

Do Palestinians Teach Their Children to Hate?

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- Professor Nathan J. Brown, PhD

About Nathan Brown

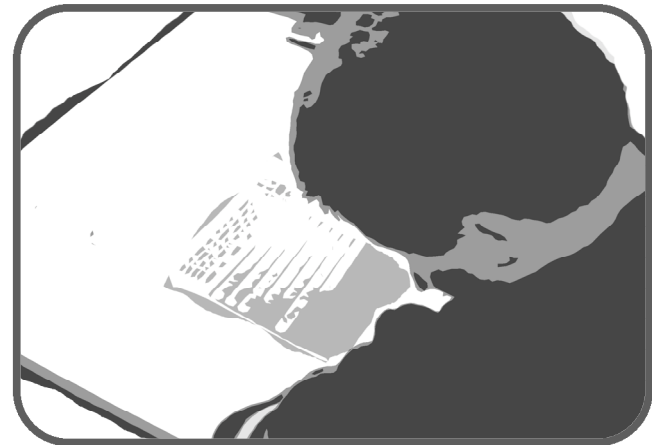
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An investigation of the Palestinian education system



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DO PALESTINIANS TEACH THEIR CHILDREN TO HATE?

An investigation of the Palestinian education system

*Americans are often led to believe that Palestinian textbooks teach hatred and violence, but rarely are presented with concrete evidence. **Nathan J. Brown**, a professor of political science and international affairs at George Washington University, undertook a comprehensive investigation of the Palestinian curriculum and textbooks to discover the truth about this oft-repeated criticism. Below are excerpts from Brown's report entitled Democracy, History, and the Contest over the Palestinian Curriculum, which was prepared for the Adam Institute, November 2001¹.*

The entire report is available at

www.geocities.com/nathanbrown1/Adam_Institute_Palestinian_textbooks.htm

Almost any discussion of education in the Middle East posits it as part of the problem rather than part of the solution. Those who seek peace, democracy, or economic development generally claim that existing educational institutions and practices stand in their way. Palestinian education is particularly notable for the number and variety of its detractors. Outside the country, critics charge that it incites rather than educates; Palestinian critics claim that education does little to foster democratic and productive citizens.

The external and internal critics may be placing an unrealistic burden on what any curriculum and cadre of teachers can accomplish. Palestinian political and economic realities are often grim, and schools hardly have a monopoly on communicating ways to interpret such realities, especially in matters that are so deeply felt and encountered on a daily basis. Still, the critics charge, the Palestinian educational system, and especially the curriculum, exacerbates existing problems...

...[T]he Palestinian curriculum is not a war curriculum; while highly nationalistic, it does not incite hatred, violence, and anti-Semitism. It cannot be described as a “peace curriculum” either, but the charges against it are often wildly exaggerated or inaccurate...

After 1948, the West Bank was annexed to Jordan and Gaza was administered by Egypt. Accordingly, West Bank schools followed the Jordanian curriculum, while Gazan schools adopted the Egyptian. In 1967, Israel occupied both areas and maintained the existing curricula for Palestinian schools. It did attempt unsuccessfully to bring its own curriculum into Jerusalem, and it also reviewed Jordanian and Egyptian books, censoring material that it found objectionable. In 1994, Palestinian education in the West Bank (including, to a limited and unacknowledged extent, Jerusalem) and Gaza was transferred to the new Palestinian National Authority (PNA). The PNA immediately established a “Curriculum Development Center” to formulate its own approach. While the Center was working, two interim measures were taken. First, the Jordanian and Egyptian curricula were restored temporarily in their entirety. Second, a supplementary series of texts covering *National Education* was hastily written for grades one through six to compensate for the non-Palestinian nature of the temporary curriculum...

