

## Written evidence from IMPACT-se (IPC0005)

### 1. Introduction

- 1.1 Founded in 1998, [The Institute for Monitoring Peace and Cultural Tolerance in School Education](#) (IMPACT-se) is a leading research and policy organisation in the field of textbook analysis in the Middle East North Africa (MENA) region. Using UNESCO-derived standards of peace and cultural tolerance as a [benchmark](#), we review textbooks and other materials included in the national curriculum, analysing how children are being educated in relation to religion, culture, human rights, inclusion and the Other. The findings are shared with governments and decision-makers in the region and are harnessed to encourage peace, equality, tolerance, promote minority rights, and the rejection of hatred in school materials.
- 1.2 School education is key to fostering the development of peaceful, tolerant, and stable societies of the future. The textbooks used in classrooms are a guiding force in influencing the views and values of countless children. Too often, textbooks are used to teach and formalize skewed historical narratives, hatred of the Other, inequality, and extremism. Textbooks are unique in their reflection of the national priorities, ideas and values with which governments and rulers wish to shape society. As such, they are an important indicator of societal and national trends, such as the enthusiasm for realizing a two-state solution and the prospects of lasting peace for Israel and the Palestinians, including the character and ambitions of post-war Gaza.

### 2. Israeli textbooks

- 2.1 There are a number of independent schools in Israel, especially in ultra-Orthodox Jewish communities and in Arab communities. However, the majority of Israeli children learn in State or State-Religious schools. In these schools it is [obligatory](#) to teach the Israeli Ministry of Education-mandated core curriculum.
- 2.2 The Ministry of Education core curriculum mandates the use of textbooks on civics and history. These include material directly addressing the Arab-Israeli conflict, the peace process, Palestinian identity, and other issues impacting students' readiness for peace and coexistence.
- 2.3 IMPACT-se [regularly reviews](#) and analyses these textbooks. The [most recent report](#) covers 107 textbooks taught at State and State-Religious schools approved by the Israeli Ministry of Education for the 2022-23 academic year. These include the entire corpus of the eight state-approved civics textbooks (from which schools could choose), as well as the majority of history textbooks addressing the periods of the Arab-Israeli conflict.
- 2.4 Key findings of this report included the following:
- The curricula are generally vehicles for teaching peace and tolerance, beginning with individual awareness.
  - Textbooks mostly educate students for tangible peace, drawing upon secular and religious

- sources, protest movements, foundational documents and laws, art, and poetry.
- Peace is envisioned within Israeli society and between Israel, Arab countries, and Palestinians.
  - Much of the researched curricula teach the Palestinian experience and perspective.
  - The curricula encourage self-reflection on historical traumas and inequities in relation to Palestinians. Historic acts by pre-state actors/organisations and individual Israelis, labeled acts of terror in textbooks, are condemned.
  - Many maps acknowledge localities of Palestinians and Israeli Arabs, mark the pre-1967 Green Line, and point to territories controlled by the Palestinian Authority.

### 3. Palestinian Authority textbooks

- 3.1 The Palestinian Authority (PA) conducted an overhaul of its authorized curriculum between 2016-18. The entire textbook corpus was revised in all grades and subjects. This was the first full restructuring of the curriculum since 2000, following the Oslo Accords. There were expectations that the new curriculum would be more moderate as compared to previous curricula taught between 2000 and 2016. The revised curriculum has subsequently been introduced in full to Palestinian primary and secondary schools.
- 3.2 IMPACT-se has [closely analysed](#) the textbooks which comprise the new PA curriculum and regularly reviews them. IMPACT-se has examined the entire corpus of over 1000 textbooks published since September 2016 and found the new PA curriculum to be more radical than those previously taught, with a clear deterioration in content meeting [UNESCO standards](#).
- 3.3 The textbooks have not been updated since IMPACT-se's last significant [report](#) on the PA curriculum was published in May 2021, covering 222 textbooks. However, a number of additional materials have since been published by the PA which have also been [reviewed](#).
- 3.4 IMPACT-se analyses have consistently found that PA textbooks are characterized by being openly antisemitic and encouraging violence, *jihad* and martyrdom. Peace itself is not taught as preferable or even possible. In contrast to the pre-2016 curriculum, IMPACT-se found major new developments worthy of concern:
- Complete removal of all pre-existing content discussing peace agreements, summits, negotiations, and proposals supporting a two-state solution with Israel, acknowledgment of historical Jewish presence in the land of Israel and labeling the name "Israel" on a map (See report [here](#)). The exception is a cursory mention of the Oslo Accords in which former PA Chairman Yasser Arafat's letter to Israel's former Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin has been doctored to remove Arafat's call for a new era of peace and coexistence, while clauses from

