European Union Review of PA Curriculum - Quotes from Report

Antisemitism | Quotes from the GEI Report (a sample)

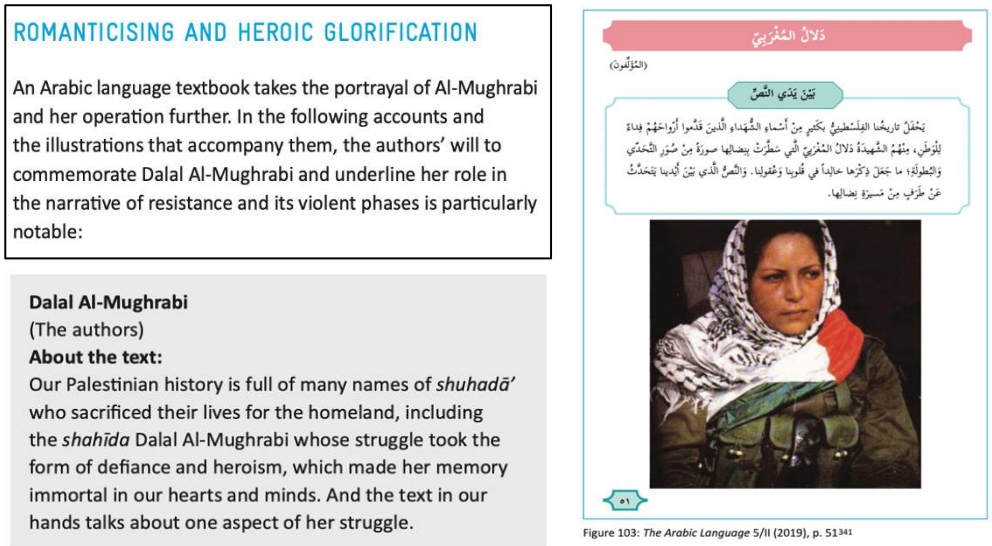
- *"When Jews appear as individuals in a section on early Islam in Islamic Education 5/II, published in 2017 and 2019, they are featured negatively with didactic reinforcement. This section displays anti-Semitic motives and links characteristics and actions attributed to Jews at the dawn of Islam to the current Israeli-Palestinian conflict."* (p. 122)
- *"The chapter ['the Female Companions of the Messenger of Allah (pbuh)'] therefore sends the message that the Jews as a collective are dangerous and deceptive, and demonizes them. It generates feelings of hatred toward Jews and […] must be characterized as anti-Semitic."* (p. 89)
- *"The authors come close to propagating a conspiracy theory in their claim that the 'Zionists' 'changed' the Buraq Wall […] into the Wailing Wall. Furthermore, the text states, Zionists removed some of the stones from the 'Jerusalem Wall' […] and replaced them with stones bearing 'Zionist drawings and shapes'. That the Jews in the Jewish sector of the Old City had had synagogues for centuries, some of which had been destroyed in the Jordanian occupation and rebuilt after 1967, is presented here as though the 'Zionists' had built those synagogues with the effect of altering the Arab-Islamic character of the Old City."* (p. 98)
- *"[a] textbook provides a learning context that displays anti-Semitic motives and links characteristics and actions attributed to Jews at the dawn of Islam to the current Israeli-Palestinian conflict."* (p.172)
- *"[…] repeated recourse to such aspects and frequent use of negative attributions in relation to the Jewish people in, for example, textbook exercises suggest a conscious perpetuation of anti-Jewish prejudice, especially when embedded within the current political context."* (p. 83)
- *"For instance, lesson 10 in the book for year 8/II, […] addresses the battle of banū qurayḍah; […] Whilst this lesson does not explicitly refer to Jews as traitors and does make passing reference to Jewish allies of the prophet Muhammed, it still has clear potential to be perceived as a story portraying Jews as the enemy."* (p.84)
- *"Islamic Education 9/I (2019) dedicates a 5-page lesson to the military campaign of Muhammad and his followers in the year 628 against the oasis Khaybar, which was inhabited by Jewish tribes […] The 'Jews' are thus not only described here as deceptive but also as inferior given their alleged cowardice."* (p. 84)
- *"[…] the text portrays the 'Jews' as deceptive, cowardly and aggressive protagonists: they attempt to kill Muhammad with a boulder from behind, or by using poisoned food. Through the recurrent use of the phrase 'The attempts by Jews to kill the Prophet [the Messenger]' […] the responsibility for these actions is not placed on individuals but on the 'Jews' collectively."* (p.88-9)
- *"The creation of a connection between the stated deception of the 'Jews' in the early days of Islam and the insinuated behaviour of Jews today, who supposedly desecrate Muslim graves, is extremely escalatory."* (p. 89)

