**

In the autumn of 2015, the UN Member States adopted 17 goals for sustainable development by 2030. The Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) (also referred to as the Global Goals) regard the environment, economy, and social development as interrelated factors. The SDGs form the political superstructure for the government's work nationally and internationally and support the government's ambition for universal opportunities for progress and development.

The 17 SDGs are wide-ranging, and include health, education, gender equality, full employment, and sustained, inclusive and sustainable economic growth. Norway's work to promote freedom of religion or belief is in line with the guiding principle in the SDGs that 'no one should be left behind'. It also involves measures that challenge negative attitudes and discriminatory practices.

#### **Work on the action plan**

The Ministry of Culture is the coordinator of an inter-ministerial working group that heads up the work on the action plan. The plan has been implemented

under the auspices of the State Secretary Committee on Extremism, Racism and Hate Speech.

As part of the work on the plan, several meetings have been held in different parts of Norway with a wide range of organisations from civil society, religious communities, and specialist groups. At the meetings, the government has received input on measures in the plan as well as insight into challenges. The meetings have also raised the issue of local dialogue work and how various actors work to combat hatred and discrimination in the local community. The Ministry of Culture arranged input meetings in Oslo and Trondheim, however, due to the pandemic, the input meetings in Southern Norway and Northern Norway were cancelled, and the participants were invited to provide written input. The Ministry of Culture has also held several remote meetings and telephone conferences. In addition, the now former Minister of Culture and Gender Equality, Trine Skei Grande, attended a meeting under the auspices of Bergen local authority, where the purpose was to obtain input on both the government's action plan and on Bergen local authority's action plan to combat hatred towards Muslims.

A common feature of feedback from civil society is that there is little knowledge among the majority population about the diversity of Muslims in Norway. Many have indicated that a somewhat one-dimensional negative spotlight and lack of knowledge contribute to stigmatisation and prejudice.

The Muslim Dialogue Network and the Islamic Council Norway have also met with government representatives to discuss the challenges and potential solutions.

Responsible ministries fund measures in this plan within the current budget framework. New measures for 2021 must be covered in future budget proposals.

# Overview of the measures in the action plan



## Dialogue and meeting places

- 1** Grant scheme to combat racism, discrimination, and hate speech  
*Responsible: Ministry of Culture*
- 2** Strengthen the work by civil society to combat racism and discrimination  
*Responsible: Ministry of Education and Research*
- 3** Investigate the possibility for an advisory scheme for insight into Muslim identity  
*Responsible: Ministry of Culture*
- 4** Culture and sport as arenas for diversity and inclusion  
*Responsible: Ministry of Culture*
- 5** Exhibition on diversity among Muslims in Norway  
*Responsible: Ministry of Culture*
- 6** Exhibition on everyday racism  
*Responsible: Ministry of Culture*
- 7** The social contract for more apprenticeships  
*Responsible: Ministry of Education and Research*
- 8** Continued support for interfaith dialogue  
*Responsible: Ministry of Children and Families*
- 9** Support for a memorial and knowledge centre under the auspices of the 10 August Foundation  
*Responsible: Ministry of Education and Research*

## Safety and security

- 10** Hate crime against Muslims registered as a hate-based motive in the police criminal record system  
*Responsible: Ministry of Justice and Public Security*
- 11** Grant scheme for safety measures for religious or belief communities  
*Responsible: Ministry of Justice and Public Security*
- 12** Dialogue between the police and Muslim faith communities  
*Responsible: Ministry of Justice and Public Security*

## Knowledge and competence

- 13** Obtain more knowledge of discrimination against Muslims in the labour market  
*Responsible: Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs and Ministry of Education and Research*
- 14** Dissemination of knowledge about racism and discrimination  
*Responsible: Ministry of Culture and Ministry of Education and Research*
- 15** Research on the associations between perceptions of negative attitudes and discrimination against Muslims, their participation in various areas of society, and sense of belonging  
*Responsible: Ministry of Education and Research*

## Efforts outside Norway

- 16** Continue Norway's comprehensive focus on freedom of religion or belief and the rights of religious or belief minorities  
*Responsible: Ministry of Foreign Affairs*
- 17** Continue to include freedom of religion or belief and consideration for religious minorities in the Universal Periodic Reviews (UPRs) of the UN Human Rights Council  
*Responsible: Ministry of Foreign Affairs*
- 18** Strengthen the contact with OSCE/ODIHR on the work in the field of religious minorities  
*Responsible: Ministry of Foreign Affairs*

# Muslims in Norway

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### History of Muslims in Norway

The history of Muslims in Norway is largely linked to recent Norwegian immigration history. Economic growth and an increased demand for labour led to significant labour immigration to Norway from the late 1960s and onwards. This period also saw the first arrival of immigrants from countries where Islam is the main religion, such as Turkey and Pakistan. This immigration lasted until 1975, when the Norwegian parliament, Storting, introduced an immigration freeze.

The first labour migrants were mainly men who wanted to work in Norway for a short period before returning to their home countries. However, many chose to stay, and eventually their spouses and children also came to settle here. Over the years, many Muslims have organised themselves into religious communities and established mosques and Quranic schools.

Unrest, war, and conflict around the world led to an increase in immigration to Norway throughout the 1980s, and individuals and families came to Norway as refugees or asylum seekers. These immigrants stemmed from countries such as Iran, Somalia, Afghanistan, Bosnia, Albania, and Iraq. In recent years, the war in Syria and the rise in refugees and migrants from North Africa and the Middle East have led to an increase in the number of Muslims in Norway.

Some of the largest groups of immigrants in Norway have their origins in countries where the majority of the population are Muslims (such as Somalia, Pakistan, Syria, and Iraq). However, the religious or belief affiliation of an immigrant will not always correspond to the religious or belief profile in their country of origin. On the contrary, religion or belief may be the very reason why some chose to leave their homeland. In Statistics Norway's living conditions survey of people with an immigrant background from 2009, two out of three immigrants from Bosnia-Herzegovina state that they were brought up in the Muslim faith, while Muslims made up 40 per cent of the population in Bosnia according to official

statistics.<sup>5</sup> Conversely, there were far fewer people with a background from Iran who stated that they were raised in the Muslim faith, despite the fact that 98.4 per cent of the population in Iran are Muslims.<sup>6</sup>

In other words, Muslims in Norway stem from very different countries and have different immigration histories. Some have immigrated to Norway, some are descendants of immigrants, and some have converted to Islam. Although the history of Muslims in Norway is closely linked to recent immigration history, many Muslims today are Norwegian-born. Furthermore, it is estimated that the number of Muslim converts is about 3,000.<sup>7</sup>

### A diverse Muslim population

Religious diversity has increased in Norway. According to figures from Statistics Norway, the number of people affiliated with religious or belief communities outside the Church of Norway has increased from about 110,000 in the early 1970s to around 680,000 in 2019.<sup>8</sup> The main reason for the increase is immigration. The Norwegian Cultural Barometer 2016 shows that about 16 per cent of the entire population are not members of a religious or belief community.<sup>9</sup>

As in the rest of the world, Muslims in Norway represent a large diversity of religious traditions and practices. In Norway, there are just over 200 Muslim faith communities, which in total have over 175,000 members. The number of members in Muslim faith communities has increased in recent years. However, these figures do not show to what extent immigrants from countries with a Muslim majority population identify as Muslims. There is also variation in how the religion is practised. Statistics Norway's living conditions survey of immigrants shows that 36 per cent of Muslim immigrants never participate in religious meetings, while 25 per cent participate weekly.<sup>10</sup> It is believed

5 Daugstad and Østby 2009.

6 Lodgaard et al. 2020.

7 Østby and Dalgard 2017.

8 Statistics Norway 2019.

9 Vaage 2017.

10 Barstad 2019.



that many Muslims in Norway are not members of any religious community.<sup>11</sup>

It is estimated that the vast majority of Muslims in Norway are Sunni, while a minority of about 15–20 per cent is believed to be Shiite. There are also believed to be approximately 1,700 Ahmadiyya Muslims in Norway.

The 'madhab' schools of law are not the only arena where differences can be found; a person's sense of cultural attachment to the country they are from or have immigrated to also impacts on how they practise Islam.

Obtaining knowledge about the population's personal relationship to religion is a challenge, and this also applies to Muslims' relationship to Islam.

<sup>11</sup> Statistics Norway 2017.

It is reasonable to assume that practising Muslims, Norwegians with a Muslim identity, and/or people with a cultural background from a Muslim country will all be represented among those who are registered as part of a religious community as well as those who are not.

