



**CENTER FOR MONITORING**

**THE IMPACT OF PEACE (R.A.)**

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**CMIP's response to UNRWA's:**  
**"Myths and Facts"**

The following is a letter from CMIP's Vice-Chairman, Dr. Yohanan Manor, to UNRWA which is a response to a section that they have put up on their site entitled "myths and facts". You can read their section on the UN web site at:

[www.un.org/unrwa/myths/index.html](http://www.un.org/unrwa/myths/index.html)

29th September 2002

Mr. Peter Hansen,  
Commissioner-General  
UNRWA  
HQ Gaza, POB 140157  
Amman 11814, Jordan

Dear Mr. Hansen,

Our attention has been drawn to UNRWA's website where CMIP's findings on new Palestinian Authority school textbooks are challenged.

We would respectfully point out that your remarks are based entirely on secondary sources, i.e. interpretations of one researcher or another with regard to the content of the textbooks, rather than on a first hand examination of the textbooks themselves.

The UNRWA site claims as fact: "**The new books have removed the anti-Semitism present in the older books**". However, the following texts are still to be found in the new books:

*"The Messenger 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, p133]

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"Mention the attitude of the Ottoman State towards the greedy ambitions of the Jews regarding Palestine" [Homework, National Education, Grade 7, p22]

"The Jews saw her [a Palestinian teacher] from afar saving an Arab youth, so they directed their fire towards her." [Our Beautiful Language, Grade 7, Part1, p95]

"The coming of the Jewish throngs to Palestine continued until 1948 and their goal was taking over the Palestinian lands and then taking the original inhabitants' place after their expulsion or extermination." [National Education, Grade 7, p20]

The UNRWA site claims that the new textbooks "**do not seek to erase Israel, delegitimize it or replace it with the State of Palestine**". However, the books contain the following texts:

"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, p22]

"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". [National Education, Grade 6, 2000, p16]

"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 on Switzerland in 1897. The first of these **infiltrations** took place at the beginning of the Ottoman rule in Palestine and brought about the formation of a Jewish community in the country". [The Palestinian Society-Demographic Education, Grade 11, p21].

"I thought it advisable [ before 1965] 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" [Our Beautiful Language, Grade 6, Part 1, p112]

We would suggest that these quotations professing infiltration, occupation and usurpation since 1948, are a denial of the legitimacy granted the Jewish State by the United Nations.

The UNRWA site claims: **each book contains a foreword describing the West bank and Gaza as the "two parts of the homeland"**.

However, in the body of the textbooks the following passages are found instructing the Palestinian pupil that the "inner" (al-dakhel), a substitute name for the State of Israel is a third part of the "homeland".

"Lesson Seven: Excursion to the **regions of the homeland**. Photograph of Jaffa. The family of Karim and Leila went on an excursion to the city of **Jaffa...**" [Our Beautiful Language, Grade 2, Part 1, p60]

**"Our Homeland Palestine. The al-Jazzar Mosque in the city of Acre"** [Our Beautiful Language, Grade 6, Part 1, p121]

" Let us fill the following chart:

**The Palestinian City**

**The Holy Places**

...

**Nazareth**

[National Education, Grade 6, 2000, p14]

"The inhabitants of Palestine on 1.2.1999

1. The West Bank	1,973,000
2. Gaza	1,113,000
<b>3. The Palestinians of the interior [al-dakhel]</b>	<b>1,094,000</b>
4. The Palestinian of the Diaspora	4,419,000
Total	8,598,000"

[National Education, Grade 6, 2000, p11]

The UNRWA site claims: **"the maps... do sometimes indicate the 1967 line and take some measures to avoid indicating borders"**

Of 27 maps dealing with the Israeli-Palestinian issue in the textbooks for grades one, two, six and seven, none name Israel. In seventeen, Israel's place on the map is marked Palestine, ten carry no name at all although five of these give unnamed contours of the West Bank and Gaza. Maps of the region that indicate the countries, name Jordan, Syria, Lebanon, Egypt and Palestine, but not Israel. This not only contravenes UNESCO's criteria [*"are illustrations, maps, and graphs up-to-date and accurate?"*], but one also wonders what effect this confusing information must have upon the young Palestinian pupil.

The UNRWA site claims: **"the books avoid treating Israel at length but do indeed mention it by name"**. It is correct that Israel is mentioned by name in the textbooks, but its image is presented as wholly negative.

The UNRWA site claims: **"the new books must be seen as a tremendous improvement from a Jewish, Israeli and humanitarian view"**. In addition to the above CMIP has found in the textbooks:

- Non-recognition of any Jewish holy site whilst claiming that the Jews have judaized Moslem holy places
- Absence of any concept of reconciliation and peace with Israel
- Absence of any concept of tolerance towards Jews and Israelis
- Glorification of Martyrdom and Jihad to liberate Palestine

CMIP commissioned highly qualified academics to carry out extensive examinations of both Palestinian and Israeli school textbooks. The reports contain precise translations into English of texts that appear in the books. Whereas other

researchers focus on analysing the rationale of the authorities in their choice of content, CMIP's reports are unique in that they accurately demonstrate what is being presented to the children in the classroom.

