



## **Anti-Semitism in UNRWA Education**

By

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**(March 2018)**

### **Introduction**

The United Nations Relief and Works Agency for the refugees of the 1948 war (UNRWA) provides educational services to school children registered as refugees in Syria, Lebanon, Jordan, the West Bank (including East Jerusalem) and the Gaza Strip. In the latter two areas it is responsible for the education of about a quarter of the Palestinian student body, with over 320,000 students in some 370 schools. As a matter of self-imposed policy, UNRWA uses in its schools textbooks of the host governments in its various areas of operation. That raises a serious ethical problem, since these books contain crude anti-Israeli, anti-Zionist and even anti-Semitic expressions clearly contradicting UNRWA's defined neutral and peace-oriented character as a UN organization.

Anti-Semitism in the Arab world is part and parcel of the current conflict, although its roots can be traced to earlier periods. As such, it exists in most Arab curricula. This is the case as well in the Palestinian one, though to a lesser extent, comparing to those of Syria, Saudi Arabia and even Egypt. That is so due, probably, to the fact that the Palestinian textbook publishing operation was partly financed by Western donor states. This assumption is based on an incident that took place in 2004 when the Palestinian Authority (PA) issued a history textbook for grade 10 in which the Protocols of the Elders of Zion were described as the confidential resolutions of the first Zionist Congress, held in Basel, Switzerland, in 1897. Following a report by the author of this paper in 2005, I was asked by the Belgian embassy in Tel Aviv to send them the relevant Arabic page accompanied by an English translation, and a few months later the PA issued a new version of the book without the said description.

Since UNRWA uses the PA schoolbooks with no omissions or amendments, it actually becomes full partner of the PA anti-Israeli and, sometimes, anti-Semitic indoctrination. Anti-Semitic expressions in such schoolbooks have existed throughout UNRWA's seven-decade activity, mostly within the context of the conflict, but also in the religious context. Following are few expressions taken from the books in current use in UNRWA schools and carrying anti-Semitic character:

### **The Religious Context**

The main issue in this context is the Jews of Arabia's political rivalry with the prophet of Islam in the 7<sup>th</sup> century AD, which has made them part of the evil camp religiously, with extended connotations to the Jews of today.

המרכז לחקר מדיניות המזרח התיכון  
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"...But the Jews [of the Arabian city of Medina] did not respect the treaty [they had signed with Muhammad] and went in for all kinds of treachery, betrayal and hostility, which made it necessary for the Muslims to fight them."  
(*Islamic Education*, Grade 7, Part 1 (2017) p. 50)

"An issue for discussion: the Jews' recurring attempts to kill the Messenger [Muhammad]".  
(Assignment, *Islamic Education*, Grade 5, Part 2 (2017) p. 66)

"Let us watch a video clip from the attached CD about the Jews' attempt to kill God's Messenger [Muhammad]."

هيا بنا نشاهد مقطع فيديو من القرص المرفق، لمحاولة قتل اليهود رسول  
الله ﷺ.



(*Islamic Education*, Grade 5, Part 2 (2017) p. 65)

"The Jews' intrigues and plots were the immediate reason for the expedition against [the Jewish fortification of] Khaybar."  
(*Islamic Education*, Grade 9, Part 1 (2017) p. 58)

Jesus Christ is considered God's prophet in Islam. The following piece is the first lesson derived from the Koranic story about him, thus, presenting the Jews as enemies of other prophets besides Muhammad:

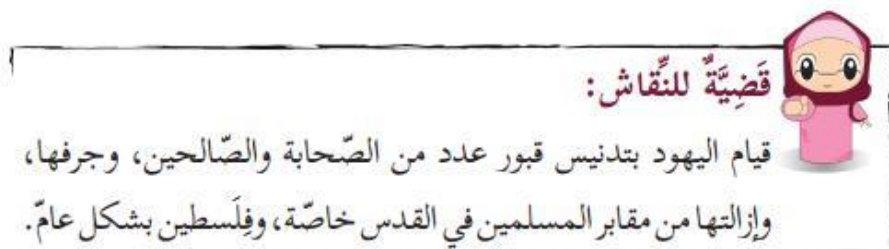
"1. Revealing the Children of Israel's character and their hostility to the prophets."  
(*Islamic Education*, Grade 9, Part 2 (2017) p. 20)

### **Within the Context of the Conflict**

#### A. Direct references to Jews

"An issue for discussion: I will discuss the Palestinian woman's role of sacrifice and steadfastness within the confrontation with the Jewish-Zionist occupier."  
(Assignment, *Islamic Education*, Grade 5, Part 2 (2017) p. 77)

"An issue for discussion: The Jews' activity [today] of desecrating the graves of some of the Prophet's Companions and the virtuous men, sweeping and removing them from the Muslim cemeteries in Jerusalem specifically and in Palestine in general."



