



## Palestinians rewrite history, part of a program to refute the Jewish narrative in order to delegitimize the State of Israel and the Jewish people by promoting the Palestinian narrative

July 15, 2021

### Overview

- ▶ On June 29 and 30, 2021, the Ramallah branch of the al-Quds Open University<sup>1</sup> held a conference **sponsored by Mahmoud Abbas**. It was the first conference on "The Zionist Narrative Between Deconstruction and Destructuring," part of a larger program called "Deconstructing the Zionist Narrative," conducted by the University and Fatah social organizations (al-Quds Open University website in Arabic, July 5, 2021).
- ▶ **PA Prime Minister Muhammad Shtayyeh** gave a speech at the conference reiterating the Palestinian claim that no connections exist between the Hebrews, the Israelis and the Jews, and today's Jews are actually Khazars, a Turkic-speaking tribe which converted to Judaism only in the 6<sup>th</sup> century CE. Shtayyeh added that Israel is not a state but rather a "tool" put in place to protect foreign interests. Other speakers reiterated the same points, stressing the claim that the Jews had no links to Jerusalem (Wafa, June 29, 2021). The speech was not posted to Shtayyeh's Facebook page, which usually reports his speeches and appearances. The al-Quds Open University's English website gives no information beyond the name and date of the conference (the Arabic website, based on reports from Wafa, provides fuller information).
- ▶ It was not the first time **the Palestinian Authority (PA) leadership, led by Mahmoud Abbas, twisted, misrepresented and rewrote history in general and of the Jews in particular**. The theme is elaborated upon extensively in one of his books and in his speeches over the years. His main theses are that the State of Israel is a Western colonial settlement, Jesus was a Palestinian, and the Palestinians are the descendants of the Canaanites who came before the Patriarch Abraham. Regarding Jerusalem, he says the Palestinians believe

---

<sup>1</sup> The al-Quds Open University is the only Open University in the Palestinian Authority. It is a public institution, ostensibly run by its board of directors but in fact operating under the oversight and with the supervision and control of the Palestinian ministry of education. It was founded by the PLO in 1991 and today has about 60,000 students studying in 24 branches in Judea, Samaria and the Gaza Strip.

they have the rights to the city because after the Canaanites founded it 5,000 years ago, Allah promised it would be the capital city of the Palestinian state [sic].

► **PA ministry of education and UNRWA textbooks contain** often reference the rejection of Israel's right to exist and promote **historical misrepresentations and factual inaccuracies**.

An examination of PA textbooks and teachers' guides carried out by Intelligence and Terrorism Information Center (ITIC) researchers revealed that one of the most prominent, persistent themes was the delegitimization of the State of Israel and the Jewish presence in the Land of Israel, including denial of existence of sites sacred to Judaism.<sup>2</sup>

► The **objectives of the Palestinians' twisting history, perpetuating inaccuracies** and deliberately distorting names, providing incorrect dates and introducing anti-Semitic elements are to cast into doubt and **deny the existence of the Jewish people and its historical connections to the Land of Israel, foster hatred for Israel and the Jews** and sabotage any chance of significant dialogue between Israel and the Palestinians. Its objectives are also reinforcing Palestinian nationalism, establishing the exclusive Palestinian "right" to the Land of Israel, **inculcating the Palestinian public with the concept of "resistance" to Zionism** and convincing the international community to deny **the right of the State of Israel to exist as the national homeland of the Jews**.

► In his opening speech at the conference **Mahmoud Abbas himself boasted** that international world opinion was gradually moving towards an acceptance of the Palestinian narrative, adding that was especially true in the United States and Europe. He said local Palestinian communities throughout the world were very active in promoting the Palestinian narrative, and that they had to continue in order to reach the decision makers in the countries where change was taking place.

#### **The al-Quds Open University Conference**

► On June 29 and 30, 2021, **the Ramallah branch of the al-Quds Open University** held a conferences whose theme was "The Zionist Narrative Between Deconstruction and Destructuring." It was sponsored by Mahmoud Abbas and held as part of the inter-organizational collaboration of the members of Fatah's social organizations, NGOs and the al-Quds Open University. It was attended by Palestinian academics, members of the PLO's Executive Committee, Fatah's Central Committee and researchers from Jordan and Egypt.

---

<sup>2</sup> For further information, see the June 10, 2020 bulletin, "Israel, Jews and Peace in Palestinian Authority Schoolbooks and Teachers' Guides" by Dr. Arnon Groiss.

The conference was part the program conducted by the university and Fatah social organizations to deny the Zionist narrative (al-Quds Open University website in Arabic, July 5, 2021).



