

Written Statement by United Nations Watch

Palestinian Violations of the Convention on the Rights of the Child - Education, Agenda Items 7 and 9

In a welcome announcement, the European Union recently stated that it will undertake a review of Palestinian Authority (PA) textbooks for hatred and violence.¹ As the State of Palestine is undergoing its first review by the Committee on the Rights of the Child (Committee), this issue is particularly timely. We urge the Committee to conduct a thorough examination of the Palestinian educational system, including textbooks, incitement by government and school officials, and use of school names and activities to incite hatred and violence.

Our research has found that the PA and Hamas education system blatantly violates Articles 6 (right to life, survival and development), 19 (obligation to protect children from physical or mental violence), and 29 (education should teach respect for human rights, peace and tolerance) of the Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC). Instead of using education to train the next generation in “human rights, the principles of the UN Charter, peace, tolerance, and friendship among all peoples,” educational resources are directed for the opposite purpose.

Below are examples of Palestinian misuse of educational opportunities to incite violence in children.

Incitement by PA officials and educators

- **Abbas Embracing child terrorist:** Palestinian President Mahmoud Abbas has personally encouraged child terrorists. On March 5, 2017 his Facebook page posted a photo of Abbas embracing 14-year-old Osama Zeidat, injured while attempting to stab Israelis at a bus stop.²
- **Glorifying martyrdom:** “The Palestinian keffiyeh has been colored with the purest blood, the blood of Martyrs (Shahids) of Palestine during their resistance to the occupation, and the keffiyeh has become the shroud of the Palestinian fighter who has sacrificed his soul for the homeland.” Director of the Qalqilya Directorate of Education (a branch of the PA Ministry of Education) Naela Fahmawi (Nov. 17, 2017).³
- **Praising mother of teenage terrorist:** “Mother of Martyr Laith Al-Khaledi [terrorist who threw Molotov cocktail at Israeli military post] from Jerusalem received the news of her son’s death as a Martyr...and said: ‘May Allah spread his mercy over my son. There is nothing better than sons who have died as Martyrs.’ This is an example of a Palestinian woman who stands firm, as the occupation wants to kill our dreams of freedom and

¹ Shiri Moshe, *European Union to Review Palestinian Textbooks for Incitement to Hatred and Violence*, ALGEMEINER (May 15, 2019), <https://www.algemeiner.com/2019/05/15/european-union-to-review-palestinian-textbooks-for-incitement-to-hatred-violence/>.

² *Abbas kisses 14-year-old stabber*, PMW (Mar. 5, 2017), http://www.palwatch.org/site/modules/print/preview.aspx?fi=339&doc_id=21039.

³ *PA education official glorifies Martyrdom at high school event*, PMW (Nov. 17, 2017) http://www.palwatch.org/main.aspx?fi=339&doc_id=24244.

independence, but it will not succeed in doing so as long as there are mothers like them, and the list is growing.” District Governor of Ramallah and El-Bireh Laila Ghannam (Aug. 1, 2017).⁴

- **Praising martyrs:** “We are unable to speak when among us are the fathers of two young wonderful Martyrs (Shahids), who gave their lives as a gift to the homeland, as a gift so that you...will enjoy freedom. They are praised and distinguished, and Paradise is their place.” PA Directorate of Education representative at school event (Apr. 26, 2016).⁵

The PA’s curriculum of hate

IMPACT-se (The Instituted for Monitoring Peace and Cultural Tolerance for School Education) has published several studies on Palestinian textbooks in recent years, all of which found that Palestinian textbooks promote hatred and are anti-peace.⁶

Notably, these textbooks are also used in UNRWA schools. Attempts by UNRWA to change this curriculum were met with fierce resistance by the PA, and in April 2017 UNRWA Commissioner-General Pierre Krähenbühl assured: “UNRWA is completely committed to the Palestinian curricula, and...no change will be made to these curricula.”⁷ In November 2017, the PA Ministry of education reiterated its categorical opposition to any attempt by UNRWA to make any change to the curriculum that would contradict the philosophy of the PA with respect to Palestinian national identity and heritage, *i.e.*, the belief that Jews have no rights in Palestine and that Palestinians will one day return to their former homes in Israel.⁸

The findings in the latest report by IMPACT-se published in September 2018 should be alarming to anyone who supports the Israeli-Palestinian peace process and the two-state solution. The report found that Palestinian textbooks radicalize Palestinian children by severely demonizing Israel, glorifying martyrdom, teaching that Palestinians will “return” to Israel proper, and that the Palestinians will defeat Israel in a Crusader-like conquest over the territory. See examples below:

- Eleventh grade history book openly endorses the Munich Massacre in which 11 Israeli Olympic athletes were killed by Fatah’s Black September group. It is referred to as the “Munich operation,” and presented as a good example for justifying Palestinian warfare against “Zionist interests abroad.”

⁴ PA District Governor of Ramallah praises mothers of teenage “Martyrs,” PMW (Aug. 1, 2017), http://www.palwatch.org/main.aspx?fi=339&doc_id=24980.

