



**Institute for Monitoring Peace and Cultural Tolerance
in School Education**

Formerly: CMIP

**JEWS, ISRAEL, THE WEST AND PEACE
IN THE PALESTINIAN AUTHORITY TEXTBOOKS
FOR GRADES 11, 12 AND THE RELIGIOUS INSTITUTIONS**

Compiled, Translated and Edited

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Executive Summary

This report covers the school textbooks of the last two grades of the PA educational system, which were published in 2005 and 2006, thus ending a seven-year process in which the PA replaced the old Jordanian and Egyptian schoolbook for all grades with its own ones. While the books for grades 1-10 were all written and published under the late PA Chairman Yasser Arafat, the books for grade 11 were written under his successor Mahmud Abbas and the books for grade 12 were written under the Hamas government, which may account for the changes therein.

In fact, the books of grade 11 provide us with several significant changes, compared to the guidelines governing earlier books. The fundamentals have not changed, to be sure, and they are as follows:

- *Rejection of any rights the Jews might have in Palestine.*
- *Non-recognition of their holy places there, which are presented as Muslim holy places the Jews aspire to take over.*
- *The Jews themselves are presented in negative light both in the historical context and in the context of the present conflict.*
- *The Jewish national movement in modern times – Zionism – is presented as an expansionist movement created by Western Imperialism and striving to seize control of Arab lands between the Euphrates and the Nile rivers.*
- *Israel is not referred to as a sovereign state. Its establishment in 1948 is referred to as “occupation”. The books consider Palestine the sole legitimate sovereign state between River Jordan and the Mediterranean.*
- *Regions within Israel’s pre-1967 borders are presented as Palestinian.*
- *Israel is demonized by a long list of accusations presenting it as a source of evil, not as a neighbor with its own legitimate rights and interests. The list of its perceived crimes includes its very establishment, occupation of various parts of Palestine, expulsion of the Palestinian people from its homeland, massacres, assassination of Palestinian leaders, aggression against Arab neighboring countries, destruction of Palestinian economy, even responsibility for the meager participation of Palestinian women in economic activity, for Palestinian social ills – such as drug abuse and illiteracy, for cultural deficiencies, etc. The accompanying term “Imperialist” appears in this context for the first time, emphasizing Israel’s illegitimate status in the books’ view.*
- *The conflict is presented in a very biased way as a result of Jewish-British conspiracy against the Arabs. Israel is solely responsible for all its developments.*
- *The Palestinian refugee problem is presented as a result of Jewish aggression and its only solution is said to be the complete return of the refugees’ descendants to their ancestors’ former homes. The Palestinians’ share of responsibility for the creation of this problem, the mass flight of Jewish refugees from the Arab countries to Israel and the obvious difficulty of the suggested solution are never discussed.*
- *Peace with Israel is never openly advocated. Even the discussion of the peace process – in some cases in great detail – is devoid of expressions of support. Israel, on its part, is presented as a party acting against peace.*
- *As before, terrorist actions against Israel are not openly encouraged or rejected but there are indications of implicit support represented by the positive reference to “martyrs”, “prisoners-of-war” and “Fidais” (members of the Palestinian armed organizations).*

The changes found in the books for grade 11 include the following:

- *For the first time the Palestinian student is given some information about the Jewish Holy Scriptures (though lacking and from an Islamic point of view) and about Jewish ancient history in Palestine (without any connection being made to the Jewish present aspirations based on that historical presence in the country).*
- *Contrary to former books, these ones do not refer much to the Muslim-Jewish rivalry in early Islam, which reduces the number of anti-Jewish expressions in this context.*
- *For the first time the Jews' suffering under the Nazis is briefly mentioned alongside the term "Anti-Semitism" (with no further elaboration).*
- *Contrary to former usage, modern Jewish cities such as Tel-Aviv are shown on the map (though their names are almost unreadable).*
- *For the first time Israeli pre-1967 territory is referred to as "Israel" side by side with former terms avoiding this name such as "the Lands of 1948".*
- *For the first time ever we find Israel's name on the map in two cases – both are reproductions of Israeli maps.*
- *The accusations against Israel, though sometimes being very critical, are generally more rationalistic than emotional, with less hateful expressions.*
- *For the first time there is in the books a clear admission that it was the Arab side, rather than the Jews, which started the war of 1948 with the professed goal of preventing the establishment of a Jewish state in Palestine in accordance with the UN 1947 resolution. Even the events of 1967 are told in a way, which does not present Israel as an outright aggressor.*
- *For the first time there are cases in which Jerusalem is mentioned as the Jews' ancient capital and which refer to the Jews as its inhabitants, including during the 1948 war. On the other hand, there are also expressions presenting Jerusalem as an exclusively Arab city occupied by the Jews.*
- *Contrary to former usage, the books for grade 11 hardly discuss the issue of the liberation of Palestine by force. Nor do they refer much to the issues of Jihad and martyrdom.*
- *The ideal of tolerance is advocated, as done in formerly published books, but this time the Jews are specifically referred to in this context, while former books mentioned Muslims and Christians only.*
- *The story of the peace process with Israel is told in full, unlike its treatment in former PA books. The narration is informative and documents related to the process are presented to the students (but, as already said, not a word of support of this move is ever heard).*

None of that, with the sole exception of the continued use of the term "Israel" to denote Israeli pre-1967 territory, appears in the books for grade 12, written under the Hamas-led government, which came to power in early 2006. The return to the old-style attitude is complete, with some additions worsening it:

