



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

Formerly: Center for Monitoring the Impact of Peace (CMIP)

**The West, Christians, Israel and Jews
In Saudi Arabian Schoolbooks**

A Research Update

By

Arnon Groiss

With the Assistance of

Ido Mizrahi



July, 2008

Table of Contents

Overview	3
Introduction	4
The Attitude to Other Religions and their Followers	6
The West	9
The Jews and Israel	12
Peace and War	17
Conclusion	20

Overview

The following is an update of [a survey of 93 Saudi Arabian schoolbooks](#) conducted in 2002/3 by the Center for Monitoring the Impact of Peace (CMIP, now renamed IMPACT-SE). Its core findings confirm our previous conclusions that Saudi Arabian school textbooks teach the student hate of the “other” and foster violent inclinations towards it. Following are some selected quotes from the books:

The struggle of this nation [i.e., the Muslim nation] with Jews and Christians goes on, and it will last for ever...

Jews and Christians are enemies of the believers [i.e., the Muslims] and it is impossible that they will [ever] be content with the Muslims... Therefore, it is necessary to be cautious against them.

Hadith, Grade 9, pp. 148-149

There is no doubt that the Muslims' power irritates the infidels and spreads envy in the hearts of Islam's enemies, namely, Christians, Jews and others. So they conspire against them, gather [their] forces against them, oppress them and seize every opportunity in order to eliminate the Muslims...

Geography of the Muslim World, Grade 8, p. 116

The Jews are a People who became naturally disposed to treachery and betrayal over the ages. They do not abide by a treaty or conscience...

[Koran] Commentary, Grade 9, Part 1, p. 41

Now it [Palestine] is occupied by the Jews, a people of treachery and betrayal, who have gathered there from every place... Their end, by God's will, is perdition.

Dictation, Grade 8, Part 1, p. 24

Is there any way for a Muslim to get closer to God, after monotheism, other than Jihad in His cause...?!

[Literary] Study, Grade 10, p. 104

One of the best deeds is Jihad in God's cause, and advocating it, for [the purpose of] spreading God's religion on earth...

Hadith, Grade 8, p. 44

There are two happy outcomes for the fighters of Jihad in God's cause: victory, or martyrdom.

Grammar, Grade 10, Part 1, p. 66

This constitutes a dangerous education nurturing hatred and violence in the younger Saudi generations and in other Muslim youngsters studying in Saudi schools abroad. The results of such education have been terrorist activities around the world, and in Saudi Arabia itself. Although some changes have been made in the books since our original research in 2002/3, the atmosphere of hatred and violence still prevails in the Saudi curriculum. For the sake of world peace and for the sake of the Saudi Arabian children themselves, this kind of "education" must be stopped.

Introduction

In January 2003, CMIP, with the support of the American Jewish Committee (AJC), issued its report on the Saudi Arabian school textbooks which covered 93 books of almost all subjects, published in the late 1990s and early 2000s and studied in Saudi school grades 1-10. The 153-page report is available on our web site: <http://www.impact-se.org>. The report revealed a very depressing picture of hatred for non-Muslims, Jews and Christians in particular, with demonizing tendencies towards the West and Israel. It also revealed a negative attitude to peace, as far as the conflict in the Middle East was concerned.

The report found that Christians and Jews were presented in the Saudi Arabian schoolbooks as enemies of Islam and the Muslims and that no love or friendship should prevail between them and the latter. The West was depicted as a source of evil afflicting the Muslim world, of which the most dangerous effect upon Muslims nowadays was Western cultural and intellectual influence.

The Jews were portrayed as a wicked nation, with the Protocols of the Elders of Zion presented as their scheme for world domination. In light of this "fact," their "disappearance" was, therefore, desired. Israel was not recognized as a sovereign state and peace with it was not sought. Rather, an emphasis was put on the importance of Jihad and martyrdom so that Palestine would be liberated in its entirety and thus be purified of what was described as "Zionist filth."