**The conference in Ramallah. According to the sign at the right, the conference was sponsored by Mahmoud Abbas (Wafa, June 29, 2021).**

► The conference opened with a **recorded speech of Mahmoud Abbas** boasting that international world opinion was gradually shifting towards accepting the Palestinian narrative, especially in the United States and Europe. In most countries, he claimed, there was increasing activity in the local Palestinian communities which should be harnessed towards exerting pressure on the decision makers in those countries. The objective, he said, was to stress the strength of the Palestinian people, their right to the land and a Palestinian state whose capital was east Jerusalem. Recent events, he claimed, especially the tension in Jerusalem, proved the Palestinian people, wherever they were, were strong and wanted their rights [sic] (Palestinian TV, June 19, 2021).

► **Muhammad Shtayyeh**, speaking in person, explained how to wage the war of narratives against Israel. He said to strengthen the Palestinian narrative Israel had to be clearly distinguished and separated from Judaism and Zionism. "History," he said, "has to be understood and it must be clearly stated that the Hebrews, Jews and Israelis are not the same thing." He claimed the Patriarch Jacob was also called "Israel," therefore the Israelites were the children of Jacob, and 1,300 years separated Jacob from Moses. Thus, 1,300 years separated the Israelis from the Jews, so the logical conclusion [sic] is that there is no connection between the Israelis and the Jews. Therefore, he said, the key question was clearly, who were the Jews of today? Obviously, he claimed, **today's Jews were the Khazars who joined Judaism in the 6<sup>th</sup> century CE.**<sup>3</sup> He also claimed Israel was not a

<sup>3</sup> The Khazar Kingdom was one of the kingdoms founded in Euro-Asia in the Middle Ages between the 7<sup>th</sup> century and the beginning of the 11<sup>th</sup>. Between the 8<sup>th</sup> century and the 10<sup>th</sup> the Khazar Kingdom,

country but rather a "tool" established to protect foreign interests. **He "quoted" Theodor Herzl as telling Lord Balfour** that if the British wanted a country that would serve Britain's interests in the Middle East and the Suez Canal, the Jews were prepared to do it (Wafa, Palestinian TV, June 29, 2021). However, **Herzl died in 1904**, while the **Balfour Declaration**, which expressed British support for a national homeland for the Jews in the Land of Israel, **was issued on November 2, 1917**.



**PA Prime Minister Muhammad Shtayyeh gives a speech at the conference (Wafa, June 29, 2021).**

► Other speakers reiterated the themes. For example, **al-Quds Open University president Dr. Younes Amro** claimed there was no connection between the Jews and city of Jerusalem, it was only a "connection of war," as noted in the Bible story of King David, who purchased Araunah the Jebusite's "threshing floor"<sup>4</sup> to build a temple to worship his God. Therefore, Dr. Amro claimed, the Jews have no religious connection of Jerusalem, only the Muslims and Christians do. Jerusalem, he claimed, is the place of peace from which both Muhammad and Jesus ascended to heaven. Christians make pilgrimages to Jerusalem, and it is the third most important city for Islam [after Mecca and Madinah], he said (Wafa, June 29, 2021).

► The conference in Ramallah was part of **a program formed by Muhammad Shtayyeh and Ataf Abu Sayif, the Palestinian minister of culture**, at the end of 2020 to declare 2021 the year of spreading Palestinian "heritage" around the world through reinforcing and defending the Palestinian narrative, especially the issue of Jerusalem, choosing Palestinians living abroad as the main vector. (Dunia al-Watan, June 29, 2021). **Dr. Abd al-Karim Najam, chairman of the conference's organizing committee**, told Ma'an TV that the program to understand the Zionist story by disassembling the parts and analyzing them had been

---

alongside the Caliphate and Byzantium, was one of the strongest powers in the eastern Mediterranean. According to contemporary Jewish and Muslim sources, the Khazars, or some of them, adopted Judaism as their religion. How many of them converted, and when and why, are still subjects of academic controversy.

<sup>4</sup> Araunah was a Biblical figure and the story is found in II Samuel 24 18-25

authorized by Fatah. He claimed the Zionist story was "fake" and based on the Torah [the first five books of the Old Testament], and the Zionists' only objective in spreading it was to "occupy the land of the Palestinians" (Ma'an TV YouTube channel, June 30, 2021).



Dr. Abd al-Karim Najam interviewed by Ma'an TV (Ma'an TV YouTube channel, June 30, 2021).

