

Senator Hillary Clinton:

Good morning everyone, and thank you very much for being here.

It is my privilege once again to join Palestinian Media Watch for this press conference, and for the latest report that they have compiled about the Palestinian textbooks. Director Itamar Marcus, who has been a steadfast leader, has helped to deliver this message which we repeat again today - we must stop the propaganda to which Palestinian children are being exposed. That must be a priority for all people who care about children, who care about the kind of peace, stability, safety and security that Israel deserves to be guaranteed. And it should be a priority for everyone who cares about the future of the Palestinian people. I'm also pleased that with us today is Associate Director Barbara Crook, with whom I have also met in the past to discuss these issues.



I have been speaking out against the incitement of hate and violence in Palestinian textbooks for years. In 2000 I joined Nobel peace prize winner Elie Wiesel in New York to denounce the lessons of hatred and violence that are part of the curricula in Palestinian schools. I wrote, with my colleague Senator Schumer, a letter to President Bush, urging his Administration to do everything in its power to persuade the Palestinians to reverse their hateful rhetoric and embrace the opportunity to move toward a strong and lasting peace in the region.

I joined with Itamar at a Senate hearing, where I reiterated the importance of our country making it clear in every way - these children deserves an education that instills respect for life and peace instead of glorifying death and violence. The videos we viewed at that Senate hearing were a clear example of child abuse. I said that at the time and I repeat it again today. Children were encouraged to see martyrdom and armed struggle and the murder of innocent people as ideals to strive for.

Today, we are here once again to release a report that is deeply disturbing, particularly for the denial of Israel's existence and the historical omissions of the Holocaust, to cite just two examples.

These textbooks do not give Palestinian children an education; they give them an indoctrination. When we viewed this report in combination with other media that these children are exposed to, we see a larger picture that is disturbing. It is disturbing on a human level, it is disturbing to me as a mother, it is disturbing to me as a United States Senator, because it basically, profoundly poisons the minds of these children.

Hate has no place in the curriculum of schools, and the glorification of violence has no place in the education of children.

This propaganda is dangerous. You know, words really matter. Some people sort of downplay the importance of words. But words really matter. Because in idealizing for children a world without Israel, children are taught never to accept the reality of the State of Israel, never to strive for a better future that would hold out the promise of peace and security to them, and is basically a message of pessimism and fatalism that undermines the possibility for these children living lives of fulfillment and productivity.

This has dire consequences for prospects of peace for generations to come.

Very briefly, the report finds the following in these textbooks: the founding of Israel is described as "a catastrophe that is unprecedented in history." There is a portrayal of the region in both maps and text in which Israel does not exist. There is the denial of the Holocaust by the omission of historical facts connecting Nazi ideology and actions with the persecution and murder of Jews. For example, the report states, "The textbook teaches the military and the political events of WWII in significant detail including sections on Nazi racist ideology, yet neither the persecution of Jews or the Holocaust is even mentioned."

Now we will hear more in a minute about this, but I believe education is one of the keys to lasting peace and security in the Middle East and the greater region. For this reason I am deeply concerned by these findings. We cannot build a peaceful, stable, safe future on such a hate-filled violent and radical foundation.

In the years since, I and others - who have been doing it long before I did in 2000- raised this issue, there has still not been an adequate repudiation of this by the Palestinian Authority. A few days ago several of my colleagues from the New York City Council, including my friend the Speaker Chris Quinn, were in Sderot, and the city came under attack from Palestinian rocket fire. The attacks are not diminishing, they are continuing. Every opportunity that there can be for an attack seems to be seized by those who are rejectionists of any different future. And I worry about the chance for peace when the next generation is learning that fighting Israel is a glorious, religious battle for Islam, as this report points out.

So it is now my privilege to introduce Itamar Marcus, Director of Palestinian Media Watch, who will present the deeply disturbing findings of this report and speak to the importance of action.

Itamar Marcus's overview of PMW's report on Palestinian schoolbooks

US Senate Building, February 8th, 2007

Thank you very much, Senator Clinton.

I want to review in greater detail some of the main points that Senator Clinton touched on about the content of the new Palestinian schoolbooks.

The new Grade 12 Palestinian schoolbooks were produced last year, and were released in November 2006. Significantly, the books were produced by the Palestinian Curriculum Development Center, a center established under the Fatah governments of Yasser Arafat and Mahmoud Abbas.

The head of the committee is Dr. Naim Abu Al-Humos, former PA minister of higher education. As such, this schoolbook report is not reflecting Hamas ideology, this is reflecting the Fatah ideology. This is very significant, because the new schoolbooks indicate a merging of Fatah towards Hamas ideology.

