

Palestinian Textbooks on the Subject of Islamic Religion

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Type and scope of material

Since 2000, two textbooks have been published by the Palestinian National Authority (PNA), at 1st to 3rd grade level and 6th to 8th grade level respectively. They are both titled “Islamic Education” (at-Tarbiyya al-Islamiyya) and are formatted in a similar manner – the title page contains a picture in a green frame, (for the 1st to 3rd grade textbook it is usually a drawing, for the other a photo of the Dome of the Rock, sometimes in combination with other important mosques). The Arabic heraldic eagle is placed to the right of the book title, and beneath it “Palestinian State – Ministry of Education and Higher Education”.¹ For each volume a team of 3 to 5 authors is credited, including one team leader and one representative of the Palestinian Curriculum Development Center (PCDC), the relevant department of the Ministry of Education. In addition, on the second page, several people are cited as responsible for drawings, layout, textual and educational conception. A “National Team for the Curricula of Islamic Education” consisting of seven persons is cited as responsible for the overall conception of the textbooks, while the final supervising authority for the curricula lies with [Minister of Education and Higher Education]² Na‘îm Abû al-Hummus, and Salâh Yâsîn, General Director of PCDC. Except for textbook 1/1 all editions are cited as “draft editions”, improvement of which is encouraged.³ The preface (the identical text in all cases) refers to the Plan for the Palestinian Curriculum of 1998 as the basis of the textbooks, according to which textbooks should be published for two grades every year. In the preface, special credit for financial and design assistance is given to UNESCO, friendly Arabic governments and the governments of Italy and Belgium.

Based on this information the following conclusions can be made for evaluation:

¹ The Arabic term is “Palestinian State” (*Dawla*) rather than “Palestinian Authority” (*Sulta*). Interestingly enough, in one 3rd grade copy the eagle and lettering have been removed. The term “Palestinian State” has been altered in handwriting to “Palestinian Authority” and the volume has been printed with this handwritten correction. Presumably this change was made because others have complained about the term “Palestinian State” which so far is only a dream, not reality.

² Not named as such therein, but rather as “Chairman of the Curriculum Board”.

³ Apparently a little more time is allowed for the review of Islamic religious textbooks, while other Palestinian textbooks cease to be termed ‘draft editions’ after their respective third edition.

1. These are the official Palestinian textbooks for the subject Islamic Religion, replacing the Egyptian and Jordanian textbooks previously used in the occupied territories.
2. These textbooks have been created by teams under the supervision of several committees. While several people have contributed, the respective type or scope of responsibility can be concluded quite clearly. UNESCO, Italy and Belgium, as well as several Arabic governments have provided the necessary financial support for the review of the textbooks. Final supervisory authority lies with the Minister of Education and Higher Education and the Chairman of the PCDC. There is a National Committee in charge of overall conception of the subject of “Islamic Religion”. A team of 3 to 4 authors is responsible for the actual wording of each book. Several experts have been consulted for special tasks (text review, design, and illustrations).

These findings are relevant in the light of prior controversy during previous evaluations of Palestinian textbooks about the extent of responsibility of the Palestinian National Authority for the textbooks in use, considering that these books were reprints of Jordanian and Egyptian books continued in use only because no other text books were available (Cf. *Le Monde Diplomatique*, April 12, 2001; Reiss 2001). Furthermore, this shows that apparently it was funds provided by UNESCO and the governments of Belgium and Italy, not by the EU, which have been used for the review of the textbooks. This finding is relevant inasmuch as there had been a controversy in the past about the extent of direct responsibility of the EU for the contents of Palestinian textbooks. According to these findings, only the governments of Italy and Belgium, (as well as UNESCO) have a share in direct responsibility for the newly published textbooks. In this regard, Christopher Patten was apparently right in denying the direct responsibility of EU for the textbooks, because it seems more than reasonable to expect that such credit would have been explicitly given if due.⁴

This analysis is based on the following textbooks:⁵

⁴ Responding to inquiries into the funding of Palestinian textbooks, Christopher Patten repeatedly denied direct EU subsidies for the textbooks and/or their revision. Says Patten, EU and UNRWA assistance does not regard production or distribution of textbooks, but merely creating “infrastructures, equipment for schools and school libraries and direct assistance for current school expenses (salaries)”. Therefore the Commission would not have the right to interfere with the contents of the textbooks. Source: www.edume.org/news/april01.htm.

