

# EDUCATING THE NEXT GENERATION

CHANGING PALESTINIAN TEXTBOOKS  
AS A PRECONDITION FOR MUTUAL  
UNDERSTANDING



Mideast Freedom Forum Berlin

## PREFACE BY FOUR MEMBERS OF THE GERMAN PARLIAMENT

Dear readers,

The conflict between Jews and Arabs reached an international dimension at the latest after the Arab rejection of the UN Partition Plan for Palestine in 1947, and the subsequent establishment of the State of Israel in 1948. While the Israeli government shaped its own educational sector in a pluralistic manner, the international community assumed responsibility for educating the Palestinian refugees through the UN agency UNRWA. With its financial contribution to UNRWA, Germany not only became a major aide to the relief programme, but moreover bears responsibility to ensure to the non-violent education of Palestinian children in accordance with the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child, thus contributing to their future.

Children play a central role in the Palestinian narrative. Echoing a very old anti-Semitic stereotype, Israel is regularly accused of killing children. "Child Murderer Israel" – this sentence was heard in the streets of Berlin in the summer of 2014. In addition, since 2015 we are observing terrifying images of Palestinian children armed with knives attempting to kill as many Jews as possible, determined to die as "martyrs".

What makes children – often not older than 13 years – stab a stranger with a knife? And what options do we have to influence these children?

This, we have to ask ourselves – for, through German public development funds we indirectly contribute to the education of the next generation of Palestinian children. The study at hand examines the depiction of Israel and Jews in Palestinian textbooks. To tell you outright: the results are alarming.

We are convinced that education is the key to a peaceful coexistence between Israelis and Palestinians, Jews and Arabs, within the framework of a two-state solution to be negotiated exclusively between the parties in the conflict. We need more transparency and must hold accountable not only Palestinian politicians, but Palestinian civil society as well. Only then, peace between Israelis and Palestinians is possible.



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## SUMMARY

*This analysis of Palestinian school textbooks from Grades 1 to 9 demonstrates that the educational contents do not encourage a constructive understanding of Israelis and Palestinians. Instead, they propagate a climate of violence. The following report shows that:*

■ Palestinian school pupils do not gather any balanced information about Jewish culture, religion, or history, or about modern Israeli society.

■ The predominant reasons for Jewish immigration to Palestine, namely anti-Semitism and the Shoah, are never mentioned.

■ The surveyed textbooks consistently portray Jews in a strongly negative manner, and often demonize them. Jews are rarely individuated, but instead are subsumed into a stereotype or the concept of Zionism.

■ The textbooks reveal serious omissions regarding Jews within the historical context of Palestine. They first appear as Zionist colonizers and settlers at the end of the nineteenth century.

■ The effect of this is that the Jewish presence in modern Israel is delegitimized.

■ Jewish and Israeli places, as well as the State of Israel as a whole, are not found on maps included in the textbooks. The existence of Israel is denied.

■ Instead, the maps label the area inside the modern borders of Israel, including the West Bank and Gaza, as 'Palestine'.

■ The terminology with which the books refer to Jews and Israelis is not neutral, but often pejorative. The contrast between them and Palestinians akin to that is between evil and good. The Palestinian resistance against Jews is glorified.

In conclusion, the content of official Palestinian textbooks is detrimental to fostering understanding between the two groups. The books do not appeal to the possibility of understanding and reconciliation, but rather encourage aggression and strengthen prejudices. They describe Palestinians and Israelis as enemies, and contain nothing to render mutual understanding a likelihood. To ensure that coming generations work toward a process of peace rather than conflict, children must be provided with more balanced and informative learning content.

## INTRODUCTION

Schoolbooks are a significant –perhaps the most significant – indicator of the values a society desires to pass on to its next generation. They transmit ideals and knowledge, regarding their own culture and others, that have been accounted worthy to pass on to children. They orient children with regards to social and cultural relations, and help to form an approved, picture of the community into which children grow.

Educational texts have a major role in the process of children's and teens' socialization, although of course individuals also access other information. This is because textbooks are perceived as authorized and objective presentations of reality.<sup>1</sup> Therefore, their content is of major importance. The particular concern of this report is the ability of educational texts to form and/or reduce prejudice, intolerance and biased perceptions.

This report is the result of research into the presentation of Israelis and Jews as "the other" in textbooks authored by the Palestinian Authority (PA). Particular emphasis is placed on issues such as tolerance and impartial representation. The analysis includes texts, charts, photographs, illustrations, and maps.

What is omitted from representations in these media is often just as important as what is present, as both inform readers' understandings of Israelis and Jews. For example, the Shoah,<sup>2</sup> anti-Semitism, and Jewish heritage in Palestine are not mentioned in the surveyed textbooks.

The principles and guidelines of UNESCO's Education Strategy 2014–2021 were used as guiding criteria for this analysis. UNESCO's guidelines state that educational books should encourage mutual understanding, and must acknowledge other human beings, religions, and societies as equal.

