

The Attitude to the Jews in Schoolbooks Issued by the PA Ministry of the Endowments and Religious Affairs

- In the framework of our current reports on the Palestinian Authority school textbooks, the Institute for Peace and Cultural Tolerance in School Education examined the attitude to the Jews in schoolbooks issued by the PA Ministry of the Endowments and Religious Affairs for 7-12 grade students in the West Bank and the Gaza Strip. The books are studied in private schools financed by Islamic charity associations alongside the regular schoolbooks provided by the PA Ministry of Education.
- References to the Jews are made in three different contexts: within Qur'anic commentary related to Biblical events, in the context of the political strife between Prophet Muhammad and the Jews of Arabia, and within the context of the present conflict.
- In all three contexts the attitude to the Jews is negative and also accompanied by derogatory terms, even by incitement to violence against them.
- Qur'an commentary serves as one of the main venues of anti-Jewish expressions. A prominent source material in this respect is a book for grade 11: *Holy Qur'an and Its Studies, Grade 11* (1996)
- The instigation for violence, on the other hand, appears in an eleven-grade book of commentary of Prophetic Sayings [*Hadith*] from the same year.
- The religious foundation of this attitude is set by the following prohibition:

The noble [Qur'anic] verses forbid [the Muslims of] befriending Jews and Christians...
(*Holy Qur'an and Its Studies, Grade 11* (1996) p. 104)

- The Jews are attacked on three intertwining levels: their unbelief or, rather, disbelief, their enmity to Islam and the Muslims, in fact – to God Himself, and their evil nature which finds its expression in their actions, whether in the framework of their relations with the early Muslims or within the ongoing conflict.
- On the first level, the Jews are accused, for example, of distorting their own scriptures in order to evade acknowledging Muhammad's mission:

Distortion of the Torah by the Jews

The noble [Qur'anic] verses also tell that the Jews distorted the word of Sublime God and changed [things] in the Torah, which He revealed to them. They interpreted its meanings in accordance with what they want and desire, so that it would suit their whims and answer their wishes. By that they have deviated from Sublime God's religion. The [Qur'anic] verses tell that the result of this distortion has been the denial of Muhammad's prophecy whose mention had appeared in the book of the Torah and Moses – peace upon him – had ordered his people to follow and obey him.
(*Holy Qur'an and Its Studies, Grade 11* (1996) pp. 37-38)

- The Jews' general disbelief, not only with regard to Muhammad, is described in the following piece:

The [Qur'anic] verses explain to the Prophet that this is the Jews' deep-rooted nature, which does not change: they violate treaties, oppose the truth, accuse the prophets of lying and disbelieve what Sublime God revealed to His prophets and messengers. That was the Jews' attitude to Jesus – peace upon him – to a point that they plotted to kill him.¹
(Holy Qur'an and Its Studies, Grade 11 (1996) p. 38)

- Hostility to Islam and the Muslims is presented as one of the main traits of the Jews, and the reason for that is said to have been religious:

The Jews' Hostility to the Believers

The noble [Qur'anic] verses began with the description of the Jews' relations with the believers. [The Jews] were described as the most hostile people to the believers. Why is this hostility to the believers, which is deeply rooted in the Jews' souls, the trace of which we feel to this very day?

The Holy Qur'an informs us more than once of the reason for this hostility: The Jews are people of stubbornness and rejection of truth. They are enemies of [Divine] guidance and good. Selfishness and egoism have subdued them. Therefore, they are malicious to the Muslims out of envy for the guidance to the religion of truth, with which Sublime God has honored them.
(Holy Qur'an and Its Studies, Grade 11 (1996) p. 136)

- Moreover, the Jews are portrayed as enemies of God Himself:

What the [Qur'anic] Verses Guide to

...Caution against the Jews' trickery and deception, for they are enemies of Sublime God, of His religion [i.e., Islam] and of the Believers [i.e., the Muslims].
(Holy Qur'an and Its Studies, Grade 11 (1996) p. 49)²

- We have already encountered several derogatory expressions with regard to the Jews, such as "people of stubbornness", "selfishness and egoism have subdued them" and "the Jews' trickery and deception". The following examples present us with more such terms:

Have you seen the Jews' trickery and their attempt at corrupting the Muslims and casting dissension in their ranks?
(The Prophet's Biography and Muslim History, Grade 11 (1996) p. 140)

¹ According to Islamic belief, Jesus Christ was saved by God at the last moment and someone else was crucified.