(Assignment, *Islamic Education*, Grade 5, Part 2 (2017) p. 71)

## B. Indirect Reference to Jews

In the following example Jews are not mentioned by name, but the context gives a precise indication of their identity, specifically the term "unbelief":

"Where are the horsemen [who will ride] towards Al-Aqsa [Mosque] to liberate it from the fist of unbelief, from the Devil's aides?"

أَيْنَ الْفُؤَارِسِ لِلْأَقْصَى تُحَرَّرُهُ مِنْ قَبْضَةِ الْكُفْرِ مِنْ أَعْوَانِ شَيْطَانٍ؟

(*Arabic Language*, Grade 7, Part 1 (2017) p. 66)

## C. References to Zionists

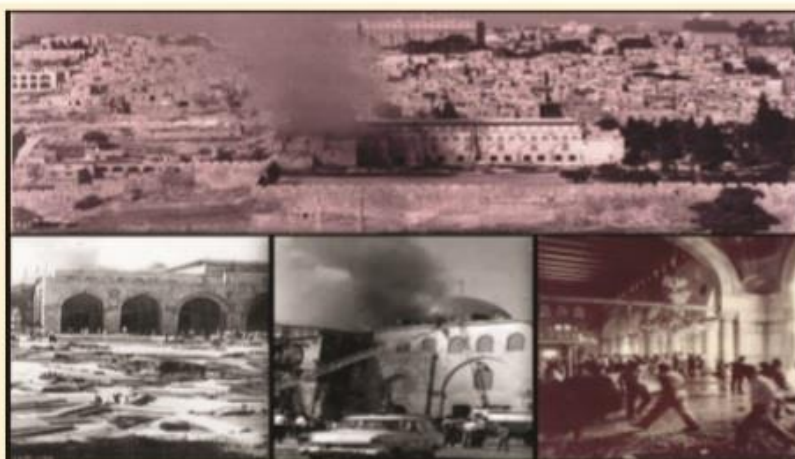
Notwithstanding the efforts by anti-Israeli non-Jews, as well as some Jews, to make a distinction between anti-Zionism and anti-Semitism, in practice they are intertwined in the eyes of both Jews and non-Jews. Consequently, some of the anti-Zionist severe expressions appearing in the books used by UNRWA have been given here:

"The Zionists have based their entity [i.e., Israel] on terrorism, extermination [*ibadah*] and colonialism [*isti'mar*]. Let us present that in detail."

(Assignment, *Arabic Language – Academic Path*, Grade 10, Part 2 (2017) p. 27)

"...Let us draw the conclusions regarding the burning of Al-Aqsa Mosque by the Zionists on August 21, 1969."

نشاط (٥): نتأمل الصورة، ونستنتج، ثم نجيب:



\* نصف ما نشاهده في الصورة.

\* نستنتج إحراق الصهاينة المسجد الأقصى بتاريخ ٢١ / آب / ١٩٦٩م.

(*Social Studies*, Grade 7, Part 2 (2017) p. 52. The arsonist was an Australian Christian tourist later diagnosed as mentally ill and hospitalized in his country.)

"The Zionists perpetrated over 60 massacres against the Palestinians..."

(Geography and Modern and Contemporary History of Palestine, Grade 10, Part 2 (2017) p. 9)

#### D. Expressions Encouraging Acts of Violence against Jewish-Israeli Individuals

These expressions are particularly anti-Jewish, as non-Jewish Israelis are considered to be Palestinian and are not intentionally targeted.

The first example is a verse in a poem describing what should be done with the surviving Jewish population of Israel following its defeat:

"Let us sing and learn by heart: The Nobles' Land [*Ard al-Kuramaa*']  
[Photograph of the Old City of Jerusalem with the Dome of the Rock]  
I have sworn! I shall sacrifice my blood  
To water the nobles' land  
And I shall remove the usurper [*ghaseb*] from my country  
And shall **exterminate** [*ubid*] the foreigners' scattered remnants [*fulul al-ghuraba*']  
O land of Al-Aqsa [Mosque] and the Sanctuary [*haram*],  
O cradle of pride and nobility  
Patience, patience, for victory is ours  
And dawn will peep out from darkness"

نُغْنِي وَنَحْفَظُ: أَرْضُ الْكُرَمَاءِ



قَسَمًا سَأُطْحِي بِدِمَائِي لِأُرْوِي أَرْضَ الْكُرَمَاءِ  
وَأَزِيلَ الْغَاصِبَ مِنْ بَلَدِي وَأُيَيْدُ فُلُولَ الْغُرَبَاءِ  
يَا مَهْدَ النَّخْوَةِ وَالْحَرَمِ يَا بَلَدَ الْأَقْصَى وَالْحَرَمِ  
صَبْرًا صَبْرًا فَالْتَصِرْ لَنَا وَالْفَجْرُ يُطِلُّ مِنَ الظُّلَمِ

