

# Narrating Palestinian Nationalism

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A Study of the New  
Palestinian Textbooks

Goetz Nordbruch

MEMRI 

The Middle East Media Research Institute

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## **About the Author**

Goetz Nordbruch studied social sciences in Marburg and Berlin, Germany, and he studied the Arabic language at Jordan University and the University of Damascus. He wrote his master's thesis on Holocaust denial in the Arab media, and he is currently a doctoral candidate in Berlin.

MEMRI is an independent, nonpartisan, nonprofit organization. It was established in February 1998 to analyze intellectual developments and politics in the Middle East.

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# Preface

This report analyzes the new Palestinian curriculum for the first and sixth grades, which was presented by the Palestinian Authority in September 2000 at the Curriculum Development Center in Ramallah. The new schooling program was developed over five years by Palestinian educators, assisted by international experts.

Previously, Palestinian schoolchildren used only Jordanian textbooks in the West Bank and Egyptian textbooks in the Gaza Strip. This is still the case for the majority of children, except those in grade one (five to six years old) and grade six (eleven to twelve years old). All of the new textbooks for the first and sixth grades were published by the Palestinian Authority's Ministry of Education in Al-Bireh, Ramallah.

As one of the outcomes of Palestinian self-rule, and the peace process, the new textbooks should reflect this unprecedented period of nation-building and search for reconciliation. This study aims to determine whether the recent Palestinian educational effort succeeds in conveying the values of peace.



## Introduction

*“Never has the identity of a people been so exposed to the dangers of being vanquished or demolished as has that of the Palestinians. The preservation of their identity from absolute dissolution remains the basic indication of the existence of this people and a guarantee for its survival at the present and in the future.”<sup>1</sup>*

In September 2000, six years after the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO) assumed responsibility for, and authority over, education and cultural affairs in the Palestinian territories, the Palestinian Authority inaugurated its new curriculum at the Curriculum Development Center in Ramallah.

The first step taken to introduce the new curriculum was the creation of twenty new textbooks for grades one and six, as part of a long-term project. New Palestinian textbooks were long overdue.<sup>2</sup> There had been no uniform curriculum; Jordanian textbooks were used in the West Bank and Egyptian ones in the Gaza Strip. Large portions of the content were out of date and lacked clear relevance to Palestinian society.<sup>3</sup>

The revision of the curriculum was intended “to prepare the Palestinian people to restore all of their national rights on their land and establish their independent state with Jerusalem as its capital.”<sup>4</sup> It was also intended to respond to Israeli complaints that the previous textbooks included antisemitic, inciting, and provoking language, in violation of the Cairo Agreement between Israel and the PLO. That agreement required both sides “to foster mutual understanding and

tolerance and . . . accordingly, [to] abstain from incitement, including hostile propaganda.”<sup>5</sup>

This study deals with the central ideas and content of the new textbooks—ideas and values that will greatly determine the future development of the Palestinian autonomous territories. (Text and images from the new textbooks are presented in Appendix A.) Palestinian history as taught in these textbooks lays the cornerstone for the Palestinian society of tomorrow. This self-portrayal reconstructs the Palestinian identity, its social roles and principles, and its view of the relationships among Islam, Christianity, and Judaism.

## Notes

<sup>1</sup> Palestinian Curriculum Development Center (PCDC), “First Palestinian Curriculum Plan” (Ramallah, 1998), p. 7.

<sup>2</sup> For the historical background and organizational framework of the curriculum project, see PCDC, “The First Palestinian Curriculum Plan for General Education: A Comprehensive Plan” [in Arabic] (Ramallah, 1996); and PCDC, “First Palestinian Curriculum Plan.”

<sup>3</sup> For an evaluation of the curriculum, see PCDC, “A Comprehensive Plan,” pp. 175ff.

<sup>4</sup> PCDC, “First Palestinian Curriculum Plan,” p. 1.

<sup>5</sup> Cairo Agreement, Article XII (May 4, 1994). As a consequence of these mutual obligations, discussions arose between Palestinian and Israeli experts regarding how the history of the other side should be reflected in the curriculum of each. A summary of such a debate relating to the inclusion of the Holocaust in the Palestinian curriculum is given in a document published by MEMRI (see Appendix B).

# 1

## **Identity, Social Roles, and Good Behavior**

The two main goals set by the new curriculum for the early years of schooling are the shaping of a Palestinian identity and the development of the individual's awareness of his or her societal obligations. Therefore, the educational system is "built on the principles of breeding the individual on the basis of serving the society as a whole." The ultimate goal of education, according to the Palestinian Authority's Ministry of Education, is "to enable the individual to perform his duties successfully."<sup>1</sup>

This central theme is emphasized not only in the units of the *National Education* and *Civic Education* curriculums, but also in many other contexts. The relationship between the individual's identity and various public institutions is reflected by the question, "Who Am I?"<sup>2</sup>

The new textbooks present the many facets of individual identity, including gender and the sense of belonging to a school, family, religion, and nationality. Connecting an individual's identity to society's obligations links the individual with his or her social roles. Belonging is tied to the endorsement of social functions and responsibilities.

Discussions about identity and social roles overlap with other issues, particularly gender relationships. The new textbooks partially break away from traditional gender roles. Yet although the introduction of new themes makes it easier to enable girls and women to be equally represented with males, topics such as family relations and work still mirror traditional gender distinctions.<sup>3</sup> The new textbooks also reproduce the classic assignments of women in the domestic setting.<sup>4</sup> The books base social roles on Islamic tradition, arguably quoting the most authoritative codex of tradition.<sup>5</sup>

The instruction to respect others appears in the curriculum mainly as a request to cooperate with members of one's family, persons outside the family, and persons of the opposite sex. Gender equality has been relegated to the background because of the different roles for the sexes within the family. Even a criticism of coerced marriages is softened by an emphasis on the importance of the family's ability to function.<sup>6</sup>

The numerous duties of girls and women in society are demonstrated by examples from Arab and Islamic history. These include a reference to Asmaa, the daughter of the first *Khalifa (Calif)*, Abu Bakr, who succeeded the Prophet Muhammad. Her example sets a model for schoolgirls. According to Muslim tradition, Asmaa helped the Prophet Muhammad in his battles by providing him with supplies and by informing him about his enemies, thereby making a great contribution to the war against the infidels.<sup>7</sup>

The textbooks refer to an advance in the status of women relative to their status in the pre-Islamic era.<sup>8</sup> Respect for women, however, derives from their social responsibilities, as ordained by the Koran, rather than from modern concepts of gender equality. The Koran places men in a more responsible position: "Men are appointed guardians over women, in that

Allah has made some of them excel over others, and in that men spend of their wealth [for women's needs]."<sup>9</sup>

The books define desirable and necessary values for society, such as cleanliness. The first-graders' *National Education* textbook cites the Islamic tradition that "cleanliness derives from faith."<sup>10</sup> This desired value is also presented in other textbooks, referring to bodily hygiene, cleanliness in private and public places, and so forth.<sup>11</sup>

The linkage between themes dealing with hygiene and themes dealing with behavior and social norms suggests to the schoolchildren that uncleanness is unpatriotic. Disorderly clothing is depicted as a symbol of "foreign behavior"—portrayed in one of the *National Education* texts as undesirable—in contrast with original Arab culture, tradition, and customs. "Negative imitation is the blind imitation of extraneous ways of behavior that do not comply with our authentic Arab culture, customs and traditions such as imitation of foreigners' mode of dressing, their eating, their daily way of life, all of which contradict our values and tradition."<sup>12</sup>

The textbooks also focus on the position of each individual and his or her task in safeguarding the cleanliness and beauty of the homeland. That task is by no means limited to ecology.<sup>13</sup> It is an appeal to safeguard Arab-Islamic norms in the face of foreign influences.

## Notes

<sup>1</sup> Palestinian Curriculum Development Center, "First Palestinian Curriculum Plan" (Ramallah, 1998), p. 9.

<sup>2</sup> *National Education*, Textbook for the First Grade, 2000–2001, p. 8.

<sup>3</sup> Examples of nongender-specific references can be found in *Technology*, Textbook for the Sixth Grade, 2000–2001, pp. 2 and 123; and in *Civic Education*, Textbook for the Sixth Grade, 2000–2001, p. 9.

<sup>4</sup> *Civic Education*, Textbook for the Sixth Grade, p. 17.

<sup>5</sup> They cite al-Bukhari's canonic compilation of traditions ("Sahih Al-Bukhari"), quoting the Prophet Muhammad: "The man is a shepherd in his family and responsible for them and the woman is a shepherdess *in her husband's home* and responsible for them." Also see *Islamic Education*, Textbook for the Sixth Grade, Part 1, 2000–2001, p. 59, dealing with "The rights of family members."

<sup>6</sup> *Civic Education*, Textbook for the Sixth Grade, p. 2.

<sup>7</sup> *The History of Arabs and Muslims*, Textbook for the Sixth Grade, 2000–2001, p. 34.

<sup>8</sup> *The History of Arabs and Muslims*, pp. 19 and 21; and *Islamic Education*, Textbook for the Sixth Grade, p. 88.

<sup>9</sup> The Koran, Sura 34, Verse 4 (London: Curzon Press, 1991 edition), p. 78. See the excerpted page from *Islamic Education*, Textbook for the Sixth Grade, in Appendix A.

<sup>10</sup> *National Education*, Textbook for the First Grade, p. 18.

<sup>11</sup> *Islamic Education*, Textbook for the First Grade, Part 1, 2000–2001, pp. 70–71; *Civic Education*, Textbook for the First Grade, 2000–2001, p. 18; and *National Education*, Textbook for the First Grade, p. 17.

<sup>12</sup> *National Education*, Textbook for the Sixth Grade, 2000–2001, pp. 79–80.

<sup>13</sup> *Islamic Education*, Textbook for the Sixth Grade, p. 68.

## 2

### **Education to Democracy**

Democratic values are a central theme in the new textbooks. Aiming to enhance citizen participation within society and the state, the textbooks present the 1988 declaration of a parliamentary, democratic, independent Palestinian state as the definitive statement of self-determination.

According to this description, democratic values are conveyed through family, school, and neighborhood. The credo of coexistence in society and the nation is “to serve the common good.” Common good in a democracy is a matter of diverse individual or group perceptions.

