

Encouraging Children to Engage in Acts of War: Struggle, Jihad and Martyrdom in Schoolbooks Taught in UNRWA Schools in the West Bank and Gaza

By

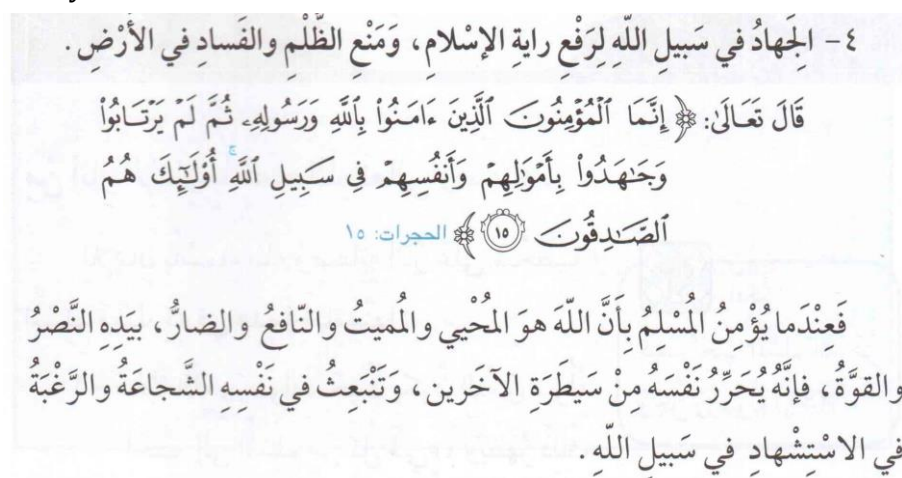
Dr. Arnon Groiss

(April 2014)

Palestinian Authority (PA) schoolbooks used by UNRWA in its schools in the West Bank and the Gaza Strip promote the goal of a violent struggle for the liberation of Palestine. That struggle, which is never restricted to the territories of the West Bank and the Gaza Strip alone, is made more compelling in the books with the help of the traditional Islamic ideals of *Jihad* and martyrdom (*Shahadah*) aided by the description of the violent return of the refugees. Thus, the Palestinian child in UNRWA schools is exposed to an atmosphere of violence and is mentally prepared for his or her actual participation in that armed struggle in the future.

The following examples taken from recently-published PA schoolbooks that have been in use in UNRWA schools during the current school year (2013/14) clearly attest to this phenomenon. One could find the spiritual foundation of the behavior expected from the prospective martyrs in the following text appearing in an *Islamic Education* textbook for grade 6:

"*Jihad* in the cause of God for raising the flag of Islam and preventing oppression and corruption on earth: ... When a Muslim man believes that God is the one who gives life and death, gain and loss, and that victory and power are in His hand, he then liberates himself from others' control, and bravery and a desire to seek martyrdom in God's cause are enlivened within his soul."



(*Islamic Education*, Grade 6, Part 1 (2012) p. 22)

A comment in another *Islamic Education* textbook gives this general notion a dimension of certain urgency:

"We, Muslims, dearly need these days to approach Sublime God so that He would grant us power and victory"

وما أحوجنا نحن المسلمين في مثل هذه الأيام إلى التوجه إلى الله تعالى لِيَمْنَحَنَا القوةَ والنصرَ .

(*Islamic Education*, Grade 7, Part 2 (2013) p. 82)

However, most pieces glorifying *Jihad* and martyrdom in the context of the conflict appear in language and literature textbooks, rather than in *Islamic Education* ones, mainly in poems and language exercises. Examples:

"Palestine [By] Ali Mahmud Taha [Excerpts]

O brother, the oppressors have exceeded all bounds and *Jihad* and sacrifice are necessary

Would we let them rob Arabdom of the ancestors' glory and power?

...

So, draw your sword from its sheath, for it should be sheathed no more

O brother, O proud Arab, I see that our date is today, not tomorrow

O brother, we have a sister in Jerusalem to whom the slaughterers have prepared the knives

O brother, rise towards the prayer-direction [*Qiblah*] of East and West and let us defend the Church [of the Holy Sepulcher] and the [Al-Aqsa] Mosque

O brother, if on her soil my blood flows and the hand closes on its pebbles

And death calls and the sword turns mad and the fire burns there...