Even before the publication of the report, high-ranking Saudi officials spoke to Western media about governmental intention to change some of the above-mentioned features of the Saudi curriculum. In an interview to CBS's 60 Minutes on Sep. 9, 2002, Saudi Foreign Minister Prince Saud Al-Faisal said that having checked his country's schoolbooks following the Sep. 11, 2001 attacks, "Ten percent of what we found was questionable. Five percent was actually abhorrent to us. So, we took a decision to change that, and we have changed."

In later years, there were more declarations about the need to change the textbooks. IMPACT-SE waited five years before conducting an update of its research on the latest editions of some Saudi books it had previously examined, in addition to others which were unobtainable in 2003, as well as new ones which have replaced previous books.

The results are quite illuminating. We found that the Saudi Arabian authorities have replaced or otherwise revised a number of textbooks, resulting in changes for the better in certain cases, especially as far as the attitude to the West was concerned. In addition, the warlike attitude toward the solution of the Middle East conflict has been softened slightly. However, it is still in force and a peaceful solution to the conflict is not advocated. The demonizing attitude toward non-Muslims in general and Jews and Israel in particular has not been changed at all. It is tempting to conclude that most changes have taken place in books related to non-religious subjects such as geography and history, while books discussing religious subjects seem to be more difficult to amend. However, such a conclusion needs further substantiation on the basis of thorough research which has yet to be conducted.

The books scrutinized in this research update include the following:

1. *Geography of the Muslim World for grade 8*
2. *Dictation for grade 8, part 1*
3. *Dictation for grade 8, part 2*
4. *Hadith [Prophetic Sayings] for grade 8*
5. *Hadith for grade 9*
6. *Hadith and Islamic Culture for grade 10*
7. *Rules of the Arabic Language for grade 9, part 2*
8. *Monotheism for grade 10*

The copies we studied were all published in 2006. However, they are identical to copies dated 2007 and 2008 which can be found on the Saudi Arabian Ministry of Education's web site: <http://www2.moe.gov.sa/ebooks/>. Books numbers 2, 3 and 6 have remained the same as we found them in 2003. Books 4, 5 and 8 were unavailable to us in 2003 and we see them now for the first time. Book 1 has been revised since 2003 and book 7 has probably replaced a previous one. Aside from these eight books, after having ascertained that they were identical to their counterparts on the Ministry of Education's web site, we further browsed through an additional number of books on the site in order to make our research update more comprehensive. It should be noted that we did not check these latter books page-by-page.

Following are our findings in more detail.

The Attitude to Other Religions and their Followers

This particular field has hardly witnessed any change. In the present edition of the [Koran] Commentary textbook for grade 9, on page 99 it is said: “the religion of Islam... is the true religion.” This is an improvement compared to the 2000 edition which added to that sentence the words: “...and any other religion is false” with some additional offensive remarks ([Koran] Commentary, Grade 9 (2000) p. 88). However, Saudi Arabian schoolbooks still teach students that Islam has rendered all other monotheistic religions obsolete and that the Koran is the only divine book safeguarded from distortion, which has been the fate of the other Holy Scriptures.

All Heavenly [monotheistic] religions have been abrogated by Muhammad's religion [i.e., Islam]... [Any]one who follows a religion other than Muhammad's follows [in fact] an abrogated religion which is no more valid...

Monotheism, Grade 10, p. 10

All the Divine books [i.e., the Old and New Testaments] which preceded the Holy Koran have been abrogated and have been inflicted with distortion and alteration.

History of the Prophets, Biography of the Prophet [Muhammad] and the Spread of Islam, Grade 10, p. 37

With the appearance of Islam, Jews and Christians were supposed to follow the new religion. Not having done so, they are regarded as infidels and even as enemies of the Muslims. The Muslims should not befriend them nor love them nor emulate them.

When God sent His prophet Muhammad, He replaced with his [Islamic] law all [other, non-Islamic] laws and obliged all people – including the People of the Book [*Ahl al-Kitab*]¹ – to believe in him [Muhammad] and follow him. The People of the Book were better suited [than others] for believing in him, because they find him in their books and [because] their prophets had announced to them of his mission.² But most of them did not believe in him and turned away from him.

The struggle of this nation [i.e., the Muslim nation] with Jews and Christians goes on, and it will last for ever...

Jews and Christians are enemies of the believers [i.e., the Muslims] and it is impossible that they will [ever] be content with the Muslims... Therefore, it is necessary to be cautious against them.