Descriptions and depictions of "others" which give rise to misjudgments and biases should be avoided. All teaching content should aim to solve conflicts in a peaceful and non-violent manner.<sup>3</sup>

## MATERIAL, METHOD AND ANALYSIS

This analysis encompasses fifteen schoolbooks from the subjects of 'History' and 'National Education', ranging from school Grades 1 to 9.<sup>4</sup> All fifteen schoolbooks were introduced to the Palestinian curriculum between 2000 and 2005, and re-issued between 2011 and 2014.<sup>5</sup> All are still in use in the Palestinian Territories, i.e. the West Bank and the Gaza Strip, at state schools as well as schools run by the UNRWA. All content is determined by the Palestinian Authority.

The analysis of the specific content of these books which concerns Israel, Jews, and Judaism is divided into three steps.

Firstly, it will be examined whether or not Israelis and Jews are granted legitimacy and equal status as adversaries in the conflict situation existing in Israel and the Palestinian Territories. Legitimacy does not entail having all of one's claims agreed to, only that adversaries ought to be introduced as rightful participants with legitimate rights and interests. The representation of an opponent and that opponent's interests ought to be balanced.

The second step is a qualitative account of the representation of Israelis and Jews, and the information about them communicated to pupils. Is the society of "the other" depicted neutrally and objectively, or in a biased and stereotyped manner? Is "the other" demonized? The report will also examine whether Israelis and Jews are referred to solely as a group or also as individuals. In the latter case, it is important to identify whether the negative qualities attributed to the group to which they belong are also assigned to every member of this group.

Thirdly, specific terminology will be examined. What are the terms which are used to represent "the other" and its actions? Does this language permit violence against this group? How is aggression against them depicted? This analysis will also include geographical terms, as specific designations of territories can legitimate political claims. Consequently, certain designations can be understood as indirect incitement of forceful "liberation" of these territories.

1: David R. Olson: On the Language and Authority of Textbooks, in Suzanne De Castell, Allan Luke and Carmen Luke (Hg.): Language, Authority and Criticism: Readings on the School Textbook, London 1989, S. 241.

2: In this text the Hebrew word 'Shoah' is preferred to the Greek word 'Holocaust'.

3: <http://unesdoc.unesco.org/images/0023/002312/231288e.pdf>

4: National Education, Grade 1, Part 1, Palestinian Ministry of Education (pub.), 2nd Ed. 2014  
National Education, Grade 1, Part 2, Palestinian Ministry of Education (pub.), 2nd Ed. 2014  
National Education, Grade 2, Part 1, Palestinian Ministry of Education (pub.), 2nd Ed. 2013  
National Education, Grade 2, Part 2, Palestinian Ministry of Education (pub.), 2nd Ed. 2013  
National Education, Grade 3, Part 1, Palestinian Ministry of Education (pub.), 2nd Ed. 2013  
National Education, Grade 3, Part 2, Palestinian Ministry of Education (pub.), 2nd Ed. 2013  
National Education, Grade 4, Part 1, Palestinian Ministry of Education (pub.), 2nd Ed. 2014  
National Education, Grade 4, Part 2, Palestinian Ministry of Education (pub.), 2nd Ed. 2011  
National Education, Grade 5, Palestinian Ministry of Education (pub.), 2nd Ed. 2012  
History of Antique Civilizations, Grade 5, Palestinian Ministry of Education (pub.), Re. 2014  
National Education, Grade 6, Palestinian Ministry of Education (pub.), Re. 2014  
National Education, Grade 7, Palestinian Ministry of Education (pub.), 2nd Ed. 2013  
History of the Middle Ages, Grade 7, Palestinian Ministry of Education (pub.), Re. 2014  
History of the Arabic and Islamic Civilization, Grade 8, Palestinian Ministry of Education (pub.), Re. 2014  
Modern and Contemporary Arab History, Grade 9, Palestinian Ministry of Education (pub.), Re. 2014  
5: This report is based on the second and partly re-edited editions (Re.).



## THE DELEGITIMISATION OF JEWS AND ISRAELIS IN HISTORY AND GEOGRAPHY

The textbooks examined characteristically omit mention of historical Jewish presence in Palestine. No text addressing antique Jewish civilizations was found, and only one chart depicts:

*the Kingdom of David (1000-923 BCE),  
the Northern Kingdom of Israel (923-722 BCE), and  
the Kingdom of Judea (923-586 BCE).*<sup>6</sup>

This reference to Jewish kingdoms is unique. The texts do, however, endow Palestinian history with an antique dimension, by referring to Canaanite Palestine or Canaanite Palestinians.<sup>7</sup>

A physical geographical map of the ancient Near East and Egypt depicts Palestine within the borders of modern Israel (see figure 1).