⁵ PA Directorate of Education representative at event at school commemorating terrorist who killed 3, PMW (Apr. 24, 2016), http://www.palwatch.org/main.aspx?fi=339&doc_id=19423.

⁶ IMPACT-se Reports (last visited Feb. 21, 2019), <http://www.impact-se.org/reports/>.

⁷ UNRWA Commissioner-General emphasizes that UNRWA is completely committed to the Palestinian Curricula...” PMW (April 17, 2017), https://www.palwatch.org/main.aspx?fi=122&doc_id=21108.

⁸ PA Ministry of Education strongly opposes any attempt by UNRWA to change PA curriculum and schoolbooks, PMW (Nov. 8, 2017), https://www.palwatch.org/main.aspx?fi=122&doc_id=24274.

- Third grade Arabic language textbook teaches violent poem calling for “sacrificing blood” to remove the Israeli enemy from the land by eliminating “the usurper,” and “exterminate[ing] the remnants of the foreigners.”

Naming schools, summer camps, and youth centers after terrorists

The PA has a practice of using school names to honor terrorists and glorify martyrdom, thus turning terrorists into role models for children. Children studying at these schools have expressed the aspiration to “reach the level” of the terrorist for whom the school is named.⁹ According to Palestinian Media Watch (PMW), dozens of PA Ministry of Education schools are named for terrorists.¹⁰

In September 2017, a scandal erupted when PMW exposed that a PA elementary school named after the terrorist Dalal Mughrabi (leader of a terrorist attack that killed 37 Israelis, including 13 children) was funded with money from Belgium.¹¹ Belgium condemned the use of its funding to glorify terrorists, stating it “will not allow itself to be associated with the names of terrorists in any way,” and demanded that the name of the school be changed. However, one year later, the school name had still not been changed.¹² Finally, after being exposed again, the PA renamed the school “The Belgian School,” but transferred the name Dalal Mughrabi to two other schools. This time, Belgium withdrew its cooperation from the PA Education Ministry.¹³ PA schools are also named for Munich Olympics mastermind Abu Iyad and Hamas terror leader Ahmed Yassin, among others.

This abhorrent practice is not limited to schools. Palestinian youth centers, summer camps, and sporting events also are frequently named for terrorists. In May 2017, Norway froze all new funding agreements with UN Women Palestine, after Norwegian funds were used to build a youth center named after Dalal Mughrabi. Norwegian Foreign Minister Børge Brende strongly condemned the incident stating: “The glorification of terrorist attacks is completely unacceptable, and I deplore this decision in the strongest possible terms. Norway will not allow itself to be associated with institutions that take the names of terrorists in this way. We will not accept the use of Norwegian aid funding for such purposes.”¹⁴

Exploiting educational opportunities to train children in terrorism

Both the PA and Hamas turn educational activities into platforms to teach hate and violence.

⁹ See, e.g., *Palestinian girl’s goal: “to reach the level” of terrorist who killed 37*, PMW (Apr. 14, 2014), http://www.palwatch.org/main.aspx?fi=157&doc_id=11243.

¹⁰ *Names of schools in the PA*, PMW (last visited Feb. 21, 2019), <https://www.palwatch.org/main.aspx?fi=608>.

¹¹ *Belgium cuts PA funding based on PMW report*, PMW (Sep. 20, 2018), http://www.palwatch.org/main.aspx?fi=157&doc_id=26338.

¹² *Belgian funded PA school still named after terrorist mass murderer*, PMW (July 31, 2018), http://palwatch.org/main.aspx?fi=157&doc_id=26161.

¹³ *Belgium ends cooperation with PA education over school named for terrorist*, i24 NEWS (Sep. 15, 2018), <https://www.i24news.tv/en/news/middle-east-ar/184247-180915-belgium-ends-funding-to-palestinian-education-over-school-named-for-terrorist>.

¹⁴ *Norway freezes funds to UN Women Palestine over center named for terrorist*, UN WATCH (May 28, 2017), <https://www.unwatch.org/norway-freezes-funds-un-women-palestine-center-named-terrorist/>.

In school plays, child actors pretend to be Palestinian victims of Israeli aggression who fight back with weapons. One school play from 2016 demonized Israel, having Israeli soldiers frame a Palestinian youth as a stabber by planting a knife next to him and then shooting him in cold blood.

In the summer of 2016, the “Pioneers of Liberation” camps of Hamas’s military wing, attended by 30,000 children, were dedicated to the theme of the “Al-Quds [Jerusalem] Intifada,” the Palestinian’s name for the wave of terror against Israelis that year. According to Hamas military wing officials “the goal of the camps is to stoke the embers of jihad among the generation of liberation, to include Islamic values and to prepare the army of victory for liberating Palestine.”¹⁵

¹⁵ *Al-Quds Intifada Summer Camps In Gaza Offer Training in Stabbing, Firearms, Tunnel Combat*, MEMRI (Aug. 8, 2016), <https://www.memri.org/reports/al-quds-intifada-summer-camps-gaza-offer-training-stabbing-firearms-tunnel-combat>.