## Similar Statements Made by Mahmoud Abbas in the Past

- ▶ It was not the first time the Palestinian leadership had twisted Jewish history and spread inaccuracies about the Jews by distorting names, changing dates and also inserting anti-Semitic themes. Their overall objective is to **delegitimize the existence of the Jews as a people and deny their connections to the Land of Israel** on the one hand, and to **strengthen Palestinian nationalism and establish the concept of the Palestinians' exclusive "right" to the Land of Israel** on the other.
- ▶ **On April 30, 2018**, the 23<sup>rd</sup> Palestinian National Council conference was held in Ramallah to discuss "Jerusalem and defending Palestinian legitimacy."<sup>5</sup> **Mahmoud Abbas** devoted the first 20 minutes of his opening speech for a "history lesson" dealing with **negating and rejecting the connection between the Jews and the Land of Israel**. He included **anti-Semitic themes**, apparently to serve his political claims, including the claim that the Europeans hated the Jews because of their social and banking activities, including charging interest on loans (Wafa, April 30 2018).
- ▶ According to Mahmoud Abbas, the establishment of the State of Israel was a "colonialist project," behind which were Christian countries which hated the Jews and wanted to get rid of them while sowing fear in the Arab countries. He also gave his own version of the Jewish

<sup>5</sup> For further information, see the May 3, 2018 bulletin, "'History lecture' by Mahmoud Abbas: At the opening of the PNC session, Mahmoud Abbas delivered a speech of fake history and anti-Semitism."

Ashkenazi roots in Europe, quoting a "Jewish historian" who said the Khazar Kingdom adopted Judaism, and when the kingdom later collapsed, the Khazars emigrated to Europe. Therefore, he said, those called Ashkenazi Jews are actually Khazars and not related to Abraham, Isaac or Jacob, the Patriarchs of the Jewish people. He also compared the fate of the Jews in Europe to that of the Jews in the Arab countries, falsely claiming that during their 1,400-year history the Jews living among Arabs had not been attacked "even once" (Wafa, April 30 2021).

► Mahmoud Abbas claimed he had provided a historical survey in response to the "incorrect story Israel is trying to market." To make his statement more credible, he also claimed that everything he said was based on books written by Jews. He ended his "history lesson" by calling for a two-state solution, proclaiming, "We don't say, let's expel them. [We say,] let us live with them on the foundation of two states" (Wafa, April 30, 2021).



**Mahmoud Abbas opens the Palestinian National Council conference in Ramallah  
(Wafa YouTube channel, April 30, 2018)**

► On **December 13, 2017**, Mahmoud Abbas attended **an Organization of Islamic Cooperation summit conference** to discuss Jerusalem, held in **Istanbul**. Its objective was to respond to Trump's December 6, 2017 decision to recognize Jerusalem as the capital of the State of Israel and to relocate the American embassy from Tel Aviv to Jerusalem. Mahmoud Abbas told the conference that Jerusalem was a Palestinian-Arabic-Islamic-Christian city and the eternal capital of the state of Palestine [sic]. He claimed the Land of Israel was the birthplace of Jesus, who was also a Palestinian. The Palestinians believed, he said, in their rights and in Allah's promise that Jerusalem ("this holy city"), since its founding by the Jebusites 5,000 years ago, had always been [sic] and would always be the capital of the independent state of Palestine and under Palestinian sovereignty. He stressed that no one knew better than the Jews how to distort religion and history, referring his listeners to the Torah where it was written, he claimed, that the Canaanites (i.e., the Palestinians)

existed before Abraham and had, he said, continued without interruption ever since (Extra News YouTube channel, December 13, 2017).

- An elaboration of all of the above ideas and others can be found in Mahmoud Abbas' book in Arabic, *The Beginning and End of Zionism*, published in 1977 with a preface by Yasser Arafat, and reprinted in 2011. It has apparently not been translated into English.



**Mahmoud Abbas at the Organization of Islamic Cooperation conference in Istanbul held to discuss Jerusalem (ExtraNews YouTube channel, December 13, 2017).**

## PA Textbooks

- PA school textbooks also deny the right of the Jews to the Land of Israel by distorting history with factually inaccurate statements. ITIC researchers examined almost 400 textbooks and teachers' guides published between 2013 and 2020, and more than 100 teachers' guides, most of them published in 2018, and found that one of the most prominent themes was the delegitimization of Israel and of Jewish presence in the Land of Israel, including the denial of the existence of Jewish holy sites. The books stridently deny a Jewish past in the region, calling Jewish history "myths" and refusing to recognize Jerusalem as a city holy to the Jews. The books have been newly edited to delete former references in history books referring to Jewish history in the Land of Israel in ancient times.

- For example:

"...[The occupier] has built for himself an artificial entity that derives its identity and the legitimacy of its existence from tales, legends and false visions, and has tried through various methods and ways to create live material evidence for these legends, or archaeological and architectural proofs that would confirm their truth and substantiality, but in vain"

(Arabic Language – Academic Path, Grade 10, Part 2 (2019) p. 68).