Any treatment of Palestinian education must confront at the outset the oft-repeated claims that Palestinian textbooks instill hatred of Israel and Jews. In a sense, this issue is at most tangential to this paper, which focuses on internal Palestinian politics and portrays textbooks as outcomes of domestic struggle more than producers of international conflict. But virtually every discussion in English on Palestinian education repeats the charge that Palestinian textbooks incite students against Jews and Israel. It may therefore come as a surprise to readers that the books authored under the PNA are largely innocent of these charges. What is more remarkable than any statements they make on the subject is their silence—the PNA-authored books often stubbornly avoid treating anything controversial regarding current Palestinian national identity, forcing them into awkward omissions and gaps. The first generation of Palestinian textbooks written in 1994, the *National Education* series, make no mention of any location as Palestinian outside of the territories occupied by Israel in 1967; those books go to some lengths to avoid saying anything about Israel at all and the few exceptions

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Pressure on Campus How pro-Israeli students and organizations have worked to prevent free academic inquiry at American universities. By former Congressman and author Paul Findley.

Jewish Fundamentalism in Israel A description of Jewish supremacist groups in Israel, first published in *The Nation*. By Israeli author David Hirst.

Christians Discriminated Against by Israel A report on Israeli policies and actions regarding Christians. By former *Time Magazine* Senior Editor and Jerusalem Bureau Chief Donald Neff

Do Palestinians Teach Their Children to Hate? A scholarly study of Palestinian textbooks and curricula. By George Washington Professor Nathan Brown. (The quick answer: no.)

Einstein's Letter to the New York Times A 1948 letter signed by Einstein, Hannah Arendt and other prominent thinkers opposing Menachem Begin's "terrorism." Begin later became Prime Minister of Israel.

The Information Blockade: The Prism Between Middle Eastern Reality and Americans A first-hand account of the perils of filming – and trying to air – an honest documentary on Israel. By prize-winning filmmaker and Ohio State Professor Tom Hayes

Iraq, Palestine, and the Israel Lobby “Connecting the dots,” by Former Yale Professor Mazin Qumsiyeh; and “The Debate that Never Happened,” by Mideast analyst Jeffrey Blankfort, co-founder of the Labor Committee on the Middle East.

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Reflecting on our Relationship with Israel A former 11-term Republican Congressman provides a hard-hitting assessment of the consequences of US policies. By Paul Findley.

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Biased Thinktanks Dictate US Foreign Policy The interlocking pro-Israel network that has come to dominate US foreign policy-making in the Middle East. By Brian Whittaker of the UK Guardian.

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- with the Arab-Israeli conflict contain the same myths and hostility." (See "The European Union and the Middle East Peace Process" Gerald M. Steinberg, *Jerusalem Letter*, No. 418, 15 November 1999. Steinberg's description of the books published by 1999 is unsupportable even by the tendentious standards of the Center.
- 17 Steve Israel, letter to *The New York Times*, 10 June 2001, Section 4, p. 14.
- 18 Two Palestinians (Khalil Mahshi and Fouad Moughrabi) looked for editions in the libraries in Ramallah and found the editions there--the ones that would have been available to the textbook authors--did not contain the banner. I located an edition published in 1991 that also lacked the banner (Mustafa Murad Dabbagh, *Biladuna Filastin*, Kafr Qara` : Dar al-Huda, 1991). In short, while it may or may not be true that one edition of the book contained the banner, most editions—including the one authors most probably relied on—do not. And the Center makes other mistakes: it claims the book is dedicated to "those who are battling for the expulsion of the enemy from our land!" In fact, the dedication is to "those who strove for maintaining the Arabness of Palestine."
- 19 Raphael Israeli, "Education, Identity, State Building and the Peace Process: Educating Palestinian Children in the Post-Oslo Era," *Terrorism and Political Violence* 12 (1, Spring 2000), pp. 79-94.
- 20 Shlomo Sharan, "Israel and the Jews in the Schoolbooks of the Palestinian Authority," in Arie Shihv, *Israel and a Palestinian State: Zero-Sum Game* (Shaarei Tikva: Ariel Center for Policy Research, 2001), available at <http://www.acpr.org.il/publications/pa/pp58.doc>, p. 57.

are hardly pejorative. The second generation of books—issued beginning in 2000—breaks some of that silence but with neither the consistency nor the stridency that critics of the textbooks allege.

