

# 1. Executive Summary

CMIP has completed its research on the Israeli schoolbook's portrayal of Arabs, Islam and Palestinians. This report is part of CMIP's comprehensive examination of Middle Eastern school books to determine the extent education has been responsive to the ongoing peace processes between Israel and her Arab neighbors. This study reviewed 360 Israeli schoolbooks, from six disciplines, that were used in three different educational streams of the Israeli school system in the school year, 1999 - 2000.

The chapters of this report are divided into seven sections, or main topics:

1. Description of the school system in Israel.
2. Islam, Muhammad, the holy sites and the connection between Islam and Judaism.
3. Literature on Arabs, and on Arab-Jewish relations in Arab countries and in Israel during various periods of history, particularly during wars.
4. Political topics – the positions of the Arab countries, Israel and the Palestinians in the dispute – from the beginning of Jewish settlement in the Eretz Yisrael until the present.
5. Peace – attempts at dialogue since the beginning of Jewish settlement. Negotiations for peace following wars and the Oslo Peace Agreements; excerpts from literature on the subject of peace.
6. Information on the Palestinians in Israel in maps and statistical data.
7. Social development of the Arab sector in Israel.

## *Methodology*

### *a) Purpose*

In this report on Israeli schoolbooks CMIP's purpose is to determine how the facts and opinions are presented in the books. The positions adopted by the parties in conflict are not discussed, nor is the internal debate among Israeli historians. The quotations from the Israeli textbooks are representative of a larger body of material with similar messages. Each of these 360 textbooks was read in its entirety, and scrutinized thoroughly according to the following criteria:

- 1) Do stereotypes, prejudices, negative images and offensive terms with regard to Islam, Muslims, Arabs and Palestinians appear?
- 2) Are Islam, Islamic and Arab culture referred to and described with respect?
- 3) Are there displays of sympathy, empathy and sensitivity to the suffering and distress of Arabs, for example Palestinian refugees?
- 4) Is the position of the Arabs during the course of the conflict presented factually?
- 5) Is there any attempt to conceal data and information?

- 6) Are historical events - violent clashes, contacts, dialogue and attempts at rapprochement- presented partially and selectively for indoctrination, or presented in an objective manner, enabling the students to form a fair judgement of both sides of the conflict?
- 7) The presence of self-criticism over Israel's actions and positions.
- 8) Is an effort made to educate towards tolerance and to prevent prejudice?

### ***b) The School Books Reviewed***

The present study reviews the schoolbooks used in Israel during the school year 1999-2000, examining how Islam, the Arabs and the Palestinians are presented and portrayed to Israeli pupils. This examination of Israeli textbooks follows the CMIP studies of more than 140 Palestinian Authority textbooks and 28 teachers' guides, in September 1998 and March 2000.

The study of the Israeli textbooks was more complex, reviewing different educational networks with different schoolbooks. The PA has one set of books published by the PA Ministry of Education.

360 schoolbooks, including about twenty workbooks, were reviewed, from six disciplines: Hebrew Language, Literature, History, Geography, Education and Civics, Bible and Judaic Studies, for grades 1-12.

A number of textbooks on Civic studies are entirely devoted to the Israeli Arabs. The authors of these books state in their prefaces, that the books were written in the knowledge that encounters between Jews and Arabs living in Israel will contribute greatly to mutual understanding and respect. These textbooks were written jointly by Arab and Jewish teachers and inform the pupils objectively of the reality of life in the Arab sector. They do not conceal the economic hardships of the Israeli Arabs. Neither do they conceal their national difficulties - that is to say, the dilemma created by their being citizens of a state which defines itself as Jewish on the one hand, and their being part of the Arab world, with deep feelings towards the Palestinian people.

The books were selected from three sources:

- 1) The list of schoolbooks approved by the Ministry of Education for use in the state-run general network and the state-run religious network. Although the official list, it is not compulsory, but an indication of the Ministry of Education's recommendations. It was published in a memo signed by the Ministry's Director General, in March 1999.
- 2) Schoolbooks not included in the official approved list. These are popular among teachers and school's pedagogic committees who prefer to use them. We found these books on the lists forwarded by schools to the main bookshops specializing in schoolbooks in Jerusalem.
- 3) 45 textbooks used in the Ultra-Orthodox stream, which does not follow the policy of the Ministry of Education. These textbooks were acquired in Me'a She'arim, the Ultra Orthodox neighborhood of Jerusalem.

The decision not to limit this study to the official list approved by the Ministry of Education was motivated by CMIP's concern to reflect as much as possible the actual use of textbooks in Israeli schools.

### ***c) What Was Not Reviewed***

The study does not include the following:

- 1) Textbooks used in previous years. The study does not compare the schoolbooks reviewed with books no longer in use, and it does not address the changes that have been introduced since the 80's. It focuses exclusively on presenting the views, images and stereotypes used during the school year 1999-2000\*.
- 2) Books used in schools of the Arab sector. These books will be examined in a separate study on the Arab sector in the State of Israel. The problems and the status of the Israeli Arabs as a minority within a Jewish State, and at the same time as part of the Palestinian people and the Arab world, form a unique situation which requires separate research.
- 3) Novels that are taught in literature classes and used in the matriculation exams, such as "*Hirbat Hiz'a*" by Israeli author Yizhar Smilansky, describing a group of Israeli soldiers who torture an Arab during the Independence War of 1948.

