

## Conclusion

*To begin with, this latest issue of PA school textbooks for grades 5 and 10 features some positive changes, compared to books of earlier issues. First and foremost among these changes is the considerable information given to the student about Western civilization, which CMIP has found adequate and mostly accurate. There is one book in this latest issue almost wholly dedicated to Western civilization and history, to such a degree that CMIP has decided not to quote from the material therein because of the vast amount of it and to be content with a clarifying comment.*

*Another positive change encountered by CMIP in one of the books of this issue is a short literary piece presenting a killed enemy soldier as a human being with a family of his own. Although there is no evidence to indicate that the soldier described is Israeli, the very inclusion of such a text in a PA book at this time may convey a different message from the one to which the Palestinian students have been, and still are, exposed.*

*Also in one of the textbooks there is quoted a statement by one of the great Zionist and Israeli leaders, David Ben Gurion, which may indicate a certain degree of openness to the opponent. Furthermore, a Christian Education textbook seemingly extends the ideal of tolerance to the opponent as well, which is not something to be found in other PA textbooks. Another Christian Education textbook quotes an official statement by church leaders in Jerusalem in which they refer to Israel as a sovereign state which too is not to be found elsewhere in this issue (and very rarely in earlier issues).*

*In addition to the above there is in a history textbook what can be interpreted as a grudging acknowledgment that Palestine has a “connection to the Jewish religion and ancient historical memories”, something that has not been recognized in earlier textbooks.*

*Whatever attempt that may have been made on the part of the PA textbooks of this issue to discuss the history of Zionism objectively, was vitiated by the authors of the specific textbook including some derogatory terms in the definition of Zionism and more particularly by the reference to the “Protocols of the Elders of Zion” as if it were a valid historical document (and see below).*

*Except the above-mentioned cases, the attitude to the “other” and to peace in the books of the latest issue is basically similar to, and sometimes worse than, that found in earlier issues of PA textbooks. The most outstanding example of a negative development is the paragraph that mentions the “Protocols of the Elders of Zion” and describes them as a set of confidential resolutions adopted by the first Zionist Congress. Although there appeared in earlier issues of textbooks several anti-Semitic references, this is the first time that a PA school textbook features an anti-Semitic text of such a magnitude and,*

*though it does not quote verbatim any of its contents, the very presentation of such a text as valid source material for Zionist history should ring an alarm bell as regards the course being taken by the PA educational system.*

*Another case of change for the worse in this issue of textbooks is the absence of any reference to the ideal of peace with Israel. Indeed the story of the Eagles and the Vultures shows clearly enough the desired outcome of the conflict envisaged by the textbook. Peace with Israel was touched once in the earlier issue of textbooks for grades 4 and 9 (published in October 2004), although even there it was not openly promoted.*

*The general trend of the textbooks of this latest issue remains much the same as that of former issues. Following are the findings in relation to the criteria prescribed by UNESCO and CMIP:*

- *Except for the thorough coverage of Western civilization and history of modern times, all other types of the “other”, namely, Israel, the Jews, and Christians, are still not adequately and objectively presented to the Palestinian Muslim student (Christian students receive the necessary information about their own religion). On the other hand, Islam and the Muslims’ superiority to other religions and their followers is stressed. In one case it is said that morals in Islam have a stable character, while elsewhere they change according to interest and benefit, which presents non-Muslims as basically immoral.*
- *Non-recognition of Israel continues. Israel is not recognized as a sovereign state, except in an official document by church leaders, quoted in a Christian Education textbook. Its name does not appear on any map, while that of Palestine does appear on many of them instead, denoting the whole country to the west of the Jordan. Israel’s official name appears twice in the text, once within parenthesis (an optional equivalent of quotation marks in Arabic) and in another case, without parenthesis or quotation marks, but in the context of its having been established on Palestinian land. There are cases in which Palestine, not Israel, is presented as the sovereign state in the region, next to Jordan, Syria and Lebanon. Israeli territory is never mentioned as such but rather circumlocutions are used instead, such as “the 1948 areas”. Cities and geographical regions and sites within pre-1967 Israel are presented as Palestinian and, in one case, as Syrian. There are at least two places where the West Bank and the Gaza Strip are distinguished within the larger Palestine.*
- *Jerusalem is denied its close connection with Jewish history and presence and in one case the Jewish character of the Western Wall is denied as well.*

