

Pro-Israel War Ads on Municipal Buses

"In any war between the civilized man and the savage, support the civilized man. Support Israel. Defeat jihad."

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San Francisco's Municipal Transportation Agency has a policy against political ads on its buses, but an ad being displayed now comes pretty close. The ad says, *"In any war between the civilized man and the savage, support the civilized man. Support Israel. Defeat jihad."*

James Ashburn was surprised when he saw his bus roll up with the ad on the side. "It really struck me as an inappropriate ad to be on a city bus," he said. Ashburn took a picture of the ad and sent it to ABC7 News [via uReport](#). He thought the ad crossed a line. "No matter what side you're on, you should not describe your opponent as a savage," he said.

The pro-Israel ad was purchased by the American Freedom Defense Initiative run by Pamela Geller. "The reason I wanted to run these ads was to counter the anti-Israel ads that were running in various cities across the country in New York, in D.C., on San Francisco BART," she said. If you don't remember any anti-Israel ads on BART, that's understandable. It has been a year since an ad ran calling on the U.S. to cut military aid to Israel. "It was a fallacious and dangerous message and it had to be countered with the truth," Geller said.

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The truth being in the eye of the beholder, ABC7 News showed the ad to Muslim's going into Friday prayers at a San Francisco mosque. Adam Kennard called it propaganda. Ted Oriqat pointed out that the ad distorts the meaning of jihad. "Jihad, it doesn't mean killing people or anything like that," he said. And Oriqat is correct. Jihad means "struggle" and is frequently used as in "striving towards the way of God."

The bus message didn't sit very well with the city system in New York. They refused to run them and Gellen took the transit authority to court. "And interestingly enough, the day that I won, was the day that San Francisco approved my ads that are currently running on your buses," Geller said.

A coincidence? Not according to Muni's spokesman Paul Rose. "In this specific case, litigation was brought to this organization and the transit agency lost," he told ABC7 News. So, the buses with the signs will continue to roll for at least the next four weeks. "If I had my way, they'd be in every city in the United States of America and if I can get the funding, that's exactly what's going to happen," Geller says.

Asked how this particular ad is not considered political in light of Muni's no-politics policy, Rose struggled to answer. However, the legal action and the fact that the New York MTA has already lost in court have had an impact.

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