I want to touch on five themes:

1. In the new schoolbooks, the Palestinians define the battle with Israel as a religious battle – a *Ribat*, as follows:

Ribat for Allah: Islam urged (Hadda'ala) Jihad for Allah, in order to defend the [Islamic] Nation's honor, greatness, and land. The Ribat for Allah is one of the actions related to Jihad for Allah, and it means: Being found in areas where there is a struggle between Muslims and their enemies... staying on this land strengthens the Muslims facing their enemies... The reward of the Murabit [people in Ribat] is ongoing, as Allah, praise him, increases the [reward] for his action until the Resurrection Day..."
[Islamic Education, grade 12, p. 86]

Ribat is a religious term. This teaching transfers the conflict from a territorial, nationalistic conflict to a religious conflict where there is no room for compromise. More than that, they teach:

"The endurance of Palestine's people on their land in these days, and their persistence against the damage and the aggression they endure – is one of the greatest of the Ribat and they are worthy of a great reward from Allah."
[Islamic Education, grade 12, p. 87]

This conflict with Israel is said to be a unique Ribat in Islamic history with a special destiny:

"The reason for this preference [of the Palestinian Ribat] is that the momentous battles in Islamic history took place on its land [Al-Sham – Greater Syria includes Israel] and, its residents are in a constant struggle with their enemies, and they are found in Ribat until Resurrection Day. The history testifies that: The battle of Al-Yarmuk decided the struggle with the Byzantines, and the battle of Hittin decided the struggle with the Crusaders, and the battle of Ein Jalut decided the struggle with the Mongols."
[Islamic Education, grade 12, p. 87]

The message to the student is that Islam has had numerous battles, momentous battles with significant turning points in Islamic history following the victorious battles on this land against earlier enemies – Byzantine, Crusades, the Mongols. The Palestinian children are taught that they have an Islamic destiny to hold onto this land – (meaning Israel) as others have done in the past.

This teaching parallels the ideology of Hamas as written in the Hamas charter:

"The Islamic Resistance Movement believes that the land of Palestine has been an Islamic Waqf (Trust) throughout the generations and until the Day of Resurrection, no one can renounce it or part of it, or abandon it or part of it."
[Article Eleven, Hamas Charter]

The schoolbooks bring mainstream Palestinian ideology much closer to that of Hamas, by defining this as a religious battle and Israel's land to be Islamic land.

2. In the schoolbooks it is clear that when they teach about "Palestine," they are not teaching about the West Bank and Gaza Strip. The books mention over and over again that Israel's very existence is being challenged. For example, as the Senator cited:

"Palestine's war ended with a catastrophe that is unprecedented in history, when the Zionist gangs stole Palestine ...and established the State of Israel."
[Arabic Language, Analysis, Literature and Criticism, grade 12, p. 104]

The establishment of Israel is the challenge, not the West Bank or Gaza, this is the problem. Israel is defined as "colonial imperialism... centered in Palestine" *[History of the Arabs and the World in the 20th Century, grade 12, p. 6]*, and other similar language that denies Israel's right to exist.

They talk about the United Nations resolutions equating Zionism with racism, and teach:

"These racist operations that Israel carried out since its establishment in 1948, motivated the UN to pass the resolution ... which views Zionism as a form of racism..."

[History of the Arabs and the World in the 20th Century, grade 12, pp. 125-126]

They are legitimizing the UN resolution teaching that it was based on the factual reality of Israel as a racist state since 1948.

Other examples of terminology that rejects the legitimacy of Israel:

Israel and Israelis are referred to as "Zionist gangs," "Zionist enemy," "Zionist entity," "enemy of the people," and many more terms throughout the schoolbooks that deny the legitimacy of Israel.

3. Beyond denying the legitimacy of Israel, the books present a world as if Israel does not exist at all.

Examples from maps were shown- see graphics.

No map mentions Israel in any of the Palestinian Authority schoolbooks.

However, beyond the pictures, the new schoolbooks define "Palestine" as if it's an existing state, a "Dawla," which is not a geographical area but a "state," and teach that it has water access to the Red Sea and the Mediterranean. Teaching that a state, "Palestine," has access to the Red Sea is describing a world in which Israel does not exist.

They also teach that the state "Palestine" is larger than 10,000 square kilometers. The size of the West Bank and Gaza together is about 6,500 square kilometers, so again are describing a world in which Israel does not exist.

4. Holocaust denial, which the Senator mentioned: The books create a World War II without the Holocaust. There are extensive details about the history of World War II -- they teach about the "race theory" of the Nazi movement:

"Race theory evolved during the thirties of the previous century, when the Nazi movement appeared in Germany in 1933 and divided the nations into superior and others who were inferior. It espoused the superiority of the Aryan race, from which the Germans originated, passed racist laws..."

[The History of the Arabs and the World in the 20th Century, grade 12, p. 123]

They even talk about the trials of the Nazi war criminals at the end of the war:

"The Allied states established an international court to bring to trial the senior Nazi leaders as war criminals."

