
RABBIS, IMAMS IN BERLIN BIKE RIDE AGAINST ANTI-SEMITISM, ISLAMOPHOBIA

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Jews and Muslims teamed up on tandem bikes to protest growing anti-Semitic and Islamophobic violence. It comes amid ongoing concerns over migration and the rise of Germany's nationalist AfD party.

Some 50 people, mainly Jews and Muslims, rode tandem bikes through Berlin on Sunday in a show of unity against anti-Semitic and anti-Muslim violence.

The cyclists [] them rabbis and imams [] their way from Berlin's Holocaust memorial to Bebelplatz, where the Nazi regime ordered the burning of around 20,000 books in 1933. Christians and non-religious people as well as Berlin politicians joined in.

"We, the imams and rabbis, should lead by example," Ender Cetin, a Berlin imam, said. He said by teaming up with rabbis and other members of the Jewish community "we send a signal to the Muslim community that we will not tolerate anti-Semitism."

Rabbi Elias Dray, who rode a tandem bike with Cetin, added that it was crucial not to allow the populists to split society. Dray and Cetin regularly visit Berlin schools together to teach pupils about religious tolerance.

Alongside the rise of the populist, anti-migrant AfD party, which managed to garner 12.6 percent of the vote in last year's national elections, Germany has seen a rise in attacks against Muslims and Jews.

Some have been attacked for wearing kippahs [] or yarmulkes [] some for wearing Muslim headscarves. In addition, some of Germany's newly arrived Muslim immigrants have added a new, albeit smaller, strain of anti-Semitism by holding Jews responsible for the Israeli-Palestinian conflict.

ng/msh (epd, KNA, AP)