Another text addressing the ancient civilizations of the Levant (**bilad ash-sham**) mentions that the area was comprised of Palestine, Jordan, Lebanon and Syria.<sup>8</sup>

Specific places important to Jewish history are also frequently omitted. Religious sites holy to Jews, Christians, and Muslims are either deprived of their significance to Judaism or renamed. In a text which addresses the alleged attempt by Jews to Judaize (**tah'wid**) Muslim religious sites, the Cave of the Patriarchs, located in Hebron and containing the tomb of Abraham, appears as Ibrahim Mosque only. The tomb of Rachel (next to Bethlehem) is called Bilal Bin Rabah Mosque.<sup>9</sup>

The Temple Mount is represented as Islamic heritage only, and it is noted that the Jews wished to conquer it.<sup>10</sup>

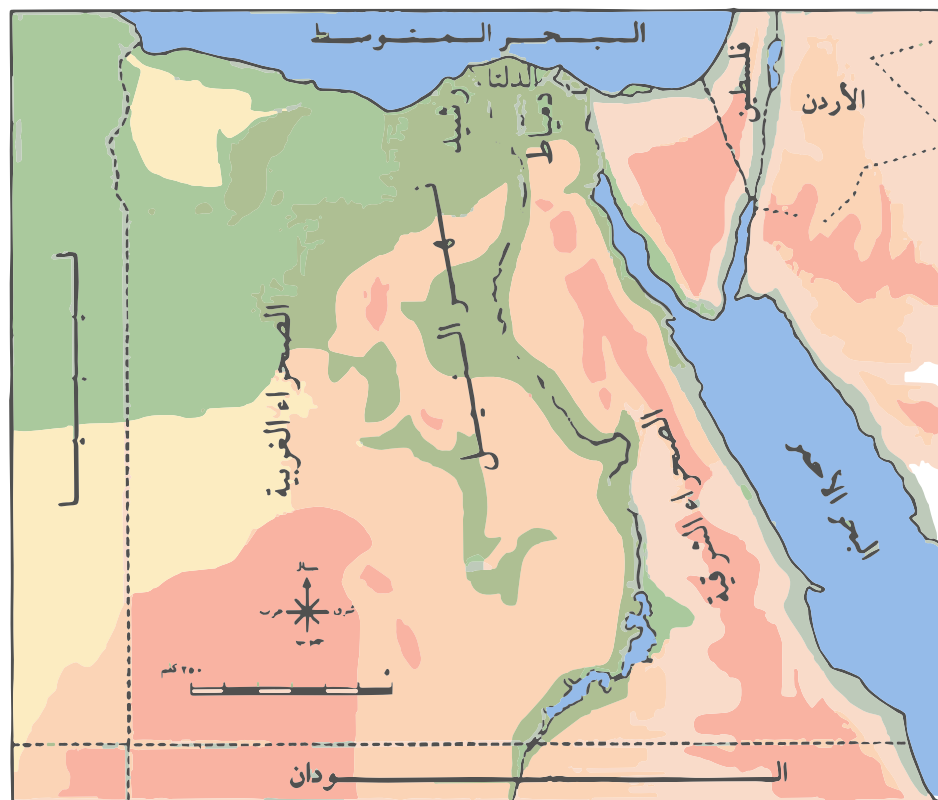


fig. 1 History of Antique Civilizations, Grade 5, Palestinian Ministry of Education (pub.), Re. 2014, pg. 48

