

Official Remarks of Moein Khawaja, CAIR-PA Civil Rights Director:

I'd like to thank all members of the media for attending.

As you know, the Foreign Policy Research Institute has teamed up with Mason Crest Publishers to produce a series of books called The World of Islam. The Foreign Policy Research Institute, FPRI, is a pro-war think tank that vigorously advocated for the Iraq war in the past and continues to defend that position. Mason Crest is a small publishing house based in Broomall, PA.

So what exactly are these books, what do they say, and why is it a problem? Let's read directly from the FPRI's website. This book series, and I quote, "while accessible to students, is neither "dumbed down" nor subject to the "political correctness" characteristic of college campuses." Everyone in this room knows what that means, that is right-wing code for prejudice, bigotry and bias.

Let's take a look at some of that bias.

For example, one text in the series titled Islam in America (also titled Muslims in America in some editions) states:

... Muslims began immigrating to the United States in order to transform American society, sometimes through the use of terrorism.

Muslims came to America to change it into a Muslim nation? That's absurd, and what is a Muslim nation? I can't even define that for you. People migrate to America for a better life, for better opportunities for their kids, and Muslims did that too.

The book is rife with incorrect information and fear mongering and ultimately seeks to paint a picture that Muslims in America are to be treated with suspicion and that they all have links to terrorism.

The text titled Islam, Law and Human Rights begins and ends with the same thing, that Muslim majority nations are the only ones that violate human rights laws set forth by the United Nations – for some reason China and North Korea are exceptions to that rule.

The History of Islam offers only a stunted glimpse of Islamic History and focuses primarily on extremism and contains an outrageous quote:

Today, the great majority of Muslims accept the idea that jihad means a struggle against non-Muslims to increase the area under the rule of Islam.

So the great majority, meaning what, above 75%, believe jihad means to fight non-Muslims? That's not true, that's the great minority, Al-Qaeda, who is an enemy of us all. In fact the true meaning of jihad is to struggle with oneself in order to do good deeds.

The anti-Islamic sentiment present throughout the entire series exemplifies itself in Islam in Europe, which states that Muslim immigrants are the source of all social conflict and that Europe is in serious danger because of Muslim immigration. A chronology on the back of this book shows the entire history of Muslims in Europe as a series of terrorist and extremist events.

Ultimately, it's not about a quote here or a quote there, quotes are the domain of sound bites and news clips. A book is about a theme, and when you finish reading these books, you walk away with the impression that Muslims are inherently violent, that Islam is a second-rate religion and that one should be wary of Muslims in any society.

What is most disturbing of all, and that is why we're here, is that these books are marketed to schoolchildren ages 10 and up - impressionable, young minds, who will innocently believe these books to be factual. And it's not just the children, but the teachers, who might do a quick review of Islam by skimming these books. Muslim students in particular may experience increased bullying or perhaps even worse.

This is not about Muslims being offended. The world is complex, intertwined and increasingly difficult to understand. We need to prepare our children and give them the foundation to understand this world. That means educating them about Islam, Muslims and yes, even Muslim extremism, but that must be done so with scholarship and integrity. Filled with incorrect information and deception, these books are contrary to the education mission of schools and libraries.

A question that arises is, why would a think tank, whose mission is to advance a pro-war foreign policy, be interested in children's books? To prepare the next generation for war, hostility and mistrust towards a quarter of the world's population? One can only guess.

I urge Mason Crest to discontinue working with the FPRI and to publish books that reflect positively on them. We also want to offer some recommendations to schools and libraries that may have purchased these books. Mason Crest has actually produced another set of books in the past, a 10 part series on Islam called Introducing Islam. CAIR commends Mason Crest for this series. This series, Introducing Islam, was written in consultation with actual scholars of Islam and does what a school book is supposed to do, educate. We respectfully request that schools and libraries that may have the World of Islam series to make an exchange with Mason Crest for the better series they have produced, called Introducing Islam. This way, schools and libraries are still stocked with books on Islam and Muslims and Mason Crest does not lose a

single dollar. I'd like to think it was simply a mistake on the part of Mason Crest to work with the Foreign Policy Research Institute.

Finally, CAIR is calling on socially conscious people, of all faiths and backgrounds, who value an objective and proper education for America's children, to check whether these books are present in their schools and libraries. We will be issuing an action alert with the ISBN's and titles of these books for everyone to take a look at. If a school or library does not return the problematic books back to Mason Crest, then I urge parents or anyone to simply donate a set of the better series called Introducing Islam. In fact, I will personally donate a set of Introducing Islam to the Free Library of Philadelphia.

Before I conclude, let me make one thing clear. CAIR is a strong supporter of the first amendment and freedom of speech. We don't believe in censorship or less speech, we just believe that true speech will ultimately defeat false speech, and that is what we're trying to do here.

Thank you.