

Anti-Muslim ads removed from New York buses after protest from James Foley's family

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An anti-Muslim advertisement featuring a photo of American journalist James Foley, taken immediately before his brutal execution at the hands of the Islamic State of Iraq and Syria (ISIS), will be removed from New York City buses and subway stations.

The American Freedom Defense Initiative (AFDI), a rabidly anti-Muslim group founded by right-wing blogger Pamela Geller, agreed to remove James Foley's photo from one of their advertisements after an impassioned protest from Foley's family. His parents insisted that Foley's life and views were completely antithetical to the fascistic ravings of Geller and her group.

J. Patrick Rowan, the lawyer representing the family, in a letter to Geller, stated, "The use of Mr. Foley's photo in your advertisement will cause profound distress to the Foley family." The letter continued, "Having lived in and reported from communities in which nearly everyone was of Muslim faith, he had great respect for the religion and those who practiced it. The advertisement you are preparing to run seems to convey the message that ordinary practitioners of Islam are a dangerous threat. This message is entirely inconsistent with Mr. Foley's reporting and his beliefs."

Foley had stated opposition to US war, and had taken a critical attitude to the practice of embedded journalism—in which journalists are attached to US military units—because he believed it encouraged biased reporting.

The Foley family also criticized US actions in the Middle East, including how the government handled Foley's kidnapping. Family members reported that the US government had threatened to prosecute them for "material support" for terrorism if they sought to raise a ransom of roughly \$132 million demanded by the

ISIS in order to free Foley.

Diana Foley, James Foley's mother, in an interview with CNN in early September, said, "We're dealing with very difficult people when we talk about ISIS. Their hate for us is great. And yet, some of our response to them has only increased the hate."

The AFDI's original advertisement included a photo of Abdel-Majed Abdel Bary, Foley's alleged executioner, next to a picture of Foley immediately before his execution. Text above the photos read, "Yesterday's Moderate is Today's Headline."

David Yerushalmi, Geller's lawyer, told the Agence France-Presse that a modified version of the advertisement will be released, with the photo of Foley replaced by a picture of a masked fighter holding a digitally blurred severed head.

The now modified advertisement is one of six posters made by the AFDI, in order to show, according to the group, "the uselessness of the distinction between 'moderate' and 'extremist' Muslims." Geller and the AFDI have paid \$100,000 to the New York Metropolitan Transportation Authority (MTA) to have these posters put on 100 buses and two subway stops for four weeks.

Geller is described by the Southern Poverty Law Center as "the anti-Muslim movement's most visible and influential figurehead" and a "self-avowed Zionist," who "has mingled with European racists and fascists." Last year, she was barred from entering Britain, where she had intended to speak on the platform of the fascistic and racist English Defense League. The Home Office found that her statements "may foster hatred which might lead to inter-community violence in the UK."

Geller and her organization are currently suing the MTA, for blocking another one of her advertisements.

This one features the phrase “Killing Jews is Worship that draws us close to Allah,” next to a masked face, attributing the quote to the Palestinian Islamist organization Hamas.

The MTA said it rejected the ad as inappropriate for covering the back of city buses because it could be interpreted as “urging direct, violent attacks on Jews.”



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