

UNRWA's Problematic Educational Role in the Middle East Conflict

By

Arnon Groiss

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UNRWA's Educational Activity in the Middle East

UNRWA – the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for the Palestinian refugees in the Middle East – was established in the wake of the Arab-Israeli war of 1948 by the UN General Assembly resolution 302 (IV) of December 8, 1948, in order to carry out relief and works programs for the Palestinian war refugees. The agency began operations on May 1, 1950. In the absence of a solution to the refugee problem, the Assembly has repeatedly renewed UNRWA's mandate.

Over half of UNRWA's general budget is dedicated to education (381,055 million US\$ out of a total budget of 673,789 million US\$ in 2012, which makes 56.55%).¹ The agency also offers health, relief and social services. UNRWA provides free-of-charge basic education to children of Palestinian refugees in the Palestinian Authority-controlled West Bank, the Hamas-controlled Gaza Strip, the Israel-controlled East Jerusalem, and in Jordan, Syria and Lebanon. In the school year of 2011/2012 it ran a total of 703 schools caring for 491,641 students. 245 of these schools were in the Gaza Strip and 99 were in the West Bank, with 225,098 and 51,695 students respectively.² Two of UNRWA's West Bank schools are actually located in the greater Jerusalem area that was annexed to Israel in 1967.

Basic education means both elementary and intermediate (also called "preparatory") schools, that is, grades 1-9 or 10, depending on the specific school system in each country. Only in Lebanon does the Agency operate some nine high schools as well, since Palestinian students of these grades find it difficult to study in local public or private schools.

UNRWA maintains close cooperation with government educational authorities in its various areas of operation. Students at UNRWA schools study the same curriculum and use the same books authorized by the host governments (except for East Jerusalem where the PA curriculum and books have been adopted for use instead of the Israeli ones). Beside the schoolbooks issued by the respective national authorities with no involvement on UNRWA's part, the Agency has published several textbooks of its own which teach issues such as tolerance and human rights in its schools, as it testifies: "One of our key programmes promotes human rights and non-violent communication skills, conflict resolution and tolerance."³ However, these additional books do not usually touch sensitive issues related to the conflict such as the attitude to the "other" or the possibility of solving the conflict peacefully.

The use of books provided by the host governments in UNRWA's school is problematic because these books sometimes contain material that contradicts UNRWA's professed mission. Being a UN agency, UNRWA is committed to the ideal

¹http://www.unrwa.org/userfiles/file/AdCom_en/nov2012/Financial%20template%20as%20of%2031%20Oct%202012%20-%20for%20Nov%202012%20AdCom.pdf

² www.unrwa.org/sites/default/files/2013042435340.pdf

³ <http://www.unrwa.org/what-we-do/knowledge-and-skills>

of peace and is bound by the UN's goal of solving the Middle Eastern conflict peacefully. In line with this commitment, UNRWA should also refrain from propagating hate indoctrination towards any group, including ethnic and religious ones. Moreover, as a UN body, UNRWA is obliged to treat all member states equally, and never promote against any of them attitudes of non-recognition, prejudice and stereotyped portrayal, not to mention demonization. However, the books used in UNRWA's schools in its various areas of operation often advocate an armed struggle against Israel which is denied legitimacy as a sovereign state and severely demonized.

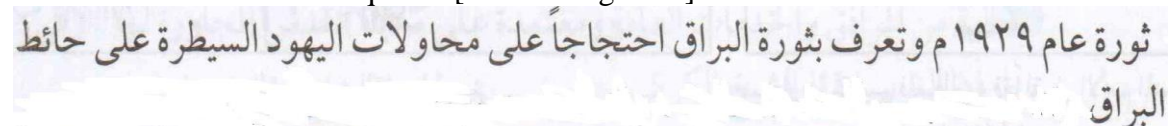
What is the situation in the Palestinian curriculum studied at UNRWA's schools in the West Bank and the Gaza Strip? In order to answer this question, some 150 textbooks of various subjects taught in UNRWA's schools there have been examined. These books were issued by the PA Ministry of Education between the years 2000-2005. Many of them appear on the Ministry's Web site, and others, including later editions and reprints of the original books, have been purchased. All the books cited in this paper were published in recent years and were in constant use in UNRWA's schools at the time of its updating.