[Then] kiss the martyr on her ground who called to God in her name and fell as a martyr

O Palestine, the youth will redeem your sanctuary; may both the sacrificing person [*fidai*] and the redeemed one be exalted!

O Palestine, our chests will defend you; [It is] either life or destruction!

فلسطين

علي محمود طه

المجد (جمعه أمجاد):
التبيل والشرف.
السُّؤْدُود والسُّؤْدُود: السيادة
والمجد والشرف.

الحُسام: السيف القاطع،
وحُسام السيف طَرَفُه الذي
يُضْرَبُ به.
الأبني: المترفع المعترّ
بنفسه، فلا يُقبل الذل.
المدى (جمع مُدَيّة):
الشكاكين.
المشرقان: المشرق والمغرب
على التغليب.

تمى الشيء: رفعه وأعلى
من شأنه.

أخي، جاوزَ الظالمونَ المدى
أنترُكُهم يغصبونَ العروبَ
وليسوا بغيرِ صليلِ السيوفِ
فجرّدَ حُسامَكَ من غمدهِ
أخي، أيها العربيُّ الأبويُّ
أخي، إنّ في القدس أختاً لنا
أخي قُمْ إلى قبلةِ المشرقينِ
أخي، إنّ جرى في ثراها دمي
ونادى الحِمَامُ، وجنَّ الحُسامُ
ففتشَ على مُهْجَةٍ حُرّةٍ
وخذَ رايةَ الحقِّ من قبضةِ
وقبّلَ شهيداً على أرضِها
فلسطينُ، يفدي حِمَاكَ الشبابُ
فلسطينُ، تحميكِ منّا الصدورُ
فحقّ الجهادُ وحقّ الفدا
عَدَلْ لها الذابحونَ المدى
أرى اليومَ موعدنا لا الغدا
أعدّ لها الذابحونَ المدى
لنَحْمِي الكنيسةَ والمسجدا
وأطبقتُ فوقَ حصاها اليدَا
وشبَّ الضُّرَامُ بها موقدا
أبَتْ أن يمرَّ عليها العدا
جلاها الوغى ونماها الندى
دعا باسمِها اللهَ واستشهدا
وجلَّ الفدائيُّ والمفتدى
فإمّا الحياةُ وإمّا الردى

(Reading and Texts, Grade 8, Part 1 (2013) p. 44)

Verses taken from this poem serve in language exercises:

"O brother, the oppressors have exceeded all bounds and *Jihad* and sacrifice are necessary

O brother, we have a sister in Jerusalem to whom the slaughterers have prepared the knives."

١- أخي، جاوزَ الظالمونَ المدى
أخي، إنّ في القدس أختاً لنا
فحقّ الجهادُ وحقّ الفدا
أعدّ لها الذابحونَ المدى
(علي محمود طه / مصر)

(Linguistic Studies, Grade 8, Part 2 (2012) p. 14)

In the following poem one can find an explicit call for martyrdom: "By your life, this is men's death and whoever wishes a noble death – here it is."

The Martyr [By] Abd al-Rahim Mahmud [Excerpts]

"I will carry my soul on my palm and toss it into the abyss of destruction

For [I will have] either a life that gladdens [my] friends or a death that irritates [my] enemies

...

By your life! I see my death but I hasten [my] steps toward it

I regard my death for my stolen right and for my country as a desired one

Hearing [weapon's] clink is pleasant to my ear and the flow of blood gladdens my soul

As well as a body thrown upon the ground and skirmished over by the desert predators

...

By your life! This is men's death and whoever wishes a noble death – here it is!"