Although many Muslims participate in activities arranged by mosques or Muslim faith communities of which they are a member, there is no requirement in most cases for participants to be members. There are also no studies that map how many people consider their relationship to Islam as a conscious religious choice or as part of their cultural background. For many, the path into Islam is influenced by their family, local community, and network. There are also cases where cultural traditions spill into and get mixed in with religious practices and belief.

## Islam

Islam is the second largest of the world religions (after Christianity), with an estimated 1.7 billion followers (2017). Like Christianity and Judaism, Islam is a monotheistic religion, where there is only one God (Allah). Belief in the Quran as the word of God, and Muhammad as God's greatest and last prophet, is fundamental in Islam.

The Quran is the holy book of Islam and contains the revelations that the Prophet Muhammad received from the year 610 AD up to his death in 632. Islam's doctrine, ethics and jurisprudence are based on the Quran.

Anyone who professes Islam is called a Muslim. The Islamic community ('ummah') can be divided into two main groups: Sunni Islam and Shia Islam. Sunni Muslims make up the majority, about 85 per cent. About 15 per cent are divided into several Shia Muslim groups. Sunni and Shia Islam have a number of differences in doctrine and practice, but share many fundamental beliefs and practices and are referred to as one community. Sufism, which is a mystical Islamic belief and practice, is found in both Shia Islam and Sunni Islam.

The five basic religious duties of Islam, also called the five pillars of Islam, are:

1. Profession of faith ('shahada')
2. Prayer ('salah')
3. Alms ('zakat')
4. Fasting ('sawm')
5. Pilgrimage to Mecca ('hajj')

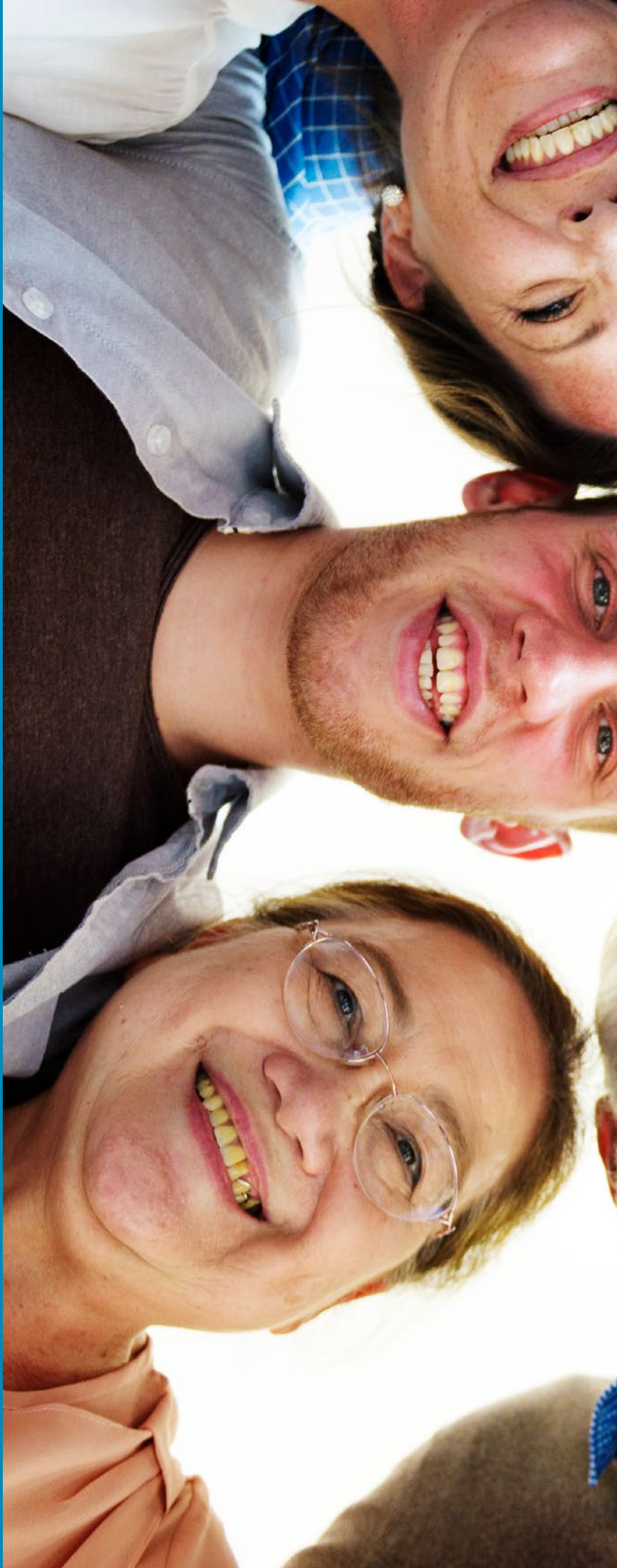
There are various schools of law in Islam. Various reform movements question the validity of established interpretations of the law.<sup>1</sup> In recent times, authority and women's contributions to the interpretation of Islamic sources have been debated. Theological colleges have been established for women, both in the Sunni and Shia Muslim communities.

Source: Vogt 2019.

<sup>1</sup> Butler and Hoffmann (eds., 2008), p. 170 and Lewis, Pellat and Schacht (eds., 1991), p. 891.

# Challenges

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Research shows that hostility, prejudice, and negative attitudes towards Muslims are a problem in Norway and internationally.

In the last ten years, right-wing extremists with anti-immigrant attitudes have carried out two serious terrorist attacks in Norway: the attack on the Al-Noor mosque in Bærum and the racist motivated murder of the terrorist's sister on 10 August 2019, and the attacks on the government building complex and on Utøya on 22 July 2011. In 1985, a bomb was detonated at the Ahmadiyya Muslim mosque at Frogner in Oslo. According to the Norwegian Police Security Service's (PST) threat assessment for 2020, the threat from right-wing extremism in Norway has developed in a negative direction during 2019. During the trial after the attack in Bærum, it was revealed that the terrorist attack had made more people in the Muslim community feel unsafe and insecure in connection with prayer time in the mosques. Some have stopped attending the mosque due to the attack. This was also confirmed during input meetings in connection with the work on this action plan, where it was noted that fear of a terrorist attack and threats meant that some Muslims are no longer going to mosques or taking part in religious celebrations.

### Anti-Muslim hostility

The Norwegian Center for Holocaust and Minority Studies (the HL Center) defines hostility towards Muslims as widespread negative prejudices, as well as acts and practices that attack, exclude or discriminate against people on the grounds that they are or are believed to be Muslims.<sup>12</sup>

### The population's attitudes and media coverage

Discrimination and negative attitudes can be expressed in various arenas, such as in the workplace, at school, online, and in dealings with public support services. In December 2017, the Norwegian Center for Holocaust and Minority Studies (the HL Center)

published *Attitudes towards Jews and Muslims in Norway 2017*, a report based on their population survey.

The report shows that approximately 27 per cent of respondents expressed anti-Muslim attitudes. About 30 per cent believe that 'Muslims want to take over Europe' and almost 40 per cent support the claim that 'Muslims pose a threat to Norwegian culture'. The statement 'Muslims do not want to integrate into Norwegian society' is supported by 42 per cent of the population. The report shows that anti-Muslim attitudes are more common among men, the elderly, and people with a low level of education.

Almost half of those who responded to the HL Center's survey support the statement 'Muslims largely have themselves to blame for the increasing anti-Muslim harassment.' Terrorism was the single factor that most respondents referred to as the explanation of negative views of Muslims. Many also state that the view of women in Islam or among Muslims is one of the reasons for negative views of Muslims. Nearly 70 per cent of respondents supported the statement that 'Muslims oppress women'. Many also refer to media reports as a reason for negative attitudes towards Muslims.

The HL Center's report shows that approximately 35 per cent of Muslims 'often or sometimes' have been made to feel that they do not belong in Norwegian society. 27 per cent have experienced people behaving negatively towards them when they learn of their religious affiliation, while 14 per cent have been directly subjected to harassment. The survey reveals that Muslims believe there is a negative trend and think that prejudice in the Norwegian population against these groups has become more prevalent in the past five years.

Fafo's report *Norwegians' attitudes towards gender equality, hate speech and the instruments of gender equality policy* from 2019 shows that just under 30 per cent of the population believe that it is not possible for Muslims to become Norwegian, even if they live

<sup>12</sup> Hoffmann and Moe 2017, p. 25.

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in Norway for a long time.<sup>13</sup> There are also many in the population who believe that Muslim immigration is significantly higher than it actually is. One-third of the respondents answered in line with Statistics Norway's estimate that Muslims make up about four per cent of the population, while one in four believe that the proportion is 16 per cent or more. Those who overestimate the proportion of Muslims in the population are more critical to immigration than others.

