

IMPACT-se

Reform or Radicalization: PA 2017–18 Curriculum

A PRELIMINARY REVIEW

Executive Summary



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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This August, the Palestinian Authority (PA) published its reformed school curriculum for Grades 5–11, completing the process that began last year with Grades 1–4.

This is the first full reform of the Palestinian curriculum since 2000, when the PA published its first curriculum following the Oslo Accords. Before then, children in the West Bank and East Jerusalem studied the Jordanian curriculum and in Gaza, Egyptian textbooks. This initial report covers sample textbooks from the new PA curriculum of 2017–18 for Grades 5–11. Further research will provide a full assessment of the new curriculum covering Grades 1–12.

Preliminary Findings

- Radicalization is pervasive across this new curriculum, to a greater extent than before.
- The curriculum exerts pressure over young Palestinians to acts of violence in a more extensive and sophisticated manner. The discourse is couched in terms of nationalist and religious martyrdom, across science, literature, history and religious education textbooks.
- This version of the PA curriculum educates for a long war of attrition against Israel which stands out as the axis mundi of Palestinian identity, connecting its various dimensions into one ideology. With a comprehensive and oft-stated justification for defensive (obligatory) *jihad*, the curriculum's focus appears to have expanded from demonization of Israel to providing a rationale for war.
- The crux of this report is education for war and against peace with Israel. The second batch of the new, reformed curriculum of the PA has further distanced itself from our UNESCO-derived standards, as detailed in the conclusion.

Topics of Interest

Respect for Elderly, Women, Authority, Anti-Corruption– There is continuity in teaching respect for teachers and authority figures and a slight improvement in presenting a realistic picture of the situation of the PA in terms of identity and a struggle against corruption. Secular textbooks present women and girls in a better manner than in Islamic studies textbooks.

Peace– The word "peace" in a political context and the term "Two State Solution" does not appear in a positive context throughout the curriculum. Past agreements between Israel and the PA appear only once, hidden within an edited version of UNSC resolution 2334 (2016), for the purpose of criticizing Israel. Any confidence-building and cooperation measures between Israel and the Palestinian Authority are omitted. Note that previous history books mentioned The Oslo Accords, Camp David Accords, The PLO Letters of Mutual Recognition and a letter from former PA President Arafat to Israeli Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin, declaring that the PLO recognizes

the right of the State of Israel to live in peace and security. These do not appear in Semester 1 of the new curriculum.

Teaching Martyrdom– The curriculum utilizes a variety of tools to convince children—mostly boys—to risk their lives and die as martyrs. These include rage and a sense of humiliation, glory and honor. Students learn that the Palestinian Authority stands behind the families of those who die and are injured during clashes, or become prisoners. The rewards of paradise are clearly elucidated, including a plethora of virgin brides. Those who pursue personal success and careers are portrayed as cowards. Subliminal messaging is evident in images of conflicts.

Emphasis on War– *Jihad* war and the rules of combat according to Islam occupy a central place in the curriculum. Overall, Islam is characterized as a religion of war rather than of peace. War is characterized as "a phenomenon that has accompanied humanity since the dawn of history; in Islam it is a legal necessity." While in one section, war is presented as negative and limited in the violence that is allowed to be exerted, children are warned not to abandon *jihad*.

Return– There is a dramatic rise in the presentation of the return of Palestinians into Israel proper. Occupation now firmly extends to 1948 lines. For the first time, a violent reference to the fate of six million Jews living in Israel after its liberation appears in a poem which calls to "annihilate the remnants of the foreigners" after "eliminating the usurper."

Also new, the reformed curriculum emphasizes that the return of Palestinian refugees to pre-1967 Israel will take place through violence and that Israel will become sovereign Palestinian territory. Emphasizing the Palestinian character of areas, sites and cities in Israel within its pre-1967 borders leads students to understand that the struggle for liberation does not end at 1967 lines.