Yet the new textbooks refer to the common good as an agreed-upon, well-known concept. “Every one of us has a role in this society, but we are all brothers in the homeland,” says the first-grade *Civic Education* textbook.<sup>1</sup> Society is described as an extended family and the nation as a larger home.<sup>2</sup> This analogy is problematic, because relationships among family members are characterized by love, not by equality. A special place is reserved for the family as the guarantor of individual needs.<sup>3</sup> In addition to providing financial security, it is the conveyor of general knowledge and of specific democratic values.

The participation of family members in the decision-making process is described as an important prerequisite for living together in society. Yet the ideal of cooperative family life in Islamic education is based on the status of the father as the authoritative figure, while the *National Education* and *Civic Education* textbooks display the father and the mother functioning in similar roles. Although the new textbooks emphasize various children's rights, these rights mostly concern receiving an Islamic education. It is the parents' primary duty to their children to provide this education—a duty that supersedes their obligation to ensure the child's development, health, moral behavior, and conduct.<sup>4</sup>

The new textbooks discuss the significance of government in Palestinian society. The nongovernmental independent institutions, such as associations, trade unions, and clubs, function as arbiters between individual and governmental interests. They also guarantee the fulfillment of social duties, which the government fails to fulfill. To stimulate the individual's participation in these institutions, the student is asked to describe the various local nongovernmental institutions and to determine their functions.<sup>5</sup> The curriculum's goal—a vibrant democracy—is described in detail in the *National Education* textbook for sixth graders.<sup>6</sup> Within this democracy, however, “values determine acceptable behavior in a society and are binding on the individual. Whoever digresses from these values will be rebuked and isolated from society.”<sup>7</sup>

In contrast with views of democracy that reflect the free choice of values and the rights of the individual in the face of the collective, in the Palestinian territories national goals and needs are the main determinants of individual values and rights.



Notably, the explanation of democracy in the textbooks is based on the religious commandment to respect others' opinions and customs. Democracy thus derives from religious tolerance. "Islam calls for tolerance, fraternity amongst human beings and offers respect (for others), freedom for human beings regardless of their religion, nationality or color." To prove the statement, the sixth-grade *National Education* textbook cites Koranic verses and Islamic history. It is noteworthy that the book attributes these values to Christianity, too.<sup>8</sup>

The tension between the commandment for tolerance and the sanctions invoked against nonconformist behavior is not even addressed. The plurality of the various groups that comprise Palestinian society is accepted only within "a unified goal: to serve the homeland and its citizens."<sup>9</sup>

Like tolerance, the concept of freedom, especially in its collective dimension, is a central theme in the new textbooks. Illustrations show the release of Palestinian prisoners and a parade marking the establishment of the Palestinian Authority. The books emphasize national freedom in the face of foreign occupation.<sup>10</sup>

Various forms of individual freedom are mentioned as important for the development of society. Yet national freedom is the primary goal and is discussed thoroughly and comprehensively, with inclusive references to other national liberation movements in the Arab world.<sup>11</sup>

The new textbooks seek to integrate the citizen into collective social entities and to guarantee loyalty to the community. The linking of civil rights to the individual's acceptance of, and commitment to, civic duties reflect the books' emphasis on the boundaries of individual freedom. The protection granted to the individual by the government and community depends on that individual's acceptance of his or her duties in society.

## Notes

- <sup>1</sup> *Civic Education*, Textbook for the First Grade, 2000–2001, p. 9.
- <sup>2</sup> *Civic Education*, Textbook for the Sixth Grade, 2000–2001, Introduction.
- <sup>3</sup> *Civic Education*, Textbook for the Sixth Grade, p. 16.
- <sup>4</sup> *Islamic Education*, Textbook for the Sixth Grade, Part 1, 2000–2001, p. 60.
- <sup>5</sup> *Civic Education*, Textbook for the Sixth Grade, p. 38.
- <sup>6</sup> *National Education*, Textbook for the Sixth Grade, 2000–2001, Introduction.
- <sup>7</sup> *National Education*, Textbook for the Sixth Grade, p. 66.
- <sup>8</sup> *National Education*, Textbook for the Sixth Grade, pp. 71–72.
- <sup>9</sup> *National Education*, Textbook for the Sixth Grade, p. 72.
- <sup>10</sup> *National Education*, Textbook for the Sixth Grade, p. 73.
- <sup>11</sup> *National Education*, Textbook for the Sixth Grade, pp. 73–75.

### 3

## **The Palestinian Imperative: The Nation's "Uniqueness"**

The national Palestinian narrative is based on the assertion that there is a Palestinian "uniqueness." The uniqueness, it is claimed, derives from the Palestinian history and struggle to maintain cultural and religious rights.<sup>1</sup>

An educational unit on "Demographic Geography" explains the division of human beings into various societies and the ways in which nations were formed. The objective is to present the "relationship between facts of nature and physical features of people."<sup>2</sup> In illustrations and tables, certain phenotypic features of individuals—for example, the shapes of their heads and noses—are assigned to certain ancestries (*Sulala*). In this depiction of the origins of people from different regions of the world, the new textbooks identify significant differences among those of so-called Caucasian, Mongoloid, and Negroid ancestries.<sup>3</sup>

The categorization of people into different semi-'natural' groups is tempered by the concept of nationality. However, the textbooks mix features and ancestry: "People are divided into various species (*Ajnas*), which are characterized by specific physical features."<sup>4</sup>

The proximity of ancestries and species, as well as the designation of biological and geographical determinants, ultimately leads to a conclusion that the populations of Australia and the Middle East—and therefore the Palestinians—are of Caucasian ancestry.<sup>5</sup> Wavy soft hair and round heads are described as Caucasian features, with complete disregard for the scientific community’s rejection of such spurious racial theories in the past several decades.<sup>6</sup>

The authors of *Principles of Human Geography* seem to be fully aware that their categorization of people into groups according to phenotypic features is questionable and problematic. In their introduction they state as their goal to immunize the student against racism and discrimination on the basis of ancestry and origin. The book makes occasional reference to the fact that despite ancestral differences, all people belong to the human species. Yet there is a contradiction between the stated “immunization” goal and the actual typifying of people by their somatic features.<sup>7</sup> The special characteristics of the Palestinian nation are described in the following profile quoted from a sixth-grade textbook:

1. Agriculturally: 70% of Palestinian society owns farmland and rely on it for their daily livelihood.
2. Nationally: all of its history is one of battle and heroism in the struggle against British rule and Israeli occupation. The Palestinian society carried out several rebellions and sacrificed thousands of martyrs and wounded.
3. [The Palestinian society is] educated: The Palestinian people throughout their long history focused on learning and knowledge as a weapon to counter challenges of poverty, expulsion and dispersion.
4. Pan-Arab Nationalism (*Qawmi*): The flag of the Palestinian national movement is the Arab flag, its hymn is the Arab

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hymn, and Arab unity is the wish of the Palestinian people. 5. Tolerant: Brotherly love and tolerance between Muslims and Christians prevails in the Palestinian society. 6. Proud in its heritage: The national dress and traditional songs, which have been preserved by the people, are proof of their pride in the heritage. 7. Overtaken by Expulsion and Dispersion: The Palestinian people were expelled from their land by the Israeli occupation of Palestine, were exposed to massacres, and [were] forced to leave to the surrounding countries.<sup>8</sup>

The new textbooks are unclear about the status of the distinct Palestinian nation as separate from the Arab nation, because Arab unity is characterized by various attributes shared by Palestinians and other Arabs: a geographic unity with the Arab world, common history, and common religion. “There are no natural barriers that hinder the [free] movement and social affiliations between residents of the Arab homelands,” states the *National Education* textbook for the sixth grade.<sup>9</sup> It quotes the Syrian national poet, Fakhri Al-Barudi, on the dimensions of the Arab homeland: “from Damascus to Baghdad, from Najd to Yemen, to Egypt and Tetuan.”<sup>10</sup>

A primary theme in the new textbooks is that of positive feelings toward the nation. The binding of Palestinian society to the Arab and Islamic world should strengthen the student’s willingness to:

1. Take pride in Palestinian and Arab societies.
2. Appreciate the importance of Arab unity for guarding the pan-Arab national entity as well as for countering external challenges.
3. Resist colonial greed in all its forms.

4. Support the creation of an independent Palestinian state.
5. Take a strong stand against reactionary elements.<sup>11</sup>

A graphic illustration in one of the *Islamic Education* books shows a model of the multilayered loyalties to which the student must commit himself: the family, a place of residence, a region, the state, and the Islamic world.<sup>12</sup>

In the *Islamic Education* context, Christian Palestinians, along with other Christian Arabs, are not included in the larger Islamic identity. In fact, the lessons found in the *Christian Religious Education* textbooks omit the linkage to the nation present in the lessons in the *Islamic Education* textbooks, implicitly estranging the Christian community from the larger Islamic identity.

The geographic extent of the Palestinian nation, according to the textbooks, includes all the territory west of the Jordan River. Haifa, Jaffa, Acre, and Nazareth<sup>13</sup> are listed as Palestinian cities, disregarding their present location in Israel.<sup>14</sup> In various illustrations the slogan “Jerusalem Is Ours” appears, ignoring the Jewish/Israeli pre-1967 portion.<sup>15</sup> The maps of the region indicate only a Palestinian state in the territory formerly under the British Mandate.<sup>16</sup> The textbooks also ignore the existence of Israel despite the PLO’s recognition of the state in the Oslo Agreement.

The new textbooks describe common experiences of sorrow as important binding themes in the life of the Palestinian nation. The British occupation and the British Mandate, along with the consequences of Zionist settlement policies before and after the establishment of Israel, are seen as basic problems for Palestinian society.

Muslims and Christians are said to comprise the Palestinian nation. There is no reference to any Jewish presence now or in the past.

That omission is especially striking in light of the fact that Jewish communities have lived in that area continuously since ancient times. The lesson “A Muslim Loves His Homeland” describes the connection between Palestinian and Arab identities: “I am a Palestinian Muslim and I love my country Palestine. At the same time, I consider any of the Arab and Islamic land as a part of my great homeland, which I love and value with all my heart and I aspire to its unity.”<sup>17</sup> In this context, neither Jews nor Christians are mentioned.

Rather than explaining the various and sometimes contradictory dimensions of Palestinian identity as deriving from a historical development, the new textbooks simply present Palestinian society as a semi-‘natural’ and distinct community. Yet the choice of geographic, cultural, and religious attributes to describe the unique Palestinian identity is ultimately arbitrary. The geographic definition of the Palestinian nation along the boundaries of the British Mandate, totally disregarding Israel, is explained in as little detail as is the exclusion of Jews from Palestinian society.