Retriever's media analysis from 2017, *Islam and Muslims in the Norwegian media*, addresses the coverage of Islam and Muslims in the Norwegian media in 2016. The survey showed that Islam and Muslims were one of the most discussed topics in editorial media this year, and received more coverage than oil prices, Brexit and the housing market combined.<sup>14</sup> Eleven per cent of the total coverage leaves a predominantly negative impression of Islam and Muslims. Almost half of the articles on Islam and Muslims in national and regional newspapers were about the situation in other countries, and more than 60 per cent of these articles on foreign affairs related to Islamist terror, IS, foreign fighters, and radical Islamism. One of the main findings is that the press exercises a consistent use of terms and rarely equates Muslims with terrorism. Furthermore, the analysis shows that the most prominent topic in 16 per cent of the articles about Islam and Muslims in a Norwegian context was what Retriever describes as 'criticism of Islam', especially in the form of reader contributions. Seven out of ten reader contributions with Islamic criticism as a theme were written by men. Muslim men most often speak on behalf of religious communities, while Muslim women almost exclusively speak as social debaters and ordinary citizens. The imams are not very visible in the Islamic debate. Imams express their views in three per cent of the total coverage of Islam and Muslims in the survey.

<sup>13</sup> Tyldum 2019, p. 79.

<sup>14</sup> Strand 2017.

### **The situation internationally**

There are several worrying developments internationally. We are seeing an increase in cases of discrimination and hatred towards various minorities and groups. These can take the form of hate speech, harassment, violent attacks, or laws and/or the exercising of authority that constitutes discriminatory attitudes or practices. A weakening of the rule of law more generally will also diminish the protection of minorities.

Discrimination or persecution can take place on the basis of, for example, ethnicity, gender, functional ability, sexual orientation, gender identity, gender expression, age, religion, or a combination of these. Regardless of the cause of discrimination and persecution, defending democracy and human rights as a whole is the best basis for counteracting such tendencies and practices, and for being able to hold those responsible to account.

International surveys show an increase in recent years in the incidence of discrimination against and attacks on religious minorities in many parts of the world.<sup>15</sup> According to the Pew Research Center, most countries have registered cases of attacks on Christians and Muslims. This is partly explained by the fact that these religions have the largest followings in the world and that they are practised in a large number of countries. There are also several cases where people belonging to different Muslim groups are subject to discrimination or attacks in countries with a Muslim majority. A well-known example of this is the treatment of the Ahmadiyya minority in South Asia and parts of the Middle East.

Discrimination and harassment of Muslims are also a common occurrence in our own part of the world. According to a survey by the Pew Research Center, cases of discrimination against Muslims by the authorities or harassment were reported in more than 80 per cent of European countries. A survey of the

<sup>15</sup> Pew Research Center 2019.

situation in the EU from 2017 showed that about four out of ten Muslims felt subject to discrimination in connection with work, education, housing, health, or other public and private services. On the positive side, 75 per cent of the respondents answered that they felt a strong connection to the country they lived in, and their trust in public institutions, including the police and the judiciary, was somewhat higher than for the general population.<sup>16</sup>

The Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE) has also registered an increase in the intolerance and discrimination against Muslims in Europe in recent years.<sup>17</sup> The OSCE puts this down to the growing focus on the fight against terrorism, the global economic crisis in 2008, concerns about national identity and the challenges of tackling increased diversity in many societies. In some cases, this has been reinforced by the use of language in the media and in political discussions that reflects intolerance. As a result, many Muslims are increasingly experiencing various forms of discrimination, harassment, hate speech, and attacks. Several surveys of Muslims in Europe, including Norway, do not distinguish between discrimination based on ethnicity, religion or, for example, immigration background. It can therefore be difficult to conclude with any certainty whether discrimination is based on religion alone, or is a combination of several factors. For those who are subject to discrimination or harassment, the negative effect is just as great, and it is therefore just as unacceptable from the point of view of society.

### **Consequences of racism and discrimination**

Hatred and discrimination against Muslims affect various parties; not only those directly involved, but also groups and society as a whole. The Official Norwegian Report *Integration and trust — Long-term consequences of high immigration*<sup>18</sup> sheds light on various consequences of racism and discrimination.

16 European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights 2017.

17 Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe 2020a, Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe 2020b.

18 NOU 2017: 2.

For the individual, racism and discrimination can lead to exclusion, lower social mobility, and psychological distress. Discrimination is a barrier to integration and good living conditions, participation in the labour market, and achievement based on a person's education and resources. It can also affect the trust of different population groups towards each other.

Discrimination can be experienced in different arenas at the same time, thereby reinforcing marginalisation and exclusion.

Discrimination can have a negative impact on a person's health. In 2019, the Norwegian Institute of Public Health conducted a study to investigate how perceived ethnic discrimination is related to health and well-being. The study, which is based on data from Statistics Norway's living conditions survey of immigrants from 2016, shows that discrimination caused psychological problems in most immigrant groups.<sup>19</sup> The proportion who reported psychological problems was twice as high among those who had experienced discrimination than those who had not. The correlation between psychological problems and perceived discrimination was stronger among those who generally had little trust in other people, and among those who did not have a strong affiliation to Norway as a country.<sup>20</sup> A survey of Muslims in France, the United Kingdom, and Germany showed that anti-Islamic attitudes have a negative impact on Muslims' mental health. Muslims who felt that the majority population feared them, reported higher rates of anxiety and stress.<sup>21</sup>

Being subject to hatred and discrimination can reduce a person's belief in their own opportunities. One of the topics of the research project 'Radicalisation and resistance' is young Muslims' experiences with negative attitudes.<sup>22</sup> The study shows how young Muslims feel continuous pressure

19 Ministry of Culture 2019, p. 11.

20 Kjøllestad et al. 2019.

21 Kunst et al. 2013.

22 Banafsheh et al. (forthcoming).

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to defend being a Muslim and Islam as a religion. As many as 67 of the 90 young Muslims interviewed had experienced harassment, often in the form of insults and derogatory comments. Some had stopped

wearing visible religious garments or symbols. The young people found the harassment particularly difficult when it came from family, friends, or acquaintances.





# Legislation and policies of special relevance







Below is an overview of international commitments, national legislation, and some of the government's efforts that are relevant to this action plan. The overview is not exhaustive.

### Supranational legislation

The prohibition against discrimination follows from the EEA regulations and international conventions to which Norway has acceded, for example the UN International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination (ICERD).

### The Norwegian Constitution and human rights

The principle of equality and non-discrimination is laid down in Section 98 of the Norwegian Constitution, which states that all people are equal under the law and that no human being must be subject to unfair or disproportionate differential treatment.

In the work to combat hatred and discrimination against Muslims, both the right to freedom of religion and freedom of speech are important. Section 16 of the Norwegian Constitution provides for the freedom of religion of all inhabitants of the realm. The right to free thought, conscience, religion, and conviction is a fundamental right for humans, and is therefore considered to hold a special position in human rights. Freedom of speech, which is enshrined in Section 100 of the Norwegian Constitution, is also a fundamental human right. The European Court of Human Rights (ECHR) has ruled in its case law that freedom of speech, religion, thought, and conscience is a prerequisite for a democratic society. Neither freedom of religion nor freedom of speech is without legal restrictions.

### The Penal Code

Section 185 of the Norwegian Penal Code<sup>23</sup> deals

<sup>23</sup> In *Proposition to the Storting 66 L (2019-2020) Amendments to the Penal Code etc. (duty to prevent, extrajudicial forced marriage, protection against discrimination, shooting at the police, etc.)*, the government proposed amendments to Section 185 and 186 of the Penal Code in the form of, inter alia, extending the scope of the provisions to also apply to discrimination on the basis of a person's gender identity or gender expression. The proposed changes will be discussed in the Storting in autumn 2020.

with discriminatory and hateful statements directed at someone because of their skin colour, national or ethnic origin, religion, life stance, homosexual orientation, or functional impairment. Whether a specific statement is covered by Section 185 of the Penal Code will only be determined after a closer assessment in light of the freedom of speech. In case law, a distinction is made between critical statements about a religion and speech that attacks one or more people because of their faith. The Supreme Court has ruled that criticism of religion is at the heart of freedom of speech and that such criticism, as the clear main rule, can therefore be presented with impunity. Even very derogatory statements about religion and religious practices are protected by freedom of speech, despite the potential for them to cause offence. Similarly, criticism of religion that is expressed through images or symbolic actions will not normally be punishable, even if it causes offence and upset.

