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**Europe's inability to ensure that its financial support serves
the cause of peace**

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CMIP's reports on Palestinian textbooks were instrumental in unveiling Europe's inability to ensure that its financial support to the Palestinian Authority (PA) serves the cause of peace.

The issue was first raised in the daily newspaper 'Il Giornale'(Milano) of October 31, 2000, mentioning Italy's role in the funding of the Palestinian Center for Curriculum Development. The article disclosed that Italy was unaware of the anti-peace orientation of the textbooks produced by the Palestinian Center, and was also unable to check their content. In the debate that followed in the Italian Parliament, the government claimed that it was not responsible for this unfortunate situation, since its only role was to allocate the funds to "humanitarian organizations".

In the following weeks written questions based on CMIP's reports were tabled by several Members of the European Parliament, notably by Francois Zimeray (European Socialist Party), Olivier Dupuis (Tech. Group of Independence) and Rijk van Dam (Europeans for Democracy and Diversity), requesting clarification from the European Commission.

Among the questions asked by the MEPs:

- (1) If there is direct or indirect funding and involvement on the part of EU or Members States in the production, publication and use of the new Palestinian textbooks?
- (2) Does the Commission consider it acceptable that EU funding is being used to foster a feeling of hatred against Israel?
- (3) Does the Commission consider it must insist on the anti-Semitic passages being removed from the textbooks?

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(4) Should EU aid be conditional to the beneficiaries' observance of basic human rights and the Oslo and Camp David agreements?

(5) What measures are being taken, prepared or planned to monitor appropriate allocation of EU funds granted to the PA, and prevent their misuse to instigate violence and hatred towards the Jewish people, and undermine the peace process?

(6) What was the Commission's response to the fact that the PA did not permit the textbooks to be inspected prior to publication, thus violating the agreement.

On behalf of the Commission, Christopher Patten, Commissioner of External Relations, chose to refer only to the first question. According to him, the Commission did not allocate funds for the production or distribution of schoolbooks: "Assistance to the educational system has focused mainly on infrastructures, equipment for schools and school libraries and direct assistance for current school expenses (salaries)." (December 12, 2000). As regards projects financed bilaterally by Member States, he claimed that "the Commission has no right of monitoring or interference." (December 12, 2000). He noted that the development of school curricula and the preparation of textbooks were the responsibility of the Palestinian Center for Curriculum Development, which "was established in 1995 with the assistance of Member States through UNESCO" (Plenary, January 31, 2001).

Mr. Patten appears to have evaded a full response. The question did not refer only to the production and distribution of textbooks, but also to their use. Funding by the EU of infrastructures, salaries, current expenses, etc. obviously facilitated the use of these textbooks in Palestinian schools. Moreover, assistance to the "Palestinian Center for Curriculum Development" was not provided within a bilateral framework, but within a multilateral one, namely the "Donors Forum", of which the EU is a member! The "Donors Forum" was established by the international community in December 1993 to assist the Palestinian Authority to assume responsibility and ensure their implementation. The "Donors Forum" is made up of 38 countries and 8 international organizations. It has pledged \$ 5.7 billion for the period 1994-1999, over 50% provided by European countries and the European Union. Approximately 10% of this aid was earmarked for the development of Palestinian education.

Within the "Donors Forum" European countries, Italy, Belgium, Holland, Norway, Ireland, and the European Union, have allocated specific funds to educational projects, implementation for which is in the hands of the World Bank and UNESCO.

MEP Zimeray did not accept Patten's explanations: " I asked you about the participation of the Commission, and you answer off the point. I asked you about the control that the Commission could exert on this assistance, and you did not answer, since such control does not exist. I regret to tell you that your answer does not satisfy me. I asked precise questions and I expect precise answers on a serious issue. Are you, yes or no, ready to condition the community's aids, not those of the Members States, to the respect of fundamental human rights?"