## Notes

<sup>1</sup> Palestinian Curriculum Development Center (PCDC), “First Palestinian Curriculum Plan” (Ramallah, 1998), p. 7.

<sup>2</sup> *Principles of Human Geography*, Textbook for the Sixth Grade, 2000–2001, p. 10.

<sup>3</sup> *Principles of Human Geography*, p. 13.

<sup>4</sup> *Principles of Human Geography*, p. 14.

<sup>5</sup> *Principles of Human Geography*, p. 16.

<sup>6</sup> *Principles of Human Geography*, p. 13.

<sup>7</sup> *Principles of Human Geography*, pp. 10–11, 14–15.

<sup>8</sup> *National Education*, Textbook for the Sixth Grade, 2000–2001, p. 13.

<sup>9</sup> *National Education*, Textbook for the Sixth Grade, p. 6.

<sup>10</sup> *National Education*, Textbook for the Sixth Grade, p. 5.

<sup>11</sup> *National Education*, Textbook for the Sixth Grade, p. 3.

<sup>12</sup> *Islamic Education*, Textbook for the Sixth Grade, Part 1, 2000–2001, p. 69.

<sup>13</sup> *National Education*, Textbook for the Sixth Grade, p. 8.

<sup>14</sup> *Our Beautiful Language*, Textbook for the Sixth Grade, Part 1, 2000–2001, pp. 109, 120–121.

<sup>15</sup> *National Education*, Textbook for the First Grade, 2000–2001, p. 24. For example, Jerusalem is referred to as the capital in an excerpt from the Palestinian Declaration of Independence of 1998. See *National Education*, Textbook for the Sixth Grade, p. 32.

<sup>16</sup> *General Sciences*, Textbook for the Sixth Grade, 2000–2001, p. 81; *National Education*, Textbook for the Sixth Grade, p. 42; and *Principles of Human Geography*, p. 53. The reference to the disputed borders is not found in the textbooks but was made by representatives of the Israeli government in parliamentary inquiries concerning the maps.

<sup>17</sup> *Islamic Education*, Textbook for the Sixth Grade, pp. 67–68.



## 4

### **The Individual and the Nation**

*“The noble soul has two goals: death and the desire for it.”*<sup>1</sup>

The self-determination of the Palestinian nation as an entity that is constantly threatened by outside forces is expressed through the obligations and duties of the individual to the community. The themes of preservation and defense are emphasized in the textbooks time and again.

Both the *National Education* and *Islamic Education* textbooks explicitly address the bonds between the individual and the nation. Defense of the nation is defined not only as a national duty, but also as a religious duty: “Islam commands every Muslim to defend [his land], whenever even an inch of his land is stolen.”<sup>2</sup> “Islam views all those who have died defending it as the most prominent martyrs (*Shuhada*), because the Koran says: ‘Why should we hesitate to fight if we are driven away from our homes?’”<sup>3</sup>

It is interesting to note that the *Christian Religious Education* textbooks assign this religious duty to Christians, too. The central text of the educational unit documents the times of Byzantine Emperor Justinian and the proceedings against Christians who were decapitated because of their devotion to Christianity.<sup>4</sup> The questions presented at the conclusion of the lesson stress the martyrdom of the Christians, who “preferred

torture, repression, and death to renouncing their faith in Our Lord Jesus Christ.”<sup>5</sup> The concept of *Shahada* (martyrdom) is emphasized in the appeal to sacrifice one’s life for a higher ideal. “The noble soul has two goals: death and the desire for it.” This line is from a poem. In contrast to *Shahada* in the *National Education* and *Islamic Education* lessons, the principle of martyrdom in the *Christian Religious Education* unit relates to keeping faith in Christ, not in national values. In stories about the martyrs of early Christianity, those Christians appear as passive victims. That does not correspond with the Islamic notion of martyrdom through active resistance and *Jihad* (holy war), which is omnipresent in the other textbooks.

Martyrdom is clearly a religious concept; the willingness to make sacrifices is described as a national obligation. Arabic literature textbooks contain many references to this obligation as a central theme. The educational unit on “The Honorable Martyr”—Hamza Ibn Abd Al-Muttalib, a contemporary of the Prophet Muhammad—who sacrificed his life for Islam seeks to confirm the “honor of martyrdom and martyrs.”<sup>6</sup>

Sacrifices for the freedom of the nation are acclaimed in sections such as those on “Prison Literature”—namely, the literature relating to Palestinians in Israeli jails—and “The *Intifada*.” The message of the educational unit is that students should respect the “sacrifices of our prisoners for the sake of freedom and independence,”<sup>7</sup> totally disregarding the nature of their violent actions against civilians and innocent victims.

Through various questions regarding the lives of the martyrs, students are encouraged to follow the lead of those heroes and to draw conclusions and analogies for their daily lives. The role model for the heroic figure to represent the call for *Shahada* is Sheikh Izz Al-Din Al-Qassam, a Syrian who

fought against the British Mandate until his death in a battle against the British police in 1935. Al-Qassam is also the historical hero of the Islamic Movement *Hamas*, which names its military wing after him—the Izz Al-Din Al-Qassam Brigade—and which violently opposes the peace process. The textbooks encourage children to participate in *Intifada* activities. Lesson tasks and questions such as, “Describe the methods used by the Palestinian people in resisting British colonialism.”<sup>8</sup> or “What steps can be taken against the expropriation of Palestinian territory?”<sup>9</sup>, carry a call to join the resistance movement.

Sometimes the textbooks pose a direct and compelling question: “Asmaa, the daughter of the first *Khalifa* (*Calif*), Abu Bakr, who succeeded the Prophet Muhammad, was my age when she took part [in the struggle] by supplying the Prophet Muhammad and his companion with provisions, water, food, and information about [his opponents in the tribe of] Quraish, after their secret migration from Madina to Mecca. What role can I play in support of the national resistance movement against the occupier and the imperialist?”<sup>10</sup>

The “Hymn of the *Intifada*” by Abd Al-Latif ‘Aqil, which appears in the Arabic language textbooks, addresses students in a similar way.<sup>11</sup> Numerous references to child martyrs in the resistance movement against Israeli occupation are underpinned by an illustration of a youth carrying a Palestinian flag in a confrontation.<sup>12</sup>

Short explanations about *Jihad* are confined to the lessons on *Islamic Education*, while the religious connotations of the concept of *Shahada* appear in various educational units. A lesson about fasting designates Ramadan as the month of “great victories in Islamic history,” a “month of strength,” and a month of *Jihad*. The ultimate proof of this month’s

importance is the “renowned Ramadan War of 1973 between the Arabs and Israel.”<sup>13</sup> The emphasis is not on the fasting, but rather on the *Jihad*.

The appeal to defend the Palestinian nation is a central theme throughout the new textbooks. Even in lessons of Arabic language, numerous texts and exercises call on the students to sacrifice their lives. For example, in a language exercise the students are requested to discuss the case of a martyrdom operation on the soil of Palestine, using the following expressions: ‘they were truthful in what they had committed themselves to’ (Koran); ‘he defended his religion and his country’; and ‘he fell as a martyr and irrigated the land with his pure blood.’<sup>14</sup> The concept of a threatened Palestinian nation gives the impression that students, too, must fight contemporary threats and dangers.

National defense is perceived not only as a struggle against the occupation and other external threats, but also as a struggle for the preservation of Palestinian traditions and values. In a lesson on Islam, the love of the homeland and the struggle against colonialism are both presented as elements of the preservation of the “cleanliness and beauty of the homeland.”<sup>15</sup>

## Notes

<sup>1</sup> *Our Beautiful Language*, Textbook for the Sixth Grade, Part 1, 2000–2001, p. 47. A line from a poem by Abd al-Rahim Mahmoud is illustrated by a painting showing a battle of *Jihad* under the banner of Islam against, presumably, infidels (see Appendix A).

<sup>2</sup> *Islamic Education*, Textbook for the Sixth Grade, Part 1, 2000–2001, p. 67.

<sup>3</sup> *Islamic Education*, Textbook for the Sixth Grade, p. 68 (al-Baqrah, p. 246).

<sup>4</sup> *Christian Religious Education*, Textbook for the Sixth Grade, 2000–2001, pp. 32–34.

<sup>5</sup> *Christian Religious Education*, Textbook for the Sixth Grade, p. 31.

<sup>6</sup> *Our Beautiful Language*, p. 46.

<sup>7</sup> *Our Beautiful Language*, p. 122.

<sup>8</sup> *National Education*, Textbook for the Sixth Grade, 2000–2001, p. 15.

<sup>9</sup> *Islamic Education*, Textbook for the Sixth Grade, p. 68.

<sup>10</sup> *The History of Arabs and Muslims*, Textbook for the Sixth Grade, 2000–2001, p. 34.

<sup>11</sup> *Our Beautiful Language*, pp. 130–32.

<sup>12</sup> *Our Beautiful Language*, p. 133.

<sup>13</sup> *Islamic Education*, Textbook for the Sixth Grade, p. 33.

<sup>14</sup> *Our Beautiful Language*, p. 58.

<sup>15</sup> *Our Beautiful Language*, p. 68.

## **5**

### **The Conflict with Israel**

The history of the Palestinian-Israeli conflict is important, not least because of its effect on Palestinian identity. Surprisingly, however, Israel is virtually ignored.

References occur, throughout the textbooks, to various problems and challenges that Palestinian society has to meet. Many of these problems are attributed to the existing state of conflict. However, there is no mention of the way in which current problems are related to Israel.<sup>1</sup>

In discussions of colonialism and occupation as threats to Palestinians, the textbooks ignore Israel.

Conflicts with the British Mandate and with Jewish prestatehood inhabitants are merely summarized in a discussion on “external threats and provocations.”<sup>2</sup>

No clear definition of the boundaries of Palestinian autonomy is provided.

The absence of Israel in graphics or illustrations suggests a Palestinian entity that comprises all the territories of the British Mandate.

The Oslo Agreement, of importance because it marks formal mutual recognition between Israelis and Palestinians, is referred to but once: “the largest part of the troops of the liberation army [that] returned to Palestine in September 1993 after the signing of the Oslo Agreement between the PLO and Israel.”<sup>3</sup>

There is no discussion of Oslo, its importance, or the problems it entails for Palestinians in the West Bank and Gaza Strip. A general criticism of the occupation and of colonialism replaces a vital but absent presentation of the problems within Palestinian society relating to Israel.