Fundamentals of PA Education regarding the Jewish/Israeli "Other"

The examination of the PA schoolbooks has revealed three main fundamentals as far as the presentation of the rival "other" within the conflict is concerned:

First: denial of legitimacy

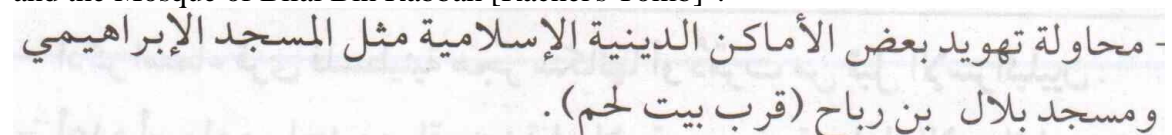
According to PA schoolbooks, Jews have no rights whatsoever in Palestine – only "greedy ambitions" (see quotations below). Jews have no holy places there either – the Wailing Wall in Jerusalem, the Cave of the Patriarchs in Hebron and Rachel's Tomb in Bethlehem are all considered Muslim holy places threatened by Jews. It is said, for example, that the revolt of 1929 was a "protest against the Jews' attempts to take control of the Al-Buraq Wall [the Wailing Wall]":



ثورة عام ١٩٢٩م وتعرف بثورة البراق احتجاجاً على محاولات اليهود السيطرة على حائط البراق

(*National Education*, Grade 7 (2011), p. 21)

Another piece in the same book talks about "the attempt to Judaize some of the Muslim religious places such as the Mosque of Abraham [the Cave of the Patriarchs] and the Mosque of Bilal Bin Rabbah [Rachel's Tomb]":



محاولة تهويد بعض الأماكن الدينية الإسلامية مثل المسجد الإبراهيمي ومسجد بلال بن رباح (قرب بيت لحم).

(*National Education*, Grade 7 (2011) p. 55)

Jewish cities – including Tel Aviv – are not shown on the map, except for one or two case.

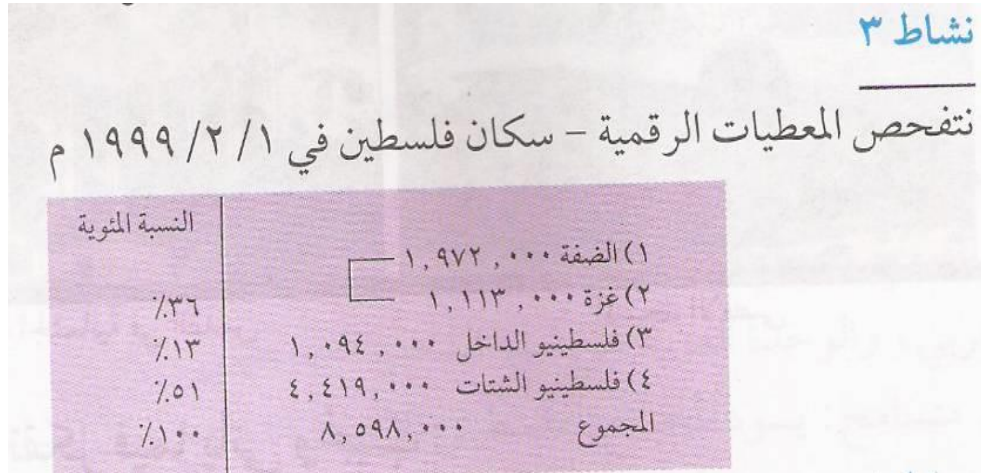
Israel's 5.5 million Jews are not counted among the country's legitimate inhabitants while Israeli Arabs and Diaspora Palestinians are, which may present in a nutshell the essence of the perceived "Right of Return" – to be discussed later on: the 5.5 million

Jewish illegitimate inhabitants of Palestine would leave and the 4.5 million Palestinians of the Diaspora will return and settle in their place.

"Activity 3

Let us examine the figures – the inhabitants of Palestine on 1.2.1999

		Percentage
1) The [West] Bank	1,972,000}	
2) [The] Gaza [Strip]	1,113,000}	36%
3) The Palestinians of the "Interior" [i.e., pre-67 Israel]	1,094,000	13%
4) The Palestinians of the Diaspora	4,419,000	51%
Total	8,598,000	100%"



(National Education, Grade 6 (2009) p. 10)

Note the use of the term "Interior" as a circumlocution for "Israel's pre-1967 territory", and see the reference to this phenomenon below.