Personal attacks are not subject to the same constitutional protection as criticism of religion. The Supreme Court has handed down sanctions in several cases relating to particularly offensive speech directed at religious minorities in Norway. 'Particularly offensive speech' is typically considered to be statements that involve serious disparagement of a group's human dignity or that encourage or endorse breaches of integrity. In January 2020, the Supreme Court upheld a verdict against a person who had made such a statement in a closed Facebook group with several thousand members. Punishing a person who launches a personal attack on someone because of their religion will not weaken the free and open criticism of religion that freedom of speech seeks to protect. Several examples of court decisions that pertain to Section 185 of the Penal Code are given at [www.hatytringer.no](http://www.hatytringer.no).

Section 186 of the Penal Code covers the refusal of commercial or similar goods or services to someone due to their skin colour or national or ethnic origin,

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religion or life stance, homosexual orientation, or disability. A decision by the Supreme Court's Appeals Selection Committee in 2017 concerned a hairdresser who refused a Muslim woman hairdressing services solely because she wore a hijab. The Court of Appeal had convicted her of violating Section 186 of the Penal Code. The Appeals Selection Committee in the Supreme Court agreed with the Court of Appeal that the hijab must be regarded as a religious symbol and that the refusal was thus within the scope of Section 186 of the Penal Code.

### **The Equality and Anti-Discrimination Act**

The purpose of this Act is to promote equality and prevent discrimination on the basis of, inter alia, ethnicity, religion or belief. The law provides discrimination protection for both the majority and minority populations, but aims in particular to improve the position of women and minorities. Religion or belief are independent and equal grounds of discrimination. The Equality and Anti-Discrimination Act also contains an independent prohibition on intersectional discrimination, where the discrimination takes place due to a combination of grounds of discrimination. In many cases, discrimination is not only related to ethnicity or religion, but also, for example, to gender or sexual orientation. This can reinforce the discrimination some people experience.

Employers and public authorities have an important role to play in facilitating equality. The Equality and Anti-Discrimination Act has a separate chapter on active equality work, and in 2020, employers and public authorities were given a reinforced responsibility to work with equality and non-discrimination in the workplace and as public authorities.

### **The government's priority areas**

In December 2019, the government launched the *Action Plan against Racism and Discrimination on the Grounds of Ethnicity and Religion 2020–2023*. The action plan will contribute to renewed and strengthened efforts in the fight against racism and discrimination. Most of the 50 measures in the plan are relevant to the challenges faced by Muslims in Norway today, and several of the measures relate to Muslims directly.

The government has several other initiatives of significance for this action plan, such as the following strategies and action plans: *Integration through knowledge (2019–2022)*, *Action Plan against Anti-Semitism (2016–2020)*, *Strategy against Hate Speech (2016–2020)*, and *Action Plan against Radicalisation and Violent Extremism (2014, revised 2020)*. As a measure in the *Action Plan against Racism and Discrimination on the Grounds of Ethnicity and Religion*, a coordinating State Secretary Committee has been established. The committee will consider the government's efforts against extremism, racism, and hate speech in conjunction with each other and ensure synergy effects. The committee will consider establishing a joint youth panel to address the aforementioned societal challenges.

The Freedom of Speech Commission, which was appointed in 2020, is also relevant in this context. Part of the commission's mandate is to 'problematise the distinction between offensive speech that is not protected by freedom of speech and speech that is protected, but which can nevertheless be perceived as problematic because it reduces the affected group's real opportunities for expression and democratic participation'.<sup>24</sup>

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<sup>24</sup> Ministry of Culture 2020.





## Dialogue and meeting places

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A well-functioning democracy is characterised by, inter alia, freedom of speech and the opportunity for everyone to use their resources and to be able to cope in interpersonal interactions.

Cooperation and dialogue across religions or beliefs and other types of meeting places, for example in voluntary work, sport, and cultural life, create communities that provide positive conditions for respect, knowledge, and understanding.

In the 'Forum on Anti-Muslim hostility', representatives from the government and the Muslim population meet to inform each other about issues that are relevant to the situation of Muslims in Norway, especially with regard to discrimination, racism, and extremism. The forum was established as an initiative in the *Action Plan against Racism and Discrimination on the Grounds of Ethnicity and Religion*.

### Interfaith dialogue

The living conditions survey of people with an immigrant background shows that religiously active immigrants do more voluntary work and have somewhat stronger trust in other people compared to those who are less active.<sup>25</sup> Religion can promote adaptation to a new society. Connecting with religious or belief communities can give access to social networks and information about society.

Interfaith dialogue is an arena for exchanging views about different aspects of religion or belief and associated practices. The diversity of religions or belief can involve value-based conflicts or tensions. Dialogue between religious or belief communities may be an important tool in learning how to live in a community with different views or to curb or prevent conflict between different religious or belief communities, as well as in society in general. Interfaith dialogue has provided important input to the public discourse, including a sense of trust and commonality across religions or beliefs.

<sup>25</sup> Barstad 2019.

For many years, the state has provided financial support for interfaith dialogue, both locally and nationally. The Ministry of Children and Families provides operating grants to dialogue and umbrella organisations in the field of religion or belief. The Council for Religious and Life Stance Communities in Norway (STL) and the Christian Council of Norway are dialogue partners and bridge-builders between different religious or belief communities, other organisations in the field of religion or belief, civil society, and the public sector. STL, the Christian Council of Norway, and the Muslim Dialogue Network also receive financial support for measures aimed at strengthening the work with diversity, inclusion, and poverty reduction. The Ministry of Children and Families also awards individual grants for dialogue measures, public debate, and knowledge development in the field of religion or belief. Measures under the auspices of or in collaboration with Muslim organisations or religious communities are given priority.

The course 'Being a religious leader in Norway' at the Faculty of Theology at the University of Oslo brings together leaders of different faith traditions to learn about and discuss various issues related to being a religious leader in Norway. The course is primarily aimed at religious leaders with a non-Norwegian background, but ministers from the Church of Norway also participate.

### The feast after the fast

In 2020, the Muslim festival, 'Eid al-Fitr', was affected by the infection control measures related to the coronavirus pandemic. Through the television programme 'Festen etter fasten' ('the feast after the fast'), the public broadcaster NRK helped give Norwegian Muslims a shared experience during the pandemic, while also providing knowledge about Muslim traditions. This was the first time a Western European broadcaster showed a programme of this nature.

### **Cooperation between Muslim organisations and local stakeholders**

Muslim communities and local authorities cooperate in various arenas throughout Norway. In some cases, this cooperation has become part of the work to prevent radicalisation and violent extremism. In the work, considerable emphasis is placed on broad cooperation across sectors, and here, particular reference is made to the importance of the cooperation that has been developed between the police and the local authority through police councils and the SLT model.<sup>26</sup> A study by the Centre for Research on Civil Society and Voluntary Sector at the Institute for Social Research shows that mosques play an important role in the efforts to prevent radicalisation.<sup>27</sup> Several religious communities work with the authorities on measures to prevent exclusion, and they believe that the cooperation works well.

Local efforts to combat radicalisation and exclusion has generated more knowledge and raised awareness of how negative attitudes and discrimination affect Muslims.

This was part of the reason why, in 2019, Bergen local authority decided to devise an action plan to combat hatred and discrimination against Muslims. In Kristiansand, there has been a long-standing cooperation between the Muslim communities, local authorities, and the police. The local authority has actively helped to bring inclusion and democratic participation into focus. During its annual event, 'A city for all', the local authority and other actors create awareness around equality, inclusion, and diversity.

### **Support for the 10 August Foundation**

Since the attack in 2019, the Al-Noor mosque in Bærum has worked in collaboration with the 22 July Centre, among others, to create an exhibition and a knowledge centre based on the terrorist incidents. The centre works to combat radicalisation and to protect human rights and freedom of speech.

### **Meeting places**

Meeting places are a key priority area in the *Action Plan against Racism and Discrimination on the Grounds of Ethnicity and Religion*. This includes dialogue meetings where discrimination and hatred towards Muslims will be addressed.

A number of organisations are working specifically to counteract racism and discrimination both locally and nationally. For example, 16 organisations receive grants for national resource groups in the area of integration in 2020. These national resource groups play a key role in monitoring immigration and integration.

The culture, sport and voluntary sector plays an important role in a well-functioning democracy. These are arenas that promote community, tolerance, and social participation. It is a goal that everybody should see these arenas as relevant and as providing equal opportunities for participation. Policy development in this area should be based on a broad definition of the concept of diversity.

Racism in sport and the lack of ethnic diversity in senior sport management were brought under the spotlight in the spring of 2020. A number of prominent athletes came forward to share their experience of racism. In the summer of 2020, the Ministry of Culture appointed a working group to investigate how racism in sport can be combatted. The working group submitted its recommendations in September of this year.