### Notes

<sup>1</sup> *National Education*, Textbook for the Sixth Grade, 2000–2001, pp. 15–17.

<sup>2</sup> *National Education*, Textbook for the Sixth Grade, p. 3.

<sup>3</sup> *National Education*, Textbook for the Sixth Grade, p. 23.

## **6**

### **Islam, Christianity, and Judaism**

Islamic doctrine and culture are taught in the new textbooks in various educational units.<sup>1</sup>

Frequent references to religious values and ideals are also made in the history and Arabic language textbooks, with an emphasis on the coexistence of Islam and Christianity in Palestinian society. Christianity is given recognition with quotations from the Koran concerning the life of Mary and with references to the various churches in Bethlehem and Jerusalem.

Historical relationships between Muslims and Christians and between Muslims and Jews are both described as being rife with conflict; present-day relations between Muslims and Christians are presented in a positive light.

Christian ideals are presented by way of stories relating to the miracles of Jesus. The *Christian Religious Education* textbooks quote the Ten Commandments as the most important principles for moral guidance.

The books also refer to the tolerance shown by Muslims toward Christians following the Islamic conquest of Jerusalem.<sup>2</sup> There are fewer references to Jews in the new textbooks, and these mainly refer to attempts by the Prophet Muhammad to convert



Jews and to the reaction of those who had settled in Madina and the oasis of Khaybar in the pre-Islamic period.<sup>3</sup> The unwillingness of the majority of Jews to convert to Islam is told in another story about a small group of Jews from Madina who did convert.<sup>4</sup>

Another reference to Jews appears in a narration of Islamic victories in which Jews are described as having acted against the Prophet Muhammad.<sup>5</sup> Despite their disloyalty, however, they were guaranteed freedom of religion in the prophet's Decree of Al-Madina.<sup>6</sup> This decree is presented in the textbooks as "one of the first documents in the world to guarantee human rights regardless of nationality, religion, and beliefs."<sup>7</sup>

This impression of a tolerant attitude toward Jews is, however, sadly contradicted by the stereotyping of Jews. Leading questions and remarks relate to the alleged problematic behavior of Jews. For example, one educational unit instructs the pupils to "compare the positions of Muslims and Jews on complying with contracts and agreements."<sup>8</sup> The textbooks also include various references to Jewish resistance to the Prophet Muhammad's armies and to the Jews' stubborn refusal to convert to Islam.

In the history textbooks *Surat Al-Hajar*, the expulsion of the Jews by the Prophet Muhammad, is interpreted as a punishment from Allah for "those who broke agreements with the Prophet of Allah."<sup>9</sup> Elsewhere, students are reminded of the prophet's instructions to his followers to learn the language of the Jews so they can avoid the Jews' cunning.<sup>10</sup> Even the Jews who converted to Islam—mentioned in a depiction of the various communities of Al-Madina—are characterized solely as "those who have a large economic influence in Al-Madina."<sup>11</sup>

The *Christian Religious Education* textbooks, rather than giving a comprehensive account of Jesus' life, focus on parts that relate to the friction between Christians and Jews. For example, the role of Judas in the Romans' capture of Jesus is emphasized.<sup>12</sup>

The description of Pontius Pilate's sentencing of Jesus reiterates Jewish treachery. Pilate gives the Jews the choice of pardoning Jesus or the convicted thief Barabbas, and he is answered with a vigorous judgment against Jesus.<sup>13</sup>

Carefully chosen references to controversial passages in the Koran and the New Testament can serve to promote resentment toward Jews and to impugn the Jewish character throughout history up to the present day.

## Notes

<sup>1</sup> Palestinian Curriculum Development Center, "First Palestinian Curriculum Plan" (Ramallah, 1998), p. 9.

<sup>2</sup> *National Education*, Textbook for the Sixth Grade, 2000–2001, p. 71.

<sup>3</sup> *The History of Arabs and Muslims*, Textbook for the Sixth Grade, 2000–2001, p. 20.

<sup>4</sup> The reference to *Surat al-Saff* is important because the Jews are portrayed as denying Muhammad's prophethood. *Reading and Recitation (Koran)*, Textbook for the Sixth Grade, 2000–2001, pp. 26–27.

<sup>5</sup> *The History of Arabs and Muslims*, p. 42.

<sup>6</sup> *The History of Arabs and Muslims*, p. 37.

<sup>7</sup> *The History of Arabs and Muslims*, p. 38.

<sup>8</sup> *The History of Arabs and Muslims*, p. 24.

<sup>9</sup> *Reading and Recitation (Koran)*, p. 79.

<sup>10</sup> *The History of Arabs and Muslims*, p. 133.

<sup>11</sup> *The History of Arabs and Muslims*, pp. 37–38.

<sup>12</sup> *Christian Religious Education*, Textbook for the First Grade, 2000–2001, pp. 69–70.

<sup>13</sup> *Christian Religious Education*, Textbook for the First Grade, pp. 73–74.

## Conclusion

The new Palestinian textbooks reflect a general attempt to lessen the virulence of anti-Israel venom. Direct incitement has significantly declined, explicit calls for violence have been radically reduced, and a serious effort has been made to enhance values such as democracy and freedom.

However, the paramount goal of the new textbooks—to maintain the claim of a unique, distinct, and homogeneous Palestinian nation as the basis for creating a Palestinian state—seems to have marred the end product of five years of preparations.

The Palestinian nation is defined as a “natural” entity that is based on distinctions from others who are perceived as being different and therefore as not belonging to the majority of the Palestinian people. Much worse, this definition, which is linked to physical features of the face and body, is the kind of definition found in racial theories discarded long ago.

The curriculum focuses on the individual’s obligations to community, parents, family, school, and coreligionists. These obligations set the stage for the highest degree of loyalty from the individual to the Palestinian nation, culminating in nurturing the wish for self-sacrifice and martyrdom among the youth.

The concept of freedom is related solely to external oppression, not to domestic repression.

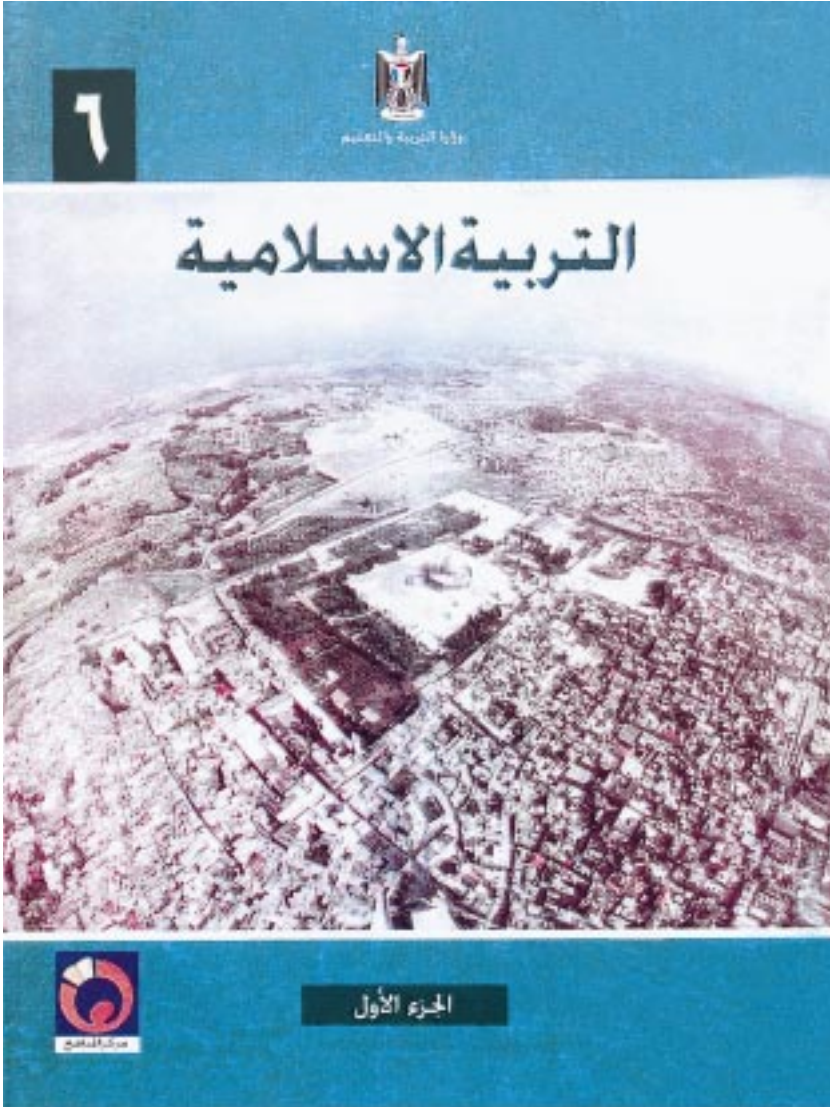
The opportunity to enhance an era of peace and reconciliation through the new textbooks has been missed. Israel still does not appear on the maps.

Antisemitic stereotypes portraying Jews still appear in the textbooks, and present-day conflicts are tied to ancient religious disputes and enmity. Moreover, the new textbooks do not nurture positive attitudes toward the West. Disorderly clothing, for example, is depicted as a symbol of undesirable foreign behavior.

The new Palestinian textbooks focus primarily on what is needed to successfully confront the nation's enemies. Sadly, the opportunity to educate Palestinian schoolchildren in the spirit of nation-building as part of a peace process was missed, and the world must wait for another opportunity.