- *With the exception mentioned above, and in the framework of the continuous effort by the PA school textbooks to suppress the connection between the Jews and the Holy Land, Jewish historical presence in the country is ignored even when Biblical events are discussed – a phenomenon mostly found in Christian Education textbooks, where the neutral term “the people” is used. Instead, the Canaanites and other ancient Middle Eastern nations are presented as Arab and the “Arab Canaanites”, whose descendents the modern Palestinians are claimed to be, are presented as the sole genuine inhabitants of Palestine. The ancient Hebrews, the forefathers of modern Jews, are presented as an expansionist nation, following an earlier mention of them as occupiers of Jerusalem. Jewish national and religious rights in the country are either ignored or openly denied.*
- *Except for one text that presents a dead enemy soldier as a human being, the “other” is stereotyped as well. There are very few references to the Jews in this issue of books, some of them neutral and some – negative, but none positive. One such mention presents a Jew as a thief, who becomes a Muslim and mends his ways. The Jewish national movement – Zionism – is dubbed “racist”. The list of Israel’s evil characteristics is long and no positive characteristic is to be found at all in the textbooks. Israel shells Palestinian schools, arrests Palestinians and tortures them, destroys Palestinian houses and holy places, robs the Palestinians of their land and water, impoverishes the Palestinians and oppresses them on a daily basis by means of the “racist annexation and separation wall”, etc. There are cases in which the West is stereotyped as well, especially in the context of modern Imperialism. And see above the reference to the morals of non-Muslims.*
- *The above-mentioned descriptions of Israel contain enough cases of wording that is likely to create hostility and prejudice. There are several similar cases in the description of the West.*
- *The Arab-Israeli conflict and the history of the Palestinian problem are not presented in an objective and honest manner. Israel is blamed for everything that has afflicted the Palestinians and the latter’s share of the responsibility for the conflict is ignored, especially their initiation of the 1947-48 war, in defiance of the UN Partition Resolution of Mandatory Palestine adopted in November 1947.*
- *Another new development in this context is the focus on the importance of Palestine and of the Palestinian people for Islam, in the form of “the Garrison [Ribat]” concept and of the great mission entrusted to the people of this land to be the vanguard in the struggle between the Muslims and their enemies. This points to the*

*political value of the religious importance of Palestine for Muslims, as seen by Palestinian educators.*

- *As regards peace and reconciliation, no progress has been detected – compared to earlier issues; rather the opposite is the case. Not only is peace not discussed at all in the present issue of textbooks, but the Oslo Accord of 1993 is now regarded not so much as a peace agreement with mutual recognition between Israel and the PLO, as in the issue of last year, but rather as part of the Palestinian violent struggle (“Intifadhah”) against Israel. Furthermore, the story of the Eagles and the Vultures, referred to above, clearly indicates how the outcome of the conflict is envisaged. The familiar phenomenon of exalting Jihad and martyrdom and the implicitly positive attitude to those who take part in terrorist activity against Israelis still continue.*
- *Cases of furnishing the student with inaccurate information abound and have, in part, already been mentioned above. Maps especially tend to be inaccurate – and not only those without Israel’s name.*
- *Equal standards are not always applied, especially when Israel or the Jews are concerned. Both do not have any kind of rights and the ideals of peace and tolerance do not apply to them, except in one implied reference in a Christian Education textbook. Moreover, one of the most important examples presented by the PA textbooks of this issue of Muslims’ tolerance to Christians is the document of the seventh century CE, known as Umar’s Covenant, in which Jews are denied the right to be inhabitants of the city of Jerusalem. Although there are many historical cases of Muslim tolerance towards the Jews, none is brought to the students’ knowledge and the only reference to the Jews in this context is the above-mentioned one, which, in fact, preserves Christian intolerance towards them.*
- *The achievements of others are not recognized (in Israel’s case) or partly recognized – as much of Western progress in science and geographic discoveries is attributed to Muslim civilization.*

*The school textbooks published by the PA still do not conform to international standards in these respects. So far the ambitious project of replacing the old books taught in the PA schools by new ones has fallen short of introducing new perspectives or recognition of the “other” and reconciliation with him. The major problem with the books remains that the Palestinian youth is not being educated to accept and coexist with the other party to the conflict, the Israelis. The PA is teaching its younger generation that the demand for freedom and liberation is inseparable from the rejection of the legitimacy of Israel’s existence. This would mean the continuation of the struggle with Israel and with the Jews.*