Regarding internal controversy between European Parliament members see John Shelly’s report in: *European Voice*, September 27, 2001.

⁵ Partial volumes 2/2, 3/2, and 8/2 were not at author’s disposal.

Title	Type of school/grade	Partial volume	Pages
Islamic Education	For grade 1, elementary school	1/1	66
Islamic Education	For grade 1, elementary school	1/2	60
Islamic Education	For grade 2, elementary school	2/1	76
Islamic Education	For grade 3, elementary school	3/1	92

Islamic Education	For grade 6, elementary school	6/1	100
Islamic Education	For grade 6, elementary school	6/2	100
Islamic Education	For grade 7, elementary school	7/1	108
Islamic Education	For grade 7, elementary school	7/2	108
Islamic Education	For grade 8, elementary school	8/1	84

Overview of topics

Except for the two grade 1 textbooks which are divided into 28 and 32 lessons respectively and covering various topics, all other textbooks for the subject of Islamic Education are divided into 4 to 5 topical blocks (“units”) consisting of several lessons each. Consistently recurring topics are: “The Koran (and its interpretation)”, “Islamic Doctrine”, “Ethics, Thinking and Education”, the “Prophet’s Life”. In addition, as of textbook 7/2 the interpretation of Sunna and Hadith respectively is discussed in dedicated chapters. For the lower grades, 1 to 3, and grade 5, the units covering the “*Koran*” are mostly preceded by short Suras from the back of the Koran⁶ and for grades 7-8 by quotations from the middle Suras.⁷ Some of these units also contain information on the revelation and transmission of the Koran, on rules for interpretation/recitation and on the meaning of the Koran (Islamic Education, grade 1, vol. I, p. 4-10; grade 2, vol. I, p. 2-7; grade 3, vol. I, p. 83-91; grade 6, vol. II, p. 18-21; grade 7, vol. I, p. 4-11; grade 8, vol. I, p. 3-10). The units on “*Islamic Doctrine*” discuss the foundations of faith, the two creeds, the Five Pillars of Islam, and the Six Pillars of Islamic Faith⁸ (grade 1, vol. I, p. 12-13; grade 1, vol. I, p. 14-19; grade 2, vol. I, p. 8-11; grade 3, vol. I, p. 2-31; grade 6, vol. II, p. 48-59; grade 7, vol. I, p. 39-49; grade 8,

⁶ These are Suras 82, 85-87, 95-97, 99, 103, 101, 104-107; 109-113, but also Sura 1, „The Opening“, at the very beginning.

⁷ These are Suras 36, 39, 55, and 68.

⁸ This includes the belief in God, the Angels, the Prophets, the Holy Scriptures, the Last Day and Divine Power/Providence.