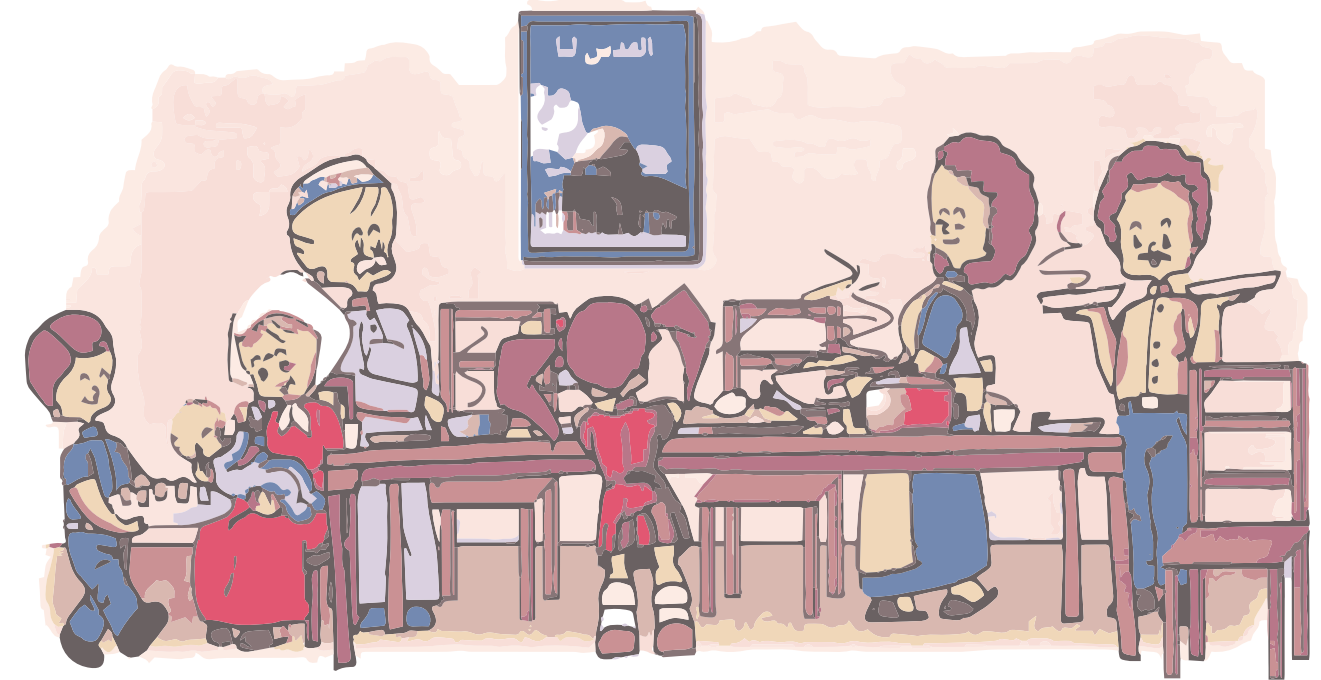


fig. 2 National Education, Grade 1, Part 1,  
Palestinian Ministry of Education (pub.), 2nd Ed. 2014, pg. 25

A textbook for Grade 1 lays claim to historical Jerusalem as an exclusively Arab city. An illustration which imagines the living room of a fictive family, which the students get to know throughout the book, features a photo with the inscription "Jerusalem is ours" (**al-quds la'na**) (see fig. 2).

Examples of this type are common. An illustration in a Grade 2 textbook distorts an historic postage stamp: the Hebrew inscription "Palestina A-I" has been erased, leaving only the Arabic "Filastin". 'Palestine A-I' (palestina eretz israel) was the Hebrew name for the region during the British Mandate of Palestine from 1917 to 1948 (see figure 3).



fig. 3 National  
Education, Grade 2,  
Part 1 (2013), pg. 7



fig. 4 The original stamp<sup>11</sup>

6: National Education, Grade 7, Palestinian Ministry of Education (pub.), 2nd Ed. 2013, pg. 3; History of the Middle Ages, Grade 7, Palestinian Ministry of Education (pub.), Re. 2014, pg. 74.

7: *ibid.* pp. 5, 8, 9; See instructions for students to draw a connection between Palestine and the Canaanite civilization. Prior to that the book describes Palestine as the "land of our forefathers" and presents the Canaanites as the first inhabitants of Palestine, cf. National Education, Grade 2, Part 1, Palestinian Ministry of Education (pub.), 2nd Ed. 2013, pg. 4. National Education, Grade 7 (2013) pg. 28.

8: National Education, Grade 7 (2013) pg. 28.

9: *ibid.* pg. 54.

10: Textbooks addressing the Temple Mount in Jerusalem mention only the Al-Aqsa Mosque, Dome of the Rocks and Muhammad's ascension to heaven. There's no mention of the Western Wall and its importance to Judaism, cf. National Education, Grade 2, Part 1 (2013) pg. 13; see as well: National Education, Grade 4, Part 1, Palestinian Ministry of Education (pub.), 2nd Ed. 2014, pg. 62; and National Education, Grade 7 (2013) pg. 21.

11: See Groiss, Arnon: *Jews, Israel, the West and Peace in the Palestinian Authority Textbooks for Grades 11, 12, and Muslim Schools in the West Bank*. Draft Report, (pub.) Institute for Monitoring Peace and Cultural Tolerance in School Education. 2007. Pg. 139, Fn. 55.

fig. 5 National Education, Grade 2, Part 2, Palestinian Ministry of Education (pub.), 2nd Ed. 2013, pg. 34

Modern Israel is also frequently redescribed. No examined textbook contains a map bearing the name 'Israel'. Instead, Palestine is depicted within the borders of modern Israel (including the West Bank and the Gaza Strip) (see figure 5).