the Accords were deliberately diluted.

- An increase in systematic insertions of teaching materials that incite violence, glorify acts of terror and terrorists, and encourage *jihad* and martyrdom. This has been executed across all grades and subjects in a more extensive and sophisticated manner, with problematic content extending even into maths and science.
- An increase in antisemitic material, repeating and encouraging age-old damaging stereotypes of Jews as controlling, powerful and duplicitous. Such material has also included denigration of Judaism as a religion, at times characterizing it as 'murderous.' Meanwhile, Israel is demonized and its very existence denied.

3.5 The PA has been uncompromising in its refusal to make positive changes to its curriculum, with senior officials publicly expressing unwillingness to take action:

- Former Palestinian PM Shtayyeh [declared](#) in a cabinet speech that the "curriculum will not be surrendered" and that the Palestinian Authority would finance the [printing of textbooks](#) by reallocating funds for water, electricity and communication systems, if foreign aid is conditioned on revisions to the curriculum.
- PA curriculum chief at the Ministry of Education, Tharwat Zaid, [told Al-Quds Newspaper](#) in March 2022 that the Palestinian Authority rejects the findings of a June 2021 report on PA textbooks commissioned and funded by the EU which found materials that are hateful, antisemitic, praise violence, protract the conflict, and reject peace-making. The EU report was the subject of a [Westminster Hall debate](#) in June 2021.
- PA Foreign Minister Al-Maliki [told](#) official PA radio station 'Voice of Palestine' in March 2022 that the PA will not amend its curriculum in exchange for releasing frozen EU funds over demands to condition funding on a curricula reform to remove hate and antisemitism.

#### 4. UNRWA education

4.1 The United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA) operates in multiple different areas, including Lebanon, Jordan, Syria, the West Bank, the Gaza Strip and Jerusalem. It chooses to teach the PA curriculum in the 370 UNRWA-run schools across the Gaza Strip, West Bank and Jerusalem's UNRWA schools, educating over 320,000 students as of 2019, according to UNRWA's data.

4.2 In addition to teaching the Palestinian Authority curriculum, an IMPACT-se [report](#) analyzed additional teaching materials produced by UNRWA's field education departments and schools, branded with the Agency's logo used during the current academic school year. It found that many of these teaching materials glorify terrorism, encourage martyrdom, demonize Israelis, and incite antisemitism.

- 4.3 A [report](#) published in March 2023 identified 133 UNRWA educators and staff who were found to promote hate and violence on social media, and an additional 82 UNRWA teachers and other staff affiliated with over 30 UNRWA schools involved in drafting, supervising, approving, printing, and distributing hateful content to students.
- 4.4 In November 2023, in the wake of the 7 October massacre, a [report](#) detailed how UNRWA staff celebrated the massacre and demonstrated the links between UNRWA textbooks and 7 October. The report also details that at least 100 Hamas terrorists are graduates of UNRWA schools. A further [report](#) highlighted the dual role of five UNRWA school heads who are also active members of Hamas' military wing.
- 4.5 IMPACT-se detailed these and further findings in both personal presentations and a [245-page dossier](#), to the UN Independent Review Group led by UN Undersecretary-General and former French FM Catherine Colonna, as part of the 2024 investigation into UNRWA's neutrality violations.
- 4.6 UNRWA has held almost none of its employees accountable for the production of teaching materials which glorify terrorism, encourage martyrdom, demonize Israelis, and incite antisemitism. Very little evidence exists which supports UNRWA's [claim](#) that it employs a zero tolerance approach towards hate speech and incitement to violence.

