

KNOWUS.ORG

FAITH. FREEDOM. FACTS.

November 7, 2023

Dear Mr. Jeffrey Bezos, Founder and Executive Chair, Amazon.com

Mr. Andy Jassy, President and Chief Executive Officer, Amazon.com

Mr. David Zapolsky, Senior VP, Global Public Policy & General Counsel, Amazon.com

Agudath Israel of America, a 101-year-old national umbrella nonprofit representing Orthodox Jewish interests, has received numerous complaints from its constituents that Amazon.com, Inc. (“Amazon”) is carrying, promoting, and selling hateful merchandise related to the war in the Middle East instigated by Hamas’ brutal terrorist attacks on Israeli citizens on October 7, 2023.

KnowUs, a division of Agudath Israel dedicated to combatting antisemitism and correcting misperceptions about Orthodox Jews, researched these concerns, and found numerous items actively being sold by Amazon that violate Amazon’s own policies of prohibited sale items.

On its seller’s portal, Amazon notifies its sellers that it prohibits:¹

- **Products that promote, incite, or glorify hate or violence towards any person or group.**
- **Products related to terrorist organizations.**
- **Products that promote intolerance based on race, religion, and sexual orientation.**

Various items on Amazon’s site violate one or more of Amazon’s internal policies.

For example: ^{2 3}

¹ <https://sellercentral.amazon.com/help/hub/reference/external/200164670>

See link for additional categories of prohibited items.

² https://www.amazon.com/Kenvonug-Support-Freedom-Sleeve-T-Shirt/dp/BOCL62NKQJ/ref=sr_1_3?c

³ https://www.amazon.com/Free-Gaza-Palestine-River-Perfect/dp/BOCKYDLSLY/ref=sr_1_7?crd=1I8655SHTKX4E&keywords=from%2Bthe%2Briver%2Bto%2Bthe%2Bsea%2Bshirt%2Bpalestine&qid=1698945156&sprefix=from%2Bthe%2Briver%2Bto%2Bthe%2Bsea%2Bshirt%2Bpalestine%2Caps%2C50&sr=8-7&th=1&psc=1



Origin and Meaning of “From the River to the Sea”

According to *Al Jazeera*⁴ and many others, the slogan “from the river to the sea” originated with the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO). While the official status of the PLO as a terrorist organization has softened in recent years due to its commitment to change tactics, the PLO was founded to, and openly engaged in, numerous heinous acts of terror since its founding in 1964.

The *second sentence* of the PLO foundational charter states, “The pan-Arab objective in the Arab-Israeli conflict is rather pervasive – the destruction of Israel.”⁵ It then calls for Palestine to exist, indivisibly, to engulf Israel’s land, that is, from the (Jordan) River, to the (Mediterranean) Sea.

Indeed, the PLO wasted no time employing terror to attempt to carry out “the destruction of Israel.” This included a massacre on an Israeli school bus (1970); many plane hijackings; the Munich executions of Israeli Olympic athletes (1972); and the Ma’alot school seizure, which resulted in the deaths of 26 students (1974).⁶ In 1988, the Attorney General summarized: “various elements of the Palestine Liberation Organization and its allies and affiliates are in the thick of international terror.”⁷

“From the river to the sea” is a battle cry that has been taken up by terrorists ever since. Hamas has overtly adopted this slogan in its Charter (updated in 2017), calling for the “full and complete liberation of Palestine, from the river to the sea.”⁸

In short, “from the river to the sea” is a slogan that was born in terror and is a mission statement of the Charter of Hamas, a terrorist organization. Its meaning and intent are to eliminate Israel and its population, through whatever means necessary.

How the Phrase is Viewed by Other Countries

Vienna police recently banned a pro-Palestinian protest, citing that the phrase “from the river to the sea” was mentioned in the event’s invitations. The head of the city's police force, Gerhard Puerstl, stated in a news conference that the offensive slogan is a “clear call to violence,” adding that it meant wiping Israel off the map.⁹

⁴ <https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2023/11/2/from-the-river-to-the-sea-what-does-the-palestinian-slogan-really-mean#:~:text=A%20slogan%20calling%20for%20freedom,attempts%20to%20curtail%20its%20use.>

We utilize this source to repudiate any accusation of the selected use of Israeli-leaning sources.