Patten responded by mentioning that the EU association agreement with the PA clearly states that mutual co-operation, "has to be based on the respect of democratic principles and fundamental human rights", and that "we intend to take up the issue ... with the PA. I give that undertaking once again. We reject any attempt to use the educational system to promote intolerance and hatred".

The number of MEPs not convinced by Mr. Patten's responses is growing. MEP Francois Zimeray, considers that "the flimsy character of the Commission's response justifies the setting up of a "public hearing", to investigate the lack of control on the devolution of its financial assistance to the PA. In addition, a group of MEPs led by F. Ries and W. Declerq is preparing another written question which enlarges the scope of the issue and asks for clear cut answers.

Invoking a recent CMIP report, the MEPs stress that numerous schoolbooks published by the PA contain messages which are contrary both to Member States laws against racial incitement and to the European Charter of Fundamental Rights, and ask the following:

1. What sort of control has the Commission introduced to ensure the efficient use of its funds given to the PA ? Does the European Commission monitor the use of funds to ensure that the results conform to the initial goal of promoting peace?
2. As the main focus of assistance by the Commission has always been to promote a culture of peace, tolerance and human rights in the Middle East, should such fundamental rights be the sine qua non condition for receiving a contribution?
3. Is the Commission aware of the fact that anti-Israeli and anti-Semitic schoolbooks exist in some other countries of the Middle East? Is the Commission involved in any EU funding to the educational systems of these countries?
4. Does the Commission agree that when the beneficiary of its funding promotes values which are contrary to the European Charter of Fundamental Rights, the beneficiary no longer has the right to receive funds?"

Member of European Parliament (MEP) questions	European Commission (EC) answers (Commissioner Patten)
1.To what extent has the aid provided by the EC directly or indirectly helped to finance the publications listed below and any other handbooks liable to contain anti-Semitic passages. (MEP Francois Zimeray, PSE)	No support. The development of school curricula and textbooks are the responsibility of the Palestinian Center for Curriculum Development (PCCD) established in 1995 with the assistance of Members States through UNESCO.
2. Has the funding by the Commission directly or indirectly contribute to the drafting, printing, distribution, use and translation of some or all of their content? (MEP Francois Zimeray, PSE)	No such contribution.
3. Have EU officials or representatives of Members States been associated with the drafting of school curricula? (MEP Francois Zimeray, PSE)	No. Members States have supported the establishment of the PCCD. EU has no right to monitor or interfere in projects financed bilaterally by Member States.

4. Does the Commission consider acceptable that EU funding being used to foster feelings of hatred towards Israeli people? (MEP Olivier Dupuis, TDI)	The Commission rejects any attempt to use the educational system to promote intolerance and hatred.
5. What steps have been taken to monitor proper allocation of funds? (MEP Francois Zimeray, PSE)	No answer
6. What measures has the Commission taken or prepared and what mechanism does it plan to introduce to prevent EU funding granted to the Palestinian Authority from being misused in order to instigate violence and hatred towards the Jewish people, foment anti-Semitism and, ultimately, undermine the peace process? (MEP Olivier Dupuis, TDI)	No answer
7. Is such aid conditional upon observance by beneficiaries of fundamental rights as well as Oslo and Camp David agreements? (MEP Francois Zimeray, PSE)	No answer
8. How has the Commission responded to the PA for having broken an agreement (that the Italian Consul, responsible for organizing European assistance would examine the textbooks before publication) by failing to allow the text of the textbooks be inspected before publication ? (MEP, Rijk van Dam, EDD)	No answer
9. Does the Commission not consider that it must insist on the anti-Semitic passages being removed from the books? (MEP, Rijk van Dam, EDD)	No answer
10. What action has the Commission taken to prevent a repeat of this situation? (MEP, Rijk van Dam, EDD)	No answer
11. Is the Commission prepared to allow agreements to be broken? (MEP, Rijk van Dam, EDD)	No answer
12. Will any assistance payments made in such cases be claimed back?	No answer