

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This report presents the official Saudi worldview to which school students between the ages 6-16 are exposed through the medium of subject textbooks. For this purpose, 93 books taught in grades 1-10, mostly from the years 1999-2002, have been examined. Special emphasis is placed on the Saudi Arabian attitude to the "other", namely, Christians, Jews and the West, as well as on: the Middle East conflict, the concept of government, women's status in society and children's status in the family. Following are the main findings.

- Education in Saudi Arabia is centered around Islam, as stated in the Education Policy document (see the Preface and clauses 2, 11, 12, 13, 25, 28, 29, 31, 50, 60, 64, 74, 83, 95, 153, 209, 232 of that document in Chapter One). Islamic studies constitute a major portion of the curriculum at all educational levels, and even science textbooks contain Islamic notions.
- Saudi Arabia is presented as a country where Islam plays the dominant role in state and society, in the judicial and educational systems, and in everyday life. Saudi Arabia assumes, in turn, a leading role in the Muslim world and sees itself as the champion of Islam.
- Islam is presented as the only true religion, while all other religions are presented as false. It is the only religion leading its followers to Paradise, whereas all other religions destroy their believers in Hell. The Muslims are, consequently, superior to followers of all other religions, in both this world and the next.
- Christians and Jews are denounced as infidels. Moreover, Christians and Jews are presented as enemies of Islam and of Muslims. Therefore, Muslims may not befriend them, nor emulate them in any way, lest that lead to love and friendship, which is forbidden.
- The West in particular is the source of the past and present misfortunes of the Muslim world, beginning with the Crusades, through modern Imperialism and ending in the establishment of the State of Israel. However, the West's most dangerous effect on Muslim society nowadays is its cultural and intellectual influence in various fields such as: the spread of Western practices and habits - from Western democracy to alcoholic drinks, Western influence in the fields of literature, art, music, the media and fashion, Western-inspired ideologies such as nationalism - including its Arab version, Communism and secularism, Western influence in education and research - including research of the Muslim world ("Orientalism"), Christian missionary work, Western humanitarian and medical aid, and even Western-invented computer games.
- The West itself is a decaying society on its way to extinction, the symptoms of which are the absence of spirituality, the practice of adultery and sodomy that increase the number of AIDS cases in the West, and the large number of suicides in Western society.
- According to the Saudi textbooks, the Jews are a wicked nation, characterized by bribery, slyness, deception, betrayal, aggressiveness and haughtiness. They were a negative element in Arabia even before Islam and cooperated with Muhammad's enemies after the emergence of Islam, for which they were punished by the Prophet with exile and, in one case - putting to death of the men and enslavement of the women and children. In spite of this they remained disloyal to Islam and created dissension within it. Their present occupation of Palestine constitutes a danger to the neighboring Muslim countries. The Jews have been a harmful element in world history, and are responsible, inter alia, for the French and Bolshevik revolutions and for the outbreak of World War I. In order to illustrate the negative role of the Jews to Saudi Arabian students, the Protocols of the Elders of Zion are presented to them as an authentic historical source. They are said to have been the secret resolutions of the first Zionist Congress that was convened in Basel, Switzerland, in 1897. One textbook mentions that perdition is the desired fate for the Jews.

- Zionism is presented as an evil movement. It is based on ancient Jewish notions, chief among them being the idea of the "chosen people", which is presented in the Saudi Arabian textbooks as a belief on the part of the Jews that they have been chosen to be masters of the world . Accordingly, Zionism strives towards world domination or, at least, towards territorial expansion in the Fertile Crescent and Arabia. It uses evil means to direct world history, including some non-Jewish auxiliary organizations, like the Freemasons and the Lyons and Rotary clubs.
- Israel is not recognized as a sovereign state in the Saudi Arabian textbooks and its name does not appear on any map. Instead, all maps bear the name Palestine. Israeli regions - such as the Negev, and cities - such as Haifa and Acre, are presented as Palestinian. Palestine is presented as a Muslim country occupied by foreigners who defile its Muslim holy places, especially al-Aqsa Mosque in Jerusalem. The occupation of Palestine is portrayed as the most crucial problem of the Arabs and the Muslims, who should all join forces for the total liberation of Palestine and for its purification from the Zionist filth.
- Peace between Muslims and non-Muslims is not advocated. Instead, the Saudi Arabian textbooks, even grammar books, are full of phrases exalting war, Jihad, and martyrdom.
- All forms of terror are rejected by the Saudi Arabian textbooks. However, it appears that such prohibitions do not apply to cases that fall in the categories of Jihad and martyrdom. Saudi Arabian textbooks use the term "Fida'i" in a positive way, which seems to indicate support for terrorist activity carried out by members of the Palestinian armed organizations who are called "Fida'is" throughout the Arab world.
- The Saudi Arabian textbooks reject Western democracy. Instead, they praise the type of regime Saudi Arabia has embraced, the character of which is attributed to Islamic directives. Within this framework, the subjects are expected to remain loyal to the ruler under all circumstances - even if the ruler is oppressive - so long as he does not order them to act in a way contrary to Islamic Law. On the other hand, the Saudi Arabian textbooks emphasize the "family-like" type of relationship between the ruler and the ruled.
- Women's legal standing and their status vis-à-vis men, including their own husbands in matters of divorce, are elaborately dealt with in the Saudi Arabian textbooks. Specific attention is paid in the books to the various rules that prohibit direct contact between men and women, and the importance of women's dress code.
- The Saudi Arabian textbooks emphasize the child's duties towards his parents, of which first and foremost is obedience. Obedience is also demanded from the students to their teacher.

It should be noted that the Saudi Arabian Foreign Minister, Prince Sa'ud al-Faisal, referred to the problem of Saudi Arabian textbooks during an interview to CBS's 60 Minutes program in September 2002. He said that a survey of Saudi Arabian textbooks that had been carried out on his orders revealed that only 5% of the material therein were "abhorrent", while other 10% were "questionable", and they had been changed (see in Appendix A, a transcript of his statement). It is too early to determine whether such a reform is complete, but CMIP and AJC hope that the present report contribute to any useful discussion of this important issue.

* The concept of the 'chosen people' almost universally held among the Jews has nothing to do with the relations between Jews and other nations. Its essence is the relations between the Jews and God Who has chosen them to live according to a special code that He envisaged for them and embodied in the Torah. Such a status is a constant test rather than a privilege and does not make the Jews superior to any other nation, as is clearly emphasized by prophets such as Amos (see Amos 3:2; 9:7).