Then where do persistent reports of incitement in Palestinian textbooks come from? Virtually all can be traced back to the work of a single organization, the "Center for Monitoring the Impact of Peace." The Center claims that its purpose is "to encourage the development and fostering of peaceful relations between peoples and nations, by establishing a climate of tolerance and mutual respect founded on the rejection of violence as a means to resolving conflicts."² Critics charge that the Center's real purpose is to launch attacks on the Palestinian National Authority, and it would be difficult to contest such a conclusion. They point to the identity of the Center's first director, Itamar Marcus, to support their suspicions.³

The Center's own reports suggest such suspicions are well-founded. The Center began operation by issuing its first report in 1998 on Palestinian textbooks that might best be described as tendentious and highly misleading. When the PNA issued a new series of books for grades one and six in 2000, the Center rushed out its second report that passed over significant changes quite quickly before presenting its allegations of "delegitimization of Israel's existence," implicit "seeking of Israel's destruction," "defamation of Israel," and "encouraging militarism and violence." However, in contrast to the alarm and alacrity with which it studied Palestinian textbooks, the Center's work on Israeli textbooks showed a far more generous spirit and proceeded at a far more leisurely pace, taking years rather than months. The report on Israeli books followed a very different method: rather than quoting example after example of offending passages with little historical context or explanation (a method that would have produced a very damning report indeed), the report on Israeli textbooks is nuanced and far more careful. Incendiary quotations are explained, analyzed and contextualized in the report on Israeli books; they are listed with only brief and sensationalist explanations in the reports on Palestinian books. In short, the Center is fair, balanced, and understanding for Israeli textbooks but tendentious on Palestinian books.

The Center's work has been widely circulated: its reports are the source for virtually any quotation in English from the Palestinian curriculum. Indeed, its influence has begun to be felt in policy circles, and has informed

congressional and presidential statements in the United States, numerous newspaper columns, and—more recently—a decision by some external donors to cut off funds for Palestinian education. Recently some European parliamentarians have begun to press their governments and the European Union as a whole, and an Israeli cabinet minister has spoken of taking the issue to the United Nations. Since the Center's reports have dominated the public debate with considerable effect and little contestation, it makes some sense to examine them.

While often highly misleading and always unreliable, most of the contents of the Center's reports are not fabricated. Clearly false statements are rare, though when they do occur they are far from minor. For instance, the Center's first report on Palestinian textbooks, issued in 1998, included the statement that: "PA TV is a division of the Palestinian Authority Ministry of Education," which allowed the report to saddle the Palestinian educational establishment with any statement broadcast on Palestinian television. The statement was false, however. In its second comprehensive report on Palestinian textbooks, issued in 2000 on the new books for the first and sixth grades, the Center claims that "the PA has rejected international calls" to modify books for the other grades. In fact, as will become clear, the plan to replace the textbooks in question was as old as the PNA itself and was proceeding according to a well-published schedule when the Center's report was issued. Several lesser errors occur throughout the Center's work.

But the real problems with the Center's reports lie elsewhere. In particular, three sets of flaws characterize its work (and much of the public debate about Palestinian textbooks more generally). First, the Center generally ignores any historical context in a way that renders some of its claims sharply misleading. In its 1998 report, the Center adduced numerous incendiary statements about Israel and Jews from books in use in Palestinian schools. The statements quoted were accurate. Some indeed were highly offensive to Jews and sharply anti-Israeli.⁴ Yet they came not from books authored by Palestinians but from Egyptian and Jordanian books used in Gaza and the West Bank, respectively.⁵ The books were distributed by the PNA, to be sure, but they antedated its establishment. (The Center's report does hold the PNA responsible for distributing the Egyptian and Jordanian books and therefore holds Palestinians responsible for the content. Here it displays an

them extremely negatively. (A completely fair account here should mention that the offensive verse in the song was not taught to the students in my son's class after my wife and I complained to the teacher, who apologized profusely and expressed extreme embarrassment that she had circulated a song with such words.) A full and fair-minded treatment of Israeli textbooks is forthcoming from Elie Podeh, *The Arab-Israeli Conflict in Israeli History Textbooks* (Westport: Bergin and Garvey, 2001).

