

# HOW DO YOU SEE THE MIDDLE EAST?

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The image of the Middle East has been represented so negatively in the media for the last six years and this has made the image of Middle Eastern people also as negative. The typical image of a terrorist has been represented as a Middle Eastern person, yet a terrorist can be anyone, any skin colour from any culture. Yet do the media show this? Of course not.

In the most recent console games the terrorists are usually dressed up in the cultural clothes of a Middle Eastern country. In movies, magazines and comic books, they all have the same image of a terrorist; all this stereotyping has made the majority of people believe that a terrorist is simply someone from the Middle East. Additionally this has led to many other problems such as racism, bullying and discrimination. No one should judge another because of their culture, skin colour or where they come from. Yet the media have had such an impact on the image of Middle Eastern people that many have been bullied because of where they come from.

This shouldn't be happening. It's not fair on anyone to get bullied because of where they come from, yet it seems that the media are somehow encouraging discrimination. It's not right. Think about the children who are suffering because of the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan. The innocent civilians who are losing loved ones because of the war they did not even start, yet somehow their lives have been dragged in to.

These wars have been going on for longer than six years and even though some of the objectives

have been accomplished, the troops are still out there putting their lives in danger, and families, friends relatives suffer as they lose loved ones. This is the same situation for the innocent civilians in Iraq and Afghanistan, as they too lose families, friends and relatives in the war, yet the difference is they are actually living in the war. They also lose their home, their pride and their future. And no one can give them an answer as to why they are being put through this; they are trapped in a tomb of violence and revulsion not knowing >

> when they are going to be freed. Even though the two most powerful countries are winning the war, the main objective has failed: they have lost the peace forever.

As the Chair of Southampton City Youth Parliament, I bought the idea of making people aware of the image of Middle East, to our meeting. I set up a group to discuss ideas about war and how it is affecting the lives of many children in Iraq and Afghanistan and children

who have families, relatives and friends in the forces. Surprisingly, the majority of the children in the Youth Parliament joined this group and took keen interest.

As a result, we are now working on a project to make others aware of the image of Middle East in the media by firstly producing a questionnaire about what people think about the image of Middle East and terrorism. I believe this subject should be discussed more often and more comfortable in schools and certainly in UK Youth Parliament as many people's lives are being affected because of this never ending war.

