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'Global war curriculum' seen in Iran's schools

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By Gareth Harding - BRUSSELS -- The Iranian education system is preparing its students for a global war against the West in the name of Islam, according to an independent study of 115 textbooks and teachers guides released today.

With Tehran accused of seeking to develop a nuclear weapons arsenal and the United States dispatching a second aircraft carrier to the Gulf, the report by the Center for Monitoring the Impact of Peace highlights the uphill task Washington faces trying to persuade Iranian youth to distance themselves from the hard-line Islamist regime.

The study, which claims to be the first of its kind, catalogs how pupils as young as 9 are conditioned to take part in a global jihad against such "infidel oppressors" as Israel and the United States.

"Hate indoctrination is a professed goal of Iranian textbooks," said the report's author, Arnon Groiss, a Princeton- and Harvard-educated journalist who also has written critical studies of the Israeli, Palestinian, Syrian, Saudi and Egyptian education systems.

According to Mr. Groiss, Iranian pupils learn from an early age that the Islamic republic is in mortal combat with Western powers bent on its destruction.

One 11th-grade textbook, quoting former spiritual leader Ayatollah Ruhollah Khomeini, refers to the United States and its allies as "the World Devourers" and says that if they "wish to stand against our religion, we will stand against their whole world and will not cease until the annihilation of all of them."

Students are drilled for battle from age 12, when they are obliged to take defense-readiness classes, according to the study by the Israel-based nongovernmental organization. Some also are drafted into the Revolutionary Guard and other elite combat units, where they are taught how to handle shoulder-propelled rocket launchers, the study says.

Through stories, poems, wills and exercises, martyrdom is glorified as a means of

defending the Islamic republic and attaining eternal happiness, the report says. A Grade 10 textbook on "defense readiness" boasts that during the eight-year war with Iraq in the 1980s, half a million students were sent to the front and "36,000 martyrs ... were offered to the Islamic Revolution."

Describing Iran's school system as a "global war curriculum," Mr. Groiss said the emphasis on military training from such a young age instilled a "siege mentality" among many students.

"It is a form of child abuse to install such notions in children's minds," he told journalists at a briefing in the European Parliament in Brussels.

Israel, which Iranian President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad repeatedly has said should be "wiped off the map," is not recognized in atlases and is portrayed as a danger to Islamic states.
