U.N. agency head admits printing ‘inappropriate’ content in Palestinian classroom materials

January 14, 2021

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Jewish Insider

<https://jewishinsider.com/2021/01/unrwa-textbooks-gaza-west-bank/>

The head of the U.N. agency tasked with providing support to Palestinians [acknowledged](https://twitter.com/UNLazzarini/status/1349688483397382145) on Thursday that learning materials widely distributed in Gaza and West Bank schools contained “inappropriate” content glorifying Palestinian militants and encouraging violence.

The U.N. Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA) printed and distributed its own materials to complement the Palestinian Authority’s curriculum. The materials, which repeatedly refer to Israel as “the enemy,” also include instructions in a math workbook for students to select the correct number of “martyrs” from the first intifada. A grammar booklet published by UNRWA includes the sentences, “Jihad is one of the doors to Paradise,” and “The Palestinians have become an example of sacrifice.”

In a series of tweets, UNRWA Commissioner General Philippe Lazzarini indicated that the material in question was distributed in error, and that the agency had replaced the offending pages with “content that adheres to U.N. values.”

Lazzarini did not respond to a question from Jewish Insider about how the problematic materials were replaced and with what.

Lazzarini’s tweets came in the wake of a [report by IMPACT-se](https://www.impact-se.org/wp-content/uploads/UNRWA-Produced-Study-Materials-in-the-Palestinian-Territories.pdf), a watchdog organization that monitors content in educational materials distributed in schools throughout the Middle East.

“This avoidance of peace education is absolutely appalling. A U.N. organization has to teach the children to whom it has a duty of care about the possibility of peace,” Marcus Sheff, CEO of IMPACT-se, told JI. “They don’t just avoid it. They make absolutely no effort whatsoever to do that.”

The Trump administration withdrew its funding from the U.N. agency in 2018. President-elect Joe Biden has said that he will restore aid to the Palestinian Authority that was cut off by the current administration, but has not specified whether that incudes aid to UNRWA. In 2017, the U.S. accounted for roughly one-third of the aid given to the organization, which spends more than 50%of its budget on education.

The Biden transition team did not respond to a request for comment.