vol. I, p. 20-35.), also explaining qualities, respectively the names of God in several lessons (grade 1, vol. I, p. 18-19; 33-35; grade 2, vol. I, p. 12-14; 18-21; grade 3, vol. I, p. 32-39; grade 6, vol. I, p. 2-27). Topics relevant for the practice of faith are mostly discussed in the units on “*Islamic Law*” (as of grade 6): feasting (grade 6, vol. I, p. 28-37), ritual prayer (grade 6, vol. II, p. 62-71) and special forms of prayer, prayers for Ramadan nights (grade 6, vol. I, p. 38-39), for the dead, for rain, for sick people and travellers, as well as free invocations (grade 7, vol. II, p. 56-71). Some lessons on commerce and finance are also included, i.e. alms at the end of Ramadan (grade 6, vol. I, p. 40-43) and alms in general, rules for business and correct behaviour of Muslim merchants (grade 7, vol. II, p. 72-75). Finally these topics also cover rules for impurity, menstruation and motherhood of women, and rules for holidays and slaughtering (grade 8, vol. I, p. 52-61). The units “*Ethics, Thinking and Education*” elaborate on Islamic rules of conduct. Some of these are religious ones, e.g. the use of the Basmalla formula, the peace greeting and the call for prayer (grade 1, vol. I, 2-3; 26-29; vol. II, 18-20). Also included are social rules like vigilance regarding cleanliness, plants and animals (grade 1, vol. I, p. 60-75; grade 7, vol. II, p. 92-95), rules for decent eating and drinking (grade 1, vol. II, p. 24-28), the correct usage of toilets with regard to religion and hygiene (grade, 1, vol. II, p. 58-59), friendly, helpful and respectful attitude towards other people (grade 1, vol. II, p. 52-57; grade 2, vol. I, p. 30-36; grade 3, vol. I, p. 66-82), the virtues of a Muslim (grade 2, vol. I, p. 40-63; grade 3, vol. I, p. 53-60; grade 6, vol. I, p. 62-75; vol. II, p. 78-97; grade 7, vol. I, p. 86-105; vol. II, p. 96-105; grade 8, vol. I, p. 62-82), and similar. The attitude towards parents is mentioned several times (grade 1, vol. II, p. 36-40; grade 2, vol. I, p. 26-29; grade 3, vol. I, p. 61-65; grade 6, vol. I, p. 36-61). The units titled “*The Life of the Prophet*” report on the Prophet’s childhood and his first revelation (grade 1, vol. I, p. 42-55; 58-59; grade 2, vol. I, p. 63-73; grade 3, vol. I, p. 40-51). Later on, special attention is paid to the preparation of emigration (grade 6, vol. I, p. 77-97) and the threat he was facing from the polytheists in Mecca (grade 6, vol. II, p. 22-45). Another topic is the construction of mosques and the agreement between the émigrés, the Muslims and Jews in Medina (grade 7, vol. I, p. 64-75). The unit “*The Holy Hadith of the Prophet*” for grade 7 shortly defines the terms Sunna and Hadith.⁹ After this, some social and ethical topics are discussed that can be deduced from the

⁹ Literally, Sunna means “customary behaviour” or “custom”. It was deemed a special virtue among pre-Islamic Arabs to eagerly follow the example (Sunna) of the fathers. In the Islamic world this term evolved into a synonym for the totality of words, actions and tacit agreements of the Prophet Muhammad and his companions in certain historical situations. The actions of Muhammad and his companions are transmitted in *Ahadith* (sg. *Hadith*) which invariably consist of two parts. One part is the chain of transmitters (*Ihsnâd*), the other is the text itself (*matn*). During the 7th and 8th centuries the number of dubious *Ahadith* grew enormously. Ever since, Islamic scholars focus on verifying the credibility of the chain of transmission.

Sunna. These are the friendliness of Muslims towards each other, joint prayer, good and bad friends, Islam and work, and the prohibition of men imitating women and vice versa (grade 7, vol. II, p. 26-53). No sooner than in one unit for grade 8 titled “*The Holy Prophet’s Sunna*” the basics of Hadith interpretation are discussed in greater detail. The two *Sahîh* and the rules for interpreting are introduced and applied to two examples (grade 8, vol. I, p. 36-51).¹⁰

Didactics

Up to grade 6 the textbooks are in multicolour print of rather good quality. Most images are not photographs but painted illustrations. The text is consistently vocalised and units are marked with different colours. As of grade 7, textbooks are in bi-colour print (black & green). The letters are not vocalised (except for texts quoted from the Koran and the Hadith). There are no painted images at all and illustration is limited to 2 to 3 photographs of mosques from all over the world. Learning objectives are not stated. Lessons contain recurring elements of the lessons, e.g. Koran quotes preceding the units on Koran with one Sura usually spread over several lessons. Subsequently, definitions of terms are given (*Ma’nâ al-Ayât*). All units contain exercises that elaborate on the contents (*an-Nashât*). The students are encouraged to reflect on the backgrounds or to list further examples (*li-Nufakkir* or *Ufakkir*) and make brief summaries of lessons learned (*Nata’allam*), sometimes with the objective of self-examination (*at-Taqwîm*). As of grade 6 additional texts for reading (*li-’l-Mutâla’a* or *Fâ’ida*) and a list of additional readings (placed at the back of the volume) are provided.