**Appendix A:  
Text and Images from the  
New Palestinian Textbooks**

*Islamic Education, Textbook for the Sixth Grade, Part 1,*  
2000–2001



## Lesson 15: A Muslim Loves His Homeland and Defends It

فَرَجَّ بِهِ إِلَى السَّمَاوَاتِ الْعُلَى . وَبِهَا الْمَسْجِدُ الْأَقْصَى الْمُبَارَكُ ، لَوْلَى الْفَيْلَكَيْنِ وَالَّذِي يَأْتِي فِي الْقُدْسِيَّةِ بَعْدَ الْحَرَمَيْنِ الشَّرِيفَيْنِ ، وَأَخَذَ الْمَسَاجِدَ الثَّلَاثَةَ الَّتِي لَا تُشَدُّ الرُّحَالُ إِلَّا إِلَيْهَا ، حَتَّى قَالَ (ﷺ) : « لَا تُشَدُّ الرُّحَالُ إِلَّا إِلَى ثَلَاثَةِ مَسَاجِدَ ، الْمَسْجِدِ الْحَرَامِ ، وَالْمَسْجِدِ حُدَا ، وَالْمَسْجِدِ الْأَقْصَى » .<sup>(1)</sup>

وَقَدْ بَارَكَ اللَّهُ عَزَّ وَجَلَّ أَرْضَ فَلسطِينِ فِي الْقُرْآنِ الْكَرِيمِ ، فَقَالَ تَعَالَى : ﴿ سُبْحَانَ الْقُرْآنِ الْمُرْتَبِّعِ ، لِثَلَاثَةِ الْمَسْجِدِ الْحَرَامِ إِلَى الْمَسْجِدِ الْأَقْصَى الَّذِي مَرَّتْ كَلِمَاتُهُ فِيهِ ﴾ .<sup>(2)</sup>

وَرَزَقْنَا فَلسطِينِ مِنَ الْهَدَمِ الْأَرْطَانِ الَّتِي قَامَتْ فِيهَا الْحَضَارَاتُ الْقَدِيمَةُ ، إِلَى أَنْ جَاءَ الْإِسْلَامُ وَتَمَّ قَلْبُهَا فِي عَهْدِ نَبِيِّ الْأُمَمِينَ عَزَّ وَجَلَّ فِي الْخُطَابِ (رَضِيَ اللَّهُ عَنْهُ) فَأَجَسَتْ فَلسطِينِ جُزْءًا مِنْ الدَّوْلَةِ الْإِسْلَامِيَّةِ .

**أَتَمُّ**

- لماذا كانت فَلسطِينِ ، مَهْدًا وَتَطْلُقًا لِلْحَضَارَاتِ ؟
- علامَ يدلُّ رُحْمَةُ الْقُرْآنِ الْكَرِيمِ بَيْنَ الْمَسْجِدِ الْحَرَامِ وَالْمَسْجِدِ الْأَقْصَى فِي حَادِيَةِ الْإِسْتِرَاءِ وَالْمُفْرَاجِ ؟



بِتِيسَاعَةِ الْعَلِيمِ الْأَكْبَرِ بَعْضَ الْمَهَبَاتِ الَّتِي وَزَقَتْ لِفَلسطِينِ فِي الْقُرْآنِ الْكَرِيمِ ؟

### حُبُّ الْوَطَنِ فِي الْإِسْلَامِ

لَمْ يُكْرِهْ الْإِسْلَامُ عَلَى الْمُسْلِمِ حُبَّ وَطَنِهِ ، بَلْ رَغَّبَ فِيهِ ، وَجَعَلَ الدَّمْعَ عَنْهُ فَرَضًا عَلَى كُلِّ مُسْلِمٍ إِذَا مَا انْتَصَبَ شَيْءٌ مِنْ أَرْضِهِ .

فَأَنَا مُسْلِمٌ فَلسطِينِي أَحِبُّ بِلَدِي فَلسطِينِ ، وَفِي الْوَلْتِ تَفْسِيهِ أَحْتَبِرُ كُلَّ لِرْضِي عَرَبِيَّةِ

(1) رواه البخاري (1313) ، (1314) .

## (Lesson 15 continued)

وَإِسْلَامِيَّةٍ جُرْمًا مِنْ وَطَنِي الْكَبِيرِ الَّذِي أَكْرَهُ كُلُّ حُبٍّ وَقَدِيرٍ ، وَأَتَطَّلِعُ إِلَى وَجْهِهِ .  
 وَقَدْ عَزَّ عَلَى الرَّسُولِ مُحَمَّدٍ (ﷺ) تَرْكُ مَنَكَةِ مَهَاجِرِ أَيْدِيهِ ، لِنَظَرِهَا لِنَظَرَةِ الْمَجِيبِ الْمُنْتَفِقِ  
 الَّذِي يُلْقِي نَظْرَةَ الرَّدَاعِ وَقَالَ : « وَاللَّهِ إِنَّكَ لَخَيْرُ أَرْضِ اللَّهِ . وَأَحْسَبُ أَرْضَ اللَّهِ إِلَيَّ » وَتَوَلَّى  
 آتَى أَخْرَجْتُ مِنْكَ مَا خَرَجْتُ » .<sup>(1)</sup>

وَاجِبًا نُجَادًا وَطَنًا :

لِلْوَطَنِ وَاجِبَاتٌ كَثِيرَةٌ عَلَى أَهْلِهِ وَبَيْنَهُ مِنْهَا :

- ١ . الدِّمَاغُ عِنْدَهُ بِكُلِّ طَرِيقَةٍ مُسْتَحْتَكَةٌ ، حَيْثُ جَعَلَ الْإِسْلَامُ الدِّمَاغَ عَنِ الْوَطَنِ وَاجِبًا دِينِيًّا ،  
 وَاعْتَبَرَهُ مِنْ قَبْلِ فِي سَبِيلِ الدِّمَاغِ عِنْدَهُ شَهِيدًا لَمْ أَغْلَى الدَّرَجَاتِ ، قَالَ تَعَالَى : « وَمَا لَنَا إِلَّا  
 مُنْقِبِلٌ فِي سَبِيلِ اللَّهِ وَقَدْ أَخْرَجْنَا مِنَ وَيْتَمُونَ وَابْتَلَيْنَاهُمْ » .<sup>(2)</sup>
- ٢ . الْمُحَافَظَةُ عَلَى أَرْضِيهِ بِزِرَاعَتِهَا وَاسْتِغْلَالِ كُلِّ شَيْءٍ فِيهَا .
- ٣ . الْمُحَافَظَةُ عَلَى أَهْلِهِ ، وَالْحِرْصُ عَلَى التَّعَاوُنِ وَالتَّكَاوُلِ ، وَتَقْوِيَةُ الْعَلَاqَاتِ الْاجْتِمَاعِيَّةِ  
 الْعَالِمَةِ عَلَى الْمَسَاوِيَةِ وَالْعَدْلِ وَاسْتِحْرَامِ الْآخَرِينَ .

لِنَشْكُرُكُمْ ثُمَّ نَجِيبُ عَنِ الْأَسْئَلَةِ الْآتِيَةِ :

- ١ . كَيْفَ نَحْفَظُ عَلَى فَلَسْطِينِ فِي رَأْيِكُمْ؟
- ٢ . صَوِّدِ جُرْمًا كَثِيرًا مِنَ الْأَرْضِ الْفِلَسْطِينِيَّةِ لِإِيَادَةِ الْمُسْتَعْمَرَاتِ ، كَيْفَ يُسْتَكِينُ مُوَاجَهَةً ذَلِكَ؟
- ٣ . كَيْفَ نَحْفَظُ عَلَى الْمِيَاهِ الصَّالِحَةِ لِلشَّرْبِ وَتَوَقُّرِهَا؟
- ٤ . كَيْفَ نَحْفَظُ عَلَى نَظَافَةِ الْوَطَنِ وَجَمَالِهِ؟
- ٥ . كَيْفَ نَعَامِلُ أَيْدِيَنَا وَطَنَنَا؟ وَمَا شَعُورُنَا نَحْوَهُمْ؟

(1) حديث صحيح رواه الترمذي وابن ماجه والبيهقي . (2) البقرة : ١٧٦ .



## **Love of the Homeland in Islam**

Islam does not deny the Muslim the love of his homeland, but aims at awakening this love and making the defense [of the homeland] an obligation for every Muslim, whenever an inch of his land is conquered.

I am a Palestinian Muslim and I love my country Palestine. At the same time, I consider any of the Arab and Islamic land as a part of my great homeland, which I love and value with all my heart and I aspire to its unity. (. . .)

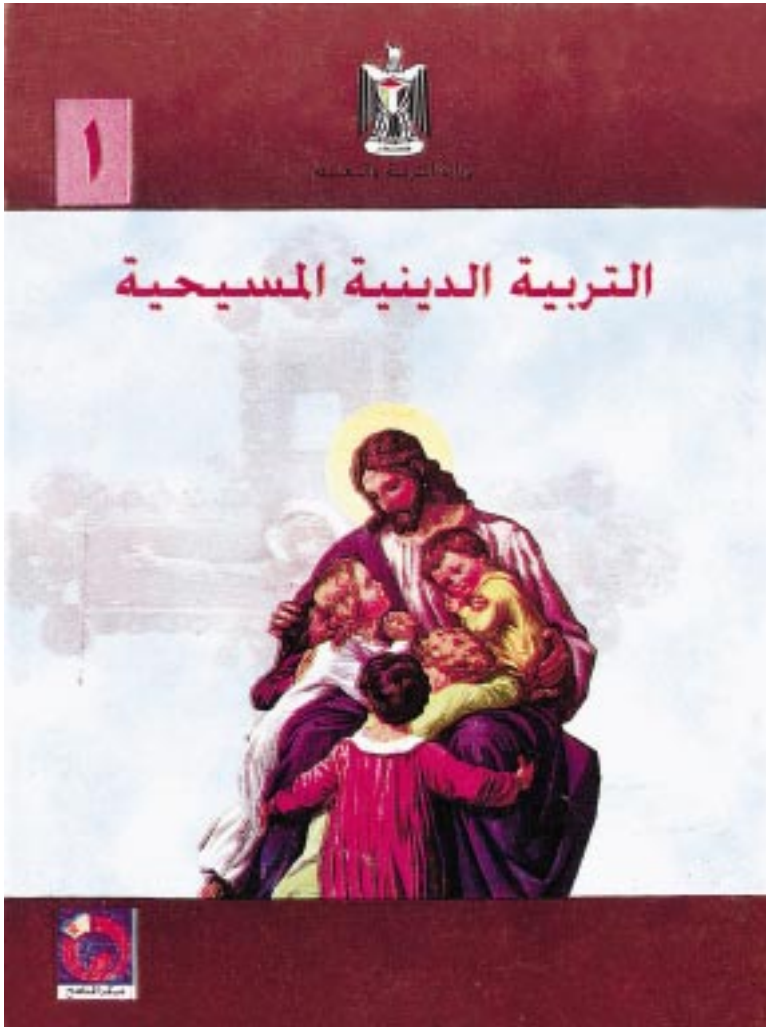
Towards the homeland, there are many duties for its people and children . . . :

1. The defense of it [the nation] by any possible means, for Islam made the defense of the nation a religious duty and considers those who were killed in its defense as [the] highest martyrs. It is said: “Wherefore would we hold back from fighting in the cause of Allah, when we have been driven forth from our homes and our children?”