⁵ <https://www.britannica.com/place/Palestine/Resurgence-of-Palestinian-identity#ref479012>

⁶ Unfortunately, this is an abbreviated list.

⁷ <https://uscode.house.gov/view.xhtml?path=/prelim@title22/chapter61&edition=prelim>

⁸ <https://irp.fas.org/world/para/docs/hamas-2017.pdf>

⁹ <https://www.reuters.com/world/from-river-sea-prompts-vienna-ban-pro-palestinian-protest-2023-10-11/>

British Home Secretary Suella Braverman recently called the slogan a “staple of antisemitic discourse.”¹⁰ The phrase has been banned by the country’s Football Association, which considers it deeply antisemitic; any player using it on social media will receive a visitation by law enforcement.¹¹

Germany arrested protestors for using this chant in a Nakba Day demonstration in March 2023.¹²

These examples demonstrate that the phrase “from the river to the sea” is internationally recognized as a call for violence against the State of Israel.

Amazon proactively maintains internal policies which prohibit **“products that promote, incite, or glorify hate or violence towards any person or group”** and **“products that promote intolerance based on race, religion, and sexual orientation.”** The phrase “from the river to the sea” fits squarely in that rubric. Accordingly, its inclusion in merchandise being sold on Amazon’s website violates Amazon’s published policies.

Some have argued that the phrase, in a vacuum, does not necessarily indicate that Palestine will forcibly overtake Israel; it is merely an innocent, hopeful aspiration that Palestinians will one day be “free from oppression.” Putting aside the veracity of such an argument given the expression’s clear historical origin, context, and use, this argument is *impossible* to make related to the specific merchandise being sold, pictured above, which overlay a Palestinian flag *dominating* the entirety of Israel.

Moreover, it is well-documented that the phrase originated with, and continues to be, a mantra of terrorist organizations, thus violating another of Amazon’s policies, prohibiting **“products related to terrorist organizations.”**

Timing is Everything

It is grotesquely offensive, yet informative, to note *when* much of this merchandise became available on Amazon. According to Amazon’s website, the t-shirt listed above first became available for sale on **October 13th**, just days after Hamas livestreamed its torture and mutilation of women, children, the elderly, and other civilians, killing 1,400, including 31 Americans.

¹⁰ <https://twitter.com/SuellaBraverman/status/1713897078923870634>

¹¹ <https://www.theguardian.com/football/2023/nov/01/fa-will-consult-police-if-players-use-river-to-sea-phrase-on-social-media>

¹² <https://www.haaretz.com/world-news/europe/2023-05-24/ty-article/.premium/according-to-berlin-police-a-well-known-pro-palestine-chant-is-banned/00000188-4ce2-df79-a19d-fefe75600000>

Product Description

100% COTTON MATERIAL.100% SATISFACTION GUARANTEE: If you are not happy with our product, please feel free to contact us, we will give the best solution to you within 24 hours.CUSTOM DESIGN: If you want to ch
select CUSTOM NOW or message us to correct it for you, the colors we offer include: Black, Carolina Blue, Irish Green, Daisy, Navy, Red, Pink, Sport Gray, Navy, White and different shirt styles including T-Shirt, Long Sleeve
Neck, Unisex Tank, Hoodie, Sweatshirt.

Product details

Department : mens

Date First Available : October 13, 2023

Manufacturer : Pudding Princess Store

ASIN : B0CKYHTGVK

Thus, this despicable merchandise was sold while the world was still reeling and mourning those who suffered from this massacre, and before any countermeasure was even announced.

In other words, this merchandise is effectively congratulating Hamas for its horrific actions and celebrating human tragedy, thus violating another of Amazon’s policies, prohibiting:

products related to human tragedies and natural disasters.¹³

The Worst is Yet to Come

Upon further research, Amazon is actively selling graphic, offensive, and prohibited merchandise beyond items featuring the slogan “from the river to the sea.”