Surely we would all agree that the well-being of the child must be the overriding concern and in the case of the PNA school textbooks, UNESCO criteria are not being met. All attempts to evade the issue by accepting explanations as to why they are not being met simply shifts the focus from the right of the child to the best education we can provide, to politics.

We look forward to receiving your response.

Sincerely Dr. Yohanan Manor  
Vice-Chairman

cc: Mr. Maher Nasser, UNRWA Liaison Office, New York  
Mr. Rene Aquarone, UNRWA Liaison Office, Geneva

## Letter from Mr. McCann, UNWRA HQ Gaza

UNITED NATIONS  
RELIEF AND WORKS AGENCY FOR  
PALESTINE REFUGEES IN THE NEAR EAST



NATIONS UNIES  
OFFICE DE SECOURS ET DE TRAVAUX POUR LES  
REFUGIES DE PALESTINE DANS LE PROCHE-ORIENT

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8 October, 2002

Dr. Yohanan Manor  
Centre for Monitoring the Impact of Peace  
26 Keren Hayesod Street  
Jerusalem  
94188

Dear Dr. Manor,

I write in response to your letter to Peter Hansen of 29 September 2002 on the subject of Palestinian Authority textbooks and the UNRWA website.

I believe it important at the outset to reiterate the point that UNRWA, like any other refugee organisation, uses the textbooks and curriculum of the local authorities that play host to its refugees. This policy is based on long-standing agreements made with host governments that ensure that the arrival of a population of refugees does not infringe on the sovereignty of the host government or nation. Given these agreements UNRWA is in no position to unilaterally replace or amend the textbooks used in its schools.

As to the content of our website, that is, of course, a matter for the Agency and UNRWA believes that it accurately reflects the nature of the Palestinian Authority's new textbooks to quote from objective, respected academics, such as Professor Nathan Brown and Ruth Firer, who have studied those books. The findings of these academics have been confirmed by the delegation of the European Union to the State of Israel.

The Agency has also conducted its own studies of the textbooks, including of the quotations highlighted by you in your letter. However, given that the contents of textbooks reflect cultural and political norms outside UNRWA's purview and that the Agency is bound by agreements to use these books, I would suggest that in future you address your specific points to the host authority in question or the academics you take issue with.

Yours Sincerely,

Paul McCann  
Chief, Public Information Office  
UNRWA HQ Gaza



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**C.M.I.P.'s response to the letter received from**  
**Mr. McCann**

27th October 2002

Mr. Peter Hansen,  
Commissioner-General  
UNRWA  
HQ Gaza, POB 140157  
Amman 11814, Jordan

Dear Mr. Hansen,

We are in receipt of Mr. Paul McCann's letter of 8th October 2002, which we do not feel adequately addresses the issues we raised in our letter to you of 29th September 2002.

Of the two "objective, respected academics", to whom you refer both in your letter and on the UNRWA website, one, Dr. Ruth Firer, has admitted for the record that the subject of Palestinian textbooks is not her area of specialization and that her knowledge on the subject is derivative, coming from her research partner, a Palestinian lecturer at Bethlehem University. Incidentally, she is further on the record as stating that her understanding is that quotations from the textbooks in our report are accurate. We are enclosing for your information a copy of a policy briefing by Dr. Firer to Americans for Peace Now as confirmation of this.

The second academic, to whom you refer, Professor Nathan Brown, has made general and unsupported allegations that CMIP reports are "tendentious and highly misleading". The nature of our reports, a maximum of direct quotations and a minimum of commentary and interpretation, affords him ample opportunity to illustrate and substantiate his contentions. This he steadfastly refuses to do, notwithstanding that he has been effectively challenged to do so.

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The delegation of the European Union to the State of Israel is hardly qualified to confirm the findings of academics. At the most it could be said to have adopted their findings, but even this is not so. It is our understanding, from Commissioner-General Christopher Patten's office, that the question of offensive material in the textbooks is still being investigated by the European Union.

We note that notwithstanding the reliance that you place on the findings of the above-mentioned academics and their supposed confirmation by the European Union, you have nevertheless seen fit to conduct your own studies of the textbooks. We would like to know when the findings of these studies are to be made public.

With the greatest respect we do not think that you can treat this matter as one that does not directly involve UNRWA, as if it were a dispute between academics or something to be taken up by us with the host countries. The mandate of your agency may well be, among other things, to provide education services to refugees, rather than to author textbooks, but you are a United Nations agency. Are you really intending to suggest that your mandate as such requires you to ignore the content of the education that you help provide, a content that is incompatible with United Nations conventions and in violation of UNESCO criteria?