### **Let’s think and answer the following questions:**

1. How can we take care of Palestine in your opinion?
2. A large part of the Palestinian land was seized to build colonies. [H]ow can we oppose this?
3. How can we care for proper drinking water and save it?
4. How can we care for the cleanliness of the homeland and its beauty?
5. How should we treat the sons of our nation [minorities], and what are our emotions towards them?

*Christian Religious Education, Textbook for the First Grade, 2000–2001*



### Chapter 3: The Arrest of Jesus (Lk. 22: 47–54)

الدرس الثالث      القبض على يسوع (لو 22: 47-54)

الأهداف:

- 1- من الشخص الذي يقبل يسوع؟
- 2- لماذا قبل يسوع؟
- 3- من الأشخاص الذين كانوا معه؟
- 4- لماذا جازوا؟

٦٩

Goals:

1. Knowing the story of the arrest of Jesus.
  2. Illustrating to the students why Jesus was arrested.
- 
1. Who is the man that kisses Jesus?
  2. Why did he kiss Jesus?
  3. Who are the people that were with him?
  4. Why did they come?

## Chapter 5: The Trial of Jesus (Lk. 22: 63–71)

الدرس الخامس محاكمة يسوع

الأهداف:

- أن يفهم الطالب  
- لماذا حُكِمَ يسوع



١- من الشخص الذي يتعدت إلى يسوع؟  
٢- ماذا سأل يسوع؟  
٣- لماذا أجاب يسوع؟  
٤- لماذا حُكِمَ على يسوع؟

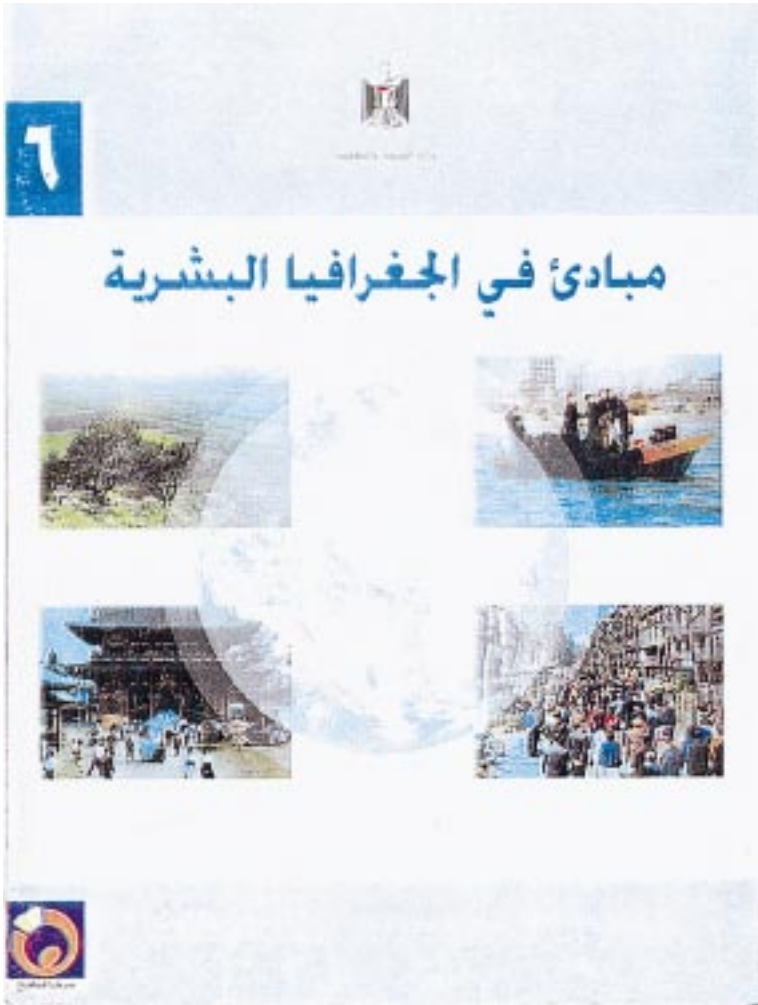
٧٣

Goals:

Concluding why Jesus was convicted.

1. Who is the man speaking to Jesus?
2. What did he ask Jesus?
3. What did Jesus reply?
4. What was Jesus sentenced for?

*Principles of Human Geography*, Textbook for the  
Sixth Grade, 2000–2001



## Chapter 3: The Human Race and Its Origins

**٢. السلالة:**

تأمل الصور الآتية:

١ ٢ ٣

سَمِّهِمْ بِأَسْمَاءٍ مَعْرُوفَةٍ

١ . تسمي هذه الصور إلى نوع واحد، ما هو؟

٢ . هل تشابه جميع الصور في صفاتها الظاهرة؟

٣ . ما أوجه الاختلاف بين الصور الثلاث من حيث: لون البشرة، شكل الشعر، شكل الرأس، شكل الأنف؟

٤ . ماذا يمكن أن نسمي مجموعة الناس التي تشترك فيما بينها في صفاتها الظاهرة؟

**٣. أقسام السلالات البشرية:**

تأمل الجدول الآتي:

السلالة	لون البشرة	شكل الشعر	شكل الأنف	شكل الرأس
الأمريكية	سمرق ممتدرة إلى سمرق معتدلة	منظوم عشق	موسعة الجرح من إلى مربع	مربع
الآسيوية	يفتح - تخرج إلى اللون الحلي	منحرف عام	عقد إلى متوسط الجرح	مستدير
الآفريقية	سمرق داكنة إلى سوداء	منحرف عشق	مربع إلى مربع حدة	طويل (استطوول)

◆◆ ١٣



### 3. Divisions of the Human Race:

We take note of the following table:

<b>Origin</b>	<b>Color of Skin</b>	<b>Kind of Hair</b>	<b>Shape of Nose</b>	<b>Shape of Head</b>
Mongols	light to dark brown	harsh straight	middle wide to wide	Wide
Caucasian	white to color of wheat	fine wavy	narrow to moderate wide	Round
Negro	dark brown to black	curled	wide to very wide	Long

## Chapter 10: Urban Geography

### A Map of Palestine

الوحدة الثالثة  
الدرس العاشر

### جغرافية المدن

١. النظام الحضري:  
تأمل الخريطة الآتية:

تفكر فيما يأتي وغيب:

١. ملأ اسماء المدن التي تظهر على الخريطة.
٢. ما القرب جولو المدن إلى مكان إقامتها؟
٣. كيف تنقل عن مكان إقامتها إلى المدينة؟
٤. لماذا ذهب الناس إلى المدن؟
٥. هل تشاهد جميع المدن في الضواحي التي تعرف فيها واجباتك التي تعلمها؟

٥٣

## Geography of Cities

### 1. The Civic Order

Let us look at the map.

Let us think and answer:

1. Let us mention [the] names of cities that appear on the map.
2. Which city is the closest to our place of residence?
3. How do we move from our place of residence to the city?
4. Why are people going to the city?
5. Are all cities the same with regard to the industries that operate in them and the services they provide?

*Our Beautiful Language*, Textbook for the Sixth Grade, Part 1,  
2000–2001



## Unit 4: The Honorable Martyrs



I lay my soul in my palm and  
fling it to the depths of dissolution.  
Either a life that will bring my comrades joy  
or a death that will cause my enemies anguish.  
The noble soul has two goals, death and desire for it.

Source: *Islamic Education*, Textbook for the Sixth Grade, Part 1, 2000–2001,  
pp. 67–68.

## Unit 8: Mustafa Murad Al-Dabbagh

### The City of Jaffa



*National Education, Textbook for the Sixth Grade, 2000–2001*





## Unit 1: The Palestinian Society



### ثانياً : على المستوى المهاري :

- ١ . تثبيت المعالم التضاريسية على خريطة الوطن العربي الصماء .
- ٢ . رسم خريطة فلسطين وإثبات حدودها وأقسامها الطبيعية .

### ثالثاً : على المستوى الوجداني :

- ١ . الاعتزاز بالمجتمعين الفلسطيني والعربي .
- ٢ . تقدير أهمية الوحدة العربية في الحفاظ على الكيان القومي العربي ومواجهة التحديات الخارجية .
- ٣ . التصدي للأطماع الاستعمارية بكل أشكالها .
- ٤ . مساندة قيام دولة فلسطينية مستقلة .
- ٥ . اتخاذ موقف قوي ضدّ عناصر التخلف .

**Goals of this unit:**

(...)

**B) On the skills level:**

1. Determine topographical characteristics on a blank map of the Arab nation.
2. Draw a map of Palestine [and] determine its borders and natural divisions.

**C) On an emotional level:**

1. Take pride in Palestinian and Arab societies.
2. Appreciate the importance of Arab unity for guarding the pan-Arab national entity as well as for countering external challenges.
3. Resist colonial greed in all its forms.
4. Support the creation of an independent Palestinian state.
5. Take a strong stand against reactionary elements.

Source: *National Education*, Textbook for the Sixth Grade, 2000–2001, p. 3.

## Chapter 3: Characteristics of the Palestinian Society

### نستنتج ما يأتي :



المجتمع :

هو مجموعة من الناس تعيش في منطقة جغرافية محددة لها ثقافتها المميزة وتاريخها المشترك، ولها عاداتها وتقاليدها، وقيمها الخاصة بها.

**تتميز المجتمع الفلسطيني ، عبر تاريخه ، بأنه مجتمع :**

- ١ . زراعي : يمتلك ٧٠٪ من أراض زراعية ، ويعتمدون عليها في معيشتهم وحياتهم اليومية ، إضافة إلى النشاطات الاقتصادية الأخرى من صناعة وتجارة ومباحة .
- ٢ . وطني : كل تاريخه كفاح وبطولة ، فقد قاوم الشعب الفلسطيني الحكم البريطاني ، والاحتلال الإسرائيلي ، وقام بعدة ثورات وقدم الآلاف من الشهداء والجرحى .
- ٣ . متعلم : اهتم الشعب الفلسطيني عبر تاريخه الطويل بالعلم والتعليم كسلاح لمواجهة التحديات من فقر وتشرذم وتشتت ، وأسهم علماءه وأدباؤه في النهضة التعليمية في الأقطار العربية .
- ٤ . قومي : قَعَمَ الحركة الوطنية الفلسطينية هو العلم العربي ، ونشيدها هو النشيد العربي ، والوحدة العربية هي أمنية الشعب الفلسطيني .
- ٥ . متسامح : يسود المجتمع الفلسطيني الإخاء والتسامح ، بين المسلمين والمسيحيين .
- ٦ . معتز بتراته : فالأزياء الشعبية ، والأغاني التراثية التي حافظ عليها الناس دليل على الاعتزاز بالتراث الشعبي الفلسطيني .
- ٧ . يغلب عليه التشريد والتشتت ، فالشعب الفلسطيني طرد من أرضه نتيجة الاحتلال الإسرائيلي لفلسطين وتعرض للمذابح ومُجَبَّر إلى البلاد المجاورة .