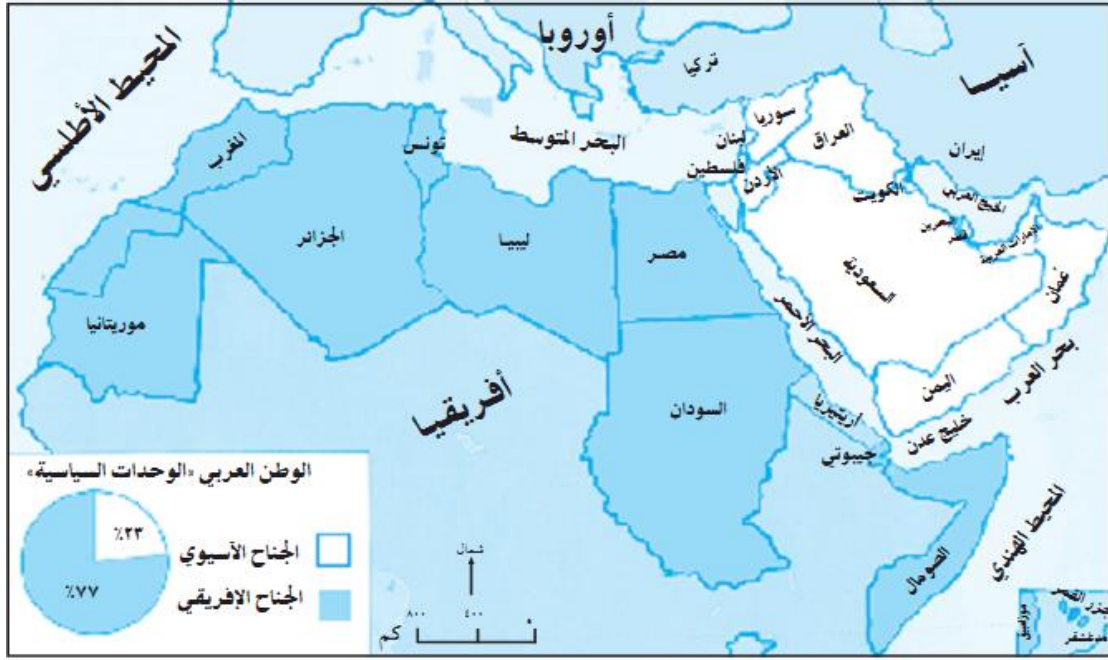
Israel is not a legitimate state according to the PA schoolbooks studied at UNRWA's schools. The name "Israel" does not appear on the map, except for two cases. In far more cases the name "Palestine" appears instead and covers Israel's pre-1967 territories as well. Example:

"Map No. 3: The Arab States"
"Palestine"

[Graph:] The Arab Homeland – Political Units

[White:] the Asian wing

[Blue:] the African wing



خريطة رقم (٣) الدول العربية

(*Geography of the Arab Homeland*, Grade 9 (2011) p. 8)

In the following example an illustration of the Palestinian flag covering the land in its entirety accompanies a math question:

"13. The independence of the State of Palestine was proclaimed in the year 1988 [in Algiers]. How many years have passed since the proclamation of independence? The answer:"

١٣ أعلن استقلال دولة فلسطين عام ١٩٨٨ م . كم سنة مضت منذ إعلان

الاستقلال؟



الحل:

(*Mathematics*, Grade 3, Part 1 (2012) p. 80)

Israel is denied existence in textual material as well:

"I will learn

The land of the Levant [*Bilad al-Sham* in Arabic] presently comprises the following states:

1. Palestine
2. The Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan
3. The Republic of Lebanon
4. The Syrian Arab Republic

أتعلم

تتألف بلادُ الشام في الوقت الحالي منَ الدول الآتية:

- ١- فلسطين .
- ٢- المملكة الأردنية الهاشمية .
- ٣- الجمهورية اللبنانية .
- ٤- الجمهورية العربية السورية .

(*History of the Ancient Civilizations*, Grade 5 (2004) p. 30)

Note: Later editions feature "Palestine, Jordan, Lebanon, Syria" only, with no titles. The State of Israel is missing in both versions.

The term "Israeli territory" is usually replaced by circumlocutions such as "the Interior" (see example above) and "the Lands of 1948" (see below).

Regions and cities within Israel proper are presented as exclusively Palestinian:

"Haifa and Gaza are two Palestinian [port cities]."

حَيْفَا وَغَزَّةٌ فِلَسْطِينِيَّانِ .

(*Our Beautiful Language*, Grade 5, Part 2 (2011) p. 90)

Note: Haifa is the main port city of pre-1967 Israel.

"Activity: Let us color the Negev desert on the map of Palestine."



(*National Education*, Grade 2, Part 2 (2009) p. 25)

Note: The Negev is an integral part of pre-1967 Israel.

The delegitimization campaign sometimes involves sheer falsification. In the following example the Hebrew inscription is erased from a stamp issued by the British Mandate authorities before 1948:

"Activity 2:

Let us connect between the word and the picture that indicates it:

[Stamp with the Arabic inscription "Palestine" circled]

Jebus


[Picture of fishermen]

Gaza


[Picture of Jerusalem]

Land of Canaan"


النشاط الثاني:
نصل بين الكلمة والصورة التي تدل عليها:



يوس



غزة



أرض كنعان

∇

(National Education, Grade 2, Part 1 (2007) p. 7)

