



InterFaith Conference of Metropolitan Washington Statement on Anti-Muslim Advertising on Buses in Washington, DC

The InterFaith Conference of Metropolitan Washington (IFC), which unites the Baha'i, Buddhist, Hindu, Islamic, Jain, Jewish, Latter-day Saints, Protestant, Roman Catholic, Sikh, and Zoroastrian faith communities in the DC Metropolitan area, strongly condemns the inflammatory and hateful ads placed on buses operated by the Washington Metropolitan Area Transit Authority (WMATA) by the American Freedom Defense Initiative (AFDI). While the IFC supports freedom of expression, we are saddened by the AFDI's attempt to undermine constructive dialogue among faith groups and the promotion of civil discourse and civil society.

At a time when American Muslims continue to be a target of hate crimes, IFC is deeply concerned about the broad public display of the ad, which misrepresents Islam, incites conflict between the Jewish and Muslim communities, invokes toxic symbolism and contributes to an environment of suspicion and mistrust. The promotion of division and conflict in American society and the demonization of minority faith communities work to "dismantle our basic freedoms and values," which is what the AFDI claims to guard against in its statement of purpose.

Our 35 years of experience, engaging multiple faith traditions, demonstrates that religious differences can be legitimately addressed with tolerance, civility and respectful dialogue. We welcome such exchanges as an expression of our highly valued democratic principles and with utmost respect for our pluralistic society. In contrast, anti-Muslim propaganda like that contained in the AFDI's ad can only serve to undermine democratic principles and values.

The InterFaith Conference calls on the DC Mayor and Council to publicly condemn these inflammatory ads on WMATA buses. Following the example of San Francisco officials, we recommend that disclaimers be posted alongside the ads and that proceeds from the ad be donated to the DC Commission on Human Rights.

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