Hadith, Grade 9, pp. 148-149

It is forbidden for a Muslim to be a friend of one who does not believe in God and His Messenger [i.e., Muhammad], or who fights the Islamic religion. God has severed [the bonds of] friendship between Muslims and infidels. The Muslim, even if he lives far away, is your brother-in-belief, while the infidel, even if he is your brother of kin, is your enemy by religion.

[Questions:]

1. Is it permissible to love Jews and Christians...?

¹ Followers of previous monotheistic religions who have their own sacred book, such as Jews and Christians.

² According to Islamic belief.

Monotheism, *Hadith*, [Islamic] Jurisprudence and [Koran] Recitation, Grade 5, Part 1, pp. 13-14 ³

It is forbidden to befriend the infidels, or support them, or help them by any means. Anyone who befriends them deviates from the path of truth. God has warned the believers against befriending the infidels and mentioned [several] reasons that [should] prevent befriending them, such as:

- They are enemies of God and of the believers...
- They do not believe in the Prophet, in the Koran and in Islam...
- Making friends with them contradicts your Jihad in God's cause...

[Koran] Commentary, Grade 9, p. 68

It is not permitted to emulate the infidels – Jews, Christians and others – in their attire and clothing. It is not permitted to follow them and imitate them... Emulation of the infidels leads to loving them, glorifying them and raising their status in the eyes of the Muslim, which is forbidden...

[Islamic] Jurisprudence, Grade 9, p. 83

The following quotation speaks of Christian-Jewish hostility to the Muslims in present times:

There is no doubt that the Muslims' power irritates the infidels and spreads envy in the hearts of Islam's enemies, namely, Christians, Jews and others. So they conspire against them, gather [their] forces against them, oppress them and seize every opportunity in order to eliminate the Muslims...

Geography of the Muslim World, Grade 8, p. 116

On the other hand, infidels should be dealt with fairly, even though a true Muslim should hate them at heart.

[It is told] by Abdullah bin Amr that the Prophet said: "Whoever kills a treaty holder [*mu'ahid*] shall not smell the scent of Paradise..."

A treaty holder: An infidel who concludes with a Muslim a protection treaty for his life, property and family. This treaty may be everlasting like the one concluded with the infidels who are the inhabitants of a land conquered by Muslims. It may be temporary in the case of an infidel coming to the Muslims' land for [the purpose of] trade or work.

Islam is the religion of justice and fairness. The justice characterizing the [Muslim] nation is not restricted to Muslims alone. Islam has given any entitled person his rights. When an infidel is given a treaty the Muslims are bound to keep it. Anyone who violates it deserves this severe threat found in this Prophetic Saying.

³ This excerpt was found in the book we scrutinized for our report of 2003 and still existed in the 2006/7 edition of the book on the website of the Saudi Ministry of Education. It has been replaced in the 2007/8 edition on that website by the following: "It is forbidden for a Muslim to love God's enemies and the unbelievers and support them." (p. 15). The question specifying Jews and Christians has been omitted.

Keeping away from infidels necessitates hating them at heart and hating their unbelief, but it does not necessitate their oppression or harming them unjustly.

[Assignment:] The students will be divided into two groups... The first one will explain the benefits of keeping the treaty with the treaty holders [and] the second will explain the harm of attacking treaty holders.

Hadith, Grade 9, pp. 142-144

Yet another quotation reflects extreme religious intolerance in general.

God in His mercy has legislated many ways for guarding religion. Among them [are the following ones]:

1. ...
2. Fighting religious innovation and punishing innovators, magicians and others.
3. Killing apostates and heretics.
4. Jihad in the cause of God by soul and property.

[Islamic] Jurisprudence, Grade 10, p. 9

The West

As previously mentioned, a variety of hostile references to the West has been omitted either directly or by changing the entire subject material. For example, a history book for grade 10, which contained in the past chapters about European Imperialism with some demonizing expressions, now ends in the pre-modern period. The older version of the Geography of the Muslim World textbook for grade 8 included on its 32nd page the following description: “[There is] a malicious Crusader-Jewish alliance striving to eliminate Islam from all the continents.” This specific sentence and other ones, less harsh, no longer exist in the new version of the book.