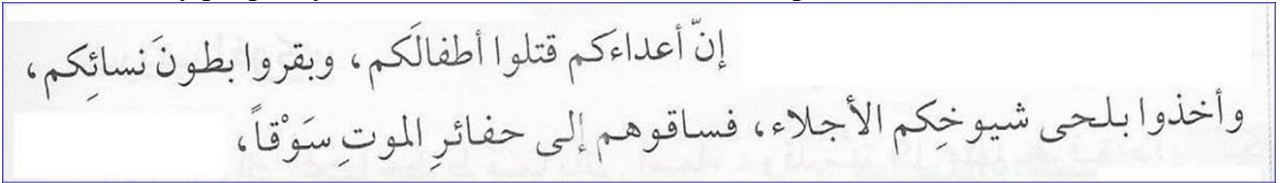
Note the bottom-left empty corner of the stamp and compare with the following original picture of the same stamp:



Second: demonization

Israel is not presented as an ordinary sovereign state, but rather as an occupying entity existing at the expense of the Palestinian people's right to self determination in its own homeland. In addition, Israel is said to have been the source of many evils directed against the Palestinians and other Arabs. During my ten-year research of PA schoolbooks I have gathered over thirty accusations against Israel in various fields, beginning with its very establishment, through its attributed usurpation, aggression, oppression, destructive conduct, desecration of holy places, etc. and ending with its perceived responsibility for drug abuse phenomena and in-family violence in Palestinian society. To make things worse, no objective information about either Israel or the Jews, that would balance their negative image in the books, is given to the students. Below is a case of an extremely demonizing text:

"Your enemies killed your children, split open your women's bellies, took your revered elderly people by the beard and led them to the death pits."



(*Reading and texts*, Grade 8, Part 2 (2010) p. 16)

Third: advocacy of violent liberation struggle rather than peace with the adversary

A delegitimized and demonized adversary is not a real partner for peace. Accordingly, no peaceful solution to the conflict is advocated in the PA books used in UNRWA's schools. Instead, a violent struggle of liberation against its occupation (both before and after 1967) is promoted:

"Good morning, O my homeland...

A morning of glory and red liberty, watered by the martyrs' blood...

[Assignment:] I will reconcile the following poetic lines with the feelings they express:

'A morning of glory and red liberty, watered by the martyrs' blood...' – The hope for the liberation of Palestine."

صباح الخير يا وطني

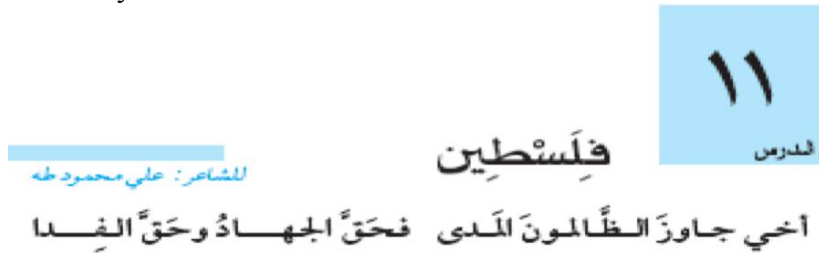
صباحُ المجدِ والحريّةِ الحمراء . . يرويها دمُ الشهداء

اللهمّة على تحرير المسجد الأقصى.	صباح مناضليك الصيّد في الأكبال في الأغلال.
التناؤل بتحرير فلسطين.	صباح المسك والعنبر صباح التين والزيتون والليمون والزعتر.
الحرص على التمسك بأرض فلسطين والثبات فيها .	تناديني مأذنته: غيابك طال وتهتف بي: تعال تعال.
الإعجاب بجمال الطبيعة في فلسطين .	صباح العاشقين ثراك، لن يلقوا بغير حماك ما ارتحلوا . . عصا الترحال.
كراهية المحتل لما يعانيه المناضلون في سجونهم.	صباح المجد والحرية الحمراء يرويها دم الشهداء صباحك أنت يا وطني بشمسك نقهر الظلماء.

(Reading and Texts, Grade 9, Part 1 (2012) pp. 9-10, 12)

This struggle, which is never said to be restricted to the areas of the West Bank and the Gaza Strip alone, is made more compelling by the use of the traditional Islamic concepts of *Jihad* and martyrdom [*Shahadah*] within its framework. Examples:

"Lesson 11: Palestine By the poet Ali Mahmud Taha
O brother, the oppressors have exceeded all bounds and *Jihad* and sacrifice are necessary..."



