



# PRESS RELEASE

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## **Pro-Israel Bus Advertisement Rejected by Massachusetts Transit Authority; Federal Civil Rights Lawsuit Filed**

Boston, Massachusetts (November 6, 2013) — Today, the American Freedom Law Center (AFLC), a national, nonprofit Judeo-Christian law firm, filed a federal civil rights lawsuit against the Massachusetts Bay Transportation Authority (MBTA) for rejecting a proposed advertisement for display on its advertising spaces that supported Israel in the debate over the Israeli / Palestinian conflict. The advertisement stated: “In any war between the civilized man and the savage, support the civilized man. Support Israel. Defeat jihad.” MBTA officials claimed that the advertisement was “disparaging” and “demeaning.”

AFLC filed the lawsuit in the United States District Court for the District of Massachusetts on behalf of Pamela Geller, Robert Spencer, and their organization, the American Freedom Defense Initiative (AFDI). As stated in the complaint, last month the MBTA, which provides public transportation throughout Massachusetts, including to millions of riders in the Greater Boston area, accepted for display on its advertising space an anti-Israel, pro-Palestinian advertisement that appeared on approximately 80 posters throughout the transit system. That advertisement depicted four maps that purport to show “the Palestinian loss of land” to Israel between 1946 and 2010. Text accompanying the maps says: “4.7 million Palestinians are Classified by the UN as Refugees.”

After receiving a rash of complaints, on October 31, the MBTA removed all of the anti-Israel advertisements from the MBTA’s advertising space. However, the very next day, the MBTA, citing a “miscommunication” with its advertising agent, reversed its decision and agreed to repost the advertisements.

Despite permitting the anti-Israel advertisement, the MBTA officially rejected ADFI's pro-Israel advertisement on Monday, November 4, prompting the immediate filing of this lawsuit.

Robert J. Muise, AFLC Co-Founder and Senior Counsel, commented: "The MBTA's acceptance of advertisements that specifically address the hotly debated Israeli / Palestinian conflict, and in particular, its acceptance of the anti-Israel advertisement, clearly demonstrate that the advertisement space is appropriate for AFDI's message. Indeed, there is little doubt that the MBTA, motivated by political correctness, censored our clients' pro-Israel advertisement out of a fear of a backlash from area Muslims and left wing activists. And there is even less doubt that the MBTA's decision violates our clients' fundamental right to freedom of speech protected by the First Amendment."

David Yerushalmi, AFLC Co-Founder and Senior Counsel, added: "Since when is calling murderous jihadis who target women and children savages demeaning or disparaging? The MBTA has taken a political position on the side of defending terrorists. Presumably they would allow an ad that labeled these terrorists freedom fighters."

Robert Muise pointed out the obvious: "The fact that the MBTA accepted the anti-Israel advertisement yet censored our clients' advertisement once again reveals the double standard that too often permeates government agencies nationwide. Fortunately, our similar free speech victories in New York, Chicago, and Washington, D.C., prove that this type of censorship is blatantly unconstitutional and a grave threat to our profound national commitment that debate on public issues should be robust and uninhibited."

The *American Freedom Law Center* is a Judeo-Christian law firm that fights for faith and freedom. It accomplishes its mission through litigation, public policy initiatives, and related activities. It does not charge for its services. The Law Center is supported by contributions from individuals, corporations, and foundations, and is recognized by the IRS as a section 501(c)(3) organization. Visit us at [www.americanfreedomlawcenter.org](http://www.americanfreedomlawcenter.org).

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