² The verse related to this issue does not include anything of that.

Sublime God knows their cunning and hypocrisy and knows about their enriching themselves with forbidden money as well as their desire for sin.

(Holy Qur'an and Its Studies, Grade 11 (1996) p. 111)

The Jews have been known among the people as being greedy, avaricious, coward, weak, envious and humiliated. If you penetrated into the depths of their souls you would find out that hostility, hatred and desire for corruption and for making other [people] corrupted gnaw on their society and divide their ranks.

(Holy Qur'an and Its Studies, Grade 11 (1996) p. 116)

What the [Qur'anic] Verses Guide to

...Caution and awareness [are needed] in dealing with the Jews for fear of [their] treachery and betrayal. For this is their nature throughout the ages.

(Holy Qur'an and Its Studies, Grade 11(1996) p. 38)

- The Jews are also demonized in the context of the present conflict:

...The Jews who occupy the land of the Muslims in Palestine and part of the Levant [*Al-Sham*] and create havoc in the land. They shed the blood of the innocent; expel the people of the country; desecrate the holy places; demolish houses; and take control of the Muslims' lands.

(Religious Subjects for Grade 8, Unit 3: Noble Prophetic *Hadith* (?) p. 13)

- This hate education culminates with the famous Prophetic Saying [*Hadith*] often used by Hamas and other extremist anti-Jewish groups. What is important to note here is the commentary accompanying this *Hadith*, which is adapted to the present conflict:

God's Messenger said: "The Hour of Resurrection will not come until the Muslims fight the Jews. The Muslims will kill them, and when a Jew would hide behind a rock or a tree the rock or the tree would say: 'O Muslim, O worshipper of God! There is a Jew behind me; come and kill him', except the salt bush, which is the Jews' tree."

...This Prophetic Saying is one of the Prophet's evident miracles. It is a prophecy of a concealed matter, which is to take place at the End of Days. It is certain good news for this nation [i.e., the Muslims] that victory will be its ally and that its trial with the Jews is bound to end in victory over them...

...When Imperialism spread its influence over the Muslim world and partitioned the Muslims' lands, it brought the Jews from the various countries of the world and made them settle in Palestine, which was groaning under British Imperialism. The Imperialist states started encouraging the Jews to immigrate to Palestine, facilitated their living

there, enacted laws and provided for the circumstances, which would enable the establishment of the Jews' state in Palestine, until it was actually done in 1948.

Thus began the modern conflict between the Arabs and the Jews over the land of Palestine...

The noble *Hadith* carries to the Muslims the good tidings of victory, makes their hearts confident and sends hope into their souls...

...In this *Hadith* the Prophet also notifies that the fighting between the Jews and the Muslims is approaching and that it will end in the Muslims' victory and in the Jews' defeat, to a point they – due to their intense cowardice and fear – will not feel safe against the Muslims' attack, and will not feel secure in any place of hiding. No tree and no rock would shelter them...

(Noble *Hadith* and Its Studies, Grade 11 (1996) pp. 200-203)

- Thus, the religious sanction for genocide is granted to the believers.
- This kind of education which is intended to enhance the religious sentiment among school students and also prepare the next generation of religious leaders for Palestinian society, raise several grave questions:
- First, is the PA under its present government aware of such curriculum, which is clearly incompatible with anti-instigation universal standards approved by UNESCO and by the donor states? If so, why are these books still reprinted under the PA sponsorship?
- Second, the books are relatively old, from the early and mid-1990s, while the PA Ministry of Education has just completed a seven-year project of replacing all its schoolbooks in all grades. What is the purpose, then, of keeping these old books in use?
- Third, to what extent do extremist Islamic groups such as Hamas still exert their influence over the PA school education through their associated charity endowments?
- It is the responsibility of the PA to tackle this issue and provide the world with adequate answers.