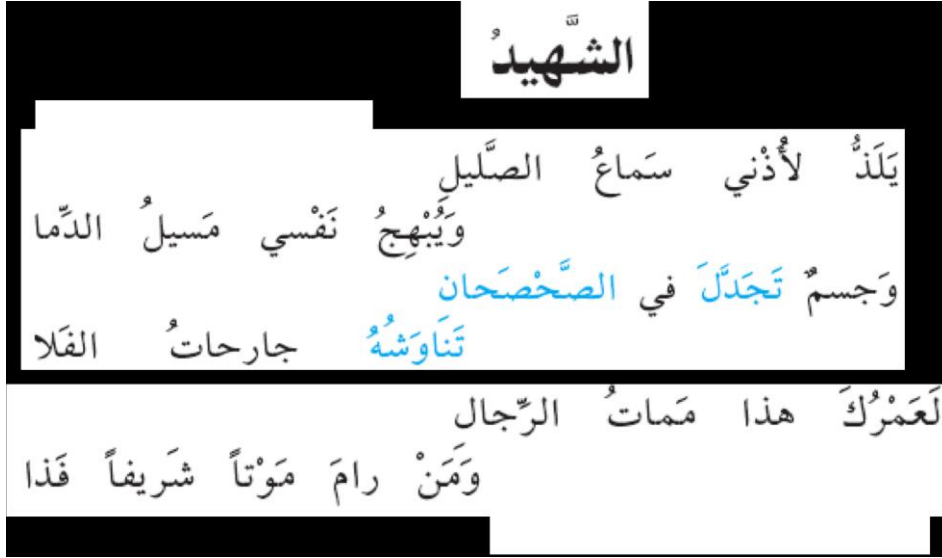
(Reading and Texts, Grade 8, Part 1 (2012) p. 44)

"The Martyr [Excerpts]

...
Hearing [weapons'] clash is pleasant to my ear
And the flow of blood gladdens my soul
As well as a body thrown upon the ground
Skirmished over by the desert predators

...
By your life! This is the death of men

And whoever asks for a noble death - here it is!"



(Our Beautiful Language, Grade 7, Part 1 (2011) p. 75)

The above-presented examples clearly show that UNRWA's educational role among the Palestinians is problematic as far as peace education is concerned. One specific issue in this general context that deserves special attention is the so-called "Right of Return".

The "Right of Return" Issue

The essence of the Middle East conflict is the century-long struggle between Jews and Palestinian Arabs over one piece of land stretching from the Mediterranean to the River Jordan, which both parties regard as their historical homeland. The United Nations Organization's attempt in 1947 to solve the conflict by way of partition was rejected by the Arab side which opened a war against the Jews in December that year. The war between the Jews and the Palestinian Arabs, to whom five Arab armies joined in May 1948, lasted sixteen months and ended in an Arab defeat. Both Jews and Palestinians lost in the war one percent of their respective populations. One of the results of that war was a mass exodus of Palestinians from areas taken over by the Jews, which later became part of the nascent State of Israel. During subsequent years, a parallel number of Jews came to Israel from the neighboring Arab countries, having mostly fled due to their deteriorating safety conditions there.

The Palestinian and Arab narrative of the Middle East conflict emphasizes what is termed "the Right of Return" which is interpreted as the personal right of every Palestinian, who left his or her home in Palestine in 1948 or afterwards, to return to it and to reclaim his or her property in full. This perceived right also applies to the refugee's descendants with no limit of number, time or place of birth.⁴ Thus, the total number of such claimers has grown during the period that has passed since 1948 from few hundred thousands to several millions. Although said to have been legally based on the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and on Resolution No. 194 adopted by

⁴ See "Palestinian Right of Return" in Wikipedia, http://ar.wikipedia.org/wiki/%D8%AD%D9%82_%D8%A7%D9%84%D8%B9%D9%88%D8%AF%D8%A9_%D8%A7%D9%84%D9%81%D9%84%D8%B3%D8%B7%D9%8A%D9%86%D9%8A (Arabic)

the UN General Assembly on Dec. 11, 1948,⁵ it is clear that such a claimed right has no legal precedence in history and, indeed, has not been applied in other cases of wartime refugees throughout the twentieth century, which witnessed a record number of such refugees.

Apart from its unique character in international terms, the "Right of Return" also raises serious political and human problems, since its full application would mean the destruction of the State of Israel as a Jewish state and thus deny the Jewish nation its right to self determination which has been legally recognized by virtue of the UN partition resolution. Indeed, throughout the years that succeeded the establishment of Israel, the "Right of Return" issue was often mentioned in Arab forums within the wider context of the discussion of Israel's liquidation. In Israeli eyes, therefore, the continued persistence on the "Right of Return" by any Arab party betrays that party's desire to wipe Israel off the map. Any impartial observer must admit that such fears are solidly grounded in light of the vast human mass involved.