Yours sincerely,

Dr. Yohanan Manor  
Vice-Chairman Att.

cc: Mr. Maher Nasser, UNRWA Liaison Office, New York  
Mr. Rene Aquarone, UNRWA Liaison Office, Geneva  
Congressman Tom Lantos  
Senator Arlen Specter  
Congressman Eric Cantor  
Mr. Christopher Patten, Commissioner for External Relations  
MEP Armin Lachet  
MEP Francois Zimeray

19<sup>th</sup> February 2003

Mr. Peter Hansen  
Commissioner-General  
UNRWA  
HQ Gaza, POB 140157  
Amman 11814  
Jordan

Dear Mr. Hansen,

We are surprised that you have not seen fit to respond to our letter of October 27, 2002.

Since our said letter to you we have been engaged in correspondence with Professor Brown, in which he has been repeatedly challenged by us to refute some or all the findings of our report of November 2001 and has not done so. For your information the exchange of correspondence may be viewed on our website at the following address:

<http://www.edume.org/react/brown1.htm>

You will doubtless note with interest one interesting point that arises from this correspondence, namely that Professor Brown's criticisms of our research, quoted on the UNRWA website, does not in fact relate to our report on the Palestinian Authority's new textbooks introduced in 2000 and 2001.

In our letter to you of September 29, 2002 we challenged the statements concerning these new textbooks attributed on your website to Professor Brown. In doing so we cited quotations from the textbooks that contradicted them, or the absence of any quotation supporting them. It must now be obvious that, in view of Professor Brown's apparent inability to impugn the findings of our report, UNRWA cannot rely on him to controvert the contention that the textbooks used in its schools teach hatred of Israel and much else besides that is incompatible with United Nations Resolutions and in direct contravention of UNESCO criteria.

We trust that we may be favored with an early reply that addresses this matter directly. We can hardly credit that UNRWA's mandate requires it to use, or in any way justifies its using, the host authority's textbooks whatever their content may be.

Sincerely,

Dr. Yohanan Manor  
Vice-Chairman

cc. Senator Richard G. Lugar, Chairman, Foreign Relations Committee, US Senate  
Congressman Peter Deutsch  
Mr. Maher Nasser, UNRWA Liaison Office, New York  
Mr. Rene Aquarone, UNRWA, Liaison Office, Geneva  
MEP Armin Laschet  
MEP Francois Zimeray

27<sup>th</sup> July 2003

Mr. Peter Hansen,  
Commissioner-General  
UNRWA  
HQ Gaza, POB 140157  
Amman 11814, Jordan

Dear Mr. Hansen,

Paul McCann's response of 25 February to our letter to you of 19 idem reached us towards the end of May, presumably because it was incorrectly addressed. Whether or not you actually saw the response in the form in which we received it, and authorized its dispatch, we are assuming that its general contents meet with your approval.

The suggestion, made in the response of the Chief of the Public Information Office of UNRWA, whom you have deputed to respond to our letters on your behalf, that this correspondence is in some way private, can hardly be taken seriously. UNRWA is an international organization and, as such, is part of the world public domain. Irrespective of the question whether such an organization can ever be said to be conducting private correspondence, one thing is quite clear: when UNRWA itself chose to go public, as it did in the Myths and Facts section of its website, impugning both the findings and the quality of research underlying the CMIP report on Palestinian school textbooks, it surely expected an equally public response and it certainly waived whatever privacy it might have been claimed that the ensuing correspondence enjoyed.

CMIP is a non-political organization engaging in research into school textbooks in the area of conflict in the Middle East. It scrutinizes textbooks in the light of criteria prescribed by another United Nations body, UNESCO. It makes its findings public and circulates them to those who, in one form or another, have an interest in them, be they in the United States, Europe or elsewhere. When publicly attacked it publicly defends itself. In this we cannot see that CMIP behaves any differently from UNRWA. Its "academic credibility" it is quite happy to leave to the informed judgment of experts. The method adopted by CMIP in its research and the formulation of its reports, namely a maximum of quotations and a minimum of commentary, makes it easy for those who impugn its findings, or claim that "the interpretations placed by CMIP on certain passages in the Palestinian textbooks often

amount to willful misrepresentations”, to prove their case. We are unaware of any successful refutation or impugning of the CMIP findings, either on the grounds of faulty methodology or on the grounds of mistranslation, taking passages out of context or tendentiousness.

Whether UNRWA wishes to continue this correspondence or not is, of course, a matter for it. We for our part think that a continuing dialogue serves a very useful purpose indeed, one that is common both to UNRWA and CMIP, namely the clarification of the true nature of the textbooks in use in UNRWA schools. We cannot force UNRWA to respond to the specific points that we raised at the beginning of this correspondence. We shall continue to keep the public informed and leave it to draw the necessary conclusions from your organization’s failure to respond further.

Yours sincerely

Dr. Yohanan Manor

Vice-Chairman

cc. Mr. Maher Nasser, UNRWA Liaison Office, New York  
Mr. Rene Aquarone, UNRWA Liaison Office, Geneva  
Senator Joseph Biden  
Senator Richard Lugar  
Senator Arlen Specter  
Congressman Eric Cantor  
Congressman Peter Deutsch  
Congressman Tom Lantos  
MEP Armin Lachet  
MEP Francois Zimeray