سَأَحْمِلُ رُوحِي عَلَى رَاحَتِي
وَأُلْقِي بِهَا فِي مَهَاوِي الرَّدَى
فَإِمَّا حَيَاةٌ تُسَرُّ الصَّدِيقَ
وَإِمَّا مَمَاتٌ يَغِيظُ الْعَدَا
وَمَا الْعَيْشُ لَا عِشْتُ إِنْ لَمْ أَكُنْ
مَخَوْفَ الْجَنَابِ حَرَامَ الْحِمَى
لَعَمْرُكَ إِنِّي أَرَى مَضْرَعِي
وَلَكِنْ أَغْدُ إِلَيْهِ الْخُطَى
أَرَى مَقْتَلِي دُونَ حَقِّي السَّلِيبِ
وَدُونَ بِلَادِي هُوَ الْمُتَبَنَّى
يَلْدُ لِأُذُنِي سَمَاعُ الصَّلِيلِ
وَيُهْجُ نَفْسِي مَسِيلُ الدِّمَا
وَجَسْمٌ تَجَدَّلَ فِي الصَّحْصَحَانِ
تَنَاوَشُهُ جَارِحَاتُ الْفَلَا
كَسَادُهُ الْأَرْضَ بِالْأَرْجَوَانِ
وَأَثْقَلَ بِالْعِطْرِ رِيحَ الصَّبَا
وَنَامَ لِيَحْلُمَ حُلْمَ الْخُلُودِ
وَيَهْنَأَ فِيهِ بِأَحْلَى الرُّؤَى
لَعَمْرُكَ هَذَا مَمَاتُ الرِّجَالِ
وَمَنْ رَامَ مَوْتًا شَرِيفًا فَذَا
(عبد الرحيم محمود)

(Our Beautiful Language, Grade 7, Part 1 (2013) p. 75)

A language exercise featuring a verse from this poem:

"By your life! I see my death but I hasten [my] steps toward it

I regard my death for my stolen right and for my country as a desired one."

١- لعمرك إني أرى مَضْرَعِي ولكنْ أُغْذِّ إليه الخُطى
أرى مَقْتَلِي دون حَقِّي السَّليب ودون بلادي هو المَبْتَغى
(عبد الرحيم محمود/ فلسطين)

(Linguistic Studies, Grade 9, Part 1 (2013) p. 41)

"When, among the rest of this world's mothers, Palestinian mothers alone continue for the sixth decade in a row to bury their children with trilling cries of joy!

When Palestinian fathers continue to commit their sons to the earth calmly and promise to keep doing so with the rest [of their sons]!

When the Palestinian [person] of whatever age, religion, gender and affiliation becomes a martyr project!..."

٥- عِنْدَمَا تَنْفَرِدُ الْأُمَّهَاتُ الْفِلَسْطِينِيَّاتُ عَنْ سَائِرِ الْأُمَّهَاتِ فِي هَذَا الْكَوْنِ، وَيُؤَاصِلْنَ، لِلْعَقْدِ السَّادِسِ عَلَى التَّوَالِي، دَفْنَ أَطْفَالِهِنَّ بِالزَّغَارِيدِ!
عِنْدَمَا يَسْتَمِرُّ الْأَبَاءُ الْفِلَسْطِينِيُّونَ فِي مُوَارَاةِ أَبْنَائِهِمُ الثَّرَى بِرِبَاطَةِ جَاشٍ... وَوَعْدِ بَايْفَاءِ الْبَقِيَّةِ!
عِنْدَمَا يُصْبِحُ الْفِلَسْطِينِيُّ أَيًّا كَانَ عُمُرُهُ، وَدِينُهُ، وَجِنْسُهُ، وَانْتِمَاؤُهُ مَشْرُوعَ شَهِيدٍ!

(Our Beautiful Language, Grade 7, Part 2 (2013) p. 58)

"Good Morning, O My Homeland [By] Lutfi Zaghlul [Excerpts]

...

Good morning, O my Homeland

...

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

الدرس ٢ صباح الخير يا وطني

...

صَبَاحُ الْخَيْرِ... يَا وَطَنِي

...

صَبَاحُ الْمَجْدِ وَالْحُرِّيَةِ الْحَمْرَاءِ... يَرْوِيهَا دَمُ الشَّهَدَاءِ

(Reading and Texts, Grade 9, Part 1 (2013) pp. 9-10)

An exercise related to this poem is the following:

"I will connect the poetic verses with the feelings they express in the following [cases]:

...

