

CONCLUSION

The selection of textbooks surveyed in this report opens a window on to the Saudi Arabian general worldview, certain aspects of which may be summed up as follows:

- A heightened sense of belonging to Islam, at the expense of all other loyalties.
- The superiority of Islam and the Muslims to all other religions and their followers.
- Christians and Jews are enemies of Islam and the Muslims; no love or friendship should prevail between them and Muslims.
- The West is the source of evil that has afflicted the Muslim world. Its most dangerous effect upon Muslims nowadays is its cultural and intellectual influence, which should be resisted. The West is also responsible for the Zionist occupation of Palestine.
- The Jews are a wicked nation, both in their relations with Arabs and Muslims, and in the context of world history. The Jews' disappearance is, therefore, desired.
- Israel is not recognized as a sovereign state. Its place is always taken by Palestine, which is depicted as a Muslim country occupied by the Zionist Jews, who defile its Muslim holy places and endanger the neighboring Muslim countries as well. Zionism is depicted as an evil movement and a grave danger to Islam.
- A peaceful solution to the Middle East conflict is not advocated. Rather, war, Jihad and martyrdom are alluded to. Palestine in its entirety should be liberated by force and purified of Zionist filth.
- Western democracy is rejected; obedience to the ruler is demanded under all but one circumstance; women's status is inferior to men's according to Western standards.

Within this overall context, the Saudi Arabian textbooks fail to comply with the criteria set up by UNESCO. The data given to the students about Christianity, Judaism, the West, Israel and Zionism is mostly incomplete and in many cases erroneous. The history of the Jews and of Western civilization is not taught in Saudi schools, unless through the prism of hostility.

Inaccuracy and distortion occur. Three prominent examples are the attempt to present the West as a materialistic and decaying civilization, the use of the Protocols of the Elders of Zion as a source for Jewish history and the systematic erasure of Israel's name from every map. Other, "minor", inaccuracies also occur, such as the allegations that Israel initiated the arson incident at al-Aqsa Mosque in 1969, or that the Jews of the Ottoman city of Salonika were responsible for the abolition of the Muslim caliphate in Turkey in 1924 (whereas they actually had already been under Greek rule since 1912).

The achievements of "others", that is, non-Muslims, are hardly recognized, and equal standards regarding them are not applied. This gives rise to the question of whether political disputes can be presented objectively and honestly in the Saudi Arabian textbooks. In all examples, whether Palestine, Kashmir, Bosnia-Herzegovina, the Philippines, or Chechnya, the Muslims are always the peaceful victims of vicious non-Muslims.

"Is wording likely to create prejudice, misapprehension and conflict avoided?" The answer to this UNESCO criterion is definitely in the negative, as indicated by the following examples:

- A malicious Crusader-Jewish alliance striving to eliminate Islam from all the continents. Geography of the Muslim World, Grade 8, (1994) p. 32
- The European Imperialists' goal behind the domination of the Muslim world was humiliating the Muslims, crushing their power and impoverishing them. Biography of the Prophet and History of the Muslim State, Grade 10, (2001) pp. 106-107
- Western civilization, which has lost the meaning of spirituality, finds itself in its turn on the verge of an abyss. It is a civilization on its way to dissolution and extinction.

- Biography of the Prophet and History of the Muslim State, Grade 10, (2001) p. 71
- The Jews are wickedness in its very essence.
Facilitating the Rules of the Arabic Language, Grade 9, pt. 2 (1999) p. 24
 - The Jews, a people of treachery and betrayal...
Dictation, Grade 8, pt. 1 (2000) p. 24

The "ideals of freedom, dignity and fraternity", emphasizing the "need for international cooperation" and "the formation of common human ideals" worldwide are advocated in the textbooks, but only among Muslims.

The content of Saudi Arabian school textbooks is an example of literature directed against anything Western, Christian and Jewish. It is a disquieting reality that needs to be addressed rather than underplayed, as was done by Prince Sa'ud al-Faisal, Saudi Foreign Minister, in an interview to CBS's 60 Minutes program in September 2002 (see Appendix A for a transcript of his statement).

It is too early to determine whether the reform promised by the Minister is complete, but CMIP and AJC hope that the present survey of Saudi Arabian textbooks contributes to a useful discussion of this important issue.