

Executive Summary

This is the fourth in a series of surveys of the new Palestinian Authority school textbooks by CMIP. It covers 30 books for grades 4 and 9, plus a second edition of an atlas approved by the PA for teaching in its schools. As in earlier reports, all references to the issues related to the attitude to the “other” and to peace were gathered, translated and organized in separate chapters with minimum analysis, in order to enable the source material to speak for itself. The analysis is given in the Conclusion and it is based on specific criteria developed by UNESCO and CMIP (see in the Introduction).

The findings are as follows:

- *Judaism as a religion is hardly referred to and no adequate information is given to the Palestinian student about it, except that the Torah was given by God to Moses.*
- *The Israelite or Jewish past in the Holy Land is ignored, except for a brief negative description of the attitude of the Jews to Jesus Christ from an Islamic point of view. A list of historical periods fails to mention the centuries of their statehood in the country, leaving a gap between the years 1200-586 BCE. In further diminution of the Jewish presence in the land, the Palestinian textbooks “Arabize” the Canaanites and Jebusites and prolong their presence until the Muslim conquest, while making all other ethnic elements in the country “transient waves” of foreign invaders and “an anomalous exception to logic and reality”.*
- *The Jews are referred to in the context of their wars with Prophet Muhammad, where they are depicted in an unfavorable light, as violators of a treaty they had signed with him and as employers of trickery.*
- *There are no references to the Jews of modern times in this latest issue of textbooks, and the trend noted in the earlier reports of not counting the 5.5 million Jewish citizens of Israel as legitimate inhabitants of the land continues. They are not included in any of the figures of the local population.*
- *Zionism – the Jewish national movement – is presented as a colonialist movement that planned from its very inception to expel the Palestinians from their land. Zionism is said to endanger the Arab states and portrayed as an influential factor in the USA, especially in presidential election campaigns.*
- *The systematic non-recognition of any Jewish holy place as such in the Holy Land continues in this latest issue of textbooks. All holy places in the country that are mentioned in the textbooks are either Muslim or Christian. Even if some of them are holy to the Jews as well, they are never mentioned as such.*

- *Israel is not recognized as a sovereign state, except once – in the context of the Oslo Accord that was signed between Israel and the PLO. Its name does not appear on any map, save in a series of three maps in the atlas showing boundaries in the 1937 Partition Plan, on which it is called “The Jewish Zone”, the 1947 Partition Resolution and the 1949 armistice lines, on both of which it is named “the Jewish State”. Palestine, instead, is represented as the sovereign state in the region, encompassing Israel’s territory in many cases. Israeli regions, cities and sites are presented as Palestinian and wherever a reference to Israeli territory is to be made, circumlocutions such as “the lands of 1948” or “the Green Line” are used instead.*
- *Israel’s image is wholly negative: It has usurped the land of Palestine; it is oppressive and aggressive; it occupies Palestine and inflicts physical and mental harm on the Palestinians; it violates human rights; it attempts to obliterate the Palestinian national identity. No objective information is given to the student about Israel as a neighboring state. No Israeli is depicted as an ordinary human being.*
- *The discussion of the conflict is incomplete and biased. It is described as a confrontation between an oppressive force – Zionism backed by Imperialism – and its victims – the Palestinians. Nothing is said in the textbooks about the UN Partition Resolution of 1947 and about the Arabs as the initiators of the war in rejection and defiance of that resolution. No attempt is made to understand the motives of the opponent, and it is never depicted as a legitimate party with its own rights and interests.*
- *Accordingly, the refugee problem of 1948 is presented as the outcome of a premeditated plan by Zionism and British Imperialism to expel the Palestinians from their land. The contribution of the Arab side to the emergence of this problem is never discussed. No solution to the problem is suggested or contemplated other than the return of the refugees (or, rather, their descendants) to their former homes inside today’s Israel. The objective difficulty in the implementation of such a solution is ignored.*
- *Jerusalem (that is, historical Jerusalem within the walls) is presented as an Arab city from time immemorial. Its Jebusite founders are Arabized and the Israelite or Jewish historical ties to this city, both national and religious, are not mentioned. The only connection that the Jews have to it, according to the PA textbooks, is as foreign occupiers, from whom it should be liberated. Though said to be holy to the monotheistic religions, the Jewish holy places in the city are never mentioned as such. Nor is the present status of Jerusalem as Israel’s capital mentioned. Instead, it is declared to be the capital of Palestine.*

- *The Palestinian liberation struggle is perceived as a violent and bloody operation with a strong religious emphasis on the liberation of the Al-Aqsa Mosque. The exact geographical extent of the areas that are to be liberated from Israeli occupation is never clearly defined.*
- *Tolerance, especially on the religious level, is an ideal taught in Palestinian schools, though under some religious limitations. But the Jews are never mentioned specifically in this context, unlike other groups (in earlier published textbooks).*
- *Peace is also an ideal advocated by the PA textbooks, with some religious limitations here as well. Until the latest issue of PA textbooks, no reference was made in this context to Israel. In this latest issue, the Oslo Accord is mentioned for the first time in the context of peace with Israel (while in earlier books it was mentioned briefly in other contexts, including a military one). Beyond that, peace with Israel is not advocated.*
- *Jihad and martyrdom are still exalted as ideals, though to some lesser extent than in the earlier books. In line with earlier practice, terrorist activity against Israel is not openly supported or discussed. But individuals who were killed or imprisoned as a result of such activity are defined as martyrs and prisoners-of-war, respectively.*
- *Unlike the earlier reports, this one includes a chapter about the PA books' attitude to the West in modern times, an issue not dealt with before by the textbooks. Western Imperialism is presented as the source of major problems encountered by the Arab world today. Apart from that, no other information is given to the student about the West in the textbooks of this latest issue.*

All these findings indicate that the school textbooks lately published by the Palestinian Authority, much like their predecessors, do not conform to the criteria set by UNESCO and CMIP regarding the proper attitude to the "other" and to peace. With this issue books have been produced for students of most grades in the Palestinian school system, namely, 1, 2, 3, 4, 6, 7, 8, and 9. Thus, the chance for improvement is limited to the books intended for the remaining four grades only, namely, 5, 10, 11 and 12.