But this new version itself includes several negative references to the West.

The Muslim world suffers from the problem of poverty and famine. This problem emanates from several factors among which [are the following]:

1. Weakness of the Muslim world's unity and the kindling of dissention and wars between its states due to European Imperialism's rule over its countries for a long period.

Geography of the Muslim World, Grade 8, p. 113

The control of foreign Imperialism over large parts of the Muslim world for a certain period. It was bent upon having the Muslim states remain as a source for raw materials which would set its factories in motion. It was also bent upon having the Muslim states remain as importers and a consumer market for its products.

Geography of the Muslim World, Grade 8, p. 52

In fact, the Saudi Arabian schoolbooks try to create the impression that Islam as a religion and the Muslims' mere existence in parts of the world are in danger. The West's particular role in this respect is implicitly mentioned in this context, as one can learn from the references to Christianization efforts vis-à-vis Muslims and to the cultural invasion of the Muslim world in general – the source of both is none other than the West.

The Muslim world today is passing through a delicate historical phase. Most of its countries have freed themselves from direct imperialist control and gained their political independence, while some of its countries still live under the yoke of occupation, like Palestine... The fighting against the Islamic religion and the endeavor to annihilate the Muslims wherever they are has remained the goal of the tendentious ones who harbor malice against this religion...

Though most of the Muslim countries have gained their political independence today, they have not yet got rid of imperialist control, which has remained even after the imperialists had left, through the intellectual invasion operations...

Geography of the Muslim World, Grade 8, p. 112

The examples of hostility to Muslims are innumerable, beginning in the plots of Islam's enemies against the Messenger [i.e., Prophet Muhammad] and the Muslims at the very beginning of the emergence of Islam and its light, and ending in the annihilation, siege and occupation inflicted upon some of the Muslims today.

Geography of the Muslim World, Grade 8, p. 116

The Muslim world today faces the problem of the Muslim minorities within the non-Muslim states, where the Muslim minorities suffer in most states of the world from the dangers of collective annihilation, or the dangers of their Christianization and diversion from their religion, or sowing atheist ideas and destructive principles in their minds.

Geography of the Muslim World, Grade 8, p. 114

In other cases, Westerners, or Europeans, are specifically mentioned in negative contexts.

Perhaps the most prominent problems facing the Muslim minorities in Europe are:

1. Their being a minority among a majority of Christians who had historical clashes (wars) with the Muslims, and the Muslim countries were exposed to Crusader invasion and Imperialism emerging from that very Europe. Therefore, Islam is facing [today] disgraceful propagandist campaigns aiming at distorting the image of Islam and presenting the Muslims as if they constitute a danger to European unity.
2. The assimilation of some of the Muslims in the European society and [their] dissolution within it. That is followed by imitation of the behavior of the European family and by inattention to the Islamic educational principles in the upbringing of the [younger] generation, especially so, as the Muslim students do not acquire any Islamic education in state schools...

Geography of the Muslim World, Grade 8, p. 99

The West's pro-Bosnian policy is ignored and it is depicted as a supporter of Serbia in its war against the Bosnian Muslims.

Serbia opposed the independence of the Republic of Bosnia and Herzegovina and the West stood at Serbia's side out of fear of the emergence of a Muslim state in Europe ... That led to the outbreak of the war of Bosnia and Herzegovina between Muslims and Christians...

Geography of the Muslim World, Grade 8, p. 104

Christian missionary work is considered one of the main dangers facing Muslims today.

The spread of poverty and famine among large sectors of the inhabitants of the states of the Muslim world opens the way to the efforts of the Christianizing organizations which exploit the suffering of the sons of the Muslim world in order to divert them from their religion...

Geography of the Muslim world, Grade 8, p. 113

Perhaps the most prominent problem facing the Muslim minorities in Africa is the concentrated Christianization activity inside that continent, which is done by Western organizations enjoying great capabilities, which take advantage of the famine [problem] to which the states of this continent are exposed from time to time...

Geography of the Muslim World, Grade 8, p. 81

The West is also being demonized in the context of the Palestinian-Israeli conflict.

