

What Syrian Children Learn: Anti-Semitism, Love of Russia and Suspicion of Iran

An analysis of the school curriculum in Bashar Assad's regime indicates which alliances are likely to last long after the war is over

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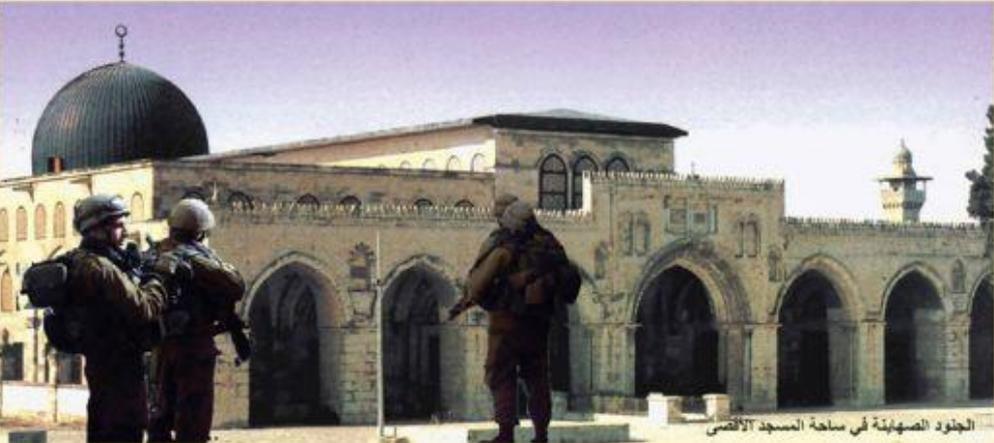
A page from a textbook in Syria.IMPACT-se

Syria's bond with Russia is a permanent one, but its alliance with Iran may be shakier. That, at least, is the conclusion suggested by an analysis of the official Syrian school curriculum of Bashar Assad's regime, which found mounting appreciation of Russian culture — including compulsory study of the Russian language — but a derogatory view of Iran.

The [report](#) was compiled by the research and policy institute IMPACT-se, which has been studying and analyzing official school textbooks since 1998. Researchers Dr. Eldad Pardo and Maya Jacobi examined the official Syrian textbooks for 1st to 12th grade used in the areas controlled by Assad. The purpose of the analysis was to determine whether the textbooks met international educational standards for tolerance, peace and acceptance of others, based on UNESCO resolutions and international treaties. It looked at how the

curriculum reflected Israel, Russia, Iran, the civil war, Hezbollah, the West, minorities, national identity and other parameters.

٣- أَسْمَى الشَّخْصِيَّةِ الشَّرِّيرَةَ مِنْ شَخْصِيَّاتِ الْقِصَّةِ.



الجنود الصهيونية في ساحة المسجد الأقصى

٤- أَحَاكِي النَّمُودَجِ فِيمَا يَأْتِي بِاسْتِخْدَامِ أَسْمَاءِ مَدُنٍ عَرَبِيَّةٍ أُخْرَى .

● القدسُ عَرَبِيَّةٌ وَسَنَبَقِي عَاصِمَةُ لِفَلَسْطِينِ.

A page from a textbook in Syria. ,Israeli soldiers on the Temple Mount.IMPACT-se

التَّوْبِيحُ النَّهَائِي



نَحْتَفِلُ يَوْمَ السَّادِسِ عَشَرَ مِنْ تَشْرِينِ الثَّانِي بِذِكْرِ الحَرَكَةِ
مُحِيحِيَّةِ الَّتِي قَادَهَا القَائِدُ المَوْسَسُ حَافِظُ الأَسَدِ ليرسُمَ معَالمَ
يَّةِ الحَدِيثَةِ، فَإِذَا نَظَرْنَا لِحِظَةً أَمَامَنَا، فَإِنَّا نَجِدُ الكَثِيرَ مِنْ
رِوَعَاتِ الحَيَوِيَّةِ الَّتِي انْتَشَرَتْ فَوْقَ أَرْضِهَا شَرْقًا وَغَرْبًا،
سَ التَّأْمَلُ بُرْهَةً يَجْعَلُنَا نَلْحَظُ ثَمَارَ مَسِيرَةِ التَّطْوِيرِ وَالتَّحْدِيثِ
ةِ القَائِدِ المُفَدَّى بِشَارِ الأَسَدِ.