- 10 Without a hint of irony, Krauthammer simultaneously denounced the Israeli changes, favorably citing a book that covered the issue "in rather great and shocking details." See the transcript of remarks delivered at the American Enterprise Institute, "Is the Israeli/Palestinian Peace Process Dead, and if so, What's Next," 6 November 2000, www.aei.org/past_event/conf001106.htm.
- 11 Berl Wein, "Illusions," *Jerusalem Post*, 26 October 2000.
- 12 Christina Lamb, "Intifada: The Next Generation," *Sunday Telegraph*, 15 October 2000, p. 26
- 13 Commission of the European Communities, "Statement on behalf of Commissioner Patten on press reports regarding alleged EC funding for text books used by the Palestinian Authority," press release, 27 April 2001. The statement came after a story in the *European Voice* on the textbook controversy.
- 14 "Hillary Clinton: Link PA Aid to End to Antisemitism," *Jerusalem Post* 26 September 2000.
- 15 The text of the letter can be found at <http://www.senate.gov/~clinton/news/2001/06/2001614111.html>.
- 16 Gerald Steinberg criticized European assistance and diplomacy for ineffectiveness in 1999, writing that "new Palestinian textbooks dealing

pro-Communist message because of the role of the Abraham Lincoln Brigade in the Spanish Civil War. Certainly the Center's logic could be used to cite any Israeli textbook mentioning Yitzhak Shamir as encouraging massacres of Palestinians and political assassinations of British and UN officials.

- 9 The Center eschews such a prosecutorial approach in its treatment of Israeli textbooks. Were it to be more consistent in its approach, it could easily (and, to some extent, unfairly) smear the efforts of Israeli educators. My own son's experience in a fourth-grade class in Tel Aviv can bear this out. He was given maps that included all the PNA territories in Israel and none that excluded them. (With Israel not having determined its borders or recognized Palestinian sovereignty, this is understandable, but the Center hardly approaches Palestinian textbooks with such sympathetic understanding). A unit on the history of the land included no significant material on the Palestinian population and the only treatment of Muslims (the Ottomans) was negative. A biblical text (Joshua) was presented that defined the borders promised to the Jews ambitiously covering much of Jordan and Syria. While the text itself could not be changed, the edition given to my son included notes designed to ensure the students understood the nature of these borders (the same book was reticent only when dealing with an incident involving a prostitute: the commentary indicated that the word "prostitute"—an unfortunately common playground epithet at my son's school—really meant "vegetable seller." In short, the edition showed embarrassment when the text mentioned sex, but not when it dealt with borders.) Perhaps most shocking, my son was given a song sheet during a unit on the history of the city of Tel Aviv that advocated beating and even the death of Arabs (the song lauded a guard for beating up Arabs and quoted him saying, "Get out of here, `Abd Allah, you should die, God willing, but just not in Tel Aviv.") My point here is not that Israeli textbooks are racist (my vague impression is that the secular educational establishment is to be commended for steadily growing sensitivity over how such matters are to be taught). I only wish to observe that a report using the same selective techniques as the Center could easily portray

odd double standard: it does not note that Israel has distributed the exact same books in East Jerusalem, removing only the cover. The only books that the Israelis refused to distribute after 1994 were those authored by the PNA—the *National Education* series—even though those books were free of the content that Israel objected to. The likely reason for this odd policy is that Palestinian sovereignty in Jerusalem—implied by using PNA-authored books—was far more problematic for Israel than anti-Semitism.)