Comments on the presentation of Antisemitism

On the one hand, the report correctly identifies instances of antisemitic tropes; at the same time it goes to extraordinary lengths to not call it antisemitism or hatred of Jews (ex: heading in Executive Summary titled *Ambivalent* Representation of Jews). Moreover, the researchers attempt to downplay antisemitism by making the following argument: "*It is often difficult to ascertain exactly which connotations of the term 'Jew' are intended by the Palestinian textbooks, located as they are within a context of highly virulent conflict in which the State of Israel defines itself in national terms as a Jewish state"* (p. 70). This attempt to excuse Jew-hate is in direct contravention of the IHRA Working Definition of Antisemitism adopted by the EU in 2020.

Celebration of Terrorists | Quotes from the GEI Report (a sample)

- *"Al-Mughrabi became known as a result of the role she played in 1978 in one of the most deadly terror attacks in the history of Israel, widely referred to as the Coastal Road Massacre. Al-Mughrabi herself was killed in this attack. This, together with highly symbolic elements added to embellish the story at a later stage have imbued Al-Mughrabi with a solid position as resistance fighter and shahīda in the Palestinian collective memory. As one of few women in the Palestinian national movement she is presented as a role model to girls and young women in particular. She is given a prominent depiction in the textbooks, symbolising the armed violence of 'resistance' in the form of terror attacks on Israeli citizens and institutions, not only in Israel, especially in the 1970s."* (p. 112)
- *"The description of the various phases and forms of resistance here mentions Dalal Al-Mughrabi […] This representation appears to frame violence against Israeli civilians both in the anticolonial narrative and a context of women's empowerment. As no further portraits of significant female figures in Palestinian history are presented, the path of violence implicitly appears to be the only option for women to demonstrate an outstanding commitment to their people and country."* (p. 110)



ROMANTICISING AND HEROIC GLORIFICATION

An Arabic language textbook takes the portrayal of Al-Mughrabi and her operation further. In the following accounts and the illustrations that accompany them, the authors' will to commemorate Dalal Al-Mughrabi and underline her role in the narrative of resistance and its violent phases is particularly notable:

Dalal Al-Mughrabi
(The authors)
About the text:
Our Palestinian history is full of many names of *shuhadā'* who sacrificed their lives for the homeland, including the *shahīda* Dalal Al-Mughrabi whose struggle took the form of defiance and heroism, which made her memory immortal in our hearts and minds. And the text in our hands talks about one aspect of her struggle.

Figure 103: *The Arabic Language* 5/II (2019), p. 51[341]

Images of the GEI report, from p. 114 of sub-chapter of on Dalal al-Mughrabi (p. 112-117)

Comments on the presentation of Celebration of Terrorists

This sub-chapter of the report successfully provides a succinct, yet comprehensive analysis of how textbooks elevate not only the persona of Dalal al-Mughrabi, but her acts, in which she killed dozens of civilians, as a role model. This is done throughout several grades and subjects, and as GEI points out, she is one of the only female role models found in the curriculum.

That being said, the reviewers also claim that her presentation has been deescalated in a newer textbook by replacing the image with one in which her hair is uncovered, and she is wearing civilian clothing. The wording of this lesson (and others about her) remains intact, which is difficult to characterize as an improvement or "reduction in escalatory potential."