Apart from the *Sahîh al-Bukharî* five other *Hadîth* collections are considered canonical in Sunni Islam – those by Muslim (817/821-875), Abû Dawûd (817-888), Tirmidhî (815-892), Nasâ’î (830-915), and by Ibn Mâja (824-886). Shiite Islam refers to proprietary Hadith collections.

¹⁰ The most famous and most frequently quoted Hadith collections in Sunnite Islam are those by Bukhârî (810-870) and by Muslim (817/821-875). Their respective main volumes are both titled ‘*Sahîh*’. This title is taken from the criteria used to assess the credibility of transmission – only texts whose chain of transmission seemed historically credible were deemed *Sahîh* (‘accurate, real, authentic’). In addition, the transmitters had to appear impeccable and trustworthy with regard to their faith and behaviour. It had to be ascertained that these transmitters had correctly understood and reflected the transmitted contents. They had to have transmitted more than only one Hadîth. Transmission required an unbroken chain of transmitters, they had to state explicitly that Muhammad (or his companions) made certain statements and their contents had to fit in with the early Islamic community. Apart from these authentic records assessed as ‘*Sahîh*’ there were also ‘beautiful’ (‘*Hasan*’) records which were not completely credible but seemed noteworthy, and records evoking substantial doubts as to their reliability and were therefore regarded as ‘weak’ transmissions (‘*Da’îf*’).

Concept of self / Concept of others

The cultural concept conveyed is that of a conservative Islamic society. All women and almost all girls – even prepubescent girls – are depicted with veils and clothes which cover them from head to toe, even in a home setting (grade 1, vol. I, p. 7; vol. II, p. 25; grade 3, vol. I, p. 83).



Illustration 1: Girl praying
(grade 1, I, p.7)



Illustration 2: Girls reading (grade 3, I, p.83)

Except for family situations, boys and girls, and men and women, are never depicted sitting next to each other or doing something together. Segregated classes for boys and girls respectively are implied (grade 2, vol. I, p. 30 and 41; grade 1, vol. I, p. 26; vol. II, p. 7).



Illustration 3: Boys' class (grade 1, I, p. 26)



Illustration 4: Girls' class (grade 2, I, p.30)

Even in cases where only one girl is depicted, the accompanying text uses the male gender, a fact which is highly unusual and not customary in Arabic. All 7 images illustrating the decent



Illustration 5: „The Muslim eats with his right hand“ (grade 1, II, p.25)

way of eating (grade 1, vol. II, p. 24-27) invariably depict a single girl. However, the narrative always uses the male gender: ‘The [male] Muslim washes *his* hand before and after eating’; ‘Before meals the [male] Muslim says, In the name of the Merciful God’ etc.. A lesson titled “Respect for the [male] teacher” is illustrated

with a *female* teacher in a classroom with girls only (grade 2, vol. I, p. 30). Laughing children are depicted only on painted illustrations, while children on photographs are always very serious. Several times the authority of parents, teachers, and elders is emphasized. Disrespect for parents is presented as a major sin (grade 6, vol. I, p. 54-57). It is implied that a natural distinction between women and men exists which ought not to be blurred (cf. the lesson titled “*The Prohibition of Women Imitating Men and Men Imitating Women*”, grade 7, vol. II, p. 50-53). Lessons on ethical behaviour mostly deal with the piety of the individual and the attitude towards other Muslims. Democracy and human rights are not dealt with at all. People

of different faith are scarcely mentioned and if so, only to explain one aspect of Islamic ethics (Muhammad made an agreement with the Jews in Medina; Muslims practice tolerance towards each other and also with respect to non-Muslims). If social topics are discussed the children's insight is not encouraged, instead they are told to obey God's Commandments and the Muslim customs. Discussions, original ideas or independent development of solutions are also not encouraged in the exercises.

