Lawmakers call on the EU to make public report on antisemitic Palestinian school textbooks

June 15, 2021

By Yossi Lempkowicz

European Jewish Press

<https://ejpress.org/lawmakers-call-on-the-eu-to-make-public-report-on-antisemitic-palestinian-school-textbooks/>

**Following the exposure of an unpublished  EU report on Palestinian school textbooks last week by German newspaper**BILD**, several lawmakers have called to make the report public.**

IMPACT-se, a research and policy institute that monitors and analyzes education, has  obtained a copy of the report, which found that Palestinian textbooks – funded by the EU- contain antisemitism, incite children to hatred and violence and delegitimize the State of Israel.

In 2019, then EU foreign policy chief Federica Mogherini, told European lawmakers that the European Union would fund a study on Palestinian school textbooks “with a view to identifying possible incitement to hatred and violence and any possible lack of compliance with UNESCO standards of peace and tolerance in education.’’

Initially commissioned in 2019, the final report has been delayed for two years and has still not been made public.

A [follow up piece](https://impact-se.us13.list-manage.com/track/click?u=cda888712516195d04c9534ec&id=d8c0e92175&e=8a937a57c3) in daily BILD stated that the EU Commission misled policymakers who requested a copy of the report and were denied on the basis that it had not yet been ‘’finalized’’ despite the report being submitted by the reviewing institute in March.

The German government has called on the EU to make public the secretive report, citing public interest and concerns over whether German taxpayer money is being used to fund hate. A spokesperson for the German development ministry told BILD that “a confidential draft of the study is available. The federal government has advocated publication several times vis-à-vis the EU. The EU has now promised this.”

A member of the Bundestag, the German federal parliament, Frank Müller-Rosentritt of the FDP party, also called for the publication saying “anything else would call into question the strategy of the federal government in combating anti-Semitism. One cannot speak in Germany of wanting to intensify this fight while at the same time financing the production of school books that call for terror against Jews.”

A German member of the European Parliament for the European Peoples’ Party (EPP), Niclas Herbst, who is Vice Chairman of the EU Parliament budgetary affairs committee, criticized the EU for hiding the report stating, “the secrecy of the EU Commission is counterproductive and incomprehensible.”

He called for a 5% reserve on EU funding to the PA and UNRWA, stating the withheld funds should be redirected towards NGOs that adhere to UNESCO standards until the PA removes all hate and incitement from its textbooks.

The EU directly funds the salaries of Palestinian teachers and the publishers of textbooks.

IMPACT-se, which for the analysis of textbooks uses international standards on peace and tolerance as derived from UNESCO declarations and resolutions to determine compliance and to advocate for change when necessary, received a copy and independently assessed the EU report. While not reviewing the whole curriculum and missing quite a bit, it confirms many of IMPACT-se’s own findings.

The EU’s report states that the Palestinian textbooks promote antisemitism, encourage violence, erase peace agreements and delegitimize Israel.

The European Parliament passed last year a resolution calling for the conditioning of financial aid to the Palestinian Authority on school books complying with standards of peace and tolerance. ‘’Not publishing the report is clearly not an effective strategy. The EU has to finally act to remove the hate and demand a peace curriculum for Palestinian school children,’’ said IMPACT-se CEO, Marcus Sheff.

Despite the critical nature of the report, the conclusion by the reviewing institute, the Georg Eckert Institute, that the textbooks still meet UNESCO standards is challenged by BILD which states that this conclusion is inconsistent with the main body of the report and by the EU itself, which clearly does not think full adherence has been reached.

An EU  spokesperson said that it “takes this study seriously and will act on its findings as appropriate, with a view to bring about the full adherence to UNESCO standards in all Palestinian education materials.”

**What says the report ?**

Textbooks persist in the promotion of antisemitism and Jew hatred. “While use of the term ‘Jewيهودي  yahūd’ and its derivatives in the textbooks may indicate religious and cultural tolerance it also occurs together with anti-Jewish prejudice.”

Jews are referred to as enemies of Islam. “For instance, lesson 10 in the book for year 8/II, […] addresses the battle of banū qurayḍah; […] Whilst this lesson does not explicitly refer to Jews as traitors and does make passing reference to Jewish allies of the prophet Muhammed, it still has clear potential to be perceived as a story portraying Jews as the enemy.”

The report confirms the removal of all peace agreements summits and proposals that were previously included in the Palestinian curriculum post-Oslo Accords have been removed including the “omission of the passage that speaks of beginning a new era of peaceful coexistence free of violence reflects the current situation between the two parties, which does not provide a roadmap to non-violence and peace acceptable to all sides involved.”

The curriculum purposefully delegitimizes and demonizes Israel. For instance, a 9th grade Arabic textbook which presents students with a collage of a Palestinian child and Israeli soldiers. The report states “the montage suggests that the Israeli sniper was purposely aiming at the little boy, thus produces a demonizing portrayal of the ‘other’; in this case the Israeli soldier. The text also implies a fundamental malice and inherent barbarity of soldiers who sim their weapons, as it comes across in the text, at children crossing the street. The story and its visualization portray the Israeli soldiers as aggressive and insidious, hiding behind concrete barriers while shooting at the children.”

Textbooks promote violence, particularly against Israel. “Concerning violent acts by the Palestinian side against Israel, the textbooks for Arabic language contain depictions of violence as a heroic struggle.”

**Call for an investigation into UNWRA**

In another development,  a group of 26 cross-party MEPs from all the major parties in the European Parliament, initiated by Swedish MEP David Lega and Slovakian MEP Miriam Lexmann both from the EPP group, have written to the EU Commission and UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres demanding an investigation into UNRWA, the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees, over antisemitism and incitement in UNRWA educational materials.

The letter expressed alarm about “UNRWA’s continued use of hateful school materials that encourage violence, reject peace, and demonizes both Israel and the Jewish people. We deeply deplore the agency’s lack of oversight, transparency and accountability with regard to the repeated revelations of teaching hate and incitement to Palestinian children under UNRWA’s care.”

It condemns the use of EU taxpayers’ money to fund hate teaching and antisemitic aggravation.

The letter called Secretary-General Guterres to demand that UNRWA expeditiously disclose all its educational materials for teachers and students in Arabic used in its classes as well as the workings and findings of the host state curricula reviews it conducts, which allegedly ensure textbooks “align with UN values,” and which UNRWA so far has refused to release.