<sup>26</sup> Coordination of local drug and crime prevention measures.

<sup>27</sup> Winsvold et al. 2017.

The government grants support to seven peace and human rights centres that each in their own way help strengthen freedom of speech and tolerance and communicate democratic values and attitudes. These are the Centre for Holocaust and Minority Studies, the Falstad Centre, the ARKIVET Foundation, the Nansen Peace Centre, the Narvik Centre, the European Wergeland Centre, and the Rafto Foundation.

Since 2014, the government has granted support to 'Stopp hatprat' ('Stop hate speech'), a campaign that targets young people and adults and seeks to raise awareness of and commitment to stopping hate speech. Moreover, in 2019 and 2020, the government has granted support to Salam, an organisation for gay Muslims. Moreover, activities that can improve conditions for LGBTIQ persons with immigrant backgrounds are a prioritised area in the grant scheme to ensure better living conditions and quality of life for lesbian, gay, and transgender, intersex, and queer persons.

### **Kindergartens and schools as arenas that promote democratic values and attitudes**

Kindergartens and schools should provide safe arenas for play and learning, where everybody should feel that they are included. Everybody should be treated equally, and nobody should be subjected to discrimination. The framework plan for kindergartens stipulates that the staff should prevent, stop and follow up on discrimination, exclusion, bullying, harassment, and unhealthy patterns of interaction.

The general part of the curriculum states that schools should promote democratic values and attitudes. Schools should impart historic and cultural insight and

affiliation, and help each student uphold and develop their identity in an inclusive and diverse community. They should foster attitudes that counteract prejudice and discrimination. Schools should also promote respect for human diversity, and pupils should learn to solve conflicts by peaceful means.

Chapter 9 of the Education Act states clearly that zero tolerance should prevail against offences such as bullying, violence, discrimination, and harassment in schools. The general part of the curriculum stresses that schools should be inclusive communities that promote health, wellbeing, and learning for all. Since the schools' remit includes personal development as well as education, social learning and subject-specific learning will be closely interconnected. Schools should therefore support and encourage their pupils' social learning and development through work with the subjects and in the interaction in the school setting in general. This means that the pupils should learn about equality, democracy, human rights, and efforts against racism, and promote inclusion in the subjects, while also experiencing this through school practices.

'Democratic preparedness against racism and anti-Semitism' (Dembra) is a national initiative for schools involving competence enhancement in prevention of anti-Semitism, racism, and undemocratic attitudes. Its target groups include teachers, school leaders, teacher trainers, and student teachers. For many years, Dembra has targeted lower and upper secondary schools and teacher training institutions. From 2020, the primary level has been included in the initiative. The website [www.dembra.no](http://www.dembra.no) provides specific teaching and background material to schools and teacher training institutions.



## Measures

### 1 Grant scheme to combat racism, discrimination, and hate speech

The government will establish a dedicated grant scheme against racism, discrimination, and hate speech. The objective of the grant scheme will be to facilitate local, regional, and national engagement and support initiatives and activities that seek to promote diversity and dialogue, and counteract racism, discrimination, and hate speech.

*Responsible: Ministry of Culture*

### 2 Strengthen the work by civil society to combat racism and discrimination

Efforts against racism and discrimination and for diversity in local communities shall be strengthened through the 'Grants for local immigrant organisations and voluntary activity in local communities' scheme, which is administered by the Norwegian Directorate of Integration and Diversity and 20 local councils and open to applications from NGOs. A new goal for this purpose will be added to the grant scheme.

*Responsible: Ministry of Education and Research*

### 3 Investigate the possibility for an advisory scheme for insight into Muslim identity

The government will undertake a feasibility study of an advisory scheme for insight into Muslim identity based on the methodology for the Sami and Jewish Pathfinders. The goal of the project in question is to dismantle prejudices against and discrimination and hatred towards Muslims through dissemination of knowledge on Muslim identity, belonging, culture, and society in Norway. Bridge-building, democratic citizenship, and diversity among Muslims shall be emphasised. The project shall have a clear dialogue-based profile and target young people.

The report will draw on the knowledge base for the Sami and Jewish Pathfinders, as well as relevant dialogue initiatives. The report shall also give an account of the financial and administrative consequences of such a scheme.

*Responsible: Ministry of Culture*

### 4 Culture and sport as arenas for diversity and inclusion

The Ministry of Culture wants to strengthen the diversity in the arts, culture, sport, and voluntary sector. The goal is that everybody, irrespective of, for instance, gender, ethnicity, religion, sexual orientation, functional ability and/or socioeconomic background and place of residence, shall perceive these arenas as relevant and as providing equal opportunities for participation. For example, the Ministry of Culture has strengthened the efforts of the Arts Council Norway for more diversity within arts and culture. In 2020, the Arts Council Norway was given the role of national coordinator for more diversity, inclusion, and participation in the culture sector.

*Responsible: Ministry of Culture*

### 5 Exhibition on diversity among Muslims in Norway

The Norwegian Directorate for Children, Youth and Family Affairs will be charged with preparing an exhibition on persons with a Muslim identity in Norway. The objective of the exhibition is to raise awareness of the diversity among Norwegian Muslims when it comes to, for example, identity, religious practices, and culture. This will be achieved through a physical or digital exhibition of images and quotes that communicate the experience of being a Muslim in Norway. The target group will include the general public.

*Responsible: Ministry of Culture*

### 6 Exhibition on everyday racism

In 2021, the Norwegian Centre for Holocaust and Minority Studies will open a new exhibition on everyday racism. The exhibition will combine personal experience narratives with research-based knowledge on racism in the past and present. The exhibition will give a voice to those who experience racism in everyday life in various forms, and place these experiences in a historic, social, and cultural context. The target group for the exhibition is school classes from the middle level and up, as well as the general public. The exhibition is intended to establish a broader understanding of racism through an 'insider perspective' and through active use of art in various forms.

The Ministry of Culture will provide financial support to the exhibition.

*Responsible: Ministry of Culture*

### 7 The social contract for more apprenticeships

A completed upper secondary education is important for each individual's ability to adapt and for a permanent affiliation with a competence-intensive labour market. More pupils need to complete a craft or journeyman's certificate. Availability of apprenticeships is crucial to achieving this goal.

The social contract for more apprenticeships is based on tripartite collaboration and is a

joint strategy to concentrate active efforts to offer apprenticeships to more applicants by recruiting more enterprises and organisations to the apprentice scheme. It is a desire for discrimination to be made a special topic in the preparations for the renewal of the social contract. These efforts are planned to start in early 2021.

*Responsible: Ministry of Education and Research*

### 8 Continued support for interfaith dialogue

The Ministry of Children and Families will continue to support interfaith dialogue and cooperation between different religious communities and denominations to prevent polarisation and hate speech on the basis of religion or belief. Initiatives by or in cooperation with Muslim communities and organisations are given priority.

*Responsible: Ministry of Children and Families*

### 9 Support for a memorial and knowledge centre under the auspices of the 10 August Foundation

The 10 August Foundation is granted start-up support to enable development of a memorial and knowledge centre. The terrorist attack against the Al-Noor Islamic Centre in Bærum on 10 August 2019 will form the basis for the centre's communication to the public.

*Responsible: Ministry of Education and Research*



Muhammed Rafiq (left) and Mohammad Iqbal were in 2020 awarded the Medal for Heroism for their deeds during the attack on the Al-Noor mosque in Bærum, Norway. Credit: Ole Berg-Rusten / NTB





# Safety and security

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### **The authorities' responsibility to ensure security**

The authorities have the general responsibility for ensuring the security of all of the country's citizens and for enacting special measures for groups who are exposed to special risk. Feedback from civil society in association with the preparation of this plan shows that prejudice, anti-Muslim attitudes, and racism give rise to a sense of insecurity among Muslims. Some experience negative comments, and young women can be exposed to harassment for wearing religious headwear.