## 5. Regional comparison

- 5.1 Closely monitoring the production of new textbooks across the MENA region and analysing these new materials, IMPACT-se has noted an unmistakable positive trend over the past few years. In the countries listed below, textbooks have been revised and now more often embrace coexistence, diversity and peace. Similarly, levels of antisemitism have been reduced and in some cases eradicated from textbooks, while Israel is less often portrayed as an enemy. By contrast, the PA's refusal to revise its textbooks increasingly place it as a regional outlier in this respect. UNRWA's steadfast refusal to reform its education system places it in a similar position. At the same time, the Abraham Accords have brought countries closer together across the region, demonstrating the clear connection between the content of textbooks and the prospects for peace.
- 5.2 [Saudi Arabia](#) has eliminated practically all antisemitism from its national school curriculum over a four-year period. References to the "Israeli enemy" or the "Zionist enemy" have been replaced. Meanwhile, the promotion of violent *jihad* and other extremist material has also been eliminated. This stands in stark contrast to previous Saudi textbooks, which had formerly been noted for their high volume of anti-Jewish and extremist material.
- 5.3 In the [United Arab Emirates](#), textbooks have been revised to emphasize tolerance, coexistence, and friendly relations with non-Muslims. The curriculum does not contain antisemitism, the Abraham Accords are taught, and anti-Israeli material has been moderated. IMPACT-se is working with the UAE Ministry of Education on aspects of the curriculum, including the incorporation of Holocaust educational content for the first time.

- 5.4 In [Morocco](#), the curriculum now emphasizes coexistence between Muslims and Jews, including portrayals of non-Jewish Moroccans being hosted for celebrations of the Jewish Sabbath and festivals. Students learn that the Jewish community is an inseparable part of Morocco, and current government efforts to preserve Jewish heritage are highlighted. Textbooks describe Jewish history, culture, and contributions to Moroccan society.
- 5.5 In [Egypt](#), a year-by-year reform of textbooks has seen major improvements in attitudes toward Jews and Judaism. Revised elementary school textbooks do not include traditional, harmful antisemitic stereotypes which were previously taught to Egyptian children.

## **6. Impact on the prospects for lasting peace**

- 6.1 The government believes that the two-state solution is the best framework to deliver peace for both Israelis and Palestinians. As such, it is committed to supporting the viability of the two-state solution, [including through programmes](#) which strengthen the governance structures of the Palestinian Authority and increase support for a peaceful resolution. The PA's intransigence over its curriculum, and insistence on publishing textbooks which encourage hate and discourage peace, can only seriously undermine the government's efforts.
- 6.2 While the PA continues to use textbooks to promote antisemitism and incite violence, at the same time removing all references to the peace process, Palestinian school children will increasingly regard violence and conflict as a better, more desirable and more realistic outcome than the two-state solution.
- 6.3 UNRWA continues to use PA textbooks throughout its schools in Gaza and the West Bank. UNRWA staff continue to produce, distribute and teach additional material which glorify terrorism, encourage martyrdom, demonize Israelis, and incite antisemitism. UNRWA staff also continue to encourage, support and even participate in acts of terror and extreme violence against Israelis. As a result, Palestinian children attending UNRWA schools are exposed to extremism, hatred and the outright rejection of peace in favour of violence.
- 6.4 The government has taken appropriate steps in response. In October 2021, it [announced](#) that it has ended all its direct funding of Palestinian education. The announcement came in a written response to a Parliamentary question asking the minister about government plans to review the allocation of funds, following the publication of the EU report into the Palestinian curriculum that found multiple examples of antisemitism, hate, and encouragement to martyrdom in the textbooks. While not linking the funding cut directly to the report and alluding to the wider aid cuts being instituted in the UK, then Minister of State for Middle East and North Africa James Cleverly stated that funding of Palestinian Authority education and health worker salaries have indeed been suspended.
- 6.5 Other countries and multilateral entities have also ended or suspended funds to the Palestinian Authority over concerns regarding the content of Palestinian textbooks:

