

United States Senate
WASHINGTON, DC 20510

November 15, 2007

The Honorable Condoleezza Rice
Secretary of State
United States Department of State
2201 C. St., NW
Washington, DC 20520

Dear Secretary Rice,

In July 2006, the State Department came before Congress to report on discussions with the Government of Saudi Arabia that had resulted in a Saudi confirmation of a detailed policy for it to promote greater religious freedom and tolerance. The State Department characterized the Saudi pledges to reform as “significant developments.” With 15 months having now passed, we are concerned that the government of Saudi Arabia has not permitted the transparency required to verify the implementation of this understanding. Our concern is heightened by the fact that despite this lack of transparency, the State Department has repeatedly asserted that reforms have been made.

The U.S. Commission on International Religious Freedom (USCIRF) stated in a report last month that its repeated efforts, both here and in Saudi Arabia, to obtain the Ministry of Education’s religious textbooks and meet with officials responsible for the curriculum have been rebuffed by the Saudi government. The Saudi government has also failed to make available its full set of textbooks published by the Ministry of Education to the State Department and Members of Congress.

The USCIRF report thus found it has been impossible to verify whether reform in these areas to which Saudi Arabia committed itself has occurred. Saudi Ministry of Education textbooks are not only used in schools in Saudi Arabia. Indeed, the Islamic Saudi Academy (ISA), in nearby northern Virginia, uses these state textbooks in the portion of its curriculum that is taught in Arabic, according to ISA’s own web brochure. Since the Commission has released its report, ISA’s principal has told the press that its textbooks have been revised by ripping out pages. When the objectionable pages were removed and from how many textbooks, of course, are not verifiable. We would not consider such a measure, if in fact it even occurred, to be textbook reform.

The ISA is unique in this country in that it is operated by the direct authority of the Saudi embassy: It is funded by the Saudi government; its board is chaired by the Saudi Ambassador; and it operates out of property owned or leased by the Saudi Embassy. The ISA aims to be “the premier educational institution for the Saudi and Muslim community for grades Pre-K – 12 in the United States,” according to the Academy’s web brochure. This set of circumstances also raises questions under the Foreign Missions Act.

We urge you to hold the Saudi government to its 2006 commitments. Specifically, we urge you to act on the following recommendation by the Commission regarding the ISA:

- 1) immediately begin diplomatic discussions with the Saudi government with the goals of:
 - a) having the Saudi government close the ISA until such time as the official Saudi textbooks used at the ISA are made available for comprehensive public examination in the United States; and

- b) ensuring a verifiable prohibition of any scheme(s) aimed at continuing Saudi government funding to the ISA through other indirect means;
- 2) conclude these discussions within 90 days and, while the discussions are ongoing, prepare to take action under the Foreign Missions Act, should such action become necessary; and
- 3) at the conclusion of the 90-day period, report to Congress on the results of the discussions:
- a) if you have succeeded in securing the release of the textbooks used at the ISA, those textbooks should be thoroughly examined and, if they are determined to contain language encouraging violence, then the U.S. government should take appropriate action under applicable U.S. laws, including the Foreign Missions Act; and
 - b) alternatively, if, at the conclusion of the 90-day period, you have failed to secure the release of the textbooks, or receive texts whose pages are missing or ripped out, then you should immediately commence action under the Foreign Missions Act to close the ISA on the grounds that the non-diplomatic activities of the ISA cannot be conducted by and through an embassy, and because significant concerns remain about whether what is being taught at the ISA promotes religious intolerance and may adversely affect the interests of the United States.

It is important for the Saudi government to carry out its promised textbook reforms. The U.S. government has the responsibility to stop foreign governments from engaging in acts on our soil that could adversely affect U.S. interests.

Sincerely,



JON KYL
United States Senator



CHARLES SCHUMER
United States Senator



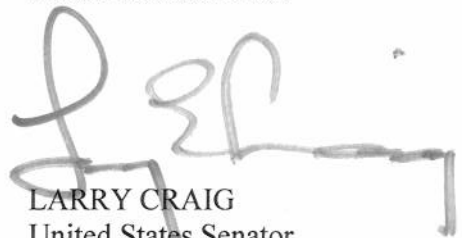
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United States Senator



TOM COBURN
United States Senator



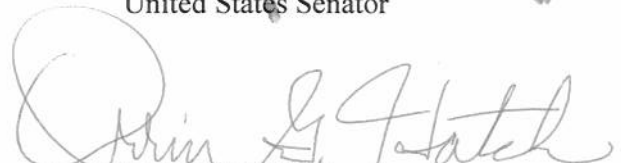
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