### ***Main Findings***

Three fundamental statements can be made about all the school books:

- a) The legitimacy of the State of Israel as independent Jewish state on the territory of the Land of Israel and the immigration of Jews to the country are never questioned.
- b) There is no indoctrination against the Arabs as a nation, nor a negative presentation of Islam. Rather, Islam, the Arab culture and the Arabs' contribution to human civilization are presented in a positive light.
- c) No book calls for violence or war. Many books express the yearning for peace between Israel and the Arab countries.

However, there is no unanimity between the authors with regard to the factors, motives of both sides and the development of events in the conflict, or regarding the ways for ending it and the price Israel and the Arabs should pay for peace. This reflects the fact that Israeli society comprises a broad spectrum of conceptions, views and lifestyles.

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\*Analysis of the previous textbooks can be found in the studies carried out by Dr. Eli Podeh, Prof. Dan Bartal and Dr. Ruth Firer. [see bibliography]

### ***Islam***

Islam is described with respect in both the general the religious state-run educational streams. Many books elaborate in detail how Muhammad established Islam and explain its basic fundamentals in a factual, objective manner. Many books highlight positive aspects in Islam. The language is factual and devoid of offensive terms and stereotypes. Sites holy to both Jews and Muslims are not presented as exclusively Jewish and the Arabs' attachment to these sites is taught. The students are even taught about the Muslims affinity to Jerusalem, although, the focus is on the religious, rather than the political dimension. In the ultra-orthodox stream examples of prejudice, patronizing expressions and disrespect to Arabs can be found.

### ***Stereotypes***

In textbooks of both the general state-run network and the religious state-run network, one senses a genuine effort to remove stereotypes and to build a foundation for coexistence and mutual respect between the two peoples. There are many stories that describe friendships between Jews and Arabs in Islamic countries and in Israel even in times of war. There are stories of Jews helping Arabs in daily life and in war as well as stories of Arabs rescuing Jews from physical harm and helping Jews to maintain their religion and identity. In many literary anthologies there are stories about the daily life of Arabs written by Arab authors. Some stories deal with the tensions created by the transition from a traditional society with its values and customs, to a modern western society. However, in some books in the ultra-orthodox network relations between Arabs and Jews are portrayed in negative terms.

### ***History of the Arab Israeli Conflict***

All the history books explain that the two main issues which prompted Arab rejection of Zionism were the purchase of land by Jews and the immigration (Aliyah) of Jews to Palestine, later the State of Israel, which was perceived by them as a threat to their position as the majority. This opposition started as local clashes, gradually becoming an organized struggle led by national leaders. In most of the books the conflict is described as a national one.

Many history textbooks describe contacts and meetings between Jewish and Arab leaders from the beginning of the conflict, breaking the stereotype of an Arab world united in their opposition to the Zionism. Failure of these contacts is attributed to the Arabs. Only a few books provide the student with data on the Arab population from the beginning of Jewish immigration to Palestine in the late nineteenth century, until the establishment of the State of Israel in 1948. Complete statistics on the Arab population are provided partially and sporadically when clashes or disturbances are described, leaving the pupil with a distorted impression of the Jews having been the majority since the beginning of their settlement.

There is a large variety of maps. Some maps describe accurately the distribution of Arab population in Palestine in different periods. Other maps, mostly in the ultra-orthodox network, illustrate Israel without mentioning the existence of Arabs, country. Some books make a distinction between the State of Israel and the territories of Judea and Samaria because the final status of these territories is not yet decided. Other books ignore this distinction, and show only the border between Israel and

Jordan along the Jordan River. The most widely used atlas in the state run and religious state run schools features a map of the territories of the Palestinian Authority, specifying areas A and B according to peace accords between Israel and the Palestinians.

All of the books present the Arabs as rejecting the United Nations Resolution of November 1947 partitioning the land between two states - Jewish and Arab. The Arab- Israeli wars appear in most of the books as justified wars of defense, from Israel's perspective. The Arabs are presented as responsible for the outbreak of all the wars.

In a few books, the hatred of the Arabs towards the Jews is presented as stemming from a fundamental difference, an inherent hatred that is independent of political, military or economic circumstance. However, most of the books explain the hostility of the Arabs as stemming from national and pragmatic reasons: their claim to having exclusive ownership of the whole territory and desire to remain a majority.

Some books in the general state and state religious systems quote speeches on peace by Arab and Israeli leaders at the signing of the peace agreements with Egypt and Jordan. Most of the literary anthologies present poems and stories that express a yearning for peace. However, it is a peace that is perceived as unattainable, a dream, and a utopia. The books express a wide range of opinions as to details of the history and motives of the sides in the conflict. A range of opinions is also presented for resolving the conflict and the compromises Israel and the Arabs should make for peace.