[The History of the Arabs and the World in the 20th Century, grade 12, p. 46]

...but they don't teach why they were on trial. They teach the history of WWII, the Nazi racism, and the trial of war criminals. But the Holocaust is not a part of that history.

5. Finally, the new PA schoolbooks divide the modern world into two camps fighting in a "Clash of Civilizations": The West, led by the United States, and the Islamic-Arab world. The US is presented very aggressively in the schoolbooks as an enemy of the Palestinians, and American foreign policy is criticized as being of:

"self-interest... its policy... didn't change during one president or another, as is clearly apparent in Afghanistan, Cuba, Iran... its blockade of Libya, Sudan and the occupation of Iraq."

[Contemporary Problems, grade 12, p 21]

All of these conflicts present the US as a source of friction in the international world.

Human rights. They talk about the US abusing human rights for its own purposes; for example, "the belief that human rights is nothing but an excuse used by the West and the ruling states for interfering in the matters of other states, as in Afghanistan, Iraq, Darfur..."

and more examples, so that the US is presented as an enemy of Islam and the Arab world.

The apex of this is the definition of the insurgency in Iraq fighting against the US:

"The Iraqis did not surrender to this American and British occupation, but succeeded in organizing themselves into a brave resistance to liberate Iraq."

[History of the Arabs and the World in the 20th Century, grade 12, p. 147]

Those who are killing American soldiers are defined as "brave resistance."

In addition, there is one glaring omission about the US in the schoolbooks. The Palestinians felt it important to mention that Israel is getting economic aid from the US, but they left out the more than \$1.5 billion that the PA and the NGOs have received from the US. The greatest financial aid to the PA from any single country has come from the US. The books leave that out, but they put in the fact that Israel is a strategic ally getting economic and political support.

So we see from this omission as well, that there was a clear intention to put the US in an enemy camp.

Because of this total picture, violence against Israel since its founding is legitimized as *Mukawama* – meaning resistance.

"Since 1948, the Mukawama – resistance - in which the inhabitants carried acts of most glorious heroism and sacrifice, which have become lessons imitated by resistance to colonialism, occupation and persecution around the world."
[Arabic Language, Analysis, Literature and Commentary, grade 12 p 105]

Essentially, they are teaching the children that Palestinian terror isn't negative -- it is glorious heroism. And all the other "resistance" nations around the world who have adopted this are learning from the Palestinians. They are actually citing themselves and their terror as a role model and they're proud that they have been a role model for other terrorist movements around the world.

And finally, the message: "Palestine will be liberated by its men, its women, its young and its elderly," the eventual destruction of Israel is promised in the textbooks.

PMW studies everything in Palestinian society. Sports, crossword puzzles, television, as the Senator mentioned. And all of these (schoolbook) messages are coming to children from every part of society – culture, even sports. And I want to just show you two examples.

We mentioned the Holocaust. I want to show you how children were taught the Holocaust on a program on official Palestinian television:

Video:

"They [the Jews] are the ones who did the Holocaust ... They opened the ovens for us to bake human beings... And when one oven stopped burning they lit a hundred more ovens. Their hands are covered with the blood of our children."

[PA TV (Fatah), March 25, 2004]

This isn't just Holocaust denial. This is turning the whole Holocaust on its head. Israel, the Jews, created ovens for the Palestinians. And this was on official Palestinian television, on a children's program.

I'll just end this with one item from yesterday, to show you how current this is. This is from February 7th, an interview on Palestinian television with a university lecturer from Birzeit University.

"What the American culture creates is a danger to humanity... 100,000 [Iraqis] are killed in Iraq, and it doesn't interest him... he lives the racism in his culture, he is saturated in it, only his pocket interests him..."

Zionism is the same thing, carries the same thought [pattern]. Nazism carried that same thought. This is the Western product, it is the product of Western philosophy."

[PA TV (Fatah), Feb. 7, 2007]

This is a total attack on Western society, and is a reflection of the tragic reality of the Palestinian media. It is constantly demonizing the West, demonizing the United States, demonizing Israel, with parallels like this to Nazism, and it creates an environment of profound hatred for the youth.

To sum up, there are many problems in the Palestinian schoolbooks. I think that the problem of packaging the conflict as a religious conflict is very significant – and it marks the disappearance of the difference between Hamas and what is seen as the more mainstream Fatah. That difference disappears when this conflict is portrayed as a religious conflict for Allah. The well-meaning student is left with no justification or religious option to accept Israel as a neighbor in coexistence.

The schoolbooks, the TV, the culture, the entire society, must educate for peace. Our desire is to have peace with our Palestinian neighbors, and our goal is that through awareness and actions like the Senator's, a change will be forced on the Palestinians to educate for peace, so that we can have peace in the next generation. Thank you.