If peace in the region is meant to be concluded between the Jewish State and its Arab neighbors – and it is so meant internationally – then the "Right of Return" issue should not stand in the way to peace as it does today. That is especially important in school, in particular – schools that are run by an international body such as UNRWA, which is bound by UN resolutions regarding peace in the region and is expressly committed to the ideal of peace.⁶

Teaching "The Right of Return": Ideological Foundations and Practice

The "Right of Return" is based ideologically on the argument that Palestine belongs to the Palestinian Arabs alone and that it became the focus of Jewish Zionist greedy ambitions (*atmaa'*) in the nineteenth century with a view to expelling or exterminating the indigenous population. Those ambitions were supported by British imperialism in the twentieth century and culminated at the UN Partition Resolution of 1947. Then war broke out in which the Arab side was defeated and Zionist terrorist organizations expelled a whole nation from its homeland and established the State of Israel.

Quotations

"The Zionist colonialist greedy ambitions in Palestine started in 1882...

بدأت الأطماع الصهيونية الاستيطانية في فلسطين منذ عام ١٨٨٢ م

...The coming of the Jewish throngs to Palestine continued until 1948 and their goal was taking over the Palestinian lands and then taking the original inhabitants' place after their expulsion or extermination...

وصلت أولى دفعات المستوطنين اليهود من بلاد روسيا إلى فلسطين عام ١٨٨٢ م والدفعة الثانية كانت عام ١٩٠٥ م واستمر وصول الكتل البشرية اليهودية إلى فلسطين حتى عام ١٩٤٨ م ، وكان هدفها الاستيلاء على الأراضي الفلسطينية ومن ثم محل محل السكان الأصليين ، بعد طردهم أو إبادتهم ،

⁵ Ibid.

⁶ See the slogan "Peace Starts Here" in English, Arabic and Hebrew on UNRWA's Web site http://www.peacestartshere.org/index_h.php

The Zionist greedy ambitions increased with the support of British Imperialism, as the British foreign minister Lord Balfour issued his declaration on November 2, 1917 which called for giving the Jews a national home in Palestine...

ازدادت الأطماع الصهيونية بدعم من الاستعمار البريطاني ، حين أصدر وزير خارجية بريطانيا اللورد بلفور تصريحه في ٢ تشرين الثاني عام ١٩١٧م الداعي إلى إعطاء وطن قومي لليهود في فلسطين .

The Zionist terrorist organizations forced thousands of Palestinians to leave their country under the threat of arms, which brought about the emergence of the refugee problem."

أجبرت المنظمات الإرهابية الصهيونية الآف الفلسطينيين على الجلاء عن بلادهم تحت تهديد السلاح مما أدى إلى قيام مشكلة اللاجئين .

(National Education, Grade 7 (2011) pp. 20-21)

"Israeli Occupation

Palestinian society underwent the Catastrophe [*Nakbah*] in 1948 [inflicted] by the Zionist organizations, when the majority of the Palestinians were made to emigrate from their land and the State of Israel was established in part of Palestine."

الاحتلال الإسرائيلي :
حلَّت بالمجتمع الفلسطيني نكبة عام ١٩٤٨م على يد المنظمات الصهيونية ، حيث هُجِّرَ معظم الفلسطينيين من أرضهم ، وأنشئت دولة إسرائيل في قسم من فلسطين ، وضمَّت الضفة الغربية إلى الأردن

(National Education, Grade 5 (2009) p. 30)

"In the year 1947 the United Nations Organization adopted a resolution partitioning Palestine between the Arabs and the Jews. Accordingly, the British Mandate over Palestine ended and the Mandate government withdrew. Then war erupted between the Arabs and the Jews in 1948, which brought about the capture of part of Palestine by the Jews and the occurrence of the Catastrophe [*Nakbah*] which caused most of the Palestinian people to emigrate."

في عام ١٩٤٧م ، اتخذت هيئة الأمم المتحدة قراراً بتقسيم فلسطين بين العرب واليهود . وبناءً على ذلك انتهى الانتداب البريطاني على فلسطين ، وانسحبت حكومة الانتداب ، فقامت الحرب بين العرب واليهود في عام ١٩٤٨م ، مما أدى إلى استيلاء اليهود على جزء من فلسطين ، ووقوع النكبة التي هجرت معظم الشعب الفلسطيني .

(Reading and Texts, Grade 8, Part 1 (2012) p. 45)

Under such circumstances it would be only natural – this line of argumentation continues – that those refugees, as well as their descendants, will be entitled to return to their usurped homeland by all means any time. In fact, the textbooks used in UNRWA's schools never discuss any other possible solution to the Palestinian refugee problem.