The threat from right-wing extremists has developed in a negative direction in Norway in 2019, as it has in many other countries. In its annual National threat assessment for 2020, the Norwegian Police Security Service (PST) considers it possible that right-wing extremists will attempt to engage in terrorist activity in Norway over the coming year, whereas this has been deemed unlikely in the preceding years. In the National threat assessment for 2020, PST notes that a possible terrorist attack from right-wing extremists most likely will target venues for Muslims or non-Western immigrants.<sup>28</sup>

In spite of a negative trend in right-wing extremism in 2019, PST expects the number of right-wing extremists in Norway to stabilise in 2020. In 2019, more people in Norway expressed support for right-wing terrorist attacks and terrorists than in the preceding year. Even though communities that are hostile to immigrants and Muslims publicly denounce violence, those who are active in these communities' online forums express hatred, threats, and abuse of minorities, politicians and political opponents. These communities are still relatively small, and would be unlikely to gather more than a few supporters for public events. They will, however, continue to spread their message, which includes, for example, calls for a ban on Islam and expulsion of non-Western immigrants from Norway. In addition, conspiracies of a Muslim and Jewish takeover of Europe and

Norway are a key element. The COVID-19 pandemic has impacted on society in 2020, in Norway and the rest of the world. PST's assessment is that more Norwegians can be susceptible to radicalisation due to the social and economic challenges resulting from the pandemic.

A broad effort at an early stage involving numerous agencies is required to identify and monitor persons who are at risk of radicalisation. In order to strengthen the public service structure in its effort to combat radicalisation and violent extremism, the government has decided to establish a national guidance and resource function at the Regional centres on violence, traumatic stress and suicide prevention (RVTS). In addition, the government has appointed the Grünerløkka district office of the Norwegian Labour and Welfare Administration (NAV) to serve as a national advisory and guidance service to other NAV offices in the area of radicalisation and extremism. These measures are embedded in the government's *Action Plan against Radicalisation and Violent Extremism*.

The police have a key role in keeping our society safe. PST prepares threat assessments and informs the police and other decision-makers about developments. PST also collaborates with a number of other agencies to prevent a potential threat from developing. The local police also have a responsibility for engaging in preventive measures. The police and others who are contributing to the preventive efforts shall maintain a dialogue and collaborate with those who are exposed to threats. Openness about the perceived threat, to the greatest extent possible, is necessary and essential. This is also an important lesson from the evaluation of the terrorist attack in Bærum in August 2019.<sup>29</sup>

The publication *Terrorsikring. En veiledning i sikrings- og beredskapstiltak mot tilsiktede uønskede handlinger [Counterterrorism. A guide to security and preparedness*

<sup>28</sup> Norwegian Police Security Service (2020).

<sup>29</sup> Evaluation committee 2020.

*measures against intentional unwanted acts] (2015)*<sup>30</sup> provides public and private enterprises, including religious communities, with an overview of the planning and implementation of security measures, and the design of preparedness systems etc., as well as guidance on such matters. The guide aims to help establish a shared understanding of security issues in the agencies concerned, including the understanding of concepts, roles, and responsibilities. The government has decided that the guide will be updated and made available to a wider audience.

Enterprises that are not encompassed by the Security Act also have a responsibility for implementing their own preventive measures. The enterprise, which in this context is the object owner, should establish an appropriate basic security standard.<sup>31</sup> If the threat situation changes, the nature of the threat and other relevant information will decide whether the police need to enact security measures in addition to those implemented by the object owner. Such reinforcement will be of temporary duration. Depending on the threat and the general threat situation, police presence could be relevant for specific time periods or in defined locations. If a serious intentional act, such as terror, should occur in a police district, the prevailing emergency preparedness plan will be effectuated.

### **Dialogue with the police**

Dialogue and efforts in building trust are key priorities in the police's approach to prevention. These efforts are essential to ensure that the police maintain a close bond with the inhabitants and familiarity with their expectations and needs.

In the wake of the attack on the Al-Noor mosque in Bærum in 2019, the National Police Directorate requested all police districts to invite the leaders of Muslim communities to dialogue meetings. The directorate has also held dialogue meetings at the

national level to communicate the current threat situation and the police's preventive efforts. The meetings also served as an arena for receiving input from the religious communities with regard to their expectations and what they themselves can contribute to the preventive and security-building work.

### **Hate crime**

A hate crime is a criminal act that is motivated by hatred towards or negative attitudes to religion or belief, skin colour, national and ethnic origin, homosexuality, functional ability etc. Police figures show that 761 cases of hate-motivated crime were reported in Norway in 2019.<sup>32</sup> This is an increase of 22 per cent from the preceding year and of 119 per cent from 2015. In 2019, 62 per cent of the reports involved hate crime on the grounds of ethnic origin, followed by religion with 17 per cent. In other words, there has been an increase in the number of reports of hate crime, but as yet we have no basis for drawing any specific conclusions regarding the causes of this development. The police assume, however, that many cases go unreported. For example, the police's citizen survey from 2019 shows that only one in every five who have been subjected to a hate crime report the incident.

Since 2014, Oslo Police District has had a group dedicated to cases involving hate crime. The group publishes an annual report.<sup>33</sup> In 2019, 253 reports of hate crimes were registered in Oslo, involving a total of 278 offences. Hate crime on the grounds of religion accounted for 17 per cent of the reports in 2019. All of these crimes were directed against Muslims or persons assumed to be Muslims. The majority of the aggrieved parties in this group were women. Many of the cases involved women who wear a hijab and who believed that the offence was associated with this.

Police efforts, competence, and the focus on hate

<sup>30</sup> Norwegian National Security Authority et al. (2015).

<sup>31</sup> Security measures that meet security needs under normal conditions.

<sup>32</sup> National Police Directorate 2020.

<sup>33</sup> The most recent is *Hatkriminalitet. Anmeldt hatkriminalitet 2019*, published by Oslo Police District.

crime have all been strengthened in recent years. The police districts have implemented competence enhancement measures to raise the level of knowledge and competence. A manual to facilitate detection of hate crimes and ensure that they are registered correctly was distributed to the police districts in September 2018. This will provide a more correct picture of the scope of these cases. The National Police Directorate notes that the recent increase in the number of cases registered as hate crime could be a result of improved procedures for detection and registration.

However, there is still a need for reinforcement of the efforts in this area. The statistics reveal fairly major differences between the various police districts in terms of the number of cases reported. Against this background, the National Police Directorate has identified a need for a national competence group for preventing and combatting hate crime that could provide assistance to all police districts.

A number of different hate-based motives can be registered in the police's criminal records system. Multiple hate-based motives can also be linked to a single report. In 2018, anti-Semitism was identified as a separate hate-based motive. These cases were previously registered as having a religious motive. Hate crimes against Muslims, on the other hand, have not previously been singled out as a separate hate-based motive.

The police have made provisions for further criminal acts to be reported digitally to improve the public's access to the police's services. The National Police Directorate is currently considering whether to enable digital reporting of violations of Sections 185 and 186 of the Penal Code.

### Measures

#### 10 Hate crime against Muslims registered as a hate-based motive in the police criminal record system

Hate crime targeting Muslims is being introduced as a separate hate-based motive/ground in the police's criminal record system. This will make it possible to produce statistics showing the scope and development of reports of offences motivated by hatred and prejudice against Muslims. It will also provide a basis for more qualitative knowledge of the content of these reports. Annual statistics are produced showing reports of hate crime in Norway, by different hate-based motives.

*Responsible: Ministry of Justice and Public Security*

#### 11 Grant scheme for safety measures for religious or belief communities

In 2020, a new grant scheme for security measures for religious or belief communities was established. The reasons for establishing the scheme include the national threat assessment from the PST, which shows that the threat from right-wing extremists has developed in a negative direction. Some of the grant funds will be used to update, translate, and communicate relevant advisory material from the justice sector, including *Terrorsikring. En veiledning i sikrings- og beredskapstiltak mot tilsktede uønskede handlinger [Counterterrorism. A guide to security and preparedness measures against intentional unwanted acts] (2015)*.<sup>34</sup>

*Responsible: Ministry of Justice and Public Security*

<sup>34</sup> Norwegian National Security Authority et al. (2015).



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**12 Dialogue between the police and Muslim faith communities**

Nationally and at the district level, the police shall take the initiative to establish a positive dialogue and meeting places with Muslim religious communities through regular dialogue meetings. The objective of these meetings will be to ensure a mutual exchange of information between the police and the religious communities. The police shall also ensure that Muslim religious communities have established contact points in the police to expedite contact and the exchange of information.

*Responsible: Ministry of Justice and Public Security*

# Knowledge and competence





Knowledge is a key precondition for implementing appropriate and targeted measures against racism and discrimination. Knowledge development will therefore be an important move to combat and prevent discrimination and hatred towards Muslims. Some research has been undertaken on issues including negative prejudice, stereotyping, discrimination, and hatred towards Muslims, and the government grants support to relevant research communities in this field. It is also essential that the public support services have knowledge about different groups in the population and an awareness of how to interact with them and provide effective, accessible services. The Norwegian Directorate for Children, Youth and Family Affairs (Bufdir) coordinates the 'Forum on ethnic discrimination', which is a meeting place for government agencies with responsibility for ensuring that public services are equally available and do not discriminate against ethnic minorities.

