De-legitimization of Israel's existence in the Palestinian Authority Schoolbooks, including those ones used in UNRWA schools

By

Dr. Arnon Groiss

(November 2018)

By virtue of the agreements between Israel and the Palestinian Authority (PA) that was established in 1994, the latter assumed responsibility for the educational services in the areas of the West Bank and the Gaza Strip, including schoolbook publishing. The PA Ministry of Education's Curricula Center in Ramallah started publishing the books in 2000 and in 2016 the PA began a rewriting operation of most textbooks which lasted until 2018. Use of the PA schoolbooks is mandatory in all schools in the West Bank and Gaza, including those ones operated by UNRWA (which include grades 1-10 only). Studies conducted on the attitude of these books to the conflict have revealed three fundamentals:

1. De-legitimization of Israel's existence in the region, as well as the very presence in the country of its Jewish citizens, and even the denial of Jewish history and the existence of Jewish holy places there.
2. Demonization of both Israel and the Jews.
3. Call for a violent struggle instead of advocacy of a peaceful resolution of the conflict.

Following are representative examples expressing the delegitimization of the State of Israel's existence. They were taken from the PA textbooks published in 2017 and currently used in UNRWA schools:

Israel is never presented as a sovereign state, neither on maps nor in texts, even within its pre-1967 borders. Rather, the whole country is described as Palestine. That Palestine, the territory of which covers Israel's entire territory, is presented as the sovereign state in the region, instead of Israel.

In the following map, titled "Political Map of the Arab Homeland", the whole country appears as one unit next to the name "Palestine":

---

Israel is never presented as a sovereign state, neither on maps nor in texts, even within its pre-1967 borders. Rather, the whole country is described as Palestine. That Palestine, the territory of which covers Israel's entire territory, is presented as the sovereign state in the region, instead of Israel.

In the following map, titled "Political Map of the Arab Homeland", the whole country appears as one unit next to the name "Palestine":

---
Lesson 2 in the following example is titled "Palestine is Arab [and] Muslim":

A map titled "States of the Arab Homeland" appears on the same page following the lesson's title and some additional material. The name "Palestine" appears on the map next to the country in its entirety, including Israel's pre-1967 territory, with the Palestinian flag flying above:
The assignment in the following example says: "A. I will paint the map of my homeland in the colors of the Palestinian flag" and the map itself is marked with the flag’s contours and colors:

(National and Social Upbringing, Grade 4, Part 1 (2017) p. 7)

The phenomenon of Israel's replacement by Palestine as the sovereign state in the region appears in textual material as well:

(National and Life Education, Grade 2, Part 1 (2017) p. 8)
"Palestine is located in the Asian wing of the Arab homeland, in a region known as the Levant [Bilad al-Sham in Arabic] which encompasses the states of Palestine, Jordan, Syria and Lebanon…"

"Palestine is located in the northern hemisphere of Earth, in the western part of the Asian continent. It is one of the states of the Levant [Bilad al-Sham] (Palestine, Syria, Jordan and Lebanon). It is bordered on the north by Lebanon and Syria, on the east – by Jordan, on the west – by the Mediterranean Sea and on the south – by Egypt and the Gulf of Aqaba…"

And this false information appears on the map as well. The following map, titled "States of the Levant [Bilad al-Sham]" includes "Syria", "Lebanon", "Jordan" and "Palestine", with the latter encompassing the whole country:
Furthermore, the name "Israel" is systematically avoided, even within the numerous demonizing texts in the PA schoolbooks in UNRWA use. Instead, Israel is referred to by terms such as "the Zionist Occupation" or "the Occupation State":

"…The Arab armies withdrew from Palestine and the Rhodes Armistice [agreements] were signed separately between the Zionist Occupation and each of [the states of] Jordan, Egypt, Syria and Lebanon…"

"One of the statements of the Occupation State's representative at the United Nations in 1967:"

In other words: Israel within its pre-1967 borders is an occupying entity, and that is exactly how its territories of that period are defined: "the territories occupied in 1948". Following is a chart indicating that:

"The Geographic Distribution of the Palestinian People:
Activity 2: Let us look at the numbers of the Palestinian people according to [their] places of residence and then we will do the following:
- We will analyze the data appearing in the chart and then will present the results arrived at.
- We will draw conclusions regarding the regions with the largest number of Palestinians.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Place of Residence</th>
<th>Number of Inhabitants</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>The West Bank</td>
<td>2,972,069</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Gaza Strip</td>
<td>1,912,276</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The territories occupied in 1948</td>
<td>1,531,716</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Diaspora in the Arab states</td>
<td>5,594,683</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Diaspora in the foreign [i.e., non-Arab] states</td>
<td>695,677</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The definition of Israel's pre-1967 territory as an occupied one is made clearer in the following assignment:

"Activity 1-A: Let us look at the following map, draw conclusions and then answer:"

The map, titled "Map of Palestine", is devoid – as usual – of the cities established by Jews in modern times, including Tel Aviv. The upper assignment on the right says:

"Let us distinguish between the Palestinian cities occupied by the Zionists in 1948 and those ones they occupied in 1967."
Since Israel's pre-1967 territory is an occupied Palestinian territory, it therefore should be liberated. Following is a map of the whole country covered with the Palestinian flag with an unambiguous English message: "Free Palestine", that is, Palestine will be made free only when the State of Israel will disappear:

(Social Studies, Grade 7, Part 1 (2017) p. 56)

(Sciences and Life, Grade 3, Part 1 (2017) p. 65)