Textbooks now push back the beginning of Zionism to 1856 and the establishment of a Jewish neighborhood in Jerusalem some half a century before the actual beginnings of the Zionist movement. Thus the Jewish presence in the Holy Land as a whole is characterized as a criminal act, an idea which negates the possibility of peace and encourages attacks on Israelis.

Violent Images– The new textbooks contain graphic descriptions of the Nakba. A fifth-grade linguistics textbook describes leaving behind "body parts" of friends and neighbors in 1948.

Violence in Science Instruction– More than in the past, violence is inserted into science textbooks as everyday examples of scientific principles. A science textbook teaches Newtonian gravity through the image of a boy with a slingshot targeting soldiers, to explain power, mass, and tensile strength. An eleventh-grade physics textbook teaches circular motion through the use of a slingshot in another clash with IDF soldiers. A science exercise is entitled: "The Stones [sic] Uprising and Elastic Potential Energy."

Increase in Religious, Salafi and Muslim Brotherhood Content– The curriculum features Salafi and Muslim Brotherhood themes, from animated depictions of paradise and hell to references to polygamy and the suggestion that sex slavery is acceptable.

Christians are tolerated through the *dhimmi* covenant by which women and Christians are second-class subjects, yet partners in *jihad* and martyrdom. While *jihad* war is presented as an unending process, the curriculum subscribes to the Sharia concept entertained by the Muslim Brotherhood, of Islamic penetration into the Western World via proselytizing with no immediate need for a *jihad* war. However, such strategy is not applied to Israel which remains the focus of military *jihad*.

A far greater emphasis than previously is placed on the Al-Aqsa Mosque and its defense. There is a negation of Jewish holy sites. The Western wall is holy to Muslims alone.

While the nationalist nature of the conflict still dominates, this increased emphasis on Islamism is a new phenomenon.

Demonization of Israel– There is a greater demonization of Israel than previously. Israel proper is mostly described as the "Zionist Occupation" and systematically characterized through examples of evil-doing. There are no examples of cooperation between Israel and the Palestinian Authority and no education for peace and coexistence.

The word "Israel" typically appears as the "Zionist Occupation" throughout the entire corpus of the new curriculum, further removing any remnant of Israel, recognized by the Palestinian Authority in the Oslo Accords.

The Jewish presence in ancient Israel/Palestine does not appear in the new Grade 5–11 textbooks. The previous curriculum mentioned the Jewish kingdoms of David and Judah as well as the entry of the Israelites into Canaan under the leadership of Joshua Bin Nun and even a Jewish presence in Jerusalem.

Palestinian National Identity– We found some adjustments, including a slightly more nuanced presentation of the Canaanite myth, the awareness of local folklore, patriotism and hatred of Israel as major identity markers.

Imperial and Regional National Identities– Somewhat at the expense of a straightforward, separate and discernable Palestinian identity, the incorporation of other characters: pan-Islamism, pan-Arabism, Shami-Levantine of Greater Syria and even Ottomanism, are enhanced. The "Islamic State" and "Arab Homeland" transnational-imperial identities and ambitions are particularly stressed. (Note that the term "Islamic State" is used in the context of past empires, and not directly with ISIS).

Distrust of the West– In the new curriculum, this forms part of the resurgence of pan-Islamic and pan-Arab dreams. It also reflects an anti-colonialist attitude.

Note: This preliminary study does not include the second semester textbooks to be published by January 2018. We trust it is not naïve to hope that the PA can reverse its course, change the first semester books and publish second semester books that are in line with UNESCO-derived standards of peace and tolerance

LIST OF RESEARCHED TEXTBOOKS

The following Arabic-language textbooks monitored for the research in this study may be found at the IMPACT-se library in Jerusalem. The titles both here and referenced in the text have been translated into English to aid the reader.

Arabic Language, Grade 5, Vol.1, 2017.

Arabic Language, Grade 6, Vol.1, 2017.

Arabic Language, Grade 7, Vol. 1, 2017.

Arabic Language, Grade 8, Vol. 1, 2017.

Arabic Language, Grade 9, Vol. 1, 2017.