أَرْضَهُ، وَشَرَّدَ أَبْنَاءَهُ، وَنَهَبَ تَرَوَاتِهِ، وَشَوَّهَ هُوِيَّتَهُ، وَبَنَى لِنَفْسِهِ كِيَانًا مُصْطَنَعًا يَسْتَمِدُّ هُوِيَّتَهُ، وَشَرْعِيَّةَ  
وُجُودِهِ مِنْ حِكَايَاتٍ، وَأَسَاطِيرَ، وَأَخْيَلَةٍ، حَاوَلَ بِأَسَالِيبَ وَطُرُقٍ شَتَّى إِيجَادَ شَوَاهِدَ مَادِّيَّةٍ حَيَّةٍ عَلَى  
هَذِهِ الْأَسَاطِيرِ، أَوْ أُدْلَةَ اثْرِيَّةٍ مَعْمَارِيَّةٍ، تُثَبِّتُ صِحَّتَهَا وَمُصَدِّقَاتِهَا، وَلَكِنْ دُونَ جَدْوَى.

"Jerusalem is an Arab city built by our Arab ancestors thousands of years ago. Jerusalem is a holy city to Muslims and Christians"

(National and Social Upbringing, Grade 3, Part 1 (2019) p. 29).

الْقُدْسُ مَدِينَةٌ عَرَبِيَّةٌ بَنَاهَا أَجْدَادُنَا الْعَرَبُ مِنْذُ آلَافِ السِّنِينَ.  
الْقُدْسُ مَدِينَةٌ مُقَدَّسَةٌ عِنْدَ الْمُسْلِمِينَ وَالْمَسِيحِيِّينَ.



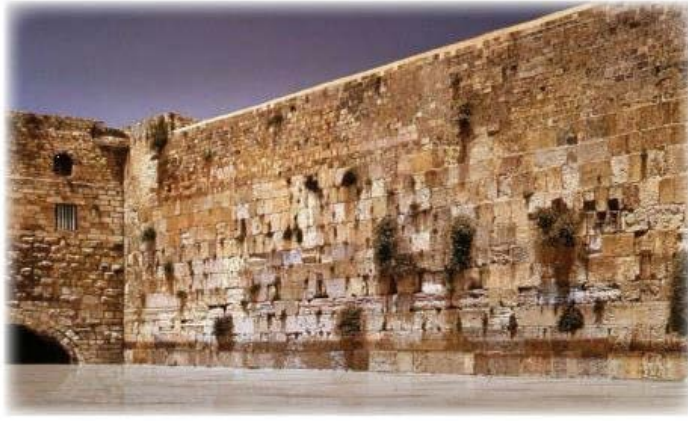
"...Even if the enemy conducts false, charged [archaeological] excavations of its baseless history and erects on its land a false heritage and findings supported by the force of dictatorship..." "...thus [Jerusalem] will remain sacrosanct in the perception of the [Palestinian/Arab] nation, far beyond the wretchedness of the fact of twisted narratives, stolen history and the hold of the invaders who spare no effort to falsify history, market illusions and give free rein to the tools of destruction, to distort geography"

**(Arab Language 1: study, grammar, poetic meter and expression – academic course, 12th grade, 2019, pages 39 and 40).**

وإن حَفَرَ الأعداءَ في تاريخها أُخاديدَ كاذبة، وأدعاءاتٍ باطلة، وأقاموا فوق  
 ترابها تراثاً مُزيفاً، وواقعاً مدعوماً بالقوة والجبروت.  
 ربوعها؛ لتظلّ في وعي الأمة مقدّسة تترفع عن بؤس الأمر الواقع، والزوايات  
 المشوهة، والتواريخ المغتصبة، وقبضة الغزاة الذين لا يألون جهداً في تزييف  
 التاريخ، وتسويق الأوهام، وإطلاق العنان لآلات الدمار كي تُشوّه الجغرافية،

"**The al-Buraq Wall:** The wall is named for al-Buraq [the mythical beast which, according to Muslim tradition, carried Muhammad on his night journey from Mecca to Jerusalem and from there to heaven] which carried the Prophet on his back and which Muhammad tethered to the wall, hence its name. The al-Buraq Wall is part of the Western Wall of al-Aqsa mosque and Muslims have the exclusive right to it".

**(Islamic Education, 5th grade textbook, part 1, 2019, page 63).**



### حائط البراق

إضاءة: سُمِّي حائطُ البراقِ بهذا الاسم؛ نسبةً إلى البراقِ الَّذِي حملَ الرَّسولُ ﷺ في رحلةِ الإسراءِ والمعراجِ، وحائطُ البراقِ جزءٌ من السورِ الغربيِّ للمسجدِ الأقصى وهو حقٌّ خالصٌ للمسلمين وحدهم.

**The Western Wall of the Second Temple of the Jews in Jerusalem (516 BCE to 70 CE), constructed before the inception of Islam (7<sup>th</sup> century CE).**