Rejection of Peacemaking or Reconciliation | Quotes from the GEI Report (a sample)

- *"The current textbooks issued by the Palestinian Authority contain only faint echoes of the short-lived rapprochement and reconciliation process that became known as the Oslo peace process. […] the depiction of peaceful attempts to resolve the conflict is limited to a few pages in 'Geography of Palestine and its Modern and Contemporary History 10/II' from 2019."* (p. 118)
- "*The omission of a passage that speaks of beginning a new era of peaceful coexistence free of violence reflects the current situation between the two parties, which does not provide a roadmap to non-violence and peace acceptable to all sides involved. The second significant omission refers to the undertaking by the PLO to require all its elements, armed groups and their respective members to renounce violence*." (p. 121)
- *"While earlier textbook editions did mention initiatives of the peace process subsequent to the Oslo Accords, these are no longer present in the textbooks analysed for this Report."* (p. 123)

Text removed from Arafat's letter in the PA textbooks:

'The organisation commits itself to the peace process in the Middle East and to a peaceful solution to the conflict between the two sides. It also declares that all major issues relating to permanent status will be resolved through negotiations...

[REMOVED] ***The Palestinian Liberation Organisation [PLO] considers that the signing of the Declaration of Principles constitutes a historic event, inaugurating a new epoch of peaceful coexistence, free from violence and all other acts which endanger peace and stability****.*

In accordance with this the organisation condemns the use of terror and other violent acts...

[REMOVED] ***and will assume responsibility over all Palestinian Liberation Organisation [PLO] elements and personnel in order to assure their compliance, prevent violations and discipline violators. In view of the promise of a new era and the signing of the Declaration of Principles and based on Palestinian acceptance of Security Council Resolutions 242 and 338****,*

and assures that the articles that deny Israel's right to exist

[REMOVED] ***and the provisions of the Covenant which are inconsistent with the commitments of this letter are now inoperative and***

are no longer valid. The Palestinian Liberation Organisation [PLO] pledges to submit the necessary amendments to the Palestinian Charter to the Palestinian National Council for official approval.'

Comments on the presentation of Rejection of Peacemaking and Reconciliation

The analysis provided by GEI corroborates a key finding IMPACT-se has been sharing since the 2016 curriculum overhaul took place: the current PA textbooks shun non-violent conflict resolution as a means of ending the conflict. That said, there are many attempts made by the researchers to place caveats and blur the intentions of the textbook's authors, namely by burying this crucial information in the body of the report and not mentioning it in the introduction or conclusions.

This removal of content that promotes non-violence is but one example of a much larger trend. IMPACT-se does not sample the curriculum to make conclusions about its nature; rather, our approach is based on the idea that a curriculum is the sum of all its parts. The fact that the curriculum fails to teach peace, demonizes and dehumanizes the Israeli/Jewish Other, shows that this rejection of reconciliation is endemic, not isolated.

Incitement | Quotes from the GEI Report (a sample)

- "*As a type of 'military operation', violence against civilians is also presented as part of the narrative of resistance*." (p. 123)
- *"[…] in this textbook for year 8 the wounding or even killing of the opponent is presented in a positive light."* (p. 111)
- *"Even if no explicit call to violence is present, it is clear that telling this story immediately before setting the exercise will influence the students' answers so that a violent solution to the conflict with the 'Jewish Zionist occupation' might be suggested."* (p. 89)
- *"The depiction of the Aqsa Mosque corresponds with the significance of Palestine's Islamic identity, presented in the text, and the constant threat represented by the 'occupation,' while the national resistance fighter (masked by a keffiyeh) suggests that the liberation of Palestine might be achievable through violent resistance. While this representation does not explicitly call for violence, it can be seen as carrying highly escalatory potential."* (p. 80)
- "*Resistance is defined as 'confronting the coloniser by peaceful or military means, or both, to respond to injury, maintain existence and identity, and gain freedom. It is a legitimate right confirmed by monotheistic canons and international conventions*". (p. 107) "*Although a 'right to resist' as such is not explicitly confirmed in internationally recognized human rights documents, it is introduced as a quasi-legal term in some of the textbooks*." (p. 63)
- *"In comparison to those of other subjects, textbooks for Arabic language contain emotionally laden depictions of Israeli violence that tend to dehumanise the Israeli adversary; occasionally with accusations of malice or deception. Concerning violent acts by the Palestinian side against Israel, the textbooks for Arabic Language contain depictions of violence as a heroic struggle."* (p. 123)
- *"The textbooks primarily refer to the First Intifada when presenting acts of violence committed by Palestinians against the Israeli occupation, justifying these acts as means of 'resistance'."* (p. 123)

Comments on the presentation of Incitement

Yet again, the researchers are forced to confront messages in the PA textbooks that incite children to hatred and to violence, despite very clear efforts to downplay the severity of the messages themselves. These specific quotations, however, just highlight further that the report fails to look at the corpus of the curriculum as a sum of all its parts.