By sharp contrast to the Egyptian and Jordanian books, the 1994 *National Education* series, actually authored by the PNA, verged on blandness. The first generation of books made no mention of any Palestinian area within the 1967 borders (the second generation of books—written after the Center's first report—reversed this policy). Indeed, the 1994 books went to some length to avoid any controversial matter whatsoever. An organization claiming to "monitor the impact of peace" might be expected to compare the older, non-Palestinian books with the newer, Palestinian ones. Indeed, such a task would seem basic to its mission. The Center goes beyond failing to live up to its name; its reports are written to obfuscate the distinction between the old and new books. It does not simply fail to note the change, but, in one of its rare falsehoods, the Center claims that in the 1994 series, Israel does not exist.⁶ (The treatment of Palestinian history in the 1994 books is extremely brief, but Israel is indeed referred to; remarkably, the 1994 texts resorts to awkward phrasing to avoid citing Israel in some negative contexts.) It is difficult to escape the conclusion that the Center was far more interested in criticizing the PNA than in an honest assessment of the changes produced in Palestinian education by the Oslo Accords.

The second problem with the Center's work is its prosecutorial style. Its reports offer little more than brief themes and then list statement after statement purporting to prove the point. Any evidence that contradicts the Center's harsh message is ignored, obscured, or dismissed, such as maps that clearly draw Palestinian governorates as covering only the West Bank and Gaza, an extended and laudatory treatment of Gandhi's nonviolence, or a tour of Palestinian cities that includes only those under PNA rule. Other evidence is interpreted inaccurately. For instance, a topographical map of Palestine (inserted most likely to avoid drawing any sensitive political issues regarding borders) is presented as a denial of Israel's existence. Many of the

selections included are presented in a highly tendentious manner: a unit on tolerance is criticized for omitting Jews, while a reading of the entire unit makes perfectly clear that its topic is tolerance within Palestinian society.⁷ 'Izz al-Din al-Qassam is mentioned in texts as a Palestinian national hero; the Center's 2000 report explains:

The primary terrorist organization operating against Israel since the signing of the Oslo Accords is the Hamas, whose members terrorized Israeli citizens with suicide attacks, primarily on buses. The terror wing of the group is called the "Az Aldin Al Kassam" squad, named after the terrorist who fought the British and Jews before the establishment of the State of Israel. The new PA school-book glorifies Kassam...

In essence, the Center provides a context for the mention of al-Qassam that, while accurate, is irrelevant to the text: it deliberately obscures how the text itself presents al-Qassam or how Palestinians would understand a reference to him. Al-Qassam was killed at the beginning of his attempt to organize a rebellion against the British mandate. Subsequent generations of Palestinians have been able to read various dimensions into his short career: for mainstream nationalists, he is a rebel against the British, for Islamists, a warrior for Islam, and for leftists, he is a mobilizer of the popular classes. To imply that mentioning al-Qassam is an implicit endorsement of suicide attacks and bus bombings is thus based on a hostile, inaccurate, and even dishonest reading—what matters is not whether the textbooks cite him but how they present him. Palestinian texts mention him only as a martyr in the struggle against British imperialism.⁸

In short, the purpose is clearly to indict the textbooks and the PNA rather than analyze and understand the content of the books. Were the Center to take a similar approach in other countries, including Israel, it could easily find comparable material.⁹

The final and perhaps the largest problem with the Center's work lies not simply with the reports themselves but in how they have been read. The Center's conclusions may be unsupported by the evidence it presents and undermined by the evidence it overlooks. But it does include some qualifications and elliptical wording that usually prevent its reports from outright falsehood. When its reports gain wider circulation, however, the buried

Marcus personally, see the document submitted by the PLO to the Mitchell Commission, "Third Submission of the Palestine Liberation Organization to the Sharm El-Sheikh Fact-Finding Committee," 3 April 2001, www.nad-plo.org/eye/Response%20to%20Israeli%20Submission.5.pdf, p. 22.