١- اسْتَخْرَجْ ظُرُوفَ الزَّمَانِ وَالمَكَانِ الوَارِدَةَ فِي الفِقْرَةِ
لِسَابِقَةٍ، وَصَنَّفْهَا فِي جَدُولٍ وَفَقِّ الآتِي:

A page from a textbook in Syria. Bashar Assad's father Hafez Assad.IMPACT-se

The report found that the Syrian curriculum presents Russia as a close ideological and cultural ally, which could attest to the strengthening alliance between the two countries that is likely to continue after the war. One indication of the tight ties is the requirement that Syrian children learn the Russian language.

“We were very surprised by the Russian element in the textbooks,” Marcus Sheff, CEO of IMPACT-se, told Haaretz. “Russia is portrayed as the closest ally of Syria and of the Arab world,” he said, adding “Russia is going nowhere after the war - it is here to stay.”

Russia’s intervention in the Syrian civil war helped turn the tide in Assad’s favor. But Iran, which has also steadfastly bolstered Assad’s regime, is presented as an untrustworthy regional rival in most textbooks. This could be an indication of the ephemeral nature of that alliance. The negative image extends not only to modern Iran but also to the ancient Persian empire.



A page from a textbook in Syria.IMPACT-se

Absent from the books is any mention of Hezbollah, the Lebanese organization that is considered one of Assad’s closest allies, and has been helping him in the war.

Israel doesn’t even appear in the textbooks, at least not by name. It is referred to as the “racist/terrorist/Zionist entity.” The curriculum includes anti-Semitic motifs, says the report, such as the stereotypical portrayal of the William Shakespeare character Shylock.

Nor does the curriculum mention the Holocaust of European Jewry. The textbooks describe Israel is a terrorist state, which, among other things, stole the Golan Heights; as a result, the textbooks convey the view that all means of struggle against Israel, including terrorism and suicide attacks, are legitimate.

ИТАЙТЕ, ОТВЕТЬТЕ НА ВОПРОСЫ.

ёшка - известнейший сувенир.
ИТСЯ ЭТОТ СУВЕНИР.



A page from a textbook in Syria. IMPACT-se

There is no hope that Syria will tone down its traditional Baathist hostility towards Israel, even after the terrible civil war is over, added Sheff. Syrian rhetoric is unchanged and hostility to Israel remains a key principle in the Syrian curriculum, he said.

Not surprisingly, the report shows that the Syrian textbooks “promote respect and total commitment” to President Bashar Assad and his late father Hafez Assad. The latter is described as a hero, whose son courageously followed in his footsteps. However, the researchers also determined that “There is no excessive personality cult as compared with Iranian education.”

The Syrian army, according to the report, continues to play a special role in the Arab nation. The curriculum is secular, and encourages independent thinking and a spirit of problem solving, volunteerism and religious openness, the researchers write. Though religious tolerance is taught as a general principle, only one government-chartered form of Sunni Islam is taught. With the exception of Christianity, other religions or streams are ignored.

Overall, the researchers conclude that the curriculum does not meet the standards of UNESCO’s guidelines for education and peace and tolerance, they conclude. One area where the curriculum does meet UNESCO demands is on gender equality.

Although shells continue to fall on homes in Syria, the war is barely mentioned in most textbooks. The ethos presented by the regime to the younger generation is that of a natural disaster requiring personal sacrifice. The children can see the war unfold for themselves but their books explain nothing, says Sheff.

IMPACT-se the Institute for Monitoring Peace and Cultural Tolerance in School Education is a research, policy and advocacy organization that monitors and analyzes education. It is based at the Hebrew University of Jerusalem.