By this, we mean to say that the combination of the specific examples which call for violence, explicitly and implicitly, don't exist in a vacuum; they're buttressed by stories celebrating terrorists like Dalal al-Mughrabi, antisemitic canards from early Islam, calls for every Palestinian to defend al Aqsa to the death, and so on. These quotations, by the way, and the GEI report as a whole only reflect a portion of the curriculum. The incitement missed by GEI in the books they analyzed, but also in those they didn't, elucidate this point even further.

The observations of GEI are worth noting, but the overall impression one must gather from looking at the curriculum as a whole is that it is designed to incite the next generation of Palestinians to continue the "resistance" until all of Palestine is "liberated" from the "Zionist occupation." This is, of course, mutually exclusive with the idea of two peoples living side by side in dignity, security, prosperity, and harmony.

Jihad and Martyrdom | Quotes from the GEI Report (a sample)

- *"The naming of persons as shuhada [martyr] follows an inconsistent pattern, this title being applied both to innocent victims of Israeli violence as well as to protagonists of Palestinian violence against civilians. "*(p. 74)
- *"The term shahīd [martyr] is almost exclusively used in the context of the conflict and applied to two different groups: to individuals killed while committing violent attacks against Israel and to victims of violence who were themselves not actively involved."* (p. 171)
- *"One in eight references to jihād in Social Studies 7/II relates to the ongoing conflict in the Middle East: 'the Palestinian freedom struggle as jihād'.* (p. 73)
- *"Islamic Education 8/II contains a whole lesson on jihād in the context of military fighting. Students are asked to discuss related topics and concepts such as mujāhid (مجاهد), (someone who engages in jihād and shahāda), here in the sense of someone killed in combat […].* (p. 72)
- *"When mentioned in the context of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, the term is used for civilian victims but also for planners and military fighters who have carried out violence against the military and civilians and have become national figures. This is the case in textbooks for various subjects, such as Arabic language, social studies, geography and history, and occurring less frequently in textbooks for the natural sciences and mathematics."* (p. 74)
- *" Similarly, Mathematics 9/II mentions a school named after ash-shahīd Abu Jihād (الشهيد أبو جهاد), who was involved in the planning of violent attacks on soldiers as well as civilians until he was killed in 1988."* (p. 74)
- *"The exercise is to calculate the probability of students suggesting certain activities to preserve the memory of the six portrayed shuhadā' (شهداء) of Land Day. […] The text neither mentions that the persons killed were Palestinian-Israeli citizens nor that the events commemorated took place in Israel. It is highly problematic that the use of the term 'occupation' here denotes Israel as an occupying power within its own state borders."* (p. 130)

Comments on the presentation of Jihad and Martyrdom

The report only dedicates a few pages to this subject despite its frequency and centrality throughout the curriculum. Moreover, the reviewers seemingly downplay the meaning of the word *Shuhāda* (martyrdom) by almost never translating it in context, and their description of its application in an "inconsistent" fashion is misleading when considering the curriculum as a whole. In addition, the report describing examples of non-violent jihad as not problematic is equally misleading; the forms of jihad presented are still trying to achieve a tactical or political means, and so even if not explicitly violent, they are far from peaceful.

Reading the report, it appears the reviewers created a very short, dense, and complicated chapter that does everything it can to avoid answering the question at hand: to what extent is violent jihad and praise of martyrdom central to the PA curriculum? Our research shows that this is in fact one of the key factors which makes the post-2016 curriculum a deterioration from previous years.

For instance, the new textbooks say in explicit terms that jihad (as in violent jihad war) is a private obligation for every Muslim – in fact, the newest versions make this even clearer. The 2020 curriculum teaches that jihad for the liberation of Palestine and defense of Al Aqsa is a private obligation held by every Muslim. The fact that the GEI report misses this or ignores it is inexcusable on scholarly grounds alone.