Towns and regions in Israel, even those within the pre-1967 borders, are either described as Palestinian places or omitted completely. Safed, Haifa, and Acre are mentioned as tourist destinations in Palestine, and Nazareth is said to be a pilgrimage site, again in Palestine. The Israeli towns of Tiberias and Bet She'an are said to be located in the Palestinian Jordan Valley, while Tel Aviv and the populous Gush Dan region do not appear on any map. In a chapter on the geography of Palestine for the fourth grade, the Carmel mountains and the mountainous regions of the Galilee are allotted to Palestine (see figure 7), as are the Negev and Arava deserts (see figure 8). Accordingly, the Palestinian coastal plain reaches from Lebanon in the north to the Egyptian border in the south (see figure 6).<sup>12</sup>

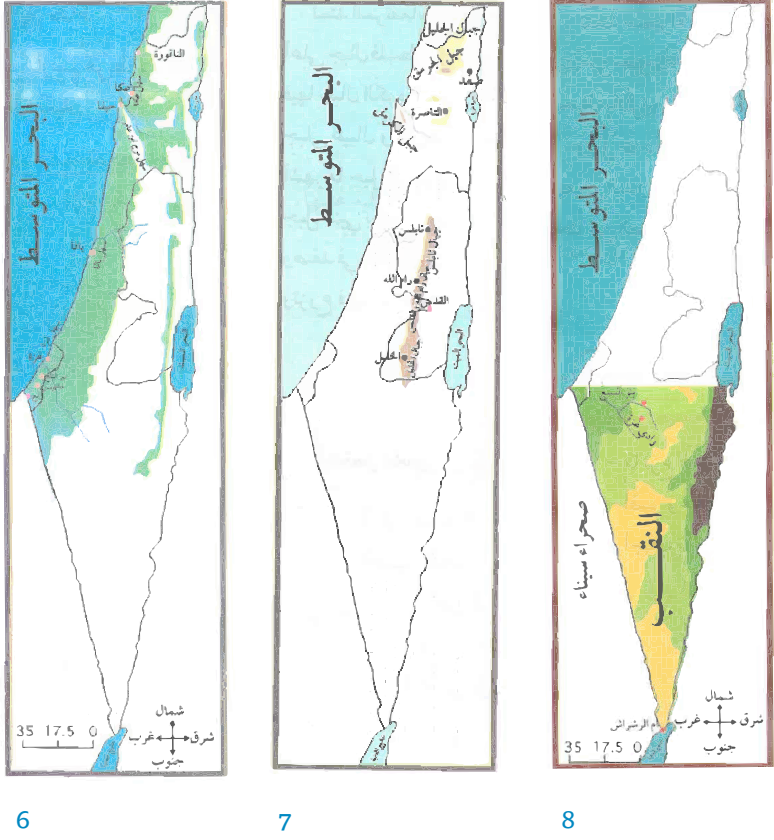
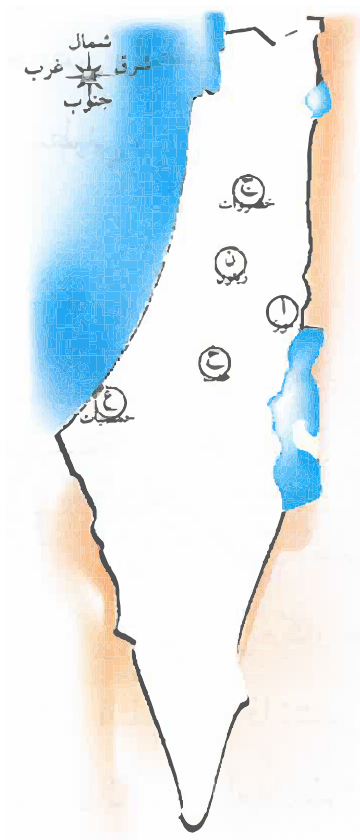


fig. 6 National Education, Grade 4, Part 1 (2014), pg. 20  
Coastal plain

fig. 7 ibid. pg. 23  
Mountains

fig. 8 ibid. pg. 29  
The Negev desert

Human geography also omits Jewish settlement. A chart quantifying the populations of Palestinians in different regions refers to Palestinians living in the Israeli state as "Palestinians of the interior" (*filastiniyyu d-dachil*), while the Jewish population is not included (see figure 9).

النسبة المئوية	
٣٦٪	١) الضفة ١,٩٧٢,٠٠٠
١٣٪	٢) غزة ١,١١٣,٠٠٠
٥١٪	٣) فلسطينيو الداخل ١,٠٩٤,٠٠٠
١٠٠٪	٤) فلسطينيو الشتات ٤,٤١٩,٠٠٠
	المجموع ٨,٥٩٨,٠٠٠

fig. 9 National Education, Grade 6, Palestinian Ministry of Education (pub.), Re. 2014, pg. 10

12: Moreover, Jaffa is mentioned and Jerusalem is listed as the capital of Palestine, cf. National Education, Grade 2, Part 1 (2013), pg. 22; Nazareth is referred to in: National Education, Grade 3, Part 2, Palestinian Ministry of Education (pub.), 2nd Ed. 2013, pg. 42; see as well: National Education, Grade 2, Part 2 (2013), pg. 21. On geography see: National Education, Grade 4, Part 1 (2014), pp. 20-29.

## REPRESENTATION OF THE "OTHER"

The representation of Israelis and Jews cannot be evaluated as balanced. From an historical perspective, the Jewish "other" appears as an antagonist; adversaries to Mohammed. The next time they appear in history is as 'occupiers' in the context of the Jewish national movement, Zionism, at the end of the nineteenth century.