What happened in beloved Palestine is but the natural end predetermined by the Imperialists, who labored for it. The Arabs... rose to recover their robbed homeland. Imperialism lay in wait for them in order to prevent that. It resisted their outburst overtly and covertly. It resisted it by creating dissension between the Arab leaders and by winning over some of them, and then with the poor-quality weapons which tore apart the hands of those who used them... The gangs' state [Israel is meant by this epithet] was established and the Imperialists spread their protection over it and... provided it with the elements of survival. I will not be able to ignore the forces of evil and deception which strengthened that alien state with arms and money, so that it would slay and destroy and spread its influence in this beloved part of the nation's body.

[Assignments:]

3. The Western states have a major role in the construction of the Jewish state.

Explain that.

4. How did the Imperialists resist the Arabs' struggle for the recovery of Palestine?

[Literary] Study, Grade 10, pp. 102-103, 105

On the other hand, an incriminating expression in this context has been omitted in one of the books. It read: "Our nation's enemies cooperated in putting Israel at the heart of the Arab land. What is the goal they seek to achieve?" (Reader and Texts, Grade 7, Part 2, p. 70).

The Jews and Israel

In this particular field the overall picture remains alarming although some minute changes did occur. For example, the presently-used grammar book for grade 9, part 2, does not contain the sentence against the Jews found in its predecessor, namely, that “the Jews are wickedness in its very essence” (Facilitating the Rules of the Arabic Language, Grade 9, Part 2, p. 24). But it has its own demonizing expressions. An exercise in which the student is requested to insert given words in their correct places within given sentences features the following:

2. The Jews ... their treaties (breach)

Rules of the Arabic Language, Grade 9, Part 2, p. 68

In another section within the same book, Israel and its people are described as follows:

How ugly Israel is! Its weapon is betrayal and all its men are the same.

Rules of the Arabic Language, Grade 9, Part 2, p. 102

Other books surveyed by us in 2003 have not been changed or replaced, and the demonizing expressions against the Jews and Israel have remained intact, as can be seen in the following examples. Please note in the fourth quotation that, although the titles refer to the Zionist movement, the material therein speaks of the Jews. Also note the presentation of the Czarist-fabricated 'Protocols of the Elders of Zion' as an authentic document in this context. The Jews are accused of various crimes throughout world history and in global social and cultural life.

Now it [Palestine] is occupied by the Jews, a people of treachery and betrayal, who have gathered there from every place... Their end, by God's will, is perdition.

Dictation, Grade 8, Part 1, p. 24

Which Muslim state is occupied by the Jews?

Geography of the Muslim World, Grade 8, p. 10

The Jews' claim to Palestine is a groundless one.

Dictation, Grade 8, Part 2, p. 31

The Foundations of Zionist Ideology

1. The Jews are God's chosen people. The souls of the children of Israel are part of God, while others' souls are satanic and resemble animals' souls.
2. This world is the property of the Israelite. It is his right to take over and have control over the world, because he, out of all human beings, is [one of] the chosen people in God's eyes.
3. Palestine is the basic target of the Jews. It is the base from which their world domination will begin...

The Goals of the Zionist Movement

1. Arousing the fighting spirit among the Jews, as well as their religious and national solidarity, in order to antagonize [other] religions, nations and people...

2. Having the world dominated by the Jews. The basis for that [domination] is the establishment of their government in the Promised Land which stretches from the Nile River to the Euphrates...
3. Kindling the fire of malicious rivalry between the Powers, so that they struggle [against each other]. Kindling the fire of war between the [various] states, in order to weaken them all and establish their [own] one...

The Protocols of the Elders of Zion

These are secret resolutions, most probably of the aforementioned Basel [first Zionist] congress. They were discovered in the nineteenth century. The Jews tried to deny them, but there was ample evidence proving their authenticity and that they were issued by the elders of Zion. The Protocols can be summarized in the following points:

1. Upsetting the foundations of present world society and its systems, in order to enable Zionism to have a monopoly on world government.
2. Eliminating nationalities and religions, especially the Christian nations.
3. Striving to increase the corruption of the present regimes in Europe, as Zionism believes in their corruption and [eventual] collapse.
4. Controlling the media of publication, propaganda and the press and using gold for stirring up disturbances, seducing people by means of lust and by spreading wantonness...