Knowledge and research constitute a key priority area in the *Action Plan against Racism and Discrimination on the Grounds of Ethnicity and Religion*. The plan includes a number of research initiatives that are relevant for knowledge on discrimination and hatred towards Muslims in terms of its nature, scope, experiences, and consequences. For example, every five years a study will be undertaken to map the population's attitudes towards religious and ethnic minorities. A new study, which will be the third of its kind, will be initiated in 2020. Separate research projects will also be carried out on racism and discrimination on the grounds of skin colour and other external characteristics, such as religious symbols.

Public debate and democracy are a priority area in the *Action Plan against Racism and Discrimination on the Grounds of Ethnicity and Religion*. One of the initiatives in this area is a research project involving a content analysis of hate speech. The project will be announced by Bufdir in 2020 and will use 'big data' to

map the scope and content of utterances of a hateful or discriminatory nature directed against Muslims and persons assumed to be Muslims.

### **The need to see knowledge development in context**

Knowledge development in this area must be seen in conjunction with research on related areas, such as racism, anti-Semitism, hate speech, radicalisation, non-discrimination, and ethnicity and population surveys on attitudes to integration, gender equality and non-discrimination. It is especially relevant to refer to one of the initiatives in the *Action plan against anti-Semitism (2016-2020)*, which deals with the establishment of doctoral/post-doctoral positions for research on the prevention of group-focused enmity in schools. The objective is to improve teachers' and pupils' competence in this area, and contribute to the school's long-term awareness-raising activities.

Hate speech and hate crime are societal challenges that have a bearing on the work with this plan, and they particularly affect ethnic and religious minorities or persons who are assumed to belong to these.<sup>35</sup> In 2016, the government established C-REX – Centre for Research on Extremism at the University of Oslo. The centre develops knowledge on the causes and consequences of right-wing extremism and hate crime in Norway and internationally.

Knowledge about discrimination must be seen in the context of the development of the living conditions and situation of the population. Bufdir's online resource, 'Kunnskapsportal om likestilling og levekår' ['Knowledge portal on equality and living conditions'] is an important contribution to better knowledge about minority groups and their position in society. It summarises statistics and research about equality and living conditions among groups that may experience discrimination on the grounds of ethnicity and religion. The knowledge portal covers

<sup>35</sup> National Police Directorate 2020

key areas of society, such as education, labour, health, discrimination, and attitudes in the population, and will be updated with new statistics and research at regular intervals.

It is important to devote attention to intersectional discrimination. In the efforts to combat discrimination and hatred towards Muslims, intersectional discrimination entails viewing Muslim affiliation and identity in conjunction with other grounds of discrimination, such as ethnicity, gender, and functional ability, as well as sexual orientation, gender identity and gender expression. Research shows that having multiple minority statuses can render a person especially vulnerable to exclusion, isolation, marginalisation, and discrimination. This is shown in, for example, the study 'Queer Migrants in Norway',<sup>36</sup> where 25 per cent of respondents had been exposed to threats or violence. Racism, on the part of the majority society as well as gay communities, is reported to constitute a considerable problem.

Knowledge about discrimination and hatred must have a gender perspective. Muslim women and men can be subjected to different forms of discrimination, prejudice, and hatred. For example, an overview from Oslo Police District shows that the majority of those who report religion-based hate crimes are women.<sup>37</sup>

### **Better knowledge about the labour market and equality in service provision**

Discrimination against immigrants in the labour market has gradually come to be well documented.<sup>38</sup> By submitting fictitious job applications, Midtbøen and Rogstad (2012) found that immigrants with a foreign-sounding name were approximately 25 per cent less likely to be invited for an interview compared to other applicants with a Norwegian-sounding name and equivalent qualifications.

To date, few studies have been made of discrimination in the labour market on the grounds of religion. It is often difficult to distinguish religion from other background variables.

The 2016 living conditions survey of immigrants shows there are no major differences in perceived unequal treatment among the different denominations, but Muslim immigrants experience discrimination in recruitment processes to a somewhat greater extent than others.<sup>39</sup> The GEMM project<sup>40</sup> investigates and compares discrimination in the labour market in five European countries, including Norway. The study finds, for example, that both first-generation immigrants and descendants of immigrants with a background from a Muslim country are less likely to be invited to a job interview.<sup>41</sup> If an application or a CV leaves the impression of active religious practice, for example participation in Muslim organisations, the likelihood of being invited to a job interview is further reduced.<sup>42</sup>

Equality in service provision means that everybody has access to services that are of equal quality and adapted to the needs of the individual. A fundamental principle in the work of the child welfare services is to uphold each child's linguistic, cultural, and religious background. The preparatory works for the new Child Welfare Act, which came into force in 2018, specify that the decision should outline how the child welfare service has safeguarded the language and culture of children in ethnic minorities. The government is currently reinforcing the child welfare service's follow-up of children and families from immigrant backgrounds, including by way of competence enhancement measures and professional recommendations for monitoring of foster homes.

36 Eggebø et al. 2018.

37 Hansen 2020.

38 See e.g. Midtbøen and Rogstad 2012

39 Barstad 2019.

40 The project 'Growth, Equal Opportunity, Migration & Markets' was undertaken in 2015–2018 and involved 20 researchers from different EU countries. The project investigated the correlation between migration and economic growth in the EU.

41 Larsen and Di Stasio 2019.

42 Di Stasio, Lancee, Veit and Yemane 2019.

Although the vast majority of immigrants experience equal treatment when they need health services, six per cent of the respondents in Statistics Norway's living conditions survey of immigrants in 2016 reported that they had experienced discrimination by the health service because of their immigrant background.<sup>43</sup>

### **Multicultural competence in the health service**

The 'Regulations on a common framework for health and social care qualifications' states that the candidate should have knowledge about inclusion, equality, and non-discrimination, irrespective of gender, ethnicity, religion or belief, functional impairment, sexual orientation, gender identity, gender expression, and age, to enable the candidate to exercise equality in the provision of services to all groups in society.

To treat Muslim patients and users in an appropriate manner, it may be necessary for health and care personnel to have knowledge about Muslim rituals, customs, and traditions. This could, for example, include knowledge of dietary rules, the use of medications during Ramadan, and the significance of gender roles. The Norwegian Directorate of Health has prepared the manual 'The Diet Handbook – a guide to nutrition in the health and care services', which gives advice on how food can be adapted to dietary rules in Islam.

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<sup>43</sup> Vrålstad and Wiggen (eds., 2017).

## Measures

### 13 Obtain more knowledge of discrimination against Muslims in the labour market

Work helps people become self-reliant, and the workplace is an important arena for participation and inclusion. Studies indicate that Muslims can be more exposed than others to discrimination in the labour market, but we currently have little knowledge about this topic. In collaboration with the Ministry of Education and Research, the Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs will make provisions for obtaining more knowledge on questions related to discrimination against Muslims in the labour market. To obtain a better understanding of the challenges in this area, issues related to discrimination need to be investigated in more detail, for example in the working environment or in the context of recruitment and career development.

*Responsible: Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs and the Ministry of Education and Research*

### 14 Dissemination of knowledge about racism and discrimination

Many positive efforts are underway in different parts of Norway, and these can inspire other regional agencies, including local authorities, in their work to combat discrimination and hatred towards Muslims and other minorities. In collaboration with the Norwegian Directorate for Children, Youth and Family Affairs, the Norwegian Directorate of Integration and Diversity (IMDi) will be charged with making relevant information material, local action plans, and good practices more accessible to the general public.

*Responsible: Ministry of Education and Research and the Ministry of Culture*

### 15 Research on the associations between perceptions of negative attitudes and discrimination against Muslims, their participation in various areas of society, and sense of belonging

There is a need for better knowledge on mechanisms of exclusion and barriers to participation in shared social arenas. The Ministry of Education and Research will issue a call for proposals to investigate the correlations between discrimination and exclusion from various arenas in society. The call for proposals will be issued in the autumn of 2020.

*Responsible: Ministry of Education and Research*

# Efforts outside Norway

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The prevalence of discrimination and abuse of Muslims varies from one country to another. The considerable and increasing incidence of such cases internationally and in our own region constitutes a challenge that Norwegian authorities also have a responsibility to counteract.

The Report to the Storting 'Opportunities for all – Human rights in Norway's Foreign Policy and Development Cooperation' outlines the principles for the government's international commitment to human rights in general, as well as for our more targeted efforts to combat anti-Muslim sentiment.<sup>44</sup> The government's *Action Plan against Discrimination on the Grounds of Ethnicity and Religion 2020–2023* describes Norway's general commitment, including in the international context.

