Britain Gives £20m for Schools Glorifying Martyrs and Jihad

Tim Shipman, Political Editor
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More than £20m of British aid money has been spent on Palestinian schools in the past year, despite ministers knowing the official curriculum could incite pupils to become martyrs and jihadists.

In a series of parliamentary answers, the aid minister, Alistair Burt, has admitted that British taxpayers are funding the salaries of 33,000 teachers implementing a school curriculum that has been criticised for promoting violence against Israel.

A report by the Institute for Monitoring Peace and Cultural Tolerance in School Education (IMPACT-se) said it “exerts pressure over young Palestinians to acts of violence”. The lessons being taught by British-funded teachers include:

- A science textbook for 12-year-olds that teaches Newton’s second law of physics using an image of a boy firing a slingshot at soldiers
- A maths textbook for nine-year-olds that asks students to calculate the number of martyrs in Palestinian uprisings
- A social science textbook for nine-year-olds that shows children in a classroom looking at an empty desk bearing the sign “the martyr”
- A textbook for 10-year-olds that calls martyrdom and jihad “the most important meanings of life”, advising that “drinking the cup of bitterness with glory is much sweeter than a pleasant long life accompanied by humiliation.”

The revelations came as 16 Palestinians were killed and more than 700 injured when protesters in Gaza clashed with Israeli security forces on the border on Friday. British aid money goes to the Palestinian Authority in the West Bank, rather than Hamas, which runs Gaza.

The curriculum teaches children about the Palestinian Authority’s support for the families of those who carry out terrorist attacks, and how they will be rewarded in paradise.

IMPACT-SE’s report concludes “radicalisation is more pervasive across this new curriculum” than the one that it has replaced, and that it “exerts pressure over young Palestinians to acts of violence in a more extensive and sophisticated manner.”

It also asserts that “the curriculum’s focus appears to have expanded from demonisation of Israel to providing a rationale for war”. One poem taught to nine-year-olds calls for “sacrificing blood,” “eliminating the usurper” and “annihilating the remnants of the foreigners.”

Even science textbooks promote violence. One question reads: “Palestinian youths used slingshots to confront the soldiers of the Zionist occupation and defend themselves from their
treacherous bullets. What is the relationship between the elongation of the slingshot’s rubber and the tensile strength affecting it?”

By contrast, references to peace agreements between the Palestinians and Israel have been removed.

In 2016 the government said it would tighten control of spending in the Palestinian territories. But Burt admitted “all of their schools in the West Bank are using the revised 2017 PA curriculum. UK-funded public servants and teachers . . . are therefore involved.”

Joan Ryan, chairwoman of Labour Friends of Israel, said: “It is absolutely appalling that UK taxpayers’ money is helping to support the teaching of a curriculum which incites violence and terrorism and spreads anti-Semitism. The government must immediately suspend all aid to the Palestinian Authority until it commits to wholesale and urgent revisions of the curriculum.”

The Department for International Development said: “Our support is helping around 25,000 young Palestinians go to school each year. The UK government strongly condemns all forms of violence and incitement to violence.”