- *A poem reproduced in one of the textbooks likens the Jews in the context of the conflict to invading snakes.*
- *Israel is blamed of exercising racial discrimination against the Palestinians, with a view, probably, to weakening its legitimacy further. This accusation had appeared once in a PA experimental textbook in the 1990s and was later omitted. Now it reappears and covers the larger part of a chapter dedicated to the phenomenon of racial discrimination in the world. Within this framework, Israeli activities such as the annexation of East Jerusalem in 1967 are presented as racial discrimination against the Palestinians.*

- *The accusations against Israel are heavily emotional, compared to the more rationalistic language of the grade-11 books.*
- *The peace process is hardly discussed, certainly not favorably. The issue of liberation by force is treated in the books for grade 12 more extensively and passionately.*
- *Although Jihad is not much discussed, there is reintroduction of the traditional Islamic concept of “Ribat”, namely, taking up position against the enemies of Islam, which had been first introduced into the books for grades 5 and 10 in 2005 under Yasser Arafat. The use of this term – referring here to the entire Muslim population of Palestine – is intended to intensify the religious aspect of the struggle against Israel.*
- *Unlike the books for grade 11, and in line with former PA school textbooks, the 12th grade books refer to the issue of martyrdom, also in language exercises. One of these references likens martyrdom to a wedding party.*

Thus, the beginnings of a possible change in attitude to the Jewish-Israeli “other” traced in books of grade 11 have been rooted out and the old notions, which inevitably had their impact on the students and undoubtedly contributed to at least part of the violence, remain in force.

The school textbooks of both grades contain many references to the West. This phenomenon began already under Arafat’s last year in power, in books for grade 10, and continued under both Mhmod Abbas and the Hamas government, with increasing intensity and hostility. The West, which began its attack against Islam and the Arabs during the Crusades and the Spanish Reconquista, is the source of evil and is blamed for almost all ills in modern Arab and Muslim societies:

- *Western Imperialism subdued most Arab and Muslim countries, in addition to vast other regions in the world.*
- *The West invented racial discrimination against the peoples of the colonies.*
- *The West invented Zionism and has supported Israel against the Arabs.*
- *The West abuses its political and economic hegemony in the world to the detriment of the weak countries, and uses Globalization, international bodies and world communication media for its purposes.*
- *The West abuses the environment.*
- *The West strives to destroy the Arab-Islamic culture by using various means, including academic research of Islam and Muslim civilization dubbed “Orientalism”.*

In other words, the West is presented to the Palestinian students as a threat to Islam and the Arab world on a large scale, which is bound to have negative results in the future, as the continuous education against Israel has so far done.

In addition to the books of grade 11 and 12, CMIP has reviewed some 25 schoolbooks issued originally in Jordan, republished by the PA – the Ministry of the (Religious) Endowments and Religious Affairs, and used in the PA religious institutions and classes. The results of this review, which appears at the end of this report as an Appendix, are as follows:

- *Although the books acknowledge the common ideals shared by all monotheistic religions and boast of Islam’s traditional tolerance towards Jews and Christians, they advocate caution against and unfriendly relations with them, as they are portrayed as enemies of Islam and the Muslims.*
- *The Jews in particular are denounced as enemies of God, the prophets and the believers, and as conspirators and violators of treaties. They are accused of being greedy, miserly, sly and treacherous.*

- *In the context of the present Middle Eastern conflict the Jews are further demonized as murderers, desecrators of holy places, usurpers of Muslim lands, etc. They are destined – according to a Prophetic Saying (Hadith) reproduced in one of the books – to be all massacred by the Muslims.*
- *The Jews' ties to the Holy Land are not recognized and their aspirations regarding that land are dismissed as "greedy ambitions". Even their holy places there are not recognized. Their modern national movement, that is, Zionism, is depicted as an invention of Western Imperialism against Arabs and Muslims.*
- *Israel's sovereignty is not recognized and its name does not appear on any map. Palestine appears there instead as the sole sovereign state in the country.*
- *Israel is demonized. It is depicted as an occupying power in Palestine and as an aggressive and expansionist entity. It has military superiority over the Arab states and constitutes a threat to them all.*
- *The West is demonized as well as a source of evil to the Muslim world: Western Imperialism subjugated Muslim countries, maltreated their population and plundered their wealth; Western Neo-Imperialism harmed the Muslim world having used its global political and economic hegemon for that purpose; the West has supported Zionism and Israel against the Muslims; the West has attacked the Muslim world culturally as well, using Westernization, foreign ideologies, "destructive movements" such as Bahaism, as means to weakening Islam's position both within the Muslim individual's soul and in Muslim society at large.*
- *Much emphasis is put in the books on the ideal of Jihad, which is elevated to a degree of a sixth religious duty in Islam, in addition to the traditional five ones. Jihad is made a necessity of Muslim society in all times, especially at present, for the purpose of defense as well as for the purpose of spreading the religion of Islam worldwide.*
- *Jihad is also a means to liberating Palestine from the Jews, although there is a text in the books – probably introduced by the Jordanian original publishers – which provides an explanation for the present peace process in the Middle East: Israel is too powerful and the general situation in the world today is such that annihilating Israel by war is impossible.*

Thus, these books as well express hostility to the "other" and emphasize the ideal of Jihad a great deal. They as well contribute to the atmosphere of hostility and violence in the Palestinian arena with grave implications for the region and the world in the foreseeable future.