(Our Beautiful Language, Grade 3, Part 2 (2017) p. 64)

The following piece is dedicated to a female terrorist who led the attack on an Israeli civilian bus in 1978 in which over 30 men, women and children were murdered:

"Dalal al-Mughrabi  
([By] the authors [of the textbook])  
In front of the text:

Our Palestinian history is full of many names of martyrs who presented their souls as a sacrifice for the homeland. Among them is the martyr Dalal al-Mughrabi who painted with her struggle a picture of challenge and heroism that have made her memory eternal in our hearts and minds. The text in front of us provides a glance on the path of her struggle."

**دلال المَغْرَبِي**

(المؤلفون)

**بَيْنَ يَدَيِ النَّصِّ**

يَحْفَلُ تَارِيخُنَا الْفِلَسْطِينِي بِكَثِيرٍ مِنْ أَسْمَاءِ الشُّهَدَاءِ الَّذِينَ قَدَّمُوا أَرْوَاحَهُمْ فِدَاءً  
لِلْوَطَنِ، مِنْهُمْ الشَّهِيدَةُ دَلَالُ الْمَغْرَبِي الَّتِي سَطَّرَتْ بِنِضَالِهَا صُورَةً مِنْ صُورِ التَّحَدِّي  
وَالْبَطُولَةِ؛ مَا جَعَلَ ذِكْرَهَا خَالِدًا فِي قُلُوبِنَا وَعُقُولِنَا. وَالنَّصُّ الَّذِي بَيْنَ أَيْدِينَا يَتَحَدَّثُ  
عَنْ طَرْفٍ مِنْ مَسِيرَةِ نِضَالِهَا.



٥١

(Arabic Language, Grade 5, Part 2 (2017) p. 51)

Another piece, taken from a story in a language textbook, describes the Jews burning in a civilian bus attacked by Molotov cocktails as "barbecue party":

"The neighbor: 'The curfew does not include us in Al-Sharafah [neighborhood]. It is imposed on Al-Natarish [neighborhood]. It seems that there is a barbecue party [*haflat shiwa'a*] there with Molotov cocktails on one of the buses of the Psagot colony [*musta'marah* - Jewish settlement] on Mount Al-Tawil"

الْجَارُ: حَظَرُ التَّجَوُّلِ لَا يَشْمَلُنَا فِي (الشَّرْفَةِ) مَفْرُوضٌ عَلَى  
(التَّارِيشِ) عَلَى مَا يَبْدُو هُنَاكَ حَفْلَةُ شِوَاءٍ بِالْقَنَابِلِ الْحَارِقَةِ لِإِحْدَى  
حَافِلَاتِ مُسْتَعْمَرَةِ (بِسَاغُوتِ) عَلَى الْجَبَلِ الطَّوِيلِ.

(Arabic Language, Grade 9, Part 1 (2017) p. 61. The "barbecue party" expression is underlined in red.)

#### E. Testimony from Gaza, 2014

The Hamas-led government in Gaza issued its own schoolbooks that were used in UNRWA schools there as well. They included some crude ant-Semitic expressions such as the following one:

"If we want to get to know the character of Zionist occupation, let us have a glance at the Jews' history and behavior towards [other] human beings and towards one another. They consider themselves to be the most eminent race in humanity while all others should be their servants. This is their true attitude to the rest of the nations. According to their belief they should control them and enslave them by means of capital, power and sex [literally: 'women']. Consequently, their practices, notions and theories point out to what they are and to their sick criminal souls that are different from [those of] the rest of the people..."

"إذا أردنا أن نتعرف إلى طبيعة الاحتلال  
الصهيوني، فلننظر في لمحات من تاريخ اليهود  
وسلوكلهم، وتصرفاتهم تجاه البشر وتجاه  
بعضهم البعض، فهم يعتبرون أنفسهم أسمى  
عرق بشري، وعلى الآخرين أن يكونوا خداماً  
لهم، وحقيقة هذه هي حقيقة، نظرتهم لباقي  
الأمم والشعوب التي يجب السيطرة عليهم  
واستعبادهم - حسب معتقداتهم - من خلال المال  
والسلطة والنساء، وبالتالي ممارساتهم  
وأفكارهم ونظرياتهم تدل عليهم وعلى نوعية  
نفوسهم المريضة بالإجرام والمختلفة عن باقي  
الناس، وقد صور القرآن الكريم صفاتهم  
القبیحة في مواقف كثيرة "

(National Education, Grade 9 (Gaza, 2013) p. 40)

It is not clear whether these books are still in use, but they were taught at UNRWA schools at least during the school year of 2013/14 and maybe in 2014/15 and 2015/16. UNRWA denies that, but its Gaza Department of Education's site featured in February 2014 the mid-term final examination with questions related to that specific book.

