

## Conclusion

*The schoolbooks for grade 11 follow the fundamentals set in earlier phases of the PA textbook publication process, namely, rejection of any rights the Jews might have in Palestine – including to their own holy places there, which are presented as Muslim holy places the Jews attempt to take possession of, presentation of Zionism as a movement connected to Western Imperialism with expansionist aspirations stretching from the Euphrates to the Nile, non-recognition of Israel as a legitimate sovereign state – a title reserved for Palestine, which includes, according to the books, regions and sites within pre-1967 Israel of which the very establishment in 1948 by virtue of UN resolution 181 is dubbed “occupation”, and the absence of open support for peace with Israel, the latter being presented as wholly evil and as a source of tremendous harm to the victimized Palestinians: occupation both in 1948 and 1967, oppression of Palestinians following both occupations, expulsion of the refugees, massacre of Palestinian civilians in Palestine and Lebanon, assassination of Palestinian leaders, responsibility for social ills among the Palestinians such as drug abuse, illiteracy, and meager participation of women in Palestinian economic activity, etc. The books for grade 11 also feature a new development of using the term “Imperialist” with regard to Israel, with the accompanying connotation of illegitimacy.*

*In addition, the books of grade 11 continue, or rather intensify, an earlier trend, which began in grade 10 and which presents the West as an enemy of Islam and the Arabs. Western Imperialism is responsible for most, if not all, present maladies of the Arab world; it supported Zionism in the past – actually invented it – and supports Israel at present; it aspires to world hegemony politically and economically through means such as Globalization and the communication media; it is responsible for religious and cultural attack against Islamic societies through missionary work and the so-called Orientalism, while its own culture and society are plagued by materialism, immorality and decay.*

*Yet, these very books also include several interesting features, which constitute a certain change of attitude regarding both the “other” and peace. Jewish ancient history in Palestine is presented to the student, though no connection is made between it and the Jews of present times, which might explain to the student one of the most important elements of the present conflict. Some information is given as well about the Jewish Holy Scriptures, though with some distortion. The Jews’ negative description as far as their relations with Prophet Muhammad are concerned has not changed but the number of references to this issue has decreased. The Jews’ presence in the country is somewhat acknowledged by showing their cities on the map once, while in earlier books even Tel Aviv was absent from the map. The Jews’ historical relations to Jerusalem are mentioned and they are referred to as inhabitants of this city in 1948, while in earlier books they were mentioned only as occupiers there. On the other hand, Jerusalem is still considered an Arab city under occupation, which the Jews try to Judaize. Contrary to former usage whereas advocacy of tolerance was restricted to Muslims and Christians, it now includes the Jews as well.*

*The old habit of reference to Israeli pre-1967 territories by circumlocutions such as “the lands of 48” still exists. But there are cases in which they are just called “Israel”. More importantly, Israel’s name appears on two maps – something not to be found in earlier books. Those two maps, however, are Israeli maps reproduced in a PA history textbook. Criticism of Israel is abundant but it is mostly rationalistic and far less emotional than before, and demonizing descriptions of Israel are relatively few.*

*The story of the conflict is told from a Palestinian point of view, with a biased approach, but one can find there some glimpses of objective description such as the admission that it was the Arab side which opened the 1948 war in order to prevent the establishment of a Jewish state,*

and again contributed a great deal to the outbreak of the 1967 war. The course of the 1973 war is described objectively.

Though peace with Israel is never openly advocated, the peace process between Israel and the Palestinians is described in detail, far more than in earlier books. One can discern, however, an attempt to show the Palestinians as the side sticking to peace while Israel is depicted as the one who obstructs peace with its belligerent actions against the Palestinians. The attacks against Israelis, which cause Israeli reactions, are not mentioned. In addition, there are very few references – comparing to earlier PA textbooks – to the issue of liberation, to Jihad and martyrdom and to issues that may be interpreted as implicit support of terrorist activity against Israel, though such references do exist.

One is tempted to explain these new phenomena by the change which took place at the end of 2004 with the passing away of Yasser Arafat and the coming to power of his successor, Mahmud Abbas, who seems to be a more pragmatic person. If this is the case, it is understandable why these initial signs of a possible change for the better in the PA schoolbooks' attitude to the "other" and to peace are missing from the books issued a year later for grade 12 under the Hamas government. In fact, one can see in the PA textbooks for grade 12 two types of development.

First, none of the nuances of change traced in the books a year earlier has remained in force, except continuous use of the term "Israel" to denote Israeli territory rather than "the Lands of 1948", etc. The return to former patterns of narration includes the following phenomena: more demonizing expressions relating to the Jews and Israel, with the criticism against Israel being more emotional than rational; more fervor in the context of the liberation issue, which assumed a very minor character in the grade 11 books; repeated emphasis of the religious aspect of the struggle embodied in the "Ribat" principle, which was first introduced into the PA curriculum in 2005 within the books for grades 5 and 10 and did not appear in the books of grade 11; the return to complete non-recognition of Israel and the Jewish presence in the country; the absence of direct references to the peace process with Israel as well to the issue of tolerance with regard to the Jews specifically; and also the disappearance of any attempt to reveal to the students – as done in the history textbook for grade 11 – that the Arab side shared some responsibility for the present situation of the conflict.

Second, the books for grade 12 feature an intensified outlook of Israel, which makes it more difficult to ever overreach the gap existing between the two parties to the conflict. The tendency to see Israel as part of the Imperialist camp, initiated in the books for grade 11, continues in the books for grade 12 too. Israel is thus presented not just as a usurping entity who has inflicted enormous disasters upon the Palestinians. It is rather an integral part of the wider world phenomenon of Imperialism, which is wholly evil and should be fought uncompromisingly.

Another new development in this context is the extensive use of the theme of racial discrimination as a new definition of Israel. A whole sub-chapter is dedicated to this issue, which is far bigger than the rest of the chapter about racial discrimination in general. It should be noted that Israel was already accused of racial discrimination against the Palestinians in an experimental edition of the PA National Education textbook issued in 1995,<sup>61</sup> but later editions omitted this accusation and it did not reappear until this latest edition of PA textbooks. A formidable effort is made to "adjust" the definition of racism to the particular case of the Palestinian-Israeli conflict. Thus, the List of Israel's racist crimes include as well the occupation of East Jerusalem in 1967 and its annexation to Israel, which by all scientific criteria, would be considered a political and not a racist act. The presentation of all of Israel's

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<sup>61</sup> See Palestinian National Education, Grade 6 (1995) p. 55, and also CMIP report "Jews, Israel and Peace in Palestinian School Textbooks 2000-2001 and 2001-2002", November 2001, p. 33.

*actions as racist aims at further making its existence illegitimate much the same as the extinct Apartheid regime in South Africa.*

*In short, the promising beginnings of change seen in the books for grade 11 were nipped in the bud by the books of grade 12, which have worsened the PA books' attitude to both Israel and peace.*

*But there is more to be said about the PA books of both grades. They have intensified the negative attitude to the West to a point of sheer hatred not only politically, but also culturally and religiously. Western Imperialism in history and Western political and economic hegemony these days under the cover of Globalization, including the US and British involvement in the Middle East, and also Western cultural influence in the Muslim world is presented as a threat that should be confronted. There is only a short distance between such indoctrination and actual anti-Western activity. A new generation is being raised in the PA territories in such a way, which may well prove disastrous to world peace in the near future.*