



CENTER FOR MONITORING

THE IMPACT OF PEACE (R.A.)

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Letter from CMIP to Christopher Patten

The Rt Hon Christopher Patten, CH
Commissioner for External Relations
European Commission

11th February 2002

Dear Sir,

It has recently been brought to our attention that documents prepared by EU representatives in Ramallah and Jerusalem claim that "the allegations of anti-Semitism and incitement directed against the PA textbooks are unfounded" and that "the quotations claimed to be taken from PA textbooks have not been found in the new PA schoolbooks funded by some EU member states. Some of the quotations can be traced to Egyptian _ or Jordanian textbooks _ Many other quotations attributed to the new Palestinian textbooks have been traced to books that have nothing to do with the school curriculum or textbooks, while others have not been traced at all".

CMIP is a non-governmental, not-for-profit organization which studies curricula, schoolbooks for the students and handbooks for the teachers, since it believes that these are the indicators of the views and values societies want to instill in their youth. CMIP undertook a comprehensive study of the new Palestinian Authority textbooks (for grades 1, 2, 6, 7, and one textbook for grade 11) in order to determine whether the textbooks conform to acceptable international criteria such as those laid down by UNESCO.

1. Are the data given accurate and complete? 2. Are illustrations, maps and graphs up-to-date and accurate? 3. Are the achievements of others recognized? 4. Are equal standards applied? 5. Are political disputes presented objectively and honestly? 6. Is wording likely to create prejudice, misapprehension and conflict avoided? 7. Are ideals of freedom, dignity and fraternity being advocated? Is the need for international cooperation, for the formation of common human ideals and the advancement of the cause of peace, as well as for the enforcement of the law, emphasized?

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CMIP presented its findings in a report "Jews, Israel and Peace in Palestinian School Textbooks 2000-2001 and 2001-2002. This report contains more than 250 quotes all of which are taken from the textbooks produced by the Palestinian National Authority. CMIP does not agree with the assessment by EU representatives and takes this opportunity of presenting you with some of the quotes to illustrate our concern:

(1) "The Messenger [Muhammad] ordered Zayd Bin Thabet to learn the Jews' language in order to be safe from their trickery". [History of the Arabs and the Muslims, Grade 6, p.133].

(2) "Second Unit: The Emergence of Islam _ The Unit's Goals: _ 6. Compare the position of the Muslims and the Jews in keeping agreements and treaties". [History of the Arabs and the Muslims, Grade 6, p.24]. Within the context of this unit, this goal constitutes an insinuation that Jews do not keep agreements as Muslims do.

(3) "Mention the attitude of the Ottoman State towards the greedy ambitions of the Jews regarding Palestine" [Homework, National Education, Grade 7, p.22].

(4) "The Jews saw her [a Palestinian teacher] from afar saving an Arab youth, so they directed their fire towards her. A fatal bullet hit her and she fell as a martyr among the martyrs of Deir Yassin". [Our beautiful Language, grade 7, part1, p.95].

(5) "The Jewish infiltration into Palestine began [long] before the emergence of the Zionist political movement following the first Zionist Congress that has convened in the city of Basel in Switzerland in 1897. The first of these infiltrations took place at the beginning of the Ottoman rule in Palestine [in the 16th century] and brought about the formation of a Jewish community in the country." [The Palestinian Society- Demographic Education, Grade 11, p.21].

(6) "The Balfour Declaration fits the saying ' the one who does not own gave to the one who does not deserve'. Comment on this saying". [National Education, Grade 7, p.22].

(7) "Palestine faced British occupation following the First World War in the year 1917 and Israeli occupation in the year 1948 with the help of Britain. The Israeli occupation destroyed most of the Palestinian villages and cities, expelled the Palestinian inhabitants and forced them to leave their lands and villages" [National Education, Grade 6, 2000, p.16].

(8) "Lesson Seven: Excursion to the regions of the homeland. Photography of Jaffa. Karim and Laila family went on an excursion to the city of Jaffa_" [Our beautiful Language, Grade 2, Part one, p.60].

(9) "Our Homeland Palestine The al-Jazzar Mosque in the city of Acre" [Our Beautiful Language, Grade 6, part1, p.121].

(10) "Let us fill in the following chart:

The Palestinian City	■	The Holy Places
...	■	
Nazareth	■	..."[National Education, Grade 6,2000, p.14].

Jaffa, Acre and Nazareth are all cities within Israel's borders of 1949.

(11) "I thought it advisable to return to my book in order to reassemble it anew and present it to the sons of Arabdom in general and the sons of Palestine in particular, so that they will remember their usurped homeland and work for its rescue" [From the preface of Mustafa Murad al-Dabbagh's book "Our Country Palestine" as quoted in Our beautiful Language, Grade 6, 2000, part 1, p.112].