Examples of Zionism's Methods for Realizing Its Goals

1. Stirring up sedition and conspiracies throughout history. Examples:
 - ...
 - The French Revolution: The Jews exploited the French Revolution for attacking [other] religions, striking at values and circulating hollow slogans. They had a role in its schemes and moral constitution.
 - The First World War. The Jews had a role in kindling its blaze.
 - The overthrow of the Ottoman Islamic caliphate...
 - The Russian Bolshevik revolution against Czarist rule. It is well known that the roots of the Marxist ideology are Jewish. Karl Marx was a German Jew... You will hardly find strife without the Jews having a part in it.
 - Attempting to immerse the peoples in vices, and spreading prostitution. The Jews have taken upon themselves to run that, to spread it and to run bars in Europe and America and in Israel itself...
2. Controlling literature and art by publishing decadent and licentious literature and encouraging the perverted inclinations in literature, thought and art...
3. Controlling the cinema and art industry in the western world and elsewhere...
4. Fraud, bribery, stealing and trickery.

Hadith and Islamic Culture, Grade 10, pp. 102-105

Other books, unavailable to us during our original research, are now within reach on the Saudi Arabian Ministry of Education's web site with material reflecting genocidal tendencies:

[It is told] by Abu Hurayrah⁴ that God's Messenger said: "the Day of Judgment will not arrive until the Muslims fight the Jews and the Muslims will kill them. Even if a Jew hides behind a rock or a tree, the rock or the tree will say: 'O Muslim, O worshipper of God! There is a Jew behind me. Come and kill him', except the salt bush [*Gharqad*], for it is one of the Jews' trees."

...In this Prophetic Saying [*Hadith*]⁵ he [Muhammad] tells us of one of the forms of the battle between Muslims and Jews...

Guidance regarding the Subject of the Prophetic Saying

1. It is of God's wisdom that the struggle between Muslims and Jews is to last until the Day of Judgment.
2. [It is] good news for the Muslims that God will eventually render them victorious over the Jews, which is one of the signs of the Day of Judgment...

[Assignments:]

- This Prophetic Saying demonstrates one of the Jews' traits, which is... [The student has to answer that by himself with the help of another verse implied in the text. The correct answer is "cowardice".]
- Cooperate with your classmates in numbering some of our Muslim brethren's forms of suffering in Palestine and in suggesting some means which would relieve them from their suffering.

Hadith, Grade 9, pp. 148-149

As if the proceeding paragraphs were not clear enough, the book's editors have inserted a photograph of the alleged Jews' bush, just in case the students might need to know where to look for their future victims.



⁴ One of Prophet Muhammad's companions and a respected source of the latter's sayings.

⁵ Prophetic Sayings are the second source of legislation in Islam after the Holy Koran. They have been gathered following Muhammad's death and are preserved in several canonical collections.

Hadith, Grade 9, p. 148

Other references demonizing the Jews contain clearly racist expressions.

The Jews are a people who have brought upon themselves [God's] wrath. God became angry at them because of their scandalous deeds and blameworthy morals.

[Koran] Commentary, Grade 9, Part 1, p. 33

The Jews are a People who became naturally disposed to treachery and betrayal over the ages. They do not abide by a treaty or conscience...

[Koran] Commentary, Grade 9, Part 1, p. 41

Lessons of the Story [about the Children of Israel and Moses]

1. ...
2. Belief does not penetrate deeply in the Jews' souls and they are ready to retreat to unbelief.
3. Materialism controls the Jews' life and they take usury. They have distorted the Torah in order to gain earthly profits.
4. The Jews covet life, even a humiliating one, and they are not prepared to fight.
5. The Jews are deluded and think of themselves as superior to others. They [falsely] claim that they are God's chosen people, though God has described them as liars, imposed on them humiliation and misery, misguided them and transformed them into monkeys and pigs.
6. The Torah of the Jews today is distorted.

History of the Prophets, Biography of the Prophet [Muhammad] and the Spread of Islam, Grade 10, p. 31

Deduce [from the text] some of the Jews' traits which necessitate caution and avoidance of [any] dealing with them at present.

