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Letter from CMIP to Christopher Patten

9th June 2002

The Rt Hon Christopher Patten, CH
Commissioner for External Relations
European Commission

Dear Mr. Patten,

We are in receipt of two documents, Mr. Guy Legras's letter of 15 April, 2002, and the "EU document on Palestinian text books issue" May 2002, sent to us by Mr. Giancarlo Chevallard, to which we wish to state for the record, as follows:

1. Guy Legras pointed to the "multitude of studies on the quality and content of the new Palestinian textbooks" as well as "similar studies on Israeli textbooks". Although this is correct, one must bear in mind the fact that these studies were carried out using different books, criteria and aspects of analysis. One should therefore be extremely cautious, in reaching sweeping conclusions. For example, most of the studies on Israeli textbooks were carried out on books no longer in use, whereas CMIP's reports on Israeli textbooks focus on text books currently in use. Regarding the Palestinian textbooks, CMIP has raised several points of concern that have not been addressed in either of the above documents.
2. There is a significant lacuna in the list of textbooks that were reviewed in the "EU document on Palestinian text books issue". In its first paragraph this document mentions the textbooks for grades one, two, six and seven, but omits a new textbook for grade 11 on "The Palestinian Society: Demographic Education". This is particularly unfortunate in view of the large number of anti-Israel quotes contained in this book.

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3. We have noted the shift from the assertion by your services that "the quotations [claimed to be taken from Palestinian books] are not found in the new PA school books funded by some European Member States" to the recognition that "many of the quotations attributed to the new textbooks by the most recent CMIP report of November 2001 could be confirmed".

4. However, these "confirmed quotations" are immediately negated by the uncorroborated claim that "these many quotations have been found to be often badly translated or quoted out of context thus suggesting an anti-Jewish incitement which the books do not in fact contain". We request precise references supporting these allegations discrediting CMIP, namely:

- (a) The quotations that could not be confirmed;
- (b) The quotations that were badly translated;
- (c) The quotations quoted out of context;

5. The "EU document on Palestinian text books issue" claims that the textbooks are "free from inciteful content". In our letter to you of 11th February 2002, we listed 20 quotations from Palestinian produced textbooks currently in use as examples of material which we believe to be problematic. Neither of the two documents sent by you has made any reference whatsoever to the problematic nature of the quotations that we brought to your attention.

6. The EU document goes on to claim that the textbooks "constitute a valuable contribution to the education of young Palestinians". What valuable contribution in educating to tolerance do textbooks make, that deny Jewish holy sites whilst presenting them as "attempts to Judaize some of the Muslim religious places like the Mosque of Abraham [The Tomb of the Patriachs] and the Mosque of Bilal Bin Rabbah [Rachel's Tomb near Bethlehem]? What valuable contribution to reconciliation and peace do textbooks make that praise Jihad and martyrdom in liberating all Palestine?

7. With some degree of logic you distinguish between the new textbooks developed and produced by the PNA with the help of some EU members, and the so-called "old" textbooks of Egyptian and Jordanian origin. In this regard we wish to draw your attention to two important facts:

a. Most of these so called "old" textbooks with their undisputed anti-Jewish and anti-Israeli content are still in use for eight grades in Palestinian schools. Is it justified that the EU should turn a blind eye to such an important component of current Palestinian education because their production was not funded with the help of EU members? Is it not the duty of the EU to raise the issue of these Jordanian and Egyptian textbooks as being contrary to the EU Charter of Rights, especially in view of the various association arrangements involving these two countries with the EU?

b. The reprinting of some of these "old but still in use" textbooks were funded with the help of EU countries. For instance, the textbook "Our Beautiful Language" for Grade 5 was reprinted in 2000-2001 with the help of Finland and Holland.

8. A salient element which is highlighted by these two documents is the lack of clear criteria to evaluate any educational system funded by public money, including the PNA. As shown above, the concept of incitement is, to say the least, ambiguous. A more appropriate concept should perhaps be whether the curricula

and textbooks promote or hamper mutual recognition, reconciliation and peace, as alluded to in the amendment to the budget of the EU last December. Without such clear peace-oriented criteria no successful monitoring mission can be carried out.

Yours sincerely

Dr. Yohanan Manor
Vice-Chairman

cc: Mr. Giancarlo Chevallard Mr. Guy Legras