In recent years, measures to protect and respect religious minorities and the freedom of religion or belief have been given a stronger focus and higher priority in Norwegian foreign and development policy.

Norway's foreign service bases its efforts to promote freedom of religion or belief and religious minorities on Article 18 of the United Nations Declaration of Human Rights: 'Everyone has the right to freedom of thought, conscience and religion'; this right includes freedom to change his religion or belief, and freedom, either alone or in community with others and in public or private, to manifest his religion or belief in teaching, practice, worship and observance.<sup>45</sup> This formulation also includes the right to have no faith or religion.

### **International cooperation on freedom of thought, religion or belief**

The International Panel of Parliamentarians for Freedom of Religion or Belief (IPPFoRB) was established in 2014 and is a global network of parliamentarians and legislators. The network promotes and protects the freedom of thought, religion or belief for all, as described in the United Nations Universal Declaration of Human Rights. The Norwegian Helsinki Committee acts as the network's secretariat.

### **Contribution through multilateral institutions**

The United Nations (UN) is an important arena for measures to combat discrimination and hatred towards Muslims. Norm-setting bodies such as the UN Human Rights Council and General Assembly develop norms and standards that UN Member States pledge to uphold. Through operational mechanisms such as the Universal Periodic Reviews of countries in the Human Rights Council and the UN's development and humanitarian organisations, Norwegian authorities assist persons and groups that are marginalised, including as a result of discrimination, exclusion or persecution, and on the grounds of their religion.

In the autumn of 2018, Norway signed an agreement with the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) covering the four-year period 2018–2021. The agreement has a budgetary framework of NOK 660 million. OHCHR is one of Norway's main partners in the area of human rights, and the agreement also includes work on the rights of religious minorities at the country level, including in countries where Muslims are at special risk.

Disagreement regarding whether freedom of speech should be restricted out of respect for religions complicated the international cooperation across religions in the UN in the years from 2000 to 2010. The cartoon controversy in 2005 and 2006 constituted an important backdrop to the debates in the UN and

<sup>44</sup> Ministry of Foreign Affairs 2014.

<sup>45</sup> United Nations General Assembly 1948.

to the decision by the UN Human Rights Council in 2011 to adopt a resolution on the struggle against intolerance, discrimination, and incitement to violence against people on the grounds of their religion or belief.<sup>46</sup> The resolution calls on member states to address religious intolerance by promoting freedom of expression, religion or belief concurrently, since these rights are mutually interdependent. The resolution established an understanding that remains fundamental to the collaboration between UN Member States on the protection of all human rights and for balancing concerns for freedom of expression with freedom of religion or belief.

### **Regional cooperation**

In 2010, the Member States of OSCE adopted the 'Astana Declaration', which condemns utterances and other expressions of racism, xenophobia, anti-Semitism, and intolerance on the basis of religion or ethnicity. It underscores that international development trends and political issues cannot justify any form of intolerance or discrimination against Muslims. The declaration calls for the member states to challenge anti-Muslim prejudices and stereotyping. Norway's contributions through participation in the OSCE cooperation, especially through the OSCE's Office of Democratic Institutions and Human Rights (ODIHR), include the following:

- Development of educational policy and programmes to combat hatred, hostility, and prejudice.
- Reinforced monitoring of hate crimes and acts motivated by hatred towards Muslims and other minorities through the country reports that enable the OSCE to collect statistics and publish annual reports on developments in each country.
- Training for civil society organisations that engage in efforts to combat intolerance against Muslims and strengthening of their capacity to register and report hate crimes.
- Participation in various regional forums where

<sup>46</sup> United Nations Human Rights Council 2011.

the challenges involved in combatting intolerance against Muslims are discussed, and concrete measures and recommendations are identified.

Norway also participates actively in the Council of Europe, which in 1993 established the European Commission against Racism and Intolerance (ECRI). One of the core remits of ECRI is to monitor and report on the situation in the 47 Member States of the Council of Europe. In March 2020, ECRI visited Norway. ECRI's country and annual reports provide an important basis for the efforts to reduce the prevalence of racism and intolerance in Europe.

In its annual report for 2019, ECRI refers to how nationalist xenophobia continues to take various expressions in the form of anti-Muslim prejudice and an increase in the portrayal of Islam as a religion that undermines the national culture and identity of many member states. ECRI refers to how such rhetoric often is the first step towards exclusion and discrimination against Muslims. In combination with the increasing tendency towards anti-Semitism, these findings have spurred ECRI to review and revise their recommendations on how intolerance and discrimination against Muslims and Jews can best be combatted. The Council of Europe's multi-year action plans give assistance to individual countries to enable them to meet the obligations that follow from the European Convention on Human Rights (ECHR) and other conventions they are bounded by. Many of these countries have enacted special measures for vulnerable groups and minorities. Norwegian support is provided through a number of action plans in Eastern Europe, the Caucasus, the Western Balkans, and North Africa.

In addition to cooperation through various global and regional institutions, many embassies are also engaging in concrete measures to promote freedom of religion or belief and other human rights, with a view to counteracting discrimination on the grounds of, for example, religion.

### **Cooperation with civil society**

Civil society organisations in Norway and internationally are making a major and important effort to strengthen the respect for and understanding of the interrelations between the different human rights, including the right to freedom of religion or belief. Their activities are also crucial to preventing injustices against religious or belief minorities or other groups in society, and to securing prosecutions. By defending the freedom of expression and counteracting issues such as hate speech, these organisations help improve the situation for religious or belief minorities, while ensuring they have the opportunity to continue their work.

Furthermore, civil society organisations help promote a better understanding of the relationship between freedom of religion or belief on the one hand and other basic human rights on the other (for example gender equality and sexual and reproductive health and rights). Civil society actors can also contribute to preventive and mediatory efforts, for example by engaging in various measures to reduce interreligious or ethnic tensions and increase the tolerance for diversity.

Norwegian authorities have established cooperation agreements with many of these organisations to implement concrete measures aimed at counteracting discrimination, persecution, and hatred towards religious minorities, including Muslims. Moreover,

Norway participates in international networks where representatives of authorities, NGOs, academic institutions, and others meet to exchange information and strengthen the cooperation against discrimination and persecution based on religion or other grounds.

The Norwegian Agency for Development Cooperation (Norad) has established a dedicated grant scheme for strengthening the rights of religious or belief minorities. The objective is to strengthen the rights of religious or belief minorities and combat discrimination on the basis of religion or belief. Through this scheme, Norad provides support to various civil society actors in their efforts to document and report infringements of rights, build competence and spread information on freedom of religion or belief. Norad also supports social actors in their efforts to raise awareness among national and regional authorities and to promote interreligious and intercultural dialogue to help engender mutual understanding and acceptance. Many of the programmes supported by Norad are implemented in South and South-East Asia and address the increasing emergence of discrimination and hatred towards Muslims at the regional level. In addition to this earmarked support, freedom of religion or belief is an integrated component of Norad's broad cooperation with major civil society organisations as part of their human rights and anti-discrimination efforts.

## Measures

- 16 Continue Norway's comprehensive focus on freedom of religion or belief and the rights of religious or belief minorities**  
Norway's most important initiatives to combat discrimination and hatred towards Muslims will largely be realised within the framework of the efforts to promote freedom of religion, belief, and expression. These efforts will remain based on the human rights in general and on Article 18 of the Declaration of Human Rights in particular, as well as on the principle of non-discrimination. An objective of the further work will be to strengthen the linkages between freedom of religion or belief on the one hand and other rights on the other, such as freedom of expression and gender equality, and to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals in cooperation with civil society and other partners.

*Responsible: Ministry of Foreign Affairs*

- 17 Continue to include freedom of religion or belief and consideration for religious minorities in the Universal Periodic Reviews (UPRs) of the UN Human Rights Council.**  
The UPRs provide an opportunity for states to enter into dialogue on complex human rights issues, including challenges associated with the freedom of religion or belief. In the reviews, Norway will devote attention to such issues.

*Responsible: Ministry of Foreign Affairs*

- 18 Strengthen the contact with OSCE/ODIHR on the work in the field of religious minorities**  
The Chairman-in-Office of the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) has personal representatives dedicated to combatting intolerance and discrimination against Jews, Christians, Muslims, and other religious minorities, respectively. The Personal Representative of the OSCE Chairman-in-Office on Combating Intolerance and Discrimination against Muslims has expressed a wish to visit Norway. Provisions for such a visit will be made as soon as practically possible. The visit will provide a good basis for a closer cooperation with the OSCE/Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights (ODIHR) on combatting discrimination and hatred towards Muslims.

*Responsible: Ministry of Foreign Affairs*

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