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

The hope for the liberation of Palestine."

١١ أوفّق بين الأسطر الشعرية والعواطف التي تعبّر عنها فيما يأتي :

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

(Reading and Texts, Grade 9, Part 1 (2013) p. 12)

The issue of the claimed "Right of Return" of Palestinian refugees and their descendants to their previous homes inside today's Israel is also described as part of the violent struggle for liberation. Examples:

"We Shall Return [By] Abu Salma [Excerpts]

Beloved Palestine, how could I live far away from your plains and heights

...

Tomorrow we shall return and the generations will listen to the footfalls during the return

We shall return with the thundering storms, with the sacred lightening and the shooting star

With the winged hope and the songs, with the soaring vulture and the eagle

Yes! Thousands of victims shall return; victims of oppression shall open every door"

سَنَعُودُ

فِلَسْطِينُ الْحَيْبَةُ كَيْفَ أَحْيَا بَعِيداً عَنْ سُهُولِكَ وَالْهَضَابِ

تُنَادِينِي السُّفُوحُ مُخَضَّبَاتٍ وَفِي الْآفَاقِ آثَارُ الْخِضَابِ

تُنَادِينِي الشَّوَاطِئُ بِأَكْيَاتٍ وَفِي سَمْعِ الزَّمَانِ صَدَى انْتِحَابِ

تُنَادِينِي مَدَائِنُكَ الْيَتَامَى تُنَادِينِي قُرَاكَ مَعَ الْقَبَابِ

غَدَا سَنَعُودُ وَالْأَجْيَالُ تُصْغِي إِلَى وَقَعِ الْخُطَى عِنْدَ الْإِيَابِ

نَعُودُ مَعَ الْعَوَاصِفِ دَاوِيَاتٍ مَعَ الْبَرْقِ الْمُقَدَّسِ وَالشَّهَابِ

مَعَ الْأَمَلِ الْمُجَنِّحِ وَالْأَغَانِي مَعَ النَّسْرِ الْمُحَلِّقِ وَالْعُقَابِ

أَجَلُ سَتَعُودُ آلَافُ الضَّحَايَا ضَحَايَا الظُّلْمِ تَفْتَحُ كُلَّ بَابِ

(أَبُو سَلْمَى: الْمُسَرَّدُ)

(Our Beautiful Language, Grade 7, Part 1 (2013) p. 28)

"We Are Returning [By] Harun Hashem Rashid

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 plains, to the mountains

Under the flags of glory, *Jihad* and struggle

In blood, sacrifice, fraternity and loyalty

We are returning

Returning, O hills; returning, O heights

Returning to childhood; returning to youth

To *Jihad* on the highlands, to the harvest in the land

We are returning"

