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Newsletter April 1999

Senators and Congressmen condemn PA schoolbooks

In March 1999, a group of 50 Senators and Congressmen petitioned President Clinton to make the problem of incitement to hatred in the PA media, and especially in the education of youth, an issue of prime importance.

In his response the President acknowledged the problem and pledged to continue working towards the elimination of incitement in education and the media.

Below are excerpts from the Congressman's letter and the President's response:

Congressmen's letter:

"We are concerned about the systematic use of anti-Semitic language in Palestinian media and textbooks.....

"Most disturbing, however, is the anti-Israel brainwashing of the Palestinian children. The Palestinian educational system and media incite their youth for virulent hostility toward, and inadmissibility of reconciliation with, the Jews, not just with the Israelis. The issue here is not disagreements over certain aspects of the permanent agreement, but to the incitement and indoctrination of a whole generation to hate Jews to such an extent that irrespective of existing formal agreements, genuine reconciliation and peace may be impossible to attain,,,,,,,,,,,,,"

"Thank-you for giving proper attention to this critical matter,,,,,,,,,,,,,"

Signed by:

Senators - Sam Brownback, Connie Mack and John Ashcroft and 47 Congressmen.

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President Clinton's response:

"Thank-you for your letter concerning the issues of incitement in the Palestinian media.

"A real and durable peace in the Middle East will require a fundamental change in the hearts and minds of the Israeli and Palestinian people. This, in turn, demands a consistent effort to eliminate all instances of incitement in the media and, most importantly, in the textbooks.....

"...we are deeply troubled by remaining instances of Palestinian incitement - both those that you mention and others of which we are aware. Some statements by Palestinian officials suggest that violence remains an option. Books and newspapers continue to include anti-Semitic language....

"We have raised our concerns at the highest levels, both bilaterally and in the context of the Anti-incitement Committee, and will continue to do so....."

Signed,
President Bill Clinton

CMIP material in the trilateral committee as a result of the Wye accords

As part of the Wye accords, a trilateral committee to prevent incitement was established. CMIP director of research Mr. Itamar Marcus serves as an Israeli delegate of the committee. CMIP's report on the PA schoolbooks was presented at the very first meeting of this trilateral committee and the American members have, since then, repeatedly expressed strong support for the elimination of the offensive material found in the books. PA media has condemned Israel's request for these modifications to the schoolbooks as an attempt to dictate Palestinian national consciousness. Israel has denied these charges calling only for the elimination of inciteful and anti-Semitic references.

Senator Connie Mack condemns PA education and incitement

In March 1999, CMIP's director of research Mr. Itamar Marcus, met with Senator Connie Mack, in Jerusalem. Mr. Marcus presented Senator Mack with CMIP's findings on the Palestinian schoolbooks and with examples of Palestinian media incitement. On returning to the USA, Senator Connie Mack addressed the Senate:

"...Mr. President, I very recently traveled to Israel.....I learned a great deal during the week and I rise today to share a few simple thoughts.....

"Let's be clear. The peace process to be meaningful, must be about more than rules and laws and lines on a map. We can reach a short-term agreement on these points, but if a Palestinian leadership fails to abandon incitement of hatred, persecution and terrorism, then we are all dreaming, only dreaming, and our President's behavior must be labeled foolish appeasement. There will not be peace until hearts and minds are changed, and we must focus our attention on these issues. Mr. President, many of my colleagues in the Senate and in the house are aware of the promotion of hatred contained in the Palestinian media, and more significantly in the Palestinian schoolbooks.....

"I also have some examples from Palestinian textbooks for a third grade grammar lesson. Here is the task: Complete the following blank spaces with the appropriate word. And the sentence is "The Zionist enemy _____ civilians with its aircraft. The correct answer is 'The Zionist enemy attacked civilians with its aircraft. For seventh graders: 'Answer the following question: Why do the Jews hate Muslim unity and want to cause division among them give an example of the evil attempts of the Jews, from events happening today.' These are from Palestinian textbooks today.

"One would expect, rather than focus on hatred, if they were serious about peace, they would focus on how the two peoples are working to live side by side. A history book for 12th graders, published only last summer teaches: 'The clearest examples of racist belief and racial discrimination in the world are Nazism and Zionism.'

"To see this taking place today is chilling....

"...While the Government of Israel makes good-faith efforts to come to a peace agreement, the Palestinian Authority teaches children hatred. This causes me to ask, How can peace be obtained when the children are being taught hatred?...

UNWRA Investigates anti-Semitism in PA Schoolbooks

The CMIP report on PA schoolbooks prompted the US Congress to demand that UNWRA review them. The following are excerpts from UNWRA's "Report to Congress on textbooks and Curricula used by UNWRA.

"UNWRA began its investigation by cross-checking all of the references in the "report on Palestinian Authority Textbooks produced by the Center for Monitoring the Impact of Peace.....UNWRA's review did reveal instances of anti-Semitic characterizations and content in these host authority texts."

"UNWRA and the Department have undertaken a preliminary review and will continue to review this issue. To address our strong view that any anti-Semitic content is unacceptable:

- The United States Government (USG) will approach the Palestinian Authority and other governments responsible for these texts to urge them to eliminate anti-Semitic material.
- The Department will fund additional curriculum and educational programs designed to foster tolerance and peace.....
- The USG will also use existing channels including tri-lateral bodies involving Israel and the PA to highlight this issue and seek ways to eliminate the problem.

Prime Minister Netanyahu lauded CMIP's research

In a letter to CMIP chairman Mr. Andre Marcus, Prime Minister Netanyahu writes:

"Your examination of the textbooks used by the PA in Palestinian schools is perhaps the most important task undertaken by a non-governmental body in recent years.

"The most pertinent test of intentions and good faith in the peace process is the way the young are educated. It is indeed worrisome that Palestinian children, from pre-school to university, are taught that Israel's presence in the Middle East is illegitimate. This may well be the most dangerous aspect of Palestinian non-compliance with the Oslo agreement....."

CMIP's research presented at International conference

Dr. Yohanan Manor, co-chairman of CMIP, presented CMIP findings on PA schoolbooks at the international conference entitled "The Dynamics of Anti-Semitism in the Second Half of the 20th Century", sponsored by the Vidal Sassoon International Center for the study of Anti-Semitism held at the Hebrew University of Jerusalem. Prof. Manor's presentation was titled "The Image of Jews and Judaism in School Textbooks of the Arab Countries".