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Press Release

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IMMEDIATE

MTA Rejects Advertisement Proposed For City Buses

AFDI "Killing Jews" Advertisement Violates MTA Standards

The Metropolitan Transportation Authority (MTA) has rejected a request by AmericanFreedom Defense Initiative to run advertisements that include the phrase "Killing Jews" on the back of MTA New York City Transit buses.

The MTA concluded it was reasonably foreseeable that displaying the advertisement would imminently incite or provoke violence or other immediate breach of the peace, and so harm, disrupt, or interfere with safe, efficient, and orderly transportation operations. Under the MTA's viewpoint-neutral advertising standards, the agency can prohibit advertisements that violate that standard.

The advertisement features the quotation "Killing Jews is Worship that draws us close to Allah," attributed to " Hamas MTV." It depicts a masked figure and includes the phrase, "That's His Jihad. What's yours?" The advertisement was an apparent parody of "MyJihad" ads sponsored by the Council on American-Islamic Relations, which the group said were intended to show that jihad is a concept of individual and personal struggle, rather than violent conflict or terrorism. Those ads ran on buses in other cities, but not in New York.

The American Freedom Defense Initiative has run many other advertisements promoting its views on jihad, Hamas, Islam and Israel throughout the MTA network. In 2011, the MTA rejected a proposed advertisement from the group on the grounds that it demeaned groups of people on account of their religion, national origin or ancestry. The group sued the MTA, and the next year a federal judge ruled the MTA's "no demeaning" standard violated the First Amendment. The MTA responded by updating its advertising standards to the current standard.

The MTA does not decide whether to allow or not allow a proposed advertisement based on the viewpoint that it expresses or because that viewpoint might be controversial. MTA Director of Safety and Security Raymond Diaz, a former chief of the New York City Police Department Transit Bureau, concluded the proposed advertisement would lead reasonable observers to interpret it as urging direct, violent attacks on Jews, given turmoil in Gaza, Syria and Iraq and New York City's heightened security concerns.