Arabic Language, Grade 10, Vol. 1, 2017.

Arabic Language: Reading, Grammar, Presentations and Expression, Grade 11, Vol. 1, 2017.

Arabic Language: Literature and Rhetoric, Vol. 2, Grade 11, 2017.

Chemistry (Science and Agriculture), Grade 11, 2017.

Chemistry (Academic), Grade 10, Vol. 1, 2017.

Entrepreneurship (Technology), Grade 11, 2017.

Geography and History of Palestine in the Modern Age, Grade 10, Vol. 1, 2017.

Geography, Grade 11, Vol. 1, 2017.

History, Grade 11, Vol. 1, 2017.

Islamic Education, Grade 5, Vol. 1, 2017.

Islamic Education, Grade 6, Vol. 1, 2017.

Islamic Education, Grade 7, Vol. 1, 2017.

Islamic Education, Grade 8, Vol. 1, 2017.

Islamic Education, Grade 9, Vol. 1, 2017.

Islamic Education, Grade 10, Vol. 1, 2017.

Islamic Education, Grade 11, Vol. 1, 2017.

Life Sciences, Grade 10, 2017.

Life Sciences (Science and Agriculture), Grade 11, Vol. 1, 2017.

Management and Economics (Entrepreneurship and Business), Grade 11, Vol. 1, 2017.

Mathematics, Grade 5, Vol. 1, 2017.

Mathematics, Grade 6, Vol. 1, 2017.

Mathematics, Grade 7, Vol. 1, 2017.

Mathematics, Grade 8, Vol. 1, 2017.

Mathematics, Grade 9, Vol. 1, 2017.

Mathematics, Grade 10, Vol. 1, 2017.

Mathematics (Business Leadership, Hotel, Home Economics, Agriculture), Grade 11, 2017.

Mathematics (Science and Industrial), Grade 11, Vol. 1, 2017.

Mathematics (Literature and Sharia), Grade 11, 2017.

National Education, Grade 2, 2013.

National Education, Grade 3, Vol. 1, 2002.

National Education, Grade 4, Vol. 1, 2013.

National Education, Grade 5, Vol. 1, 2013.

National Education and Socialization, Grade 3, Vol. 2, 2016.

National Education and Socialization, Grade 4, Vol. 1, 2016.

Physics, Grade 10, Vol. 1, 2017.

Physics, Grade 11, Vol. 1, 2017.

Programming and Automation, Grade 11, 2017.

Recitation and Intonation, Grade 5, 2017.

Recitation and Intonation, Grade 6, 2017.

Recitation and Intonation, Grade 7, 2017.

Recitation and Intonation, Grade 8, 2017.

Recitation and Intonation, Grade 10, 2017.

Science and Life, Grade 5, Vol. 1, 2017.

Science and Life, Grade 6, Vol. 1, 2017.

Science and Life, Grade 7, Vol. 1, 2017.

Science and Life, Grade 8, Vol. 1, 2017.

Science and Life, Grade 9, Vol. 1, 2017

Scientific Education, Grade 11, Vol. 1, 2017.

Small Projects Entrepreneurship, Grade 11, 2017.

Social Studies, Grade 5, Vol. 1, 2017.

Social Studies, Grade 6, Vol. 1, 2017.

Social Studies, Grade 7, Vol. 1, 2017.

Social Studies, Grade 8, Vol. 1, 2017.

Social Studies, Grade 9, Vol. 1, 2017.

Technology, Grade 5, 2016.

Technology, Grade 6, 2016.

Technology, Grade 7, 2016.

Technology, Grade 8, 2016.

Technology, Grade 9, 2017.

Technology, Grade 10, 2017.

Technology, Grade 11, 2016.