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**The Palestinian society is distinct, through its history, ...**

1. Agriculturally: 70% of Palestinian society owns farmland and rely on it for their daily livelihood. 2. Nationally: all of its history is one of battle and heroism in the struggle against British rule and Israeli occupation. The Palestinian society carried out several rebellions and sacrificed thousands of martyrs and wounded. 3. [The Palestinian society is] educated: The Palestinian people throughout their long history focused on learning and knowledge as a weapon to counter challenges of poverty, expulsion and dispersion. 4. Pan-Arab Nationalism (*Qawmi*): The flag of the Palestinian national movement is the Arab flag, its hymn is the Arab hymn, and Arab unity is the wish of the Palestinian people. 5. Tolerant: Brotherly love and tolerance between Muslims and Christians prevails in the Palestinian society. 6. Proud in its heritage: The national dress and traditional songs, which have been preserved by the people, are proof of their pride in the heritage. 7. Overtaken by Expulsion and Dispersion: The Palestinian people were expelled from their land by the Israeli occupation of Palestine, were exposed to massacres, and [were] forced to leave to the surrounding countries.

Source: *National Education*, Textbook for the Sixth Grade, 2000–2001, p. 13.

## Chapter 20: Imitation and Innovation

الوحدة الثالثة  
الدروس العشرون

### التقليد والابتكار

أولاً: التقليد  
نظر إلى الصورتين الآتيتين وتأملهما:



فكر فيما يأتي وخبب :



- ١ . ماذا ترى في الصورة (أ) ؟
- ٢ . ماذا تعني بالتقليد ؟
- ٣ . نذكر بعض المظاهر الإيجابية التي نقتد بها الأحرار في البيت والمدرسة والمجتمع .
- ٤ . ماذا ترى في الصورة (ب) ؟
- ٥ . نذكر بعض المظاهر السلبية التي يملد فيها شبابنا من المجتمعات الأخرى ؟
- ٦ . ما رأيك في التقليد السلبي لمظاهر غريبة على مجتمعنا الفلسطيني ؟

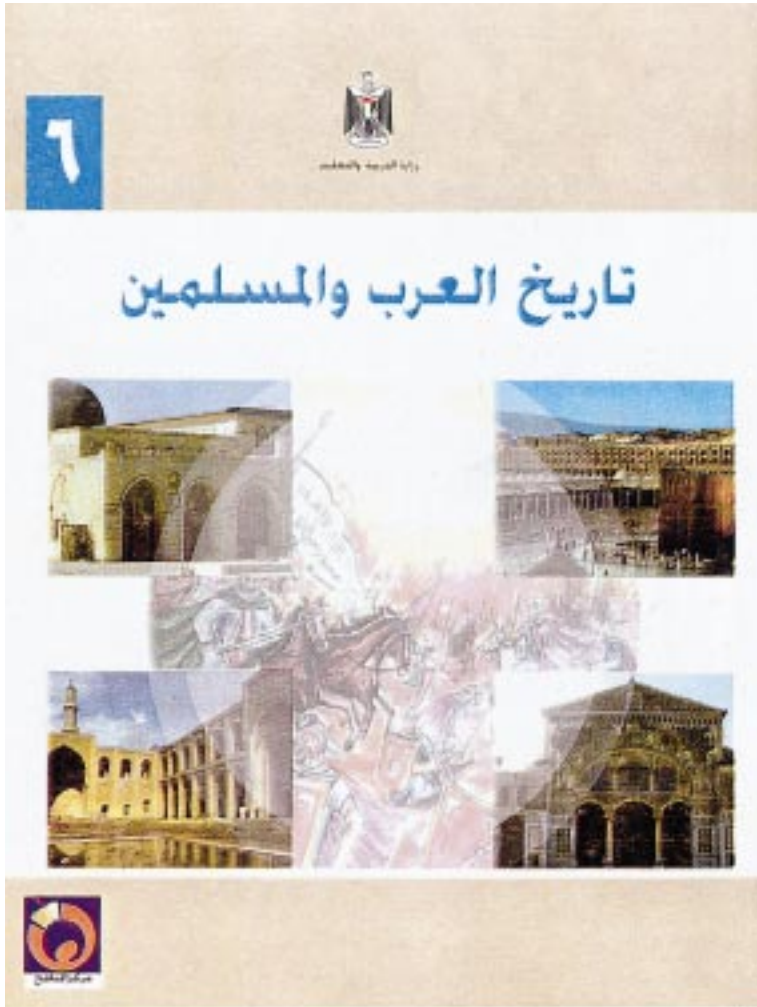
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### First: The Imitation

We look at the two following pictures and ask ourselves:

1. What do we see in picture (a)?
2. What do we mean by “imitation”?
3. We recall some positive phenomena which we imitate from others at home, in the school and society.
4. What do we see in picture (b)?
5. We recall some negative phenomena which our youths copied from youths of other societies?
6. What is your opinion about negative imitations of the West within our Palestinian society?

*The History of Arabs and Muslims*, Textbook for the  
Sixth Grade, 2000–2001



## Chapter 6: Hidjra

### أختبر نفسي



- ١ . لماذا كان انتشار الإسلام في المدينة أسهل منه في مكة؟
- ٢ . أعلل اتخاذ المسلمين من أحداث الهجرة بداية للتاريخ الإسلامي .
- ٣ . ما النتائج التي تريت على هجرة المسلمين إلى المدينة؟
- ٤ . ماذا توقع جماعة المسلمين في مكة ، لو أنهم لم يقوموا بهجرتهم الأولى للحيشة و هجرتهم الثانية للمدينة المنورة ؟
- ٥ . أسماء بنت أبي بكر ، كانت في مثل حُمَيري ، عندما لعبت دوراً في توفير المؤن والماء ، ونقل أخبار قريش للرسول ورفيقه أثناء هجرتهم السرية من مكة إلى المدينة) ، ما الدور الذي استطيع أن أقوم به في دعم حركة المقاومة الوطنية ضد المحتل والمستعمر ؟
- ٦ . أكمل الفراغ في الجمل التالية :
  - أ . أول هجرة في الإسلام كانت الهجرة إلى .....
  - ب . خرج المسلمون الأوائل إلى الحيشة هرباً إلى الله عز وجل به .....
  - ج . يقع المسجد الحرام في . . . . . والمسجد الأنصفي في .....
  - د . هاجر المسلمون إلى المدينة عام .....
  - هـ . سُميت بئرب بعد هجرة الرسول (ﷺ) إليها باسم .....
  - و . بدأ المسلمون باستخدام التاريخ الهجري زمن .....
  - ٧ - أجبب بنعم أو لا
    - أ . سلم النجاشي ملك الحيشة المسلمين الذين هاجروا إلى الحيشة لوفد قريش .



Test yourself:

(...)

5. Asmaa, the daughter of the first *Khalifa (Calif)*, Abu Bakr, who succeeded the Prophet Muhammad, was my age when she took part [in the struggle] by supplying the Prophet Muhammad and his companion with provisions, water, food, and information about [his opponents in the tribe of] Quraish, after their secret migration from Madina to Mecca. What role can I play in support of the national resistance movement against the occupier and the imperialist?

Source: *The History of Arabs and Muslims*, Textbook for the Sixth Grade, 2000–2001, p. 34.

**Appendix B:  
MEMRI Special Dispatch—  
“Palestinians Debate Including  
the Holocaust in the Curriculum”**

### **Palestinians Debate Including the Holocaust in the Curriculum**

*In a symposium held in Nicosia, Cyprus, in April 2000, Palestinians and Israelis discussed “How to Strengthen Peace through Education.” Representatives from Egypt, Jordan, Morocco, and Tunisia were also present. Heading the Israeli delegation was **then Minister of Education Yossi Sarid**. Heading the Palestinian delegation was **Palestinian Authority Undersecretary of Planning and International Cooperation Anis Al-Qaq**.*

*Al-Qaq stated at the symposium that he is “interested in teaching the history of the Holocaust in Arab and Palestinian schools. . . . I believe that Palestine and the entire Arab world need to learn about the Holocaust, and therefore this subject should be included in the school curriculum.” Al-Qaq added, “We cannot be proud of anything, until we know about the subject [of the Holocaust].” He admitted, however, that “it will be difficult to remove the anti-Israel expressions from the Arab curricula.”<sup>1</sup>*

*The Palestinian press did not report on the symposium, with the exception of one newspaper that omitted Al-Qaq’s speech. The Arab media, on the other hand, reported that Al-Qaq told the Israeli minister of education that the Palestinian Authority established a committee composed of members of the Ministry of Education and the Ministry of Planning and International Cooperation to examine the possibility of including the Holocaust in the Palestinian curriculum in the next school year. Al-Qaq’s remarks provoked anger among Palestinian intellectuals. Following is a survey of some of the responses by leading Palestinian figures.*

**Dr. Musa Al-Zu'but, chairman of the Education Committee of the Palestinian Legislative Council (PLC),** said, "There will be no such attempt to include the history of the Holocaust in the Palestinian curriculum. The PLC enacted a law about the general framework [of the school curriculum]. The council, in general, and the Education Committee, in particular, follow what is being taught in the curriculum and evaluate whether anything contradicts or harms Palestinian history." Al-Zu'but continued, "The Holocaust has been exaggerated in order to present the Jews as victims of a great crime, to justify [the claim] that Palestine is necessary as a homeland for them, and to give them the right to demand compensation. When the history of the Holocaust is taught [in the Palestinian schools], it must be explained to the students that the Holocaust was inflated and that we, the Palestinians, had to live with the results: Our country, Palestine, was lost and was occupied by Israel. It is better to teach the students about what is happening to our people."

Al-Zu'but expressed his hope that in his statements, Al-Qaq intended that it must be taught that the Holocaust was blown out of proportion. He concluded by saying, "We [the Palestinians] have no interest in teaching the Holocaust."