إِنَّا لَعَائِدُونَ

عَائِدُونَ عَائِدُونَ إِنَّا لَعَائِدُونَ

فَالْحُدُودُ لَنْ تَكُونَ وَالْقِلَاعُ وَالْحُصُونُ

فَاضْرُخُوا يَا نَازِحُونَ

إِنَّا لَعَائِدُونَ

عَائِدُونَ لِلدِّيَارِ لِلشُّهُولِ لِلجِبَالِ

تَحْتَ أَعْلَامِ الْفَخَارِ وَالْجِهَادِ وَالنُّضَالِ

بِالدِّمَاءِ وَالْفِدَاءِ وَالْإِخَاءِ وَالْوَفَاءِ

إِنَّا لَعَائِدُونَ

عَائِدُونَ يَا رَبِّا عَائِدُونَ يَا هِضَابَ

عَائِدُونَ لِلصُّبَا عَائِدُونَ لِلشَّبَابِ

لِلجِهَادِ فِي النَّجَادِ وَالْحَصَادِ فِي الْبِلَادِ

إِنَّا لَعَائِدُونَ

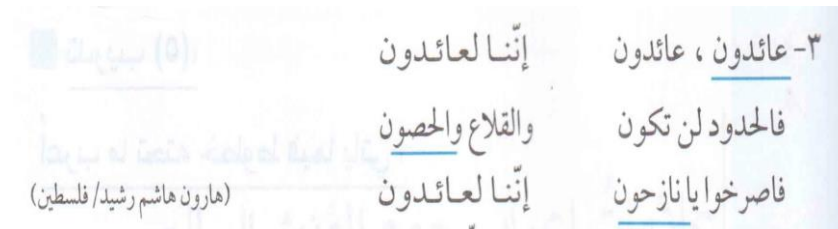
(Our Beautiful Language, Grade 5, Part 1 (2013) p. 50)

A language exercise featuring a verse taken from this poem:

"Returning, Returning; we are returning

Borders shall not exist, nor citadels and fortresses

Cry out, O those who have left: We are returning."



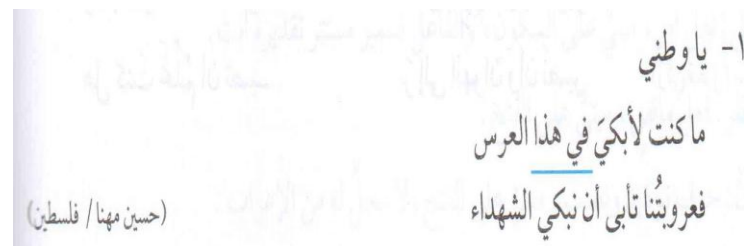
(*Linguistic Studies*, Grade 8, Part 2 (2012) p. 19)

There are other examples repeating the same motifs. The following one likens martyrdom to a wedding party:

"O my homeland,

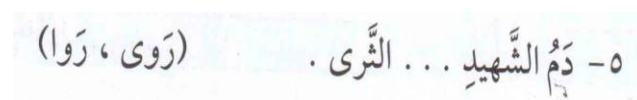
I shall not cry in this wedding party

For our Arabness refuses that we cry over the martyrs"



(*Linguistic Studies*, Grade 8, Part 2 (2012) p. 60)

"The martyr's blood [watered] the ground."



(*Our Beautiful Language*, Grade 6, Part 2 (2012) p. 8)

"If I fall take my place, O my comrade-in-arms

Carry your [my?] weapon and do not let my blood that flows from the weapon frighten you..."

١ - أنا إن سقطت فخذ مكاني
يا رفيقي في الكفاح
واحمل سلاحك لا يُخفك
دمي يسيل من السلاح

(Linguistic Studies, Grade 9, Part 1 (2012) p. 14)

The following is an assignment for seventh graders:

"I will write up to ten lines about one of the martyrs whom I know, being assisted by the following elements: his name and place of birth, his life and achievements, the circumstances of his martyrdom, society's attitude to his family after his martyrdom, the martyr's rank in Islam."

التعبير

أَكْتُبْ فِي حُدُودِ عَشْرَةِ أَسطُرٍ عَنْ أَحَدِ الشُّهَدَاءِ الَّذِينَ أَعْرِفُهُمْ بِالاسْتِعَانَةِ بِالْعُنَاصِرِ الْآتِيَةِ:

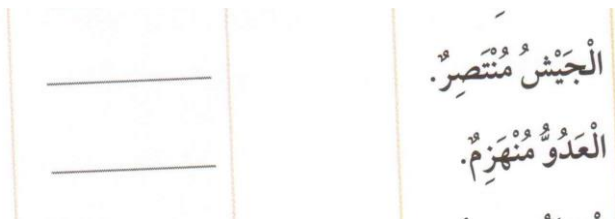
- اسْمُهُ وَمَوْلَدُهُ.
- حَيَاتُهُ وَإِنْجَازَاتُهُ.
- ظُرُوفُ اسْتِشْهَادِهِ.
- مَوْقِفُ الْمُجْتَمَعِ مِنْ أُسْرَتِهِ بَعْدَ اسْتِشْهَادِهِ.
- مَكَانَةُ الشَّهِيدِ فِي الْإِسْلَامِ.