THE IMPACT-SE METHODOLOGY

IMPACT-se's research utilizes a content analysis research method to examine the textbooks according to the following criteria which is a condensed version of UNESCO's standards for peace and tolerance in school education: ¹

1. **RESPECT:** The curriculum should promote tolerance, understanding and respect toward the "Other," his or her culture, achievements, values and way of life.²
2. **INDIVIDUAL OTHER:** The curriculum should foster personal attachment toward the "Other" as an individual, his or her desire to be familiar, loved and appreciated.³
3. **NO HATE:** The curriculum should be free of wording, imagery and ideologies likely to create prejudices, misconceptions, stereotypes, misunderstandings, mistrust, racial hatred, religious bigotry and national hatred, as well as any other form of hatred or contempt for other groups or peoples.⁴
4. **PEACEMAKING:** The curriculum should develop capabilities for non-violent conflict resolution and promote peace.⁵
5. **UNBIASED INFORMATION:** Educational materials (textbooks, workbooks, teachers' guides, maps, illustrations, aids) should be up-to-date, accurate, complete, balanced and unprejudiced, and use equal standards to promote mutual knowledge and understanding between different peoples.⁶

¹ The methodology was initiated by Yohanan Manor. This is an updated version of the standards prepared by Eldad J. Pardo, Jean-Claude Nidam and Shimon Shetreet (May 2014). <http://www.impact-se.org/methodology/>

² As defined in the Declaration of Principles on Tolerance Proclaimed and signed by Member States of UNESCO on November 16, 1995, Articles 1, 4.2. See also the UN Declaration on the Promotion among Youth of the Ideals of Peace, Mutual Respect and Understanding Between Peoples (1965), Principles I, III. Universal Declaration of Human Rights (1948): Education shall be directed to the full development of human personality and to the strengthening of respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms. It shall promote understanding, tolerance and friendship among all nations, racial and religious groups and shall further the activities of the United Nations for the maintenance of peace.

³ The goal of education for peace is the development of universally recognized values in an individual, regardless of different socio-cultural contexts. See *Ibid.*, Article 6. See also, on exchanges between youth, the UN Declaration on the Promotion among Youth of the Ideals of Peace, Mutual Respect and Understanding between Peoples (1965), Principles IV, V.

⁴ Based on *Ibid.*, Articles III.6, IV.7 and VII.39; and on the Integrated Framework for Action on Education for Peace, Human Rights and Democracy, approved by the General Conference of UNESCO at its twenty-eighth session, Paris, November 1995, Article 18.2.

⁵ Based on the Integrated Framework for Action on Education for Peace, Human Rights and Democracy, approved by the General Conference of UNESCO at its twenty-eighth session, Paris, November 1995, Article 9; and on the Declaration of Principles on Tolerance proclaimed and signed by member states of UNESCO on November 16, 1995, Article 5.

⁶ Based on UNESCO recommendation concerning education for international understanding, cooperation and peace and education relating to human rights and fundamental freedoms, adopted by the General Conference at its eighteenth session, Paris, November 19, 1974, Article V.14.

6. **GENDER:** The curriculum should foster equality and mutual respect between women and men. It should refrain from stereotyped gender roles.⁷

7. **SOUND PROSPERITY and COOPERATION:** The curriculum should educate for sound and sustainable economic conduct and preservation of the environment for future generations. It should encourage regional and local cooperation to that effect.⁸

⁷ The preamble to the Declaration of Principles on Tolerance proclaimed and signed by member states of UNESCO on November 16, 1995, notes the Convention on the Elimination of Any Form of Discrimination against Women and emphasizes respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms for all, without distinction as to gender.

⁸ Based on UNESCO recommendation concerning education for international understanding, cooperation and peace and education relating to human rights and fundamental freedoms, adopted by the General Conference at its eighteenth session, Paris, November 19, 1974, Articles III.6, and IV.7. On the imperative for developing “systematic and rational tolerance teaching methods that will address the cultural, social, economic, political and religious sources of intolerance,” see the Declaration of Principles on Tolerance proclaimed and signed by member states of UNESCO on November 16, 1995, Article 4.2. On education for international cooperation, see also the UN Declaration on the Promotion among Youth of the Ideals of Peace, Mutual Respect and Understanding between Peoples (1965), Principle II.