

CENTRE FOR RELIGIOUS FREEDOM

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NEW REPORT ON SAUDI GOVERNMENT PUBLICATIONS IN U.S.

WASHINGTON, DC, January 28, 2005- Freedom House's Center for Religious Freedom released today a new report exposing the dissemination of hate propaganda in America by the government of Saudi Arabia.

The 89-page report, "**Saudi Publications on Hate Ideology Fill American Mosques,**" is based on a year-long study of over two hundred original documents, all disseminated, published or otherwise generated by the government of Saudi Arabia and collected from more than a dozen mosques in the United States.

The propagation of hate ideology by Saudi Arabia is known to be worldwide, but its occurrence within the United States has received scant attention until now. Within worldwide Sunni Islam, followers of Saudi Arabia's extremist Wahhabi ideology are a distinct minority, as is evident by the millions of Muslims who have chosen to make America their home and are upstanding, law-abiding citizens and neighbors.

The report concludes that the Saudi government propaganda examined reflects a "totalitarian ideology of hatred that can incite to violence," and the fact that it is "being mainstreamed within our borders through the efforts of a foreign government, namely Saudi Arabia, demands our urgent attention." The report finds: "Not only does the government of Saudi Arabia not have a right – under the First Amendment or any other legal document – to spread hate ideology within U.S. borders, it is committing a human rights violation by doing so."

Such publications that "advocate an ideology of hatred have no place in a nation founded on religious freedom and toleration," write James Woolsey, chairman of the board of Freedom House, in the foreword to the report.

Among the key findings of the report:

- Various Saudi government publications gathered for this study, most of which are in Arabic, assert that it is a religious obligation for Muslims to hate Christians and Jews and warn against imitating, befriending, or helping them in any way, or taking part in their festivities and celebrations;

- The documents promote contempt for the United States because it is ruled by legislated civil law rather than by totalitarian Wahhabi-style Islamic law. They condemn democracy as un-Islamic;
- The documents stress that when Muslims are in the lands of the unbelievers, they must behave as if on a mission behind enemy lines. Either they are there to acquire new knowledge and make money to be later employed in the jihad against the infidels, or they are there to proselytize the infidels until at least some convert to Islam. Any other reason for lingering among the unbelievers in their lands is illegitimate, and unless a Muslim leaves as quickly as possible, he or she is not a true Muslim and so too must be condemned. For example, a document in the collection for the “Immigrant Muslim” bears the words “Greetings from the Cultural Attache in Washington, D.C.” of the Embassy of Saudi Arabia, and is published by the government of Saudi Arabia. In an authoritative religious voice, it gives detailed instructions on how to “hate” the Christian and Jew: Never greet them first. Never congratulate the infidel on his holiday. Never imitate the infidel. Do not become a naturalized citizen of the United States. Do not wear a graduation gown because this imitates the infidel;
- One insidious aspect of the Saudi propaganda examined is its aim to replace traditional and moderate interpretations of Islam with extremist Wahhabism, the officially-established religion of Saudi Arabia. In these documents, other Muslims, especially those who advocate tolerance, are condemned as infidels. The opening fatwa in one Saudi embassy-distributed book, published by the Saudi Air Force, responds to a question about a Muslim preacher in a European mosque who taught that it is not right to condemn Jews and Christians as infidels. The Saudi state cleric’s reply rebukes the Muslim cleric: “He who casts doubts about their infidelity leaves no doubt about his.” Since, under Saudi law, “apostates” from Islam can be sentenced to death, this is an implied death threat against the tolerant Muslim imam, as well as an incitement to vigilante violence;
- Sufi and Shiite Muslims are viciously condemned;
- For a Muslim who fails to uphold the Saudi Wahhabi sect’s sexual mores (i.e. through homosexual activity or heterosexual activity outside of marriage), the edicts published by the Saudi government’s Ministry of Islamic Affairs, and found in American mosques advise, “it would be lawful for Muslims to spill his blood and to take his money;”
- Regarding those who convert out of Islam, the Saudi Ministry of Islamic Affairs explicitly asserts, they “should be killed;”
- Saudi textbooks and other publications in the collection, propagate a Nazi-like hatred for Jews, treat the forged Protocols of the Elders of Zion as historical fact, and avow that the Muslim’s duty is to eliminate the state of Israel;

- Regarding women, the Saudi publications instruct that they should be veiled, segregated from men and barred from certain employment and roles

The report states: “While the government of Saudi Arabia claims to be ‘updating’ or reforming its textbooks and study materials within the Kingdom, its publications propagating an ideology of hatred remain plentiful in some prominent American mosques and Islamic centers, and continue to be a principal resource available to students of Islam within the United States.”

The research, translation and principle analysis of the materials for the report were carried out by both Muslims and non-Muslims who wish to remain anonymous for reasons of security. Some 90 percent of the publications are in Arabic; two independent translators reviewed each Arabic document. This project was undertaken after many Muslims requested the Center’s help in exposing Saudi extremism in the hope of freeing their communities from ideological strangulation.

About the Center for Religious Freedom

The Center for Religious Freedom is a self-sustaining division of Freedom House. Founded in 1941 by Eleanor Roosevelt and Wendell Willkie to oppose Naziism and Communism in Europe, Freedom House is America's oldest human rights group. Its Center for Religious Freedom defends against religious persecution of all groups throughout the world. It insists that U.S. foreign policy defend Christians and Jews, Muslim dissidents and minorities, and other religious minorities in countries such as Indonesia, Pakistan, Nigeria, Iran and Sudan. It is fighting the imposition of harsh Islamic law in the new Iraq and Afghanistan and opposes blasphemy laws in Muslim countries that suppress more tolerant and pro-American Muslim thought.

Since its inception in 1986, the Center, under the directorship of human rights lawyer Nina Shea, has reported on the religious persecution of individuals and groups abroad, and undertaken advocacy on their behalf in the media, Congress, State Department and White House. It also sponsors investigative field missions and presses official Washington for overall religious freedom in China, Sudan, Vietnam, Pakistan, Saudi Arabia, Egypt and elsewhere.

Freedom House is a 501 (c) 3 organization, headquartered in New York City. The Center for Religious Freedom is located at 1319 18th Street, NW, Washington, DC 20036.