- 4 The report's method of listing large number of statements from the books led it to include all sorts of material under the anti-Israel rubric. For instance, any mention of a Palestinian character to Jerusalem was listed as questioning the Israeli nature of the city. Since Jerusalem was designated as a matter for final status negotiations, the idea that the Palestinians questioned Israeli annexation should have been unsurprising. What is more surprising—and unremarked in the report—is that all mentions of locations in Jerusalem in the Palestinian-authored books refer only to the Old City and a few Arab neighborhoods. If textbooks are taken as indications of negotiating positions—an implicit assumption of the report—then the Palestinians showed far more willingness to compromise on Jerusalem than Israel.
- 5 The Center's report does include some excerpts from the 1994 Palestinian-authored books but none can fairly be viewed as hostile to Israel or to Jews. The texts are examined in more detail below.
- 6 <http://www.edume.org/news/news1.htm>
- 7 My son attended a Tel Aviv school which celebrated "tolerance day," assuring all students that Israelis can be religious or secular, light-skinned or dark-skinned, and Jewish or Arab. Following the Center's methodology, such a unit might be lambasted for failing to include Palestinians who do not hold Israeli citizenship and for denying Palestinian identity (by not mentioning it).
- 8 To follow the Center's methodology, an American textbook from the late 1930s mentioning Abraham Lincoln might be seen as carrying a

adults often assume when addressing subjects they would prefer to avoid. In explaining the concept of species, one of the new books explains that animals that are not alike cannot “marry” and have children—a rather Victorian presentation. Discussions of sensitive political topics often show a similar reticence to sensitive topics...

In short, far from inciting schoolchildren, the books generally treat sensitive political questions as tangential. There are some exceptions to this rule, but not in any sustained way. Palestinian educators have decided not to supply either a coherent narrative or a set of conceptual tools for understanding such issues. History is presented with very different ends in mind...

Excerpted from “Democracy, History, and the Contest over the Palestinian Curriculum”

REFERENCES

- 1 I gratefully acknowledge the assistance and comments provided by the late Ibrahim Abu Lughod, Sam Kaplan, `Ali Jarbawi, Elie Podeh, Lara Friedman, David Matz, Khalil Mahshi, Isma`il Nujum, Maher Hashweh, Rif`at Sabah, and Fouad Moughrabi. This research was funded by a Fulbright grant and a grant from the United States Institute of Peace. The opinions expressed are solely my own and do not necessarily reflect the views of Fulbright or the USIP.
- 2 See the Center’s website, www.edume.org
- 3 An Israeli resident of the West Bank settlement of Efrat, Marcus previously lobbied to keep West Bank aquifers under Israeli control. His work on textbooks led Prime Minister Binyamin Netanyahu to appoint him to a joint committee with the Palestinians on incitement. He then went on to found an organization that searches Palestinian media for anti-Israeli and anti-Jewish statements, following a similar method to that followed for textbooks.

For an example of a criticism of the Center's work that focuses on

qualifications get lost. The Center’s 2000 report actually admitted that changes had occurred in the Palestinian-authored books but then attempted to undermine its own admission:

A few changes were noted in the new PA books. The open calls for Israel’s destruction found in the previous books are no longer present. However, given the de-legitimization of Israel’s existence, together with teachings such as the obligation to defend Islamic land, the seeking of Israel’s destruction has merely been shifted from the explicit to the implicit.

Another change is that certain overtly anti-Semitic references defining Jews and Israelis as “treacherous” or ‘the evil enemy’, common in the previous books, are likewise not present. However, given the books’ portrayal of Israel as a foreign colony that massacred and expelled Palestinians, the defamation of Israel continues even if the word “enemy” has been removed.

In short, the new books removed the earlier offensive material, but the Center acknowledged the change only by denying its significance. Thus it is not surprising when public references to the textbooks based on the Center’s report lose any subtlety and make erroneous claims about the new books. Charles Krauthammer claimed that since the signing of the Oslo Accords, the Palestinians had “intensified the propaganda, the antisemitism, in their pedagogy and in their media” and that while Israel had “assiduously” changed its textbooks to prepare for peace, “on the Palestinian side, the opposite was happening.”¹⁰ Rather than lauded for having removed offensive material, the Palestinians were criticized for introducing it. A *Jerusalem Post* columnist falsely claimed “The incitement to hatred of Jews and the destruction of Israel, which has always been part of the Palestinian school curriculum, was intensified.”¹¹ A spokesperson for Israeli settlers in the West Bank introduced the puzzling charge which would probably have made even the Center’s staff blush: “We teach our children to respect life, while they teach that if you die with Jewish blood on your hands you go to heaven and are fed with grapes by 15 virgins.”¹² The European Commission came under fire in the press for supporting the books (it did not, though some member states did support the Palestinian Curriculum Development Center), leading an exasperated spokesman to declare: “The Commission utterly rejects the promo-