Quotations

"The number of the Palestinians in the world is close to nine millions. About half of the Palestinian people (four and a half millions) live in historical Palestine at a total of approximately three and a half millions in the West Bank and the Gaza Strip and around a million in the lands of 1948 while four and a half millions live in the Diaspora outside of Palestine, particularly in Jordan, Lebanon, Syria, Iraq, Egypt, the states of the Arab Gulf as well as in various states of the world. **Most of them are refugees who wait to return to the motherland after having been expelled from it.**"



ملخص تعليمي

يقارب عدد الفلسطينيين في العالم التسعة ملايين نسمة، ويعيش نحو نصف الشعب الفلسطيني (أربعة ملايين ونصف) في فلسطين التاريخية وبمجموع (ثلاثة ملايين ونصف) تقريباً في الضفة الغربية وقطاع غزة، ونحو المليون في أراضي عام ١٩٤٨، وأربعة ملايين ونصف يعيشون في الشتات خارج فلسطين لاسيما في الأردن ولبنان وسوريا والعراق ومصر ودول الخليج العربي ودول العالم المختلفة، معظمهم من اللاجئين ينتظرون العودة إلى الوطن الأم بعد أن طُردوا منه.

(*National Education*, Grade 4, Part 1 (2011) p. 43) [**Emphasis** added in the translated text]. Note the use of the circumlocution "the lands of 1948" (underlined in the translation) which refers to Israel's territory in its pre-1967 borders.

"The [refugee] camp is not considered an original home for the Palestinian refugee. Rather, it is a temporary place where he has been forced to live. All the Palestinians wait for the return of every Palestinian to his city or village from which he was made to emigrate."

لا يُعَدُّ المَخِيْمُ مَوْطِنًا أَصْلِيًّا
لِلْفَلَسْطِينِيِّ اللّاجِئِ، وَإِنَّمَا هُوَ
مَكَانٌ مُؤَقَّتٌ أُرْغِمَ عَلَى العَيْشِ
فِيهِ، وَيَنْتَظِرُ جَمِيعُ الفِلَسْطِينِيِّينَ
عَوْدَةَ كُلِّ فِلَسْطِينِيٍّ إِلَى مَدِينَتِهِ أَوْ
قَرِيَّتِهِ الَّتِي هُجِّرَ مِنْهَا .

(*Islamic Education*, Grade 6, Part 1 (2012) p. 69)

The "Right of Return" is part and parcel of the discussion of the conflict. It appears in stories, such as the one in which a grandfather is showing to his grandson the

ownership deeds of the land they owned in the Coastal Plain and "the keys of our house which we were forced to leave", and the grandson promises to keep it.



جهد: ماذا يوجد في ذلك الصندوق يا جدي؟
 الجد: مستندات (قواشين) الأرض التي نملكها في السهل الساحلي، وهي مسجلة في دفاتر الطابو الرسمية في دائرة تسجيل الأراضي، ومفتاح بيتنا الذي هجرنا منه هي أمانه في عنقك، فحافظ عليها.
 جهد: أجل يا جدي سوف أحافظ عليها ولن أفرط فيها-إن شاء الله- مهما يحصل.
 الجد: أحسنت يا بُني.

(History of the Ancient Civilizations, Grade 5 (2012) p. 7)

There are also language exercises using this theme such as the following one:

"Exercise 2: Let us fill in the empty space with the appropriate noun...
 The [refugee] dreams of returning to his homeland."

تدريب ٢

نملاً الفراغَ بالفاعلِ المناسبِ مما يأتي ونَضْبِطُهُ بِالشَّكْلِ الصَّحِيحِ :

السَّائِحِ الْمُؤْمِنِ اللّاجِئِ الفَتَاةِ الغَوَاصِ

١ يَحْلُمُ بِالْعَوْدَةِ إِلَى وَطَنِهِ.

(Our Beautiful Language, Grade 5, Part 1 (2011) p. 91)

Especially interesting in this context is the use of poems in order to strengthen among the students the sense that the return is inevitable. The poems add an emotional dimension to the issue and reveal one of its characteristics that is not usually evident in other forms of discussion of the "Right of Return":

The Violent Character of "The Right of Return"

The "Right of Return", by definition, is a right, not a privilege. As such, it does not depend on Israel's good will and is not part of the peace process. Rather, it is presented as a decisive event, shrouded in an atmosphere of violence. The following two poems well exemplify that:

"We Shall Return

...

Tomorrow we shall return and the ages shall listen
To the footfalls during the return
We shall return with resounding storms
With the sacred lightening and the shooting star
With the winged hopes and the songs
With the soaring vulture and the eagle
Yes! Thousands of victims shall return
Victims of oppression shall open every door"

سَتَعُودُ

غَدًا سَتَعُودُ وَالْأَجْيَالُ تُصْغِي
إِلَى وَقْعِ الْخَطَى عِنْدَ الْإِيَابِ
تَعُودُ مَعَ الْعَوَاصِفِ دَاوِيَاتِ
مَعَ الْبَرْقِ الْمُقَدَّسِ وَالشُّهَابِ
مَعَ الْأَمَلِ الْمَجْنَحِ وَالْأَغَانِي
مَعَ النَّسْرِ الْمُحَلَّقِ وَالْعُقَابِ
أَجَلُ سَتَعُودُ آفَ الضَّحَايَا
ضَحَايَا الظُّلْمِ تَفْتَحُ كُلَّ بَابِ

