

## **Open Letter to the Delegations Taking Part in the Annapolis Summit**

The Annapolis conference brings together Israel and the Palestinians, along with international support, to restart the peace process and place it on the right track toward ending the conflict. As the parties lay the foundations for a final agreement, they must pay special attention to the enormous impact education has on the process, and commit to amending their respective curricula to reflect the spirit of their declarations. Education reform is not just a key factor for Israel and the Palestinians but also for the Arab countries that are participating in the conference as well. As of now, the horrific incitement and xenophobia present in Middle East school textbooks only serves as a stumbling block to the process that prevents the sides from reaching a peaceful end to the conflict.

A study of Palestinian textbooks by the Center for Monitoring the Impact of Peace (CMIP) reveals the Palestinian Authority is still educating its young generation with values that dash any prospects of peace with Israel. The Palestinian education system still teaches children the following incendiary lessons in schools: Jews are foreigners and have no rights whatsoever in the land; the Jews have a dubious and even murderous character. Israel is an illegitimate usurper who occupied Palestine in 1948 and is the source of all kinds of evil against Palestinians. No peace with Israel based on reconciliation is ever sought. A violent struggle for liberation is encouraged instead. The exact area to be liberated is never restricted to the West Bank and Gaza alone. Jihad is glorified, militants are held up as role models for kids to emulate and terrorism against Israel is implicitly encouraged.

That being said, the CMIP study shows that when Mahmoud Abbas succeeded Yasser Arafat as PA Chairman, several significant and positive changes were introduced to some schoolbooks. One textbook mentions the history of the Jews in the land in antiquity for the first time. Another book teaches school students that it was the Arab countries and the Palestinians that rejected the UN 1947 partition plan and started the war with Israel. Moreover, also for the first time, the name of Israel appeared on two maps in the same Palestinian schoolbook. These initial sparks of change are encouraging but there is still no Palestinian program that teaches kids to seek peace, and hatred toward Israel is still part of the official curriculum.

Arab countries, some of whom are set to participate in the Annapolis conference, teach children a similar and often even more hostile education syllabus. Even Egypt and Jordan that signed peace treaties with Israel display negative attitudes toward Israel in their school textbooks and, despite the treaties, do not advocate peace with Israel.

The Israeli curriculum maintains a clear peace advocacy program. Since the middle of the 90's the Israeli textbooks stopped using derogatory language to describe the Arab world or Palestinians. Lessons supporting peace and the compromises involved in its achievement increased consistently over the years until the outbreak of the second Intifadah when they reached a plateau and seemingly even some kind of set back, reflecting a deep disenchantment from the peace process.

With all this in mind, we urge the delegations taking part in the Annapolis summit, especially those involved in the Arab-Palestinian-Israeli conflict, to commit to adopting the following peace oriented steps:

- To advocate peace and tolerance in their respective school curricula toward all the parties involved in the conflict.
- To explicitly voice opposition to resorting to war and violence as a means to solving the conflict in their respective school curricula.
- To agree to set up a joint mechanism to monitor their school curricula that will follow the actual implementation of the above.

The Institute for Monitoring Peace and Cultural Tolerance in School Education, formerly CMIP, is a non-profit, non political NGO dedicated to the research of school curricula and textbooks throughout the Middle East. Since its creation in 1998 it has researched school textbooks, teachers' guides and syllabi used by the Palestinian Authority, Israel, Syria, Saudi Arabia, Egypt and Iran. The respective reports are available on its web site [www.edume.org](http://www.edume.org)

For more information or to schedule interviews please contact:

The Institute for Monitoring Peace and Cultural Tolerance in School Education  
(Formerly CMIP) - 972 2 533 2497

Dr. Yohanan Manor, Chairman – 972 54 554 3554

Nir Boms, Member of the Board - 972 50 959 4388

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

**Email: [info@edume.org](mailto:info@edume.org)**