History of the Prophets, Biography of the Prophet [Muhammad] and the Spread of Islam, Grade 10, p. 40

A major component of the demonizing effort and hate indoctrination regarding Jews and Israel is the religious theme related to the Al-Aqsa Mosque in Jerusalem.

O, mosque of Jerusalem whom I love
A deep love which penetrates my blood
O, Al-Aqsa Mosque, I broke my barriers
And came, while darkness hanging down above you
I asked the passers by about you, [but] my eyes
Saw only fearful [people] begging [for alms]
And an orphaned [girl] crying and a mother suffering
From bereavement and an old man murmuring
Bowing his head and pulling out his steps
And begging for his daily bread
I saw only a deadly encounter
Between bullets and those who stroll about
I saw people openly destroying you
And the excuse for what they do is the "Temple"...

The [lesson's] goals:

At the end of this lesson I'll be able, God willing, to:

1. Mention the historical glory of the Al-Aqsa Mosque.
2. Mention the manifestation of misery inflicted upon Jerusalem and her people by the Jews.
3. Talk about the poet's hope regarding the liberation of Jerusalem.
4. Be convinced that Jerusalem will become liberated, God willing.

Texts, Grade 7, Part 2, pp. 46-47

The Jews are further accused of sabotage against the Al-Aqsa Mosque.

The Wailing Wall..., which is part of the western wall of the Jerusalem [Muslim] Holy Sanctuary, is considered by the Jews to be the western part of the Temple. Although it does not exist [today], they insist on digging at the Al-Aqsa Mosque foundations in search for it. Their purpose in that is the destruction of the mosque.

Texts, Grade 7, Part 2, p. 56

Another demonizing theme against Jews and Israel is the perceived danger posed by Israel to the Arab and Muslim world in its entirety.

It is no longer a secret that the Jewish leaders aspire to spread their influence in all the Arabs' lands... Those are their goals. It is better that [word of] it reach every [Arab] heart and strike every ear, until the sons of Islam know of this looming danger, which lies in wait for them...

[Literary] Study, Grade 10, p. 103

The Jews' greedy ambitions do not stop at the borders of military control. Rather, they go beyond that to other types of control such as [in the spheres of] economy, the media and morals. I will talk about this issue, warning against those greedy ambitions...

Assignment, **[Literary] Study, Grade 10, p. 105**

Peace and War

To begin with, Israel is not recognized as a sovereign state and its place is taken by Palestine:

The Levant [*Al-Sham*]*...

* [Footnote:] [*al-Sham*] now represents Palestine, Jordan, Lebanon and Syria.

History of the Muslim State, Grade 5, p. 48

This phenomenon is seen on the map as well:



The Arab World – Political

"Palestine"
Geography, Grade 6, p. 11

Non-recognition implies war and legitimates total destruction of the enemy. Indeed, it is clear from the following quotations that no peaceful solution to the Middle East conflict is sought. Rather, according to the present Saudi Arabian schoolbooks, Palestine should be liberated by force.

In our time the Jews have occupied Palestine with the help of Crusadism [*Salibiyyah*, i.e., modern Western Imperialism] – which harbors malice towards Islam. They have taken possession of the Al-Aqsa Mosque and have defiled its holiness. But the Muslims will not sit idly in the face of this injustice, and will not put up with this occupation. With God's help they will drive those usurpers away, no matter how long it takes. On that day the Believers will rejoice at God's victory.

Reader and [Holy] Texts, Grade 6, Part 1, p. 26

The Muslims will drive the usurping Jews away...

Reader and [Holy] Texts, Grade 6, Part 1, p. 28

The Islamic traditional ideal of Jihad is to be used in this context.

Is there any way for a Muslim to get closer to God, after monotheism, other than Jihad in His cause...?!

The Muslims will never reclaim Palestine, or other [regions], without holy Jihad, by which faithful throngs will march and fight, so that God's word shall be the highest. And I do not think there will be among us one who will refrain from answering such a faithful call...