- The European Union froze all funding to the PA of over 220 Million Euros in April 2021 for 13 months due to problematic content in textbooks, following an EU-funded report that found “antisemitic narratives and glorification of violence” in the curriculum, and a resolution passed by the EU Parliament in May 2021 to condition funding to the PA until the curriculum fully adheres to UNESCO standards. In July 2024, the European Commission [agreed](#) an aid package to the PA, conditioned upon substantive reforms including changes to textbooks.
- Norway [announced](#) in June 2020 that more than half of the year’s [planned funding](#) to the Palestinian Ministry of Education had [been withheld](#) until tangible “positive changes are seen in the Palestinian curriculum within a reasonable time”, and “will depend on the sufficient will and ability of the Palestinian Authority to improve the curriculum.”
- Belgium cut all direct bilateral financial support to the PA Ministry of Education in September 2018, and ended ties with the Ministry over glorification of terrorists and terrorism through education using Belgium funds.

6.6 The government has correctly previously expressed concerns over its funding to UNRWA and reconsidered its financial commitment. In January 2024, the government suspended aid over [allegations](#) that UNRWA staff were involved in the October 7 attack against Israel. Like other UNRWA donor nations, UK funding was [resumed](#) during 2024. However, other donor nations have continued to withhold or curb with funding to UNRWA due to specific concerns regarding UNRWA’s education system and its fostering of hatred and violence.

- In April 2024, Japan’s government [pledged](#) that its UNRWA funding in Gaza would be limited solely to “Provision of relief supplies for women and infants,” and in the West Bank to “Provision of medical supplies.” Pointedly, education was excluded from this funding.
- Switzerland’s House of Representatives’ Foreign Affairs Committee [conditioned](#) a partial resumption in financial support for UNRWA in April 2024, on a guarantee that the money will only be used for emergency and humanitarian aid. Again, education was excluded from this funding.

## 7. Suggested actions for the government

7.1 While the government’s decision in 2021 to halt direct funding of Palestinian education is a key and commendable step, additional actions are required in order to effectively counter the reality that PA textbooks promote violence, antisemitism and extremism, reducing the prospects of implementing the two-state solution. The following actions are advised:

- The government is advised to increasingly raise the issue of textbook reform in bilateral talks with the Palestinian Authority. Given the importance of the issue to the future of Palestinian society and the prospects for the two-state solution, textbook reform should be a key item on the agenda in talks with the PA at any level.

- The government is advised to take a leading diplomatic role to advocate for reform of Palestinian Authority textbooks in the United Nations and other appropriate international forums. Such a role would help to place this key issue further towards the forefront of the global agenda, while strengthening the UK's role as a leading advocate for the two-state solution and a lasting peace.

7.2 While the government's decision in 2024 to temporarily freeze funding to UNRWA indicated a necessary reconsideration of UNRWA's role in the conflict, a specific focus is required on the role played by UNRWA's education system. The UK should refrain from supporting UNRWA schools which perpetuate hatred, encourage violence and diminish the chances of lasting peace. The following actions are advised:

- The government is advised to carefully note and internally discuss its funding of UNWRA ([£7 million](#) was pledged for UNRWA in December 2024) in the context of UNWRA's use of Palestinian Authority textbooks in UNWRA schools, and the development of other [inciteful materials](#) which UNWRA staff develop and teach to Palestinian children.
- Should the government decide to allocate further funding towards UNRWA, the government is advised to strongly consider conditioning such aid upon specific reforms to UNRWA's education system. Such conditions could include an agreement to teach a revised version of the PA curriculum, which would exclude current material that fosters hate and encourages violence.
- The government is advised to take a leading diplomatic role in the United Nations to advocate for reform of UNRWA's education system, in order that it proactively teach and encourage peace and tolerance. Such a role would help to strengthen the UK's role as a leading advocate for a two-state solution and a lasting peace.

**10<sup>th</sup> December 2024**