In most cases, Jews figure as aggressive, violent colonialists, who were able to occupy Palestine with the aid of Great Britain, and who occupy it still. The separation of Palestine following the UN resolution of 1947 is pictured as "occupation" (**ih'tilal**) and as illegal, violent, land seizure (**igh'tisab**).<sup>13</sup> The Jewish immigration to Palestine is described as "colonising greed" (**al-at'ma'a al-istitaniya**) which aims to take the place of the native population (**as-sukan al-asliyun**) after their eviction (**tard**) and extermination (**iba'da**).<sup>14</sup> Zionism, therefore, becomes a political movement which aims to mobilize Jews worldwide to immigrate to Palestine, with the declared objective of building the state of Israel by evicting (**tashrid**) the people of Palestine.<sup>15</sup>

Anti-Semitic stereotypes such as 'greed' or 'financial temptations' exist, but are quite rare. For instance, the textbooks suggest that Zionists should have tried to convince the Ottoman Sultan Abdelhamid II to allow Jews to migrate to Palestine by offering material incentives (**al-igh'ra'at al-madiya**).<sup>16</sup> It is also claimed that 'Zionism' relocated its 'headquarters' from London to New York since it controls (**fi aydi l-harakat as-sahyunia**) many of media outlets and important parts of the US economy.<sup>17</sup> In this way, the textbooks perpetuate elements of popular anti-Semitic conspiracy theories.

The textbooks describe ongoing Palestinian suffering through eviction and deprivation as part of an ongoing Israeli objective to extinguish (**tams**) Palestinian heritage, both materially and culturally. On arrival, the books claim, the Jews destroyed the majority of Palestinian villages and cities, and the remaining native population was expelled.<sup>18</sup> They describe how in towns like Jaffa, Eilat, Acre, Ramla, and Lydda; as well as in the villages of Galilea; the triangle (**al-mut-hallath**);<sup>19</sup> and the Negev (all of which are described as "Palestinian"); construction and maintenance of buildings is prohibited. Historical Islamic sites they claim to have been Judaized (**tah'wid**): geographical names changed and Islamic scripts robbed (**sariqa**) or destroyed (**itlaf**). Palestinian songs and melodies, say the books, have been Hebrewized, and traditional garments imitated and labeled as Israeli.<sup>20</sup> As a result of these texts, Palestinian schools make a great effort to preserve Palestinian heritage. Students are required to acquaint themselves with Palestinian traditions and customs lest "the occupation" succeed in annihilating the Palestinian identity (**muhawalat li'tams al-huwiyya al-filastiniyya**).<sup>21</sup>

A section of a sixth grade textbook addresses problems in Palestinian society, and characterizes Israel as the main culprit for the many hardships which Palestinian society faces, particularly the neglect of the educational, social, and health sectors. The Israeli regime controls what are more properly Palestinian resources, especially groundwater, and its conduct continually encroaches on the Palestinian economy.<sup>22</sup> For instance, Israel is blamed for the decline (**tada'hur**) of the Palestinian tourism industry, by imposing restrictions and curfews, and withholding permissions for the construction of new hotels.

Israel also spreads the negative propaganda (**de'a'ya sal'biya**) that Palestine isn't safe, which prevents tourists from visiting Palestinian cities.<sup>23</sup>

Several more examples in which the Palestinian textbooks represent Israelis and/or Jews as malevolent and aggressive could easily be added to this list. It should be stressed that this negative image of Israelis and Jews is not counterbalanced by any information sympathetic to Judaism, Israel, or Jewish culture and society. Nor, as mentioned above, are there references to Jewish suffering, i.e. the Shoah or anti-Semitic persecution in Europe. This means Palestinian students

learn nothing of some of the key reasons for Jewish migration from Europe and Arab countries to Palestine, and are left with only the impression of an aggressive invasion.

13: The term Igh'tisab is more usually used in a sexual context, where it means 'rape'; For the text section see: Modern and Contemporary Arab History, Grade 9, Palestinian Ministry of Education (pub.), Re. 2014, pg. 55; "Britain gave the Land it did not own - Palestine, to a movement, that did not deserve it [the land] (la tastahaqu'ha) - the Zionist movement [...]", ibid. See as well: National Education, Grade 7 (2013), pp. 20-21.

14: ibid. pg. 20.

15: Modern and Contemporary Arab History, Grade 9 (2014), pg. 54; See as well National Education, Grade 6 (2014), pg. 15.

16: National Education, Grade 7 (2013), pg. 20.

17: Modern and Contemporary Arab History, Grade 9 (2014), pg. 56.

18: National Education, Grade 6 (2014), pg. 15.

19: The region referred to as the triangle is a region mostly inhabited by Israeli-Arabs/Palestinians.

20: National Education, Grade 7 (2013), pg. 55.

21: ibid. pg. 44; On Palestinian identity in PA textbooks see as well: National Education, Grade 6 (2014), pg. 16.