[Questions:]

7. Holy Jihad is the Muslims' path to the recovery of Palestine. Explain that.

[Literary] Study, Grade 10, pp. 104-105

The importance of Jihad is stressed in general, not necessarily in the context of the Israeli-Arab conflict alone.

[It is told] by Abdullah bin Mas'ud who said: "I asked the Prophet [Muhammad] what is God's most favored deed. He said: 'Praying in time.' I said: 'And after that?' He said: 'Pleasing one's parents.' I said: 'And after that?' He said: 'Jihad in God's cause.'"

Guidance regarding the Subject of the Prophetic Saying

...
5. One of the best deeds is Jihad in God's cause, and advocating it, for [the purpose of] spreading God's religion on earth...

Hadith, Grade 8, p. 44

"Jihad is one of the gates of Paradise opened by God to His exclusive friends. It is the garment of piety... and the one who neglects it out of dislike – God clothes him with the garment of humiliation..."

The text... contains six major themes:

1. The importance of Jihad in God's cause and that it is one of the gates of Paradise through which God's friends enter. Neglect of Jihad entails grave matters and entails humiliation...

Discussion

- What is Jihad's status in God's eyes as depicted by Ali?
- What is the gloomy fate awaiting anyone who neglects Jihad out of dislike? Explain it as mentioned by Ali.

Arabic Literature, Grade 10, Part 2, pp. 54, 55, 56

Martyrdom, the potential fate of every Jihad fighter, is also favorably mentioned.

There are two happy outcomes for the fighters of Jihad in God's cause: victory, or martyrdom.

Grammar, Grade 10, Part 1, p. 66

On the other hand, there are several cases in which expressions stressing the idea of the liberation of Palestine by force, and especially the notion of its purification as a result of such an action, are no longer present in the books (see, for example,

Geography of the Muslim World, Grade 8 (1994) p.37). More impressive is the omission of a poem titled “the Martyr”, which glorifies death and bloodshed (Reader and Texts, Grade 7, Part 2 (2001) p. 92).

Conclusion

Since 2003 the Saudi Arabian authorities have introduced various changes into their schoolbooks, some of which may be safely described as an improvement. That is, several specific negative expressions no longer appear. However, the overall atmosphere of intolerance and belligerence still exists. As proven in past years, this kind of educational messages instilled in Saudi Arabian students is potentially dangerous both inside and outside the kingdom.

Saudi Arabia has witnessed during the last decade a series of terrorist attacks by Islamic extremists, usually young people whose state education made them easy prey for charismatic anti-government propagandists. Saudi state education, which is propagated in other Muslim countries and in the West through a network of schools financed and operated by the Saudi state apparatus, has already contributed to the atmosphere in which clandestine terrorist cells have sprouted in various countries. Most of their activity has been directed against the United States – its citizens, soldiers, allies, and interests – and Saudi Arabia is considered to be among America's most valued allies in the region. Clearly, the latter is not compatible with the religious education Saudi youngsters receive in class.

This is the case as well with regard to peace in the Middle East. Saudi Arabia has endorsed, even drafted, the Arab peace initiative of 2002. It has further emerged as a major regional power supporting peace and stability, as opposed to the destabilizing role played by Iran and its satellites. This Saudi position stands in stark contrast to what is taught in Saudi schools.

All the above clearly indicates that the changes introduced into the Saudi curriculum as of yet are insufficient. Most urgent is the need to change the attitude to non-Muslims in general and Jews in particular. The present attitude is extremely anti-Semitic and blatantly racist. Furthermore, if Saudi Arabia considers itself a leading moderate power in the Middle East and the proponent of the latest Arab peace initiative, its curriculum should reflect that. Under such conditions there is no room in the textbooks for belligerent expressions regarding the liberation of Palestine through Jihad. Special efforts should be made to widen the scope of change so that it would include specific textbooks on religious subjects such as Koran Commentary, Hadith and Monotheism, in addition to geography, history and literature. So far, changes for the better in books on religious subjects - even minute ones - such as the one made in a fifth-grade textbook (see footnote no. 3), have been rare.

The Saudi Arabian authorities have proven that change in their curriculum is possible. It is now incumbent upon all people, organizations and governments devoted to tolerance and peace to encourage them to continue their journey down this path.