Delegitimization of Israel | Quotes from the GEI Report (a sample)

- *"When examining the textbook excerpts relating to the Israeli- Palestinian conflict, its history and the present situation, it is striking that the State of Israel is rarely mentioned by name."* (p. 68)
- *"The cartographic representations of an imagined All-Palestine, either as a political entity or an imagined homeland, generally do not include a spatial representation of the State of Israel or of cities founded by Jewish immigrants. The State of Israel and cities such as Tel Aviv are not charted on these maps."* (p. 95)
- *"In general, portrayals of violence perpetrated by the Israeli protagonists present them as a homogenous entity mostly referred to as the '(Zionist) occupation' or by similar epithets. On the rare occasions in which individual Israelis do occur in the books, they are de-individualized as violent representatives of a negatively connoted collective, such as soldiers or settlers."* (p.172)
- *"[…] maps specifically depicting this region are irredentist and portray […] a territorially whole Palestine, as an imagined homeland, within the borders of the British mandate. This imagined territorial entity of Palestine negates the existence of the State of Israel. None of the geographical maps of the region or symbolic or iconographic presentations of the territory identified in the corpus depicts Israel as a state*." (pp. 75-76). "*The State of Israel and cities like Tel-Aviv are not mentioned in the maps. Sites or cities located in Israel with large Arab populations […] are incorporated into the imagined All-Palestine, as are landscape formations that lie within Israeli state territory*." (p. 122)



Figure 59: *Geography of Palestine and its Modern and Contemporary History* 10/I (2018), p. 12

Diversity of Palestinian Terrain
Activity (1-a) Look at the map of Palestine and:
- Identify the side from which each aspect of the Palestinian terrain extends.
- Describe the land topography in terms of slope inclinations and elevations when travelling from the Dead Sea area in the east to the opposite side on the Mediterranean Sea in the west.

Activity (1-b) Look at the map of Palestine and by working in pairs:
- Exchange views on the impact of the diversity of terrain in Palestine
- Present your findings orally in the classroom.

[Map]
Elevations in meters
[…]
Under sea level

The map in *Geography of Palestine and its Modern and Contemporary History* 10/I shows the 'diversity of Palestinian terrain'. Although the cartographic drawing itself does not carry the label 'Palestine', its portrayal is that of All-Palestine, as the caption and the accompanying exercises suggest by referring several times to the 'map of Palestine'. While the map shows Palestine as a geographical entity it also conveys a political message. The places marked on the map are cities in the Palestinian Authority territories and on Israeli state territory (which is not marked as such on the map) that, historically, have an Arab-Palestinian population. Cities founded in the 20th century by Jewish immigrants, such as Tel Aviv, Netanya or Nahariya, are missing from the map.

A similar evasion technique occurs in an exercise in a mathematics textbook for year 6:



Figure 60: *Mathematics* 6/II (2019), p. 86

[Map] [Weather symbols]
What is the probability of sunny weather on one day of the week?

The exercise is about the probability of certain weather events during the week; the map next to the weather symbols is actually irrelevant for completing the task. The map thus has a secondary learning objective: the function of visualising for the students the topographical shape of All-Palestine and the locations of 'Palestinian' places. These, as in the previous map from the history and geography book, are cities with Arab-Palestinian populations; no Israeli-Jewish cities are named. These practices of cartographic appropriation or exclusion do not, however, only affect urban areas: in the following section the Negev Desert, which is situated entirely within Israel, is presented as part of All-Palestine.

Comments on the presentation of Delegitimization of Israel

The report documents extensively how Israel is demonized, delegitimized, and erased as a matter of policy. In addition to being erased from maps, Israelis are universally presented as foreign, malicious, and monolithic. Israel is rarely mentioned by name, referred to in pejorative instead; it is not regarded as a political entity of equal status as other states in the region or the world. In fact, even the aspects of the PA curriculum that ought to be praiseworthy are laden with this problem. While the introduction of content on human rights and international conventions is commendable at first glance, the researchers note that these rights and considerations are never afforded to Israelis: *"Above all, the textbooks fail to engage with the question of whether violence carried out by Palestinian actors might equally constitute a violation of human rights"* (p. 64).

Israel and Israelis have no place in the new Palestinian curriculum. This cannot be denied, nor perceived as congruent with the vision of a peaceful resolution to the conflict, and therefore violates UNESCO standards.