Following is the upper part of the first page of the form:

"The United Nations Relief and Works Agency  
Education Department - Gaza  
Educational Development Center

Examination of the End of First Term  
Subject: Social Subjects      Grade: Ninth  
School Year of 2013/2014"

[www.sef.ps](http://www.sef.ps)

اسم الطالب	:	.....
رقم الطالب	:	.....
المدرسة	:	.....
الصف	:	.....
الشعبة	:	.....

وكالة هيئة الأمم المتحدة للإغاثة والتشغيل  
دائرة التربية والتعليم - غزة  
مركز التطوير التربوي

رقم المراقبة : .....

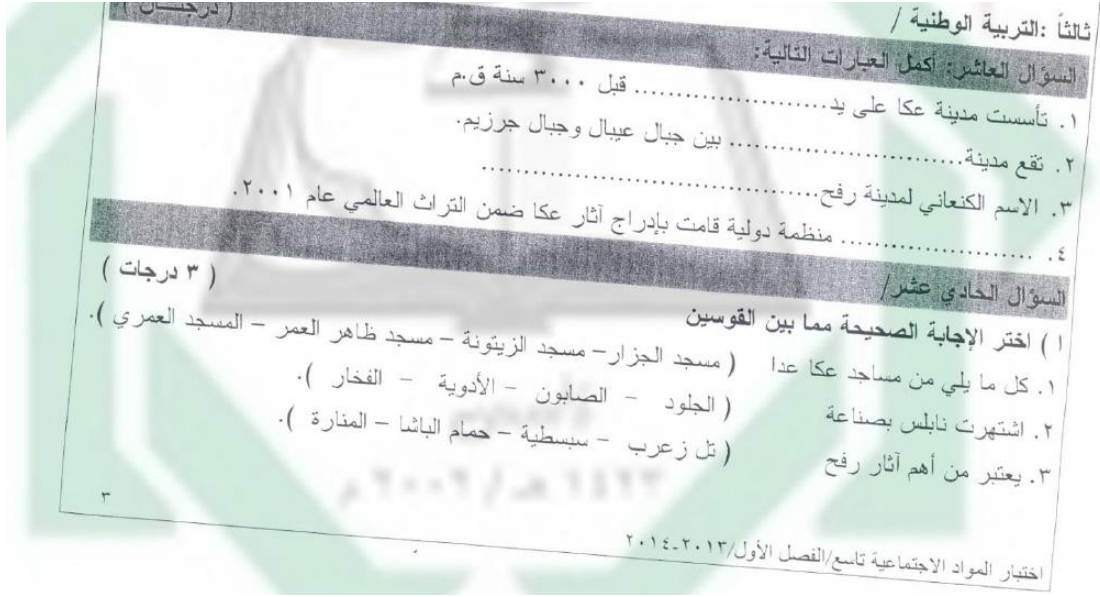
**اختبار نهاية الفصل الأول**  
المادة : المواد الاجتماعية      الصف : التاسع  
العام الدراسي 2014/2013م

رقم السؤال	العلامة بالترقيم	العلامة بالحروف	توقيع المصحح	توقيع المدقق
١				
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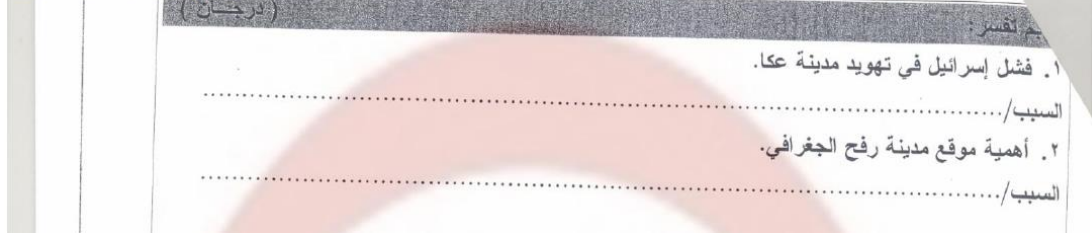
The relevant pages (3-4):

"Third: National Education:"

The textbook of *National Education* for grade 9 is the source of the quoted piece above. Questions 10 and 11 below relate to this book



[www.sef.ps](http://www.sef.ps)



The answers to these questions are found in *National Education, Grade 9 (Gaza, 2013)* pp. 7, 11, 15, 8, 8, 12, 16, 9 and 16, respectively.

### Conclusion

The examples brought in this paper speak for themselves, and there are more. UNRWA donors should answer as to why UNRWA teaches such material and what it intends to do with it after having noticed their venomous character. These and similar expressions of virulent Anti-Semitism have been taught in UNRWA schools for too long!