22: ibid. pp. 15-16.

23: National Education, Grade 7 (2013), pp. 78-79.



## TERMINOLOGY OF OTHERNESS

The final section of this report concerns the specific terminology used in Palestinian textbooks to describe both Jews and Palestinians. It is a concern if the language used to describe people and actions is dehumanizing or delegitimizing, as such language shapes perceptions and acceptable behavior. The language with which the textbooks depict Israelis is solely pejorative: they appear only as occupiers and colonizers.<sup>24</sup>

Palestinian actions against Israelis or Jews, by contrast, are often glorified, and called "death-defiant defense";<sup>25</sup> "heroic resistance";<sup>26</sup> "armed Palestinian revolution" or "struggle for liberation."<sup>27</sup>

Both the negative portrayal of Jews and of the Palestinian actions which are applauded are problematic. None of the surveyed textbooks feature an appeal for mutual understanding, but descriptions of armed resistance are numerous, and implicitly praise conflict.<sup>28</sup> For instance, Israel is depicted as an occupying regime (**sultatu l-ih'tilal**)<sup>29</sup> or as a Zionist terror organization (**al-munathama al-irhabiya as-sah'yuniya**).<sup>30</sup> Jewish settlements are described with explicitly negative terms as Mus'tautana and Musta'amara.<sup>31</sup> Palestinians are cast as the native people (**as-sukan al-asliyun**) of the area who resist (**qawama**) the aggressor.<sup>32</sup> This resistance is glorified with terms as sacrifice (**tad'hiya**) and martyrdom (**istish'had**).

24: *ibid.* pg. 23.

25: *ibid.*

26: *Modern and Contemporary Arab History, Grade 9 (2014), pp. 56-57.*

27: *ibid.* pg. 61.

28: See *ibid.* pg. 56-57 on the PLO.

29: *National Education, Grade 7 (2013), pg. 78.*

30: *ibid.* pg. 21.

31: The term Musta'amara derives from the word Isti'a'mar (colonialism), and the term Mus'tautana goes back to the word Istiyatan (settlement/settling). Both terms are used to describe only Jewish settlements; cf. *Modern and Contemporary Arab History, Grade 9 (2014), p. 55.*

32: *National Education, Grade 7 (2013), pg. 21*; In contrast to Israeli settlements Palestinian places of residence are referred to as Tadsha'muat As-Sakiniya Al-Filistiniya (Palestinian residential communities), villages (qura) or towns (mudun), see for instance: *National Education, Grade 2, Part 1 (2013) pp. 22, 34.* Only in very few cases the textbooks address Israeli residential communities as such (tadsha'muat as-sakiniya al-isra'iliya), cf. *National Education, Grade 7 (2013), pg. 57.*

33: *ibid.* pg. 21.

34: *National Education, Grade 2, Part 1 (2013), pg. 71.*

35: *National Education, Grade 7 (2013), pg. 21.*

36: *ibid.*

37: *National Education, Grade 1, Part 2, Palestinian Ministry of Education (pub.), 2nd Ed. 2014, pg. 59.*

38: *National Education, Grade 7 (2013), pg. 21.* Thaura also means 'revolution'. Calling uprisings Thaura has a glorifying connotation. Hence, resistance appears as a revolutionary act. Terms alternative to Thaura would be Intifada or Tamar'rud.

39: *Modern and Contemporary Arab History, Grade 9 (2014), pg. 55.*

40: *ibid.* pg. 56.

Palestinians killed in conflict figure as martyrs (**shu-hada**).<sup>33</sup> The textbooks use the term Jihad only in its limited sense of a struggle against an adversary. Its broader reference to an inner struggle for faith is not present. This language extends throughout the curriculum: a textbook intended for children in Grade 2 already stresses the significance of martyrs and prisoners, and encourages pupils to visit the families of martyrs on Independence Day.<sup>34</sup> Members of Palestinian resistance organizations are referred to as **Fida'i** (self-sacrificing warriors)<sup>35</sup> or **Thuw'war** (revolutionaries).<sup>36</sup> The idea of Fida'i is celebrated in the Palestinian anthem, which is printed in a textbook for the first grade.<sup>37</sup>

Such language subverts accounts of historical events. Uprisings (**thaura**) against Jews in Palestine during the British Mandate are referred to in a biased and flawed manner. The rebellion that took place in Jerusalem in 1929, called Al-Buraq-Uprising in Arabic, is portrayed in the textbooks, as a result of the Jews attempt to usurp the Temple Mount.<sup>38</sup> The war in 1948, which Israelis refer to as the War of Independence, is described as **Nakba** (catastrophe). Any Palestinian responsibility for the war, due to their rejection of the UN Partition Plan of 1947, is ignored, and a British-Zionist collusion is blamed instead. The textbooks reduce the war's consequences to violent seizures of Palestinian land (**igh'tisab**),<sup>39</sup> and the uprooting and expulsion of Palestinians by "the Zionism".<sup>40</sup>



جهاد: ماذا يوجد في ذلك الصندوق  
يا جدي؟

الجد: مستندات (قواشين) الأرض  
التي نملكها في السهل  
الساحلي، وهي مسجلة في  
دفتر الطابو الرسمية في دائرة

تسجيل الأراضي، ومفتاح بيتنا الذي هجرنا منه هي أمانه في عنقك، فحافظ عليها.