(12) "Lesson 4: Palestine is Arab and Muslim." This title appears above a map of the Middle East mentioning all the countries of the Middle East by names, Turkey, Iran, Iraq, Syria, Lebanon, Jordan, Saudi Arabia, Yemen, Sudan, Egypt, Libya and Palestine, but does not include the State of Israel. [National Education, Grade 2, 2001, part1, p16].

(13) "Jerusalem _ is the focus of the world because of the Muslim and Christian holy places there" [Geography of Palestine, Grade 7, p.76].

(14) "_ the Jews' attempts at controlling the al-Buraq Wall" (The Wailing Wall or Western Wall) [National Education, Grade 7, p.21].

(15) "The attempts of Judaize some of the Muslim religious places like the Mosque of Abraham [The Tomb of the Patriarchs] and the Mosque of Bilal Bin Rabbah [Rachel's Tomb near Bethlehem]." [National Education, Grade 7, p.55].

(16) "Mention the names of mosques and Muslim and Christian religious places the character of which the Israelis have tried to change" [National Education, Grade 7, p.56].

(17) "The [Palestinian] National Council decided to create armed Palestinian battalions which were named 'the Palestinian Liberation Army' for the liberation of Palestine and for the defense of the Palestinian revolution. The battalions of this army were stationed in Egypt, Syria, Iraq and Jordan. After the signing of the Oslo agreement between the PLO and Israel in September 1993 most forces of the Liberation Army entered Palestine". [National Education, Grade 6, 2000, p.23]. There is no explanation in this textbook or in any of the other PA textbooks about the content, meaning and import of the Oslo agreement

(18) "Therefore, the increase of fertility rates is a demographic weapon that can be used in resisting the occupation. It plays a positive role in winning the Arab-Israeli conflict" [The Palestinian Society- Demographic Education, Grade 11, p.29].

(19) "Jihad comes first after worship" [Our beautiful Language, Grade 6, Part 1, p.20].

(20) "Lord of the Martyrs: The Goals: Our dear students, may peace be upon you and God's mercy and Blessings. We expect you, after studying this unit, to realize the following goals: _ Glorification of the concept of martyrdom and martyrs". [Our beautiful Language, Grade 6, Part 1, p.46].

One could reasonably argue that all these quotes seem selective and one-sided, and that positive references to Jews, Israel and peace have intentionally been omitted from the list.

Unfortunately, this is not so. The only positive change found in the textbooks was that accusations of racial discrimination that were leveled against Israel in a textbook on Palestinian identity, produced and published in 1995 by the PA, was removed in the 1996 and 2000 editions.

One cannot but reach the conclusion that the new PA textbooks do not prepare the youth to accept Israel's legitimate existence and favor reconciliation and peace with it. Certainly a search for Palestinian nationalism is legitimate, but is it legitimate to utilize it in pursuing the struggle against Israel to liberate the "entire national soil".

The question must be asked, therefore, whether the content of these Palestinian textbooks is congruous with the substantial support in the field of education granted to the PA by the international community in general and the EU in particular.

We would be interested in receiving from the EU representative in Ramallah and Jerusalem the list of quotes that they claim cannot be traced to the PNA textbooks.

Sincerely,

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Vice-Chairman

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EUROPEAN COMMISSION
EXTERNAL RELATIONS DIRECTORATE-GENERAL

DIRECTORATE: Middle East, South West (Eastern)
Mediterranean and Israel

Brussels, 15 AVR. 2002
CABPAT A(02)614
ER/F3/dc D(02)106955

REC'D 13
23 APR 2002

Dear Dr Manor,

Thank you for your letter of 11 February 2002 to Commissioner Patten, in which you set out the methodology of the Centre for Monitoring the Impact of Peace (CMIP) concerning its assessment of the content of Palestinian textbooks, and, in which you present some of CMIP's most recent findings. Commissioner Patten has asked me to reply on his behalf.

As you are aware, there are a multitude of studies on the quality and content of the new Palestinian textbooks; similar studies have also assessed the content of Israeli textbooks. The European Commission has received a number of such papers from organisations and academic institutions, all of which shall be given due and objective consideration.

In your letter you also refer to a report which is in the process of being finalised by EU representative offices in Ramallah and Jerusalem. Whilst this report is not yet final, its preliminary findings are that the new Palestinian textbooks are largely free from negative content, that they represent a major improvement on the textbooks they are replacing, and that they constitute, on the whole, a valuable contribution to the education of young Palestinians. This report, once completed, shall be made public.

Concerning the matter of EU financial assistance, which you mention, I would like to emphasize that EU assistance to the West Bank and Gaza, is based on tolerance, respect for democracy and human rights. These are basic founding principles of the European Union and shall continue to be guiding principles of EU policy in the Middle East.

Yours sincerely,


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