



Press Releases

AJC-CMIP Report: Scant Progress in Revising Palestinian Textbooks

March 20, 2008 – New York – Seven years after the Palestinian Authority began publishing textbooks for use in West Bank and Gaza schools, there still is no recognition of the State of Israel and no advocacy of peace with it. Instead, the textbooks promote violent struggle, while hateful descriptions of Jews and the West remain prevalent.

“While Israeli leaders speak openly of negotiating a two-state solution, Palestinian children are exposed to a rigid, narrow worldview in which Israel does not exist and Jews are considered subhuman enemies,” said AJC Executive Director David A. Harris. “A negotiated settlement cannot succeed until Palestinian children are taught to live in peace with their Israeli neighbors.”

A summary report, [*Palestinian Textbooks: From Arafat to Abbas and Hamas*](#), is co-published by AJC and the Institute for Monitoring Peace and Cultural Tolerance in School Education (formerly the Center for Monitoring the Impact of Peace– CMIP) and is available at www.ajc.org. It concludes a seven-year project of surveying PA schoolbooks by CMIP. A draft version of the full report on grades 11 and 12 will be available at www.edume.org, where the complete reports for all the other grades also can be found.

This is the fourth in a series of studies co-published by CMIP and AJC. Previous reports examined textbooks used in Saudi Arabia, Egypt, and Iran.

The Palestinian Authority launched in 2000 a project to publish schoolbooks, providing new books for two grades each year. The process was completed with publication of the books for grade 11 in 2005, and grade 12 in 2006. Books for grades 1-10 were prepared under Yasir Arafat, while grade 11 books were written under his successor, Mahmoud Abbas, and the books for grade 12 under the Hamas-led PA government.

Compared to books used in grades 1 to 10, the report shows that under Mahmoud Abbas, the Palestinian Authority made some improvements regarding Israel and Jews in 11th grade books. But, any potential for further progress came to an abrupt halt when revision of the 12th grade books came under the Hamas-led PA government.

Israel does not exist on maps in the books – except for two maps, reproduced from Israeli maps, in an 11th grade book – which also do not recognize the historical connection of Jews to the land. Even Jewish holy places, such as the Cave of the Patriarchs in Hebron and Rachel’s Tomb in Bethlehem, are not recognized for their Jewish historical ties, but instead are presented as Muslim holy places taken over by Jews.

“With regard to the Jews, facts about their history, civilization and religion are hardly available in the books,” writes Dr. Arnon Groiss, author of the new report. “The Holocaust is not mentioned. Nor can the student find particulars about Israel – its political and social structure, economy, culture, etc.”

Israel’s establishment in 1948 on the basis of the 1947 UN Partition Resolution is not recognized and is referred to as the “occupation of Palestine.” For example, a sixth grade book, National Education, states “Palestine faced British occupation...in 1917 and Israeli occupation in 1948.”

The way the books are written “leaves a strong impression that the struggle against Israeli occupation does not end within the boundaries of the West Bank and the Gaza Strip,” writes Groiss.

Advocacy for peace is absent, while violent struggle, exemplified by the extolling of jihad and martyrs, is glorified. A ninth grade book, for example, states: “Good morning, O my homeland...A morning of glory and red liberty, watered by the martyrs’ blood....”

In books for grade 12, published in 2006, after Hamas assumed control of the Palestinian education system, hatred toward Jews as well as the West has intensified.

Under Hamas, language has been added that reinforces armed struggle. A poem in a twelfth grade book reads, “I swear by Al-Aqsa Mosque and those plains/I shall not return the sword to its sheath and shall not lay down arms.”

According to the report, books developed under Hamas for the twelfth grade represent a setback to the small progress made under Mahmoud Abbas and reflected in eleventh grade books.

In the eleventh grade, “for the first time the Palestinian student is given a relatively substantial amount of information about ancient Jewish history in Palestine, and the Jews are mentioned as inhabitants of Jerusalem,” writes Groiss. However, the grade 11 books still maintain the common Palestinian educational view regarding the Jewish holy places and promote the concept that Jerusalem is historically an Arab city.

Nonetheless, with the slight improvements under Mahmoud Abbas in reforming the Palestinian schoolbooks, the report concludes that “the Palestinian Authority has shown that an improvement of its school curriculum is definitely possible.”