In case ambiguity remained about what “freeing” Palestine actually means, here is this cute sticker:^{14 15}

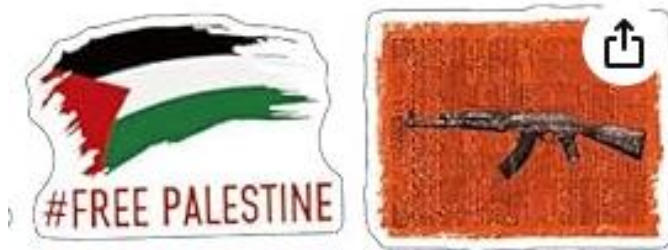
¹³ <https://sellercentral.amazon.com/help/hub/reference/external/200164670>

¹⁴ https://www.amazon.com/Palestine-Stickers-Waterproof-Bottle-Skateboard/dp/B0CCHV414M/ref=pd_sim_sccl_3_1/130-6741021-0168543?pd_rd_w=9N53m&content-id=amzn1.sym.deea2496-fc60-414f-9888-d6b71c774bf1&pf_rd_p=deea2496-fc60-414f-9888-d6b71c774bf1&pf_rd_r=KK7DFQB58WD1MKW73A33&pd_rd_wg=OwzFU&pd_rd_r=83ec4882-3232-4283-9d75-763d11a0cd80&pd_rd_i=B0CCHV414M&th=1

¹⁵ https://www.amazon.com/Palestine-Stickers-Freedom-Skateboard-Motorcycle/dp/B097K82GWT/ref=pd_day0_sccl_1_6/130-6741021-0168543?pd_rd_w=A2cPF&content-id=amzn1.sym.8ca997d7-1ea0-4c8f-9e14-a6d756b83e30&pf_rd_p=8ca997d7-1ea0-4c8f-9e14-a6d756b83e30&pf_rd_r=WZACTMY7RJ3Q5J8P9WTN&pd_rd_wg=cma1a&pd_rd_r=046c1b82-012e-4e3e-9d44-b8837c4a6f64&pd_rd_i=B097K82GWT&pssc=1



And this one, which features “#Free Palestine” together with an AK-47 assault rifle, courtesy of Amazon. Is there any question that violence is the intent here?



But, of course, this letter is just an exercise in the American and Israeli stranglehold of perfectly reasonable free speech, as this Free Palestine graphic brings home so beautifully.



With Antisemitism at Historic Highs – Encourage Tolerance, Don't Merchandise Hate

Antisemitism is at historic highs in America today, with the Anti-Defamation League reporting that antisemitic incidents had risen by 400% in the two weeks following the Oct. 7 attack, compared with the same period last year.¹⁶ Unfortunately, we are seeing frightening rises in antisemitic slurs, protests, and outright violence in America and worldwide. Corporations, the White House, and state leaders nationwide have acted to curb these disturbing trends.

We do not believe that Amazon *intentionally* wished to feature merchandise that is so offensive, incites violence, or that clearly violates its own policies.

Amazon has captured the imagination of consumers worldwide by offering a cornucopia of quality products and making it affordable and convenient for consumers to access and receive them. Surely, with over 600 million products listed on Amazon's marketplace, it is inevitable that some will fall through the cracks and will be offensive.

Our ask of you now, however, is that, after being made aware of these products which violate Amazon policies, ***please*** expeditiously take the appropriate measures toward tolerance.

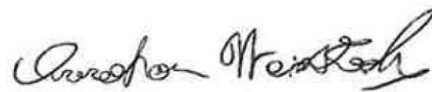
We must lower the temperature of hate and antisemitism in the volatile environment we find ourselves in today.

This is an opportunity for Amazon to meaningfully contribute to that.

With appreciation,



Rabbi David Zwiebel
Executive Vice President
Agudath Israel of America



Avrohom Weinstock, JD
Chief of Staff | Director of KnowUs
Agudath Israel of America

¹⁶ <https://www.reuters.com/world/how-surge-antisemitism-is-affecting-countries-around-world-2023-10-31/#:~:text=A%20survey%20by%20a%20civil,of%20Oct.%207%2D15>.