"If the purpose is to express sympathy, this is useless for us, since we are the ones who suffered as a result."<sup>2</sup>

**Ziyad Abu Amr, chairman of the Political Committee of the PLC,** asked what explanation was given by Al-Qaq for the need to teach the Holocaust to Palestinians. "Did Al-Qaq call for teaching the Holocaust because of Yossi Sarid's initiative to include Mahmoud Darwish's poems in the Israeli curriculum?" he asked, adding, "Why must we teach the literature [i.e., the "Jewish version" of the Holocaust] of a people and a state who occupied our land? When the situation changes, we will be able to be more open to their literature and heritage, just as we are now in regard to other countries."

Abu Amr added that, in any case, “this topic cannot be mandatory. People who studied the history of the Holocaust in the past have come to very different conclusions. Why, then, must we force our students to study the history and the heritage of the Jews? We are in dire need of studying our own heritage and history. Likewise, our relations with them must be recovered first, through their recognition of our people’s rights in their entirety. The fundamental problems between us and them have not been solved and I do not believe that this is the time to program our children by teaching them Jewish history in general, and not only the Holocaust.”<sup>3</sup>

**Hatem Abd Al-Qader, PLC member and *Fatah* leader,** said that teaching the Holocaust in the Palestinian schools “is a great danger to the developing Palestinian mentality. It would be dangerous to change the Palestinian curriculum in such a direction. First, the Jews should learn about our disaster, the massacres, the murder and the exile, because this disaster is still alive. As for the so-called Holocaust, it has already been moved into the museum of history.” Abd Al-Qader added, “We cannot annul the Palestinian historic dream, even if we remove it from the official Palestinian rhetoric. . . . This land was promised to us by Allah, while it was promised to the Jews by Balfour. If such a decision [about teaching the Holocaust] is made, it will undoubtedly ruin the Palestinian dream and aspirations. It will entirely obliterate the past, present, and future of the Palestinians. We, in the Legislative Council, will oppose any experiment that might harm the mind, the identity, or the historic roots of the Palestinians.”<sup>4</sup>

**Dr. Isam Sisalem, Palestinian historian,** who in the past has denied the existence of the gas chambers, expressed his amazement at Al-Qaq’s statements. “We as Palestinians,” he said, “condemn the indiscriminate killing of many people by the Germans, but we cannot allow that the killing of the Jews

be used to oppress another nation, namely the Palestinians. The Nuremberg courts exploited [Jewish] lies to divide Palestine, claiming that the Jewish community had suffered annihilation and was in need of a homeland in which to settle. What interests us, however, is our own people who suffered from the exile and destruction of thousands of its people. We are more entitled [than the Jews] to the support of all of the nations.”

Dr. Sisalem said that since the Stockholm convention in 2000 requiring all European states to include the history of the Holocaust in their curricula, the Western media has lied and exaggerated about the Holocaust. He said, “The Zionist movement exploited it in order to disguise its loathsome crimes in Palestine. It also continues to extort the European states to this very day. The truth is that the Zionist leaders negotiated with the Nazis and signed agreements with them under which many Jews were expelled to Palestine.”<sup>5</sup>

**Abdallah Al-Horani, Palestinian intellectual**, also expressed astonishment at Al-Qaq’s statements. “I don’t believe that Israel and the Zionist movement need the efforts of the Palestinians to spread the false story about the Holocaust. There are those whose loyalty to Israel . . . is greater than their loyalty to the national and Pan-Arab cause. Instead of talking about the so-called Holocaust, Al-Qaq should have followed the doubts [about it] which are gaining momentum in the international arena and among leading European intellectuals. He should have spoken about the massacres perpetrated by the Israelis against the defenseless Palestinian people, who, wherever they are found, still suffer from the cruel Zionist terror.” Al-Horani added that Al-Qaq’s statements “remind him of those who ‘volunteered’ to refrain from talking about the return of the refugees to the land from which they were driven out in 1948. These declarations come in the framework of what is known as the ‘culture of

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peace,' which is supported by the U.S. . . . . The goal of this 'culture of peace' is to propagate the American interpretation of globalization, which means giving into the American terms, and consequently to the Israeli terms. The meaning of this globalization is also to erase the memory of nations, to efface their national heritage and history, [and to neutralize] any opposition to foreign ideological or cultural invasion."

Al-Horani warned of the "culture of peace and its followers" in the region and called on Arab intellectuals who worry about the history and heritage of their nation . . . to take an antagonistic approach toward this culture and to such a peace.<sup>6</sup>

**Sheik Nafez 'Azzam, leader of the "Palestinian Islamic Jihad" movement in Gaza,** said in reaction to Al-Qaq's statements that "in light of the current political situation, one might start to believe sometimes that he lives in an imaginary world. It is inconceivable that a nation would respect its murderers and the robbers of its rights and its land. Why do people speak only of the Jewish victims in WWII, why don't we even mention our [own] victims and martyrs?! Before anything else, we must teach the history of this conflict which symbolizes the great wrong done to the Palestinian people, by the silence and conspiracies in which most of the world's governments take part."

'Azzam stated, "Whoever puts his trust in brainwashing is bound to fail. . . . Such a program will have no influence on the formation of the minds of the [sons of the] nation."

"The intention to teach the Holocaust in the Palestinian schools contradicts the natural order of the universe," he concluded.<sup>7</sup>

On the other hand, **Sheik Jamal Mansour, a Hamas leader,** said, "It is not fair to deny the Holocaust or to diminish the

importance of the persecution that the Jews have suffered. We must clearly condemn it and stand by the oppressed—whoever they may be—and against the oppressor.” However, Sheik Mansour explained that the problem is with “the West, which takes a rigid stance when it comes to the history of the Jews with the Nazis and forces all of the governments and peoples to teach one history of the Holocaust. In addition, the West uses Zionist historians in order to establish this [narrative] and turn it into an axiom, which no one is allowed to question.”

“At the same time,” adds Sheik Mansour, “they want us to forget all of the massacres, the tens of thousands of victims, the millions of exiles, our confiscated land, our occupied land, and our blood which continues to be spilled . . . . The Jews have mobilized the so-called free and civilized world in order to bow the heads of its victims, to apologize for their history, and to commit to their well-being and to protect their strength in the future, and all this because of one crazy man who was an enemy to the entire world and not the Jews alone, and who murdered 20 million Russians with his own hands.”<sup>8</sup>

## Notes

<sup>1</sup> *Al-Quds Al-Arabi* (London), April 11, 2000.

<sup>2</sup> *Al-Risala* (PA), April 13, 2000.

<sup>3</sup> *Al-Risala*, April 13, 2000.

<sup>4</sup> *Al-Istiqlal* (PA), April 20, 2000.

<sup>5</sup> *Al-Risala*, April 13, 2000.

<sup>6</sup> *Al-Istiqlal*, April 20, 2000.

<sup>7</sup> *Al-Istiqlal*, April 20, 2000.

<sup>8</sup> *Al-Risala*, April 13, 2000.



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*Note:* All of the new textbooks were published by the Palestinian Authority's Ministry of Education in Al-Bireh, Ramallah.

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## Schooled as Martyrs by Amity Shlaes

*The Financial Times*, December 5, 2001

. . . [H]ow much has Mr. Arafat, in his years building the new government of the Palestinian Authority, promulgated a culture that is fertile ground for suicide terrorists? . . . In *Narrating Palestinian Nationalism: A Study of the New Palestinian Textbooks*, Mr. Nordbruch, a German who is an alumnus of the University of Damascus, reviews school textbooks developed for six-year-olds and 11- to 12-year-olds following the Oslo Accord.

Under agreements following Oslo, both Israel and the PLO were required “to foster mutual understanding and tolerance” and to “abstain from incitement including hostile propaganda.” As a response, 20 new textbooks were developed at the Curriculum Development Centre in Ramallah. The books, Mr. Nordbruch concluded, are something of a mixed bag. They don’t contain much outright incitement. But they do three troubling things: teach racialism, “impugn the Jewish character all along to the present day,” and most dangerously, nurture “the wish for self-sacrifice and martyrdom among the youth.”

For starters, there is a chapter in the book for older children titled “The Human Race and its Origins.” It seeks to classify humans by racial category, such as “Negro,” “Caucasian,” or “Mongols.” “People,” the text reads, “are divided into various species [*Ajnas*], which are characterized by specific physical features.” Such craniology, based, as Mr. Nordbruch notes, on long-discarded racial theories, validates prejudice in a place where obliterating it should be a primary goal.

Even more disconcerting is the image of the Jewish people. They are portrayed not so much as a people with a right to their own state—the view acknowledged in the Oslo Accord—but first of all, via a history lesson, as betrayers of Christ and Christians. Thus a first-grade book describes Pontius Pilate’s sentencing of Jesus. There is even an illustration, creepily reminiscent of Medieval Jew-baiting material from Europe, of the famous Judas kiss.

. . . [T]he books fail to acknowledge [Israel’s] existence. Maps of Palestine, for example, include all of what is now Israel; Israel as a state (in any form) and Israeli cities such as Tel Aviv are not depicted. This is a vision of the region more hostile to Israel than anything agreed upon at Oslo.

Worst of all . . . is the attention the books dedicate to the notion of martyrdom. There is an educational unit on “the honorable martyr,” Hamza Ibn Abd Al-Muttalib, a contemporary of Mohammed’s; the unit is there, the text says, to confirm “the honor of martyrdom and martyrs.” This tradition, notes author Nordbruch, is linked explicitly to the present day, with a chapter on “Prison Literature” (Palestinians in Israeli jails) and a section on the *Intifada*. As Mr. Nordbruch points out, the material totally disregards the wrong of the violence. What’s more, the textbooks challenge young people to participate in *Intifada* with leading questions such as “What steps can be taken against the expropriation of Palestinian territory?”

Author Nordbruch takes pains to note that these texts are less inflammatory than much of the instruction that goes on in the Arab world. Still, when we ask where Palestinian suicide bombers may learn about martyrdom, the answer has to remain: in school.

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Goertz Nordbruch is the director of MEMRI’s German branch in Berlin. He studied social sciences in Marburg and Berlin, Germany, and he studies the Arabic language at Jordan University and the University of Damascus. He wrote his master’s thesis on Holocaust denial in the Arab media, and he is currently a doctoral candidate in Berlin.

MEMRI is an independent, nonpartisan, nonprofit organization. It was established in February 1998 to analyze intellectual developments and politics in the Middle East.

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