

Scrutinizing UNRWA's Schools

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As co-chair of the Jewish NGO Caucus at the UN, I have been working with Dr. Deborah Singer Soffen and others to promote a social action campaign entitled "UNRWA: Stop Teaching Hate". We believe that, in order to bring about peace in the Middle East, the education of Palestinian children must be reformed.

Whether or not UNRWA (the United Nations Relief and Works Agency) is reformed or replaced, there are around 500,000 students and 30,000 teachers currently using their educational materials, which incite them to violence, promote the destruction of Israel, and train Palestinian children to kill Jews.

All Palestinian schools run by UNRWA currently receive their books from the Palestinian Authority Ministry of Education's Curricula Center in Ramallah. A study by Dr. Arnon Groiss, whose research on this important subject spans 18 years, shows that the textbooks published between 2016-2018 are even more radical than their predecessors.

Here are some examples from these current school textbooks:

1. This poem taught to third graders talks about the fate of the Jews now living in Israel following its supposed liberation: "And I shall remove the usurper (*code name for Israel*) from my country and shall exterminate the foreigners' scattered remnants". This is a clear incitement to perpetrate war crimes!
2. This image is used in a first grade textbook to help students to visualize the capture of an Israeli city. The text asks the children: "How can we work together to liberate our homeland?"
3. This cartoon illustrates the false claim that the Jews are destroying Moslem shrines in Jerusalem.

It is clear that a curriculum of hatred permeates all subject matter, from elementary arithmetic to high school social studies and science. Martyrdom is glorified, and any historical connection between the Jews and their biblical homeland is denied. Maps of the region omit the State of Israel. The "Right of

Return” for over 5 million Palestinians is taught as their birthright. It comes as no surprise that so many Palestinian teenagers have been willing to sacrifice their lives in order to murder Jews. The materials used in their schools exploit the children and indoctrinate them into a culture of hate. Until their education changes, the region is at least a generation away from a true, sustainable peace.

No matter what entity replaces UNRWA, there will still be half a million Palestinian children who need to be educated, and the same teachers will probably reenter their classrooms and use the same textbooks that have corrupted the minds of Palestinian children for decades. How can we make sure that any new organization that replaces UNRWA does not continue to teach hate? Whatever entity takes over from UNRWA must undertake to reform the textbooks and to vet every teacher, to ensure that supporters of hate, jihad and murder are replaced.

The United Nations has a terrible record in situations like this. When the Human Rights Commission was disbanded because of its bias and inaction against human rights violations, it was replaced by the Human Rights Council, which has adopted virtually all the abysmal policies and personnel of its predecessor. Changing the name of an organization does not change its agenda. We will continue to campaign for a replacement for UNRWA that will promote peace.