

Conclusion

Egypt's status within the Arab world is unique. It has a long history of an organized state apparatus, a relatively democratic regime, and a well-established, educated elite. Egypt has close ties with the West, both with the United States and Western Europe. Egypt was the first Arab state to make peace with Israel, long before any other state in the region, and it has maintained formal diplomatic relations with Israel ever since, in spite of some severe crises that have arisen between the two countries.

All this, as well as Egypt's significant role within UNESCO, has placed it in an opportune position to promote education for peace and the recognition of the "other". However, the findings from the examination of 119 recently published Egyptian school textbooks, presented in this report, are disappointing. In most areas surveyed, the Egyptian textbooks have failed to meet the standard that could be hoped for from a country in this unique position.

A main source of concern is the fact that the Egyptian school textbooks tend to deliver contradictory messages to the students in various fields: Judaism and Christianity are both respected as monotheistic religions, and despised as unbelief; the attitude to the Christian West in general is not antagonistic, but past conflicts with it are described in hostile language; tolerant and non-tolerant attitudes to non-Muslims are equally present; peace and war are both praised; terrorist activity is rejected inside Egypt and supported (under a different name) in Palestine. It should be noted that the books of the religious Azharite schools contain a less tolerant position in most cases. Especially harsh in this respect is a jurisprudence book entitled "Selections for the Explanation of [the Book of] 'Selection'" for Grades 9, 10 and 11.

On the other hand, there are several issues on which the textbooks speak in one voice. Two of such issues relate to the internal situation in Egypt, namely, the tremendous efforts to foster a positive attitude towards the Copts, and to check Islamic extremism. Other such issues are all related to the Middle East conflict. The Jews are presented to the student in a negative light, with many derogatory references to them. Israel is not treated as a neighboring sovereign state but rather as the usurper of Palestine. The peace treaty that exists between Israel and Egypt is mentioned in some detail, but the textbooks do not endorse the spirit of the treaty, particularly Article 5, Annex III in which "the parties shall seek to foster mutual understanding and tolerance, and will accordingly, abstain from hostile propaganda against each other". Egypt's past wars against Israel – especially the October or Yom Kippur War of 1973 – are discussed and Egypt's performance in them praised at much greater length. Peace itself, both generally and within the context of

relations with Israel, is always conditional: If the enemy (and there are references to the Jews as enemies even today) complies with the Arab demands, peace will last. Otherwise, war is still an option. Expressions that advocate war with Israel still exist in the Egyptian textbooks, although they are very few. Finally, jihad, which is interpreted almost solely as a military endeavor, and martyrdom are exalted and encouraged.

It is important to note that these are new books (the vast majority were published in 2002) issued in the framework of the educational reform of the 1990s. CMIP has not checked the earlier books, but these new books do not conform to most of the UNESCO and CMIP criteria set out in the Introduction.

The CMIP Criteria

- *Jews are presented in a stereotyped and prejudiced manner. Israel is not recognized and accepted in principle as an equal neighbor. Neither the Jews nor Israel are treated with any respect.*
- *Egyptian education fosters peace in principle but does not encourage the school child to enter into the spirit of the peace treaty with Israel. Rather, it advocates a conditional peace and there is much praise for war as well.*

The UNESCO Criteria

- *Data are not always accurate and complete. For example, the Egyptian textbooks create the impression that the territory of Sinai was liberated in the war of 1973. This is not accurate, as the bulk of the Peninsula was returned to Egypt as a result of mutual agreements, including the peace treaty between the two countries, and not in that war. By not emphasizing this to the students, the Egyptian education system is, in fact, working against the interests of peace. Another inaccuracy is the claim made that Zionism and Israel aspire to take control of the whole area between the Nile and the Euphrates, although there is no evidence provided in the books to support such a claim. This allegation is particularly incongruous, since the same textbook, in which it is made, determines that such expansion is to be accomplished by the end of the twentieth century, while the book itself was printed after that date. Incomplete data are given in various major fields including Western civilization and culture, Judaism and Christianity, and Jewish history,*
- *Maps that show Israel's territory are not accurate. Except for two maps in a history textbook that refer to the "Jewish State", almost all of them do not label Israel's territory as such.*
- *Achievements of others are sometimes discussed, such as the cultural achievements of the Copts of Egypt throughout history. The*

- achievements of Western civilization, on the other hand, are hardly discussed, except as an extension of the Muslim civilization.*
- *Equal standards are not applied when the same acts of terror that are rejected, when committed in Egypt, are acceptable when directed against Israel (defined as “resistance” or “Jihad”). The Arab struggle for independence against Western Imperialism is emphasized, the Jews’ struggle for independence in ancient Palestine against Roman rule is described as stirring up disturbance and trouble. There is, however, one case in which a reference is made to the rights and principles of the two parties – the Arab and the Israeli ones thus placing them on an equal footing.*
 - *The political dispute between Israel and the Arab side is not presented in an objective and honest manner. For example, the Jews and Israel are depicted as the aggressor against the Arab inhabitants whereas the part played by the Arabs, led by Egypt, who initiated the war against the Jews in defiance of and following the UN Partition Resolution of November 1947, is ignored.*
 - *Negative wording is sometimes used in the Egyptian textbooks to describe the followers of Judaism and Christianity, as well as followers of sects that originated in Islam, and non-Sunni Muslims. A reference to the Jews, such as “people of betrayal and treachery”, is likely to create prejudice, apprehension and could lead to conflict.*
 - *General ideals of freedom, dignity and fraternity are advocated in the Egyptian textbooks, in particular in the context of Muslim-Copt relations inside Egypt, and in the framework of the campaign against religious extremism.*
 - *The need for international cooperation and the formation of common human ideals are generally supported by the Egyptian school textbooks. Enforcement of the law is another ideal supported by the textbooks, especially against violence and terrorism inside Egypt. As regards peace, it is generally presented as an ideal, but a closer look at it makes it clear that peace in the eyes of Egyptian educators is always conditional and not in itself an independent value. It is most worrying that the existing peace with Israel is not fully supported, but rather presented as a conditional option.*

These are some examples of relevant material in the report. It is disturbing that even today, twenty-five years after the signing of the peace treaty between Egypt and Israel, Egyptian school textbooks do not conform to the spirit of that treaty. Instead of encouraging the ideal of peace with Israel and presenting the Jewish State as a legitimate sovereign neighbor, the Egyptian school textbooks focus on past wars with Israel and thus instill in the students’ minds the idea that the peace process is a phase in a long struggle for the liberation of usurped Palestine. The Jews are still not recognized as a legitimate nation, with its own rights and interests and its own ties with the

holy land. No adequate and objective information is given to the Egyptian school student about Israel, its achievements, problems, society, etc.

CMIP would like to highlight the two cases in which the Egyptian school textbooks talk of the rights and principles of the two parties – the Arab and the Israeli ones, and of a solution for the Palestinian problem within the occupied territories of 1967 only, as well as the two maps in which Israel's territory is entitled “the Jewish State”. Such expressions and maps should be the prevailing ones, and could be used as the forerunner for change. Textbooks and curricula are a crucial factor if notions of peace are to take root among the younger generation in Egypt.