



# JCRC Backgrounder

Provided as a service to community leaders by the  
JCRC of the Jewish Federation of Greater Philadelphia

## Anti-Muslim Bus Ads to Run on SEPTA Buses March 31, 2015

Dear Friends,

By now you have certainly heard the news that SEPTA has decided not to appeal the recent court ruling which will allow **anti-Muslim ads to be run on SEPTA buses starting this week**. Many of us just returned from standing with the mayor as he spoke out against the hateful message contained in these ads. Rabbi David Straus joined the mayor at the podium along with representatives of the Muslim and Christian communities.

In response to the news that the ads would be run last week, Rabbi David Ackerman, speaking as a member of the Religious Leaders Council of Greater Philadelphia and President of the Rabbinical Assembly (Philadelphia Region), shared the Religious Leaders Council statement (attached) at SEPTA's press conference. A few of his comments were highlighted in the [Philadelphia Inquirer](#).

JCRC has been working closely with The Interfaith Center of Greater Philadelphia who has been coordinating a broad coalition of community partners, which include the ADL the AJC and most rabbinic organizations, around this issue for the past many months. As the ads might be wrongly interpreted by some as "speaking" for the Jews, we want you to understand the broad based and **overwhelming opposition** to these hateful ads in the Jewish community.

Here is more information about the response to these Islamophobic ads circulated by JCRC in the Jewish community in coalition with the Interfaith Center of Greater Philadelphia.

1. Please review the attached memo from the Interfaith Center acting on behalf of over 30 religious traditions and denominations in our community. The memo describes the situation in more detail, shares who might be impacted and offers several strategies /resources for responding.
2. Ask your friends to **click on [daretounderstand.org](http://daretounderstand.org)** to get involved and support our region-wide *Dare to Understand* education, advertising, and social media campaign.
3. While most of us understand intuitively that the claim made in the ads are wrong and a distortion of the facts, (Islamic Jew Hatred: It's in the Quran) people may need help understanding exactly **why** the ad is a distortion of the truth. For more background please see this article by Professor Reuven Firestone, a scholar on Medieval Judaism and Islam "[No, Pamela Geller, the Qur'an Is Not Anti-Semitic,](#)" Reuven Firestone ([The Jewish Daily Forward – 9/29/14](#)) To quote from his article:

"Negative scriptural references to non-believers exist in all scriptures, and they are sometimes cited and manipulated by hateful people to encourage violence and even slaughter of the religious other. But it's important for Jews to understand that anti-Semitism is no more basic to Islam than hatred of all non-Jews is basic to Judaism, an old anti-Semitic screed that was often claimed by citing scriptural citations from the Hebrew Bible."

The Jewish community is particularly sensitive to negative stereotyping of an entire faith, a phenomenon we suffered under to our detriment for a millennia.

Thank you and wishing everyone a Happy Passover and Easter.