جهاد: أجل يا جدي سوف أحافظ عليها ولن أفرط فيها - إن شاء الله - مهما يحصل.  
الجد: أحسنت يا بُني.

fig. 10 History of Antique Civilizations, Grade 5,  
Palestinian Ministry of Education (pub.), Re. 2014, p. 7

The terminology used to describe the fundamental issue of who can live where is also politically charged. The textbooks refer a great deal to Palestinian refugees, and make subtle calls for them to return to Palestine – including to territory which was Israel prior to the Six-Day-War of 1967. In fact, in various sections of the textbooks, even Israel's territory within the 'Green Line' of the 1949 Armistice borders is not recognized, and as a general rule they refrain from using the term 'Israel', preferring i.a. "the Lands of 1948".<sup>41</sup>

In lower grades, images replace words to illustrate the Palestinian claim to these territories (see figure 10).

In the illustration above, a grandfather passes to his grandchild, Jihad, the deed and key to their house by the coast, from where his family had to flee. Jihad promises his grandfather to keep them carefully, "come what will, with the help of God".

The accompanying text makes the message clear by asking the students, rhetorically, where Jihad's grandfather's house might have been.<sup>42</sup>

The key is a recurrent symbol of the steadfast clinging to land – also expressed by the Arabic term Sumud – which is a political concept that first appeared in Palestine after the Six-Day-War. It conveys an insistence on individual tenure as well as on the land of Palestine in general: eviction and flight must not be allowed to recur. The concept is also closely connected with the claim of return to areas from which Palestinians fled or were expelled in 1948. Illustrations of the "day of our return" appear as early as textbooks for Grade 2 (see figure 11). Such a return to Israeli core territories, and even the concept of Sumud, renders the possibility of a two-state solution for the Israeli-Palestinian conflict at best questionable.

41: *National Education, Grade 4, Part 1 (2014), pg. 43*; See as well fig. 9 of this analysis, a chart quantifying the populations of Palestinians in different regions, that refers to Palestinians living in the Israeli state as "Palestinians of the interior", in: *National Education, Grade 6 (2014), pg. 10.*

42: *History of Antique Civilizations, Grade 5 (2014), pg. 7.*



fig. 11 National Education, Grade 2,  
Part 1 (2014), pg. 70  
The banner reads:  
"Our celebration is the day of our return"

## EPILOGUE EDUCATING TO MATURITY

In both the West Bank and in the Gaza Strip, which is ruled by the Islamist Hamas, Palestinian schoolchildren's education barely has a content which would help these young people to develop into self-centric, self-confident individuals who above all are able to form their own opinion. The teaching content from the usual Palestinian school textbooks collected in this brochure does not help to provide the schoolchildren the perspective of a peaceful, prospering and permanent coexistence – side by side with the democratic state of Israel. Quite the opposite.

This content plays a considerable part in promoting and deepening hatred and prejudice against Jews and Jewish Israelis, and therefore in enabling, rationalizing and legitimizing violence as means of political conflict.

Whoever is serious about a future Palestinian society which has the recognized civilized standards, and whoever seriously desires a prospering, democratic Palestinian society with the appropriate level of awareness, must contribute to creating the suitable conditions for this society.

Whoever credibly wants to help bring about a peace process in the Middle East between Arabs and Israelis should contribute to social changes on the Palestinian side towards democracy, a strengthening of the individual and his or her rights and to the compliance with human and minority rights. This includes a transfer of knowledge in schools that does not add to hatred and violence.

The international community has a special responsibility here, and German and European politics play a significant role. Coming right after the US, the EU, Saudi Arabia and Great Britain, the Federal Republic of Germany is the fifth largest sponsor of the UN-agency UNRWA, which is using the problematical Palestinian textbooks in its schools. But it could also use its influence via the good European relationships to the Palestinian National Authority, which is directly responsible for the problematic content of these books. In other words: there is a need for political initiatives on both a national and a European scale to bring about permanent changes; and especially those that can be permanently controlled. After all it is also German and European tax money that is being used to help fuel anti-Jewish hatred.

The financial aid for UNRWA as well as the PA from the EU and its member states should be tied in a more committed and publicly transparent way to conditions that prohibit Palestinian media and schoolbooks from stirring up and spreading anti-Semitic pictures, prejudices and resentments. This should include a continual monitoring process by the donor countries.

Jörg Rensmann



Mideast Freedom Forum Berlin  
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