(Our Beautiful Language, Grade 7, Part 1 (2011) p. 28)

"We Are Returning

Returning, returning, we are returning
Borders shall not exist, nor citadels and fortresses
Cry out, O those who have left:
We are returning
Returning to the homes, to the valleys, to the mountains
Under the flag of glory, *Jihad* and struggle
With blood, sacrifice, fraternity and loyalty
We are returning
Returning, O hills; returning, O heights
Returning to childhood; returning to youth
To *Jihad* in the hills, [to] harvest in the land
We are returning"

إننا لعائدون

عائدون عائدون إننا لعائدون
فالحُدودُ لن تكونَ والقلاعُ والحُصونُ
فاصْرُخوا يا نازِحون
إننا لعائدون
عائدون للديارِ للسُّهولِ للجِبَالِ
تحتَ أعلامِ المَحَارِ والجِهَادِ والنُّضالِ
بالدِّماءِ والفِداءِ والإخاءِ والوَفاءِ
إننا لعائدون
عائدون يَا رَبِّيا عائدون يَا هِضابِ
عائدون لِلصِّبَا عائدون للشِّبَابِ
لِلجِهَادِ فِي النِّجَادِ والحِصَادِ فِي البِلَادِ
إننا لعائدون

(Our Beautiful Language, Grade 5, Part 1 (2011) p. 50)

Conclusion

The manifestations of the "Right of Return" in the PA textbooks taught in UNRWA's schools are not nostalgic literary pieces. Rather, as presented to the students and shown here, the "Right of Return" plays a prominent role in the Palestinian political vision of a continued struggle against a delegitimized and demonized Israel until its eventual destruction. The educational services provided by UNRWA to Palestinian students thus help to propagate this non-peaceful line, in absolute contradiction to the Agency's declared mission. The huge accumulated number of UNRWA's indoctrinated graduates throughout its six decades of operation is the Agency's contribution to the perpetuation of the conflict. It is true that UNRWA has always maintained a policy of non-involvement in local curricula taught in its schools. But it is now high time that this policy be changed. An international organization of this caliber committed to the ideal of peace and relying in its funding on democratic countries mostly, should have a say in this matter, especially in view of its relatively large share in Palestinian educational activity. UNRWA should not continue its policy of absolute submission to the political, ideological and propagandist lines of the host governments in its areas of operation whenever these lines contradict UNRWA's principles and mission. There are things that UNRWA must not teach.



Dr. Arnon Groiss – Background

Dr. Arnon Groiss is an Arabic-language journalist who has been working for the Voice of Israel Arabic Radio since 1973. He is also an expert on Middle Eastern affairs having earned his Ph.D. degree from Princeton University's Department of Near Eastern Studies, as well as an MPA degree from Harvard University's Kennedy School of Government. Dr. Groiss taught for several years at the Hebrew University in the 1990s and 2000s. Between the years 2000-2010 Dr. Groiss served as chief researcher and, later, as Director of Research at the Institute for Monitoring Peace and Cultural Tolerance in School Education (IMPACT-SE, formerly known as the Center for Monitoring the Impact of Peace – CMIP), a non-political NGO committed to studying the attitude to the "other" and to peace in the Israeli and in other Middle Eastern curricula. During his work there Dr. Groiss studied hundreds of textbooks of various school subjects and authored over ten reports on Palestinian, Egyptian, Syrian, Saudi Arabian, Iranian and Tunisian schoolbooks. The reports are available on the Institute's Web site <http://www.impact-se.org>. A summary of his ten-year research of this subject is to be found in "De-legitimization of Israel in Palestinian Authority Schoolbooks", published in *Israel Affairs*, Vol. 18 (2012), Issue 3, pp. 455-484, where he compares the PA schoolbooks with other Arab and Middle Eastern ones, including their Israeli counterparts. On the basis of his experience in this field, Dr. Groiss was appointed as a member of the Scientific Advisory Panel (SAP) of the Palestinian-Israeli Schoolbook Research Project commissioned by the Council of Religious Institutions of the Holy Land (CRIHL) and funded by the US State Department. His later evaluation of this research project is to be found at <http://israelbehindthenews.com/library/pdfs/EVALUATION-1.pdf>. Dr. Groiss has presented his findings since 2000 to both policy makers and people of the press on numerous occasions in various places, including the US Congress, the European Parliament, the UK House of Commons, the Israeli Knesset, the Canadian Parliament, the French Assemblée nationale and elsewhere.