(Our Beautiful Language, Grade 7, Part 2 (2013) p. 49)

In addition, the PA schoolbooks used in UNRWA schools feature language exercises with the following warlike messages:

"The army wins.

The enemy is defeated."



(Our Beautiful Language, Grade 4, Part 1 (2013) p. 65)

"The army defeated the enemy."

هـ- هَزَمَ الْجَيْشُ الْعَدُوَّ.

(*Our Beautiful Language*, Grade 4, Part 2 (2012) p. 45)

A story titled "An Evening Visitor" tells of a Palestinian father who lost his son in the 1967 war and later joined one of the Palestinian armed organizations and became a *Fidai* – a title given to members of such organizations. The story presents their raids against Israel from southern Lebanon in a favorable light and thus makes of them role models for the young children. Excerpts:

"Everyone knows that I have been in the South [authors' note: South: South Lebanon] for ten years. I have left the city [Amman] and the family to join the fighters...

We in the South face death any minute... Youths like Saleh [his killed son] fall every day on the South's land. We bury them and bury our grief with them..."

- سبحان الله، ألا تعرف أين أنا؟ الكلُّ يعرفُ أنني في الجنوبِ منذُ
عشرِ سنواتٍ، وأنني تركتُ المدينةَ والأهلَ؛ لألتحقَ بالمقاتلين.
الجنوب: جنوب
لبنان.

...

نحن في الجنوب نواجه الموت في كل لحظة،

...

فالشباب من أمثال صالح يسقطون كل يوم على أرض الجنوب، نواريهم التراب، ونواري معهم
أحزاننا،

(*Reading and Texts*, Grade 8, Part 1 (2013) pp. 30, 33)

The foregoing does not cover the whole picture of preparing Palestinian schoolchildren for *Jihad* and martyrdom. One could add the Palestinian national anthem itself, here cited to first graders, including the following verse: "...I shall live as a *Fidai* and continue as a *Fidai* and die as a *Fidai*..."

سأحيا فدائي وأمضي فدائي وأقضي فدائي...

نردد النشيد الوطني :

فدائي فدائي فدائي
فدائي فدائي فدائي

xxxxxxxxxxxx

يا أرضي ... يا أرض ... الجدود
يا شعبي ... يا شعب الخلود

يا أرضي ... يا أرض ... الجدود
يا شعبي ... يا شعب الخلود

بحق القسم تحت ظل العلم
سأحيا فدائي وأمضي فدائي
فدائي فدائي فدائي
فدائي فدائي فدائي

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للمعلم : يردد المعلم مع التلاميذ النشيد الوطني عدة مرات.

A language exercise demonizing Israel, in which the Palestinian child is likened to a soldier, could be added as well to this literary genre:

"The Palestinian child stood facing the enemy's bullets like a brave soldier."

٢- وقف الطفل الفلسطيني أمام رصاص العدو وقوف الجندي الباسل.

(*Reading and Texts*, Grade 8, Part 2 (2013) p. 28)

Recently introduced *National Education* textbooks for grades 8 and 9 in Hamas-controlled Gaza feature far more explicit pieces encouraging children to engage in acts of war. One example out of several:

"By resistance we shall win"



(*National Education*, Grade 8 (Gaza, 2013) p. 65)¹

From the above-given quotations taken from PA schoolbooks in current use by UNRWA, one could easily have a solid idea about the war education hundreds of thousands Palestinian schoolchildren get, apart from other alarming aspects of anti-Israeli and anti-Jewish indoctrination that is detrimental to any chance of peace in the Middle East. That kind of "education" should cease immediately and it is the responsibility of UNRWA's democratic donor states to guarantee that.

¹ UNRWA claims that it does not teach these new books in its schools in Gaza, but they feature in the final exams it has printed last February at the end of the first semester of the current school year. See the following link to the 8th grade exam:

<http://up.sef.ps/xu/files/get/J1PHIxtwL8/.zip>



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. 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. 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). The project was funded by the US State Department and ended in February 2013. Dr. Groiss' evaluation paper of this research project is to be found at <http://israelbehindthenews.com/library/pdfs/EVALUATION-1.pdf>.

