

## Executive Summary

*This is the fifth in a series of surveys by the Center for Monitoring the Impact of Peace (CMIP) on the new school textbooks published by the Palestinian Authority (PA) as part of the general project that began in 2000 to replace all the textbooks that were then in use in the PA schools. The present report covers the latest issue of 30 textbooks that were published by the PA Ministry of Education in 2004 for grades 5 and 10. CMIP has again adopted the same method followed in its earlier reports and applied the same criteria (see in the Introduction).*

*The findings are as follows:*

- *Though Christianity and Judaism are presented as Heavenly religions like Islam, very little is taught about them in the textbooks (except, of course, about Christianity in Christian Education textbooks that are intended for Christian students in the Palestinian school system). Also, Islam and the Muslims are portrayed as superior to all other religions and their respective followers. For example, the Qur'an alone is safeguarded by God against loss and distortion, unlike sacred books of other religions, and Jews and Christians – unlike Muslims – are not part of "Abraham's nation".*
- *The Jews are hardly mentioned in historical contexts either in antiquity or in modern times (except in a special section on Zionism). Their strong historical ties to Palestine are virtually ignored – even in Christian Education textbooks that speak of Old and New Testament events. At the same time, the Canaanites, and all other ancient nations in the region, are presented as Arab nations, the forebears of the Arabs, including the Palestinians, of today.*
- *Although a seemingly objective quotation from the late Zionist and Israeli leader David Ben Gurion is given and an attempt is made to present Zionism's history objectively, Zionism is depicted as a racist movement with a strong connection to Western Imperialism. Moreover, the infamous "Protocols of the Elders of Zion" are treated as a historical document, said to constitute an integral part of Zionism, and described as the confidential resolutions of the first Zionist congress.*
- *As in earlier school books published by the PA, there is no recognition of any Jewish holy place as such.*
- *Similarly, Israel is not recognized as a sovereign state. Its name does not appear on any of the maps where, in some cases, the name "Palestine" appears instead. There is one sentence in which the phrase "the State of Israel" appears within quotation marks. Israel's pre-1967 territory is never mentioned as such and phrases like "the 1948 areas" are used instead. There are cases in which Palestine replaces Israel as the sovereign state in the region.*

*Regions, sites and cities within pre-1967 Israel are described as Palestinian and once or twice the West Bank and the Gaza Strip are implicitly described as part of a larger Palestine. On the other hand, there is a sole reference to Israel as a sovereign state in an official document issued by Christian religious leaders, which is quoted in a Christian Education textbook.*

- *Israel's image is wholly negative: It has been an occupying entity since 1948, exclusively responsible for the Palestinian Catastrophe of that year and the source of violence. Israel shells schools, arrests and tortures people, demolishes Palestinian houses, blocks roads, oppresses the Palestinians – including by means of the “racist annexation and separation wall”, steals Palestinian land and water, strives to destroy Muslim and Christian holy places, tries to impoverish the Palestinians and destroy their agriculture and economy, maltreats its own Palestinian citizens, etc. On the other hand there is one piece of literature that presents a dead enemy soldier as a human being.*
- *The presentation of the conflict is biased. Israel is made exclusively responsible for the 1948 war and the ensuing refugee problem, and there is no mention of any Arab responsibility, even though it was the Arab side who started that war in defiance of the UN Partition Resolution of 1947 which it rejected. A new line of argument appears in this latest issue of textbooks: the religious importance of Palestine to Muslims and Christians is given a political meaning within the conflict. The viewpoint of the opponent is not presented in any way.*
- *As regards the 1948 refugee problem – besides Israel's exclusive responsibility for its creation, the textbooks emphasize the refugees' miserable living conditions in camps and their determination to return to their former homes within today's Israel.*
- *The struggle for liberation, though referred to less in these latest textbooks, still exists. But, unlike the earlier textbooks, areas and sites within pre-1967 Israel are not mentioned in this context (though it should be remembered that, according to the textbooks, Israeli occupation began in 1948 not in 1967, and Israeli sites and cities are regarded as Palestinian).*
- *The city of Jerusalem is portrayed as exclusively Arab. Nothing is said about the strong connection of the Jews to the city historically and at present, both religiously and nationally. The facts that the Jews constitute the absolute majority in the city today, and have done so for some 120 years, and that it serves as Israel's capital are ignored. Jewish holy places there are not mentioned as such. Rather, it is said that Jerusalem is facing Israeli attempts at Judaization.*
- *Tolerance is an ideal taught in the PA schools, mainly from an Islamic perspective. The present conflict and the Jews, however, are*

*not mentioned within that context, save for a brief sentence in a Christian Education textbook that implies tolerance toward Israelis. Furthermore, in what is presented as one of the outstanding examples of Islamic tolerance, namely, that shown to the Christians of Jerusalem after its capture by Umar bin al-Khattab, it is just the Jews who do not benefit from it.*

- *Peace with Israel is never mentioned, let alone encouraged. Indeed there is at least one text that holds out the hope of final victory and the disappearance of the Israelis as such from the region. The Oslo Accord of 1993 is now presented as part of the violent struggle against Israel and inserted between the two Intifadhas of 1987 and 2000.*
- *Instead, there are several favorable references to war and power, enhanced by the glorification of Jihad and martyrdom.*
- *As before, terror against Israel is not mentioned. But there are positive references to “martyrs” and “prisoners-of-war” within the context of the struggle against Israel.*
- *This latest issue of textbooks includes much more objective information about Western history and civilization than before, but, at times, also features a biased attitude, especially in the context of Imperialism. There are other cases that betray a non-sympathetic attitude to the West, such as the presentation of European Renaissance as a direct offshoot of Islamic Medieval civilization and the portrayal of Western knowledge as potentially harmful to Islam.*

*In summary, the above findings in the light of the criteria followed by CMIP indicate only too clearly that this latest issue of PA textbooks too does not meet international standards as far as the attitude to the “other” and to peace is concerned. Though short-lived and minute nuances of improvement have been noticed at times during the last five years, including in this latest issue, the bottom line is unequivocally clear: The PA project of school textbook publishing has not contributed, and still does not contribute, to peace and reconciliation with Israel. Rather, the opposite is true. There are still two grades – eleven and twelve – that are supposed to receive their new books next year.*