tion of intolerance or hatred, as it rejects poor journalism..."¹³

The Palestinian textbooks were such a politically attractive target that even those who were better informed as to their content criticized them. Hillary Clinton, running for the U.S. Senate, criticized Palestinian textbooks in a way that buried her acknowledgement that the new first and sixth grade books, authored by the PNA itself, were different: "All future aid to the Palestinian Authority must be contingent on strict compliance with their obligation to change all the textbooks in all grades—not just two at a time."¹⁴ After her election, her comments lost even this subtlety: in June 2001 she joined with her fellow senator from New York, Charles Schumer, in a letter to President George Bush, introducing the false charge (clearly based on a Center report): "A book that is required reading for Palestinian six graders actually starts off stating, 'There is no alternative to destroying Israel.'"¹⁵ As the second intifada took on diplomatic as well as violent dimensions, the Israeli government cited textbooks as evidence of Palestinian bad faith and hostile intentions. Others held international donors responsible for not forcing changes or even for funding new sources of incitement.¹⁶

The Center's reports were the clear source for most of these charges, whether cited or not. A member of the United States Congress wrote to *The New York Times*:

According to the Center for Monitoring the Impact of Peace, today's sixth-grade Palestinian students are required to read the textbook "Our Country Palestine," which has a banner on the title page of Volume I that reads, "There is no alternative to destroying Israel."¹⁷

The charge was false, though it was widely repeated and even displayed in an advertising campaign by an organization calling itself (with unintended irony) "Jews for Truth Now." No textbook included such a phrase. The member of Congress and others had read the Center's carelessly-written report in a careless manner. The original report had actually claimed: "An old book introduced into the PA curriculum is filled with virulent anti-Semitism." It then claimed that there is a banner on the title page stating "There is no alternative to destroying Israel." The Center's claim was misread and may have been inaccurate. The book "Our Country Palestine" was

an old geographical guide to Palestine begun in the 1940s and published in some subsequent editions. Those looking for the supposed banner could not find it (nor could I). Certainly the edition available to the textbook authors did not include the phrase.¹⁸ Further, the claim that the book was introduced into the curriculum is highly misleading. Its author's evacuation from Jaffa in 1948 was described, and, at the end of the unit, students are given a suggested activity of looking up the name of their town or village in the book. To leap from this suggested activity to a charge of inculcating virulent anti-Semitism seems—to put it politely—curious indeed.

It was not merely members of Congress who were misled by careless reading of the Center's reports. Even sloppy academics were led astray. One analysis of Palestinian textbooks reproduced quotations from the Center's reports (without attribution), mistakenly claiming that all the texts came from Palestinian-authored books (whereas most came from the Egyptian and Jordanian books being phased out).¹⁹ An equally groundless, though far more bizarre analysis of Palestinian textbooks begins with wholesale (though unattributed) borrowings from the Center's reports and then adds:

Public acclaim, a non-ending orgy of sex and all the booze you can drink, constitute a powerful combination of incentives for igniting the imagination and motivation of pubescent youth, aged 12 and up. Along with the emotionally charged scenes of actually stoning Jews and Jewish property, what more is needed to convince them that killing Jews is a worthy and honorable vocation? The PA is certainly preparing a huge army for the future that, socially and psychologically, will be trained to commit unmitigated violence against Israel and the Jewish People on behalf of Islam, the Arabs and Palestine.²⁰

The vitriolic and often inaccurate criticisms of Palestinian textbooks should not obscure that those books do treat Israel with a remarkable awkwardness, reticence, and inconsistency. Exploring the relationship between Palestinians on the one hand and Israel, Zionism, and Jews on the other might logically be seen as central to any attempt to educate Palestinians about their past, their present, and even their geography. But such topics are treated only at the margins.

Indeed, the textbooks often take on the same kind of awkwardness