This conception of these textbooks for Islamic Education conveys a concept of society which is diametrically opposite to the occidental and secular concept conveyed in the textbooks for Civil Education – despite the fact that some topics are discussed in both types of textbooks (cf. Reiss 2003). The only thing these types have in common is the lack of realism with regard to the representation of Palestinian society. Just as the textbooks for Civil Education could be criticised for completely ignoring the fact of conservative Islamic groups within Palestinian society, the textbooks for Islamic Education ignores all Muslims who are



Illustration 6: The Islamic World (grade 6, I, p.66)

less conservative and more secular as well as the whole non-Muslim world within Israel/Palestine. Many issues of a rather occidental and secular orientation are ignored that are also being discussed in Palestine for quite a while now. This restriction of the books' view to the Islamic world is clearly evident from a map of the Islamic world on which

both Lebanon and Israel/Palestine are depicted as countries with a Muslim population above 80% (grade 6, vol.1, p. 66; grade 7, vol. I, p. 56).¹¹

¹¹ However, it should be conceded that this is a global map of Islam, comprising Africa, Europe, and all of Asia. Names and borders of countries are printed so small and blurred that clear distinctions are hardly possible. Accordingly, this should not be used as evidence for a specifically anti-Israeli representation or even for a denial of Israel's existence – as the national borders of Jordan, Syria, and Lebanon are just as hard to detect. Students are basically given the impression that Muslims are in the majority from West Africa to Pakistan and Indonesia.

War and Peace

After an explanation in the first grade book (vol. I, p. 29) stating that the Islamic peace greeting is used in all greeting situations (at school, when meeting someone on the street, on the phone, upon coming home, when meeting schoolmates and for ritual prayer) the following is summarised in a poem:

*“Do you know the greeting I say when I step in front of you?
When I see a group of people I say, Peace be with you!
I am a Muslim, I am a Believer.
My Religion teaches me Peace.
I am a Muslim, I am a Believer.
Truly, I call for Peace.”*

This lesson and this poem intend to convey that Muslim believers have a particular affinity for peace because they are used to wishing other people peace in numerous everyday situations. Obviously this can only be deemed a pretty superficial reasoning as the same greeting has been common in pagan Orient since antiquity and is not proprietary or specific to Islam. This greeting is used just as well by Jews in Hebrew and Syrian Orthodox Christians in Aramaic. Nonetheless this clearly conveys the message that Muslims should “call for peace” and that peace should be the general guideline for the interaction between individuals. The intention to carry this message should be recognized as laudable.

The topic of Islam’s general love for peace is explicitly discussed in another section. The lesson *“Reasons for the expansion of Islam”* (for grade 7) states eight reasons for the rapid expansion of Islam: (1) the disunity of people on faith issues before the advent of Islam; (2) the reasonable nature of Islam, the natural disposition of humans for Islam, and the simplicity of Islamic faith; (3) the desire of people to have a religion that liberates them from *‘spiritual and moral anarchy’* and *‘socio-economic injustice’*; (4) the *‘just and merciful treatment’* of conquered nations (cf. the section on tolerance below); (5) the patience exercised in the efforts for conversion to Islam; (6) the outstanding character features of Muslims; (7) the impact of the Koran on human souls; (8) the good governance of Muhammad and his successors (grade 7, vol. I, p. 57-58). This list of positive features

attributed to Islam is followed by a typographically marked section under the heading “*I learn*” (sections with said heading usually contain summaries of the newly introduced contents). Here, the reader finds an apologetic explanation refuting the allegation that the expansion of Islam took place by means of violence and war:

“Some enemies of Islam claim that Islam was spread with the sharpness of the sword. However, the truth is not what they claim. How could the sword have been the means to spread Islam when God, the Most High, has forbidden compulsion in religion?! The Most High said, ‘Let there be no compulsion in religion’ (Sura ‘The Cow’, 256). Rather, Islam is the religion of peace, i.e. God, the Most High, encourages peace as long as there is a way towards it. The Most High says, ‘But if the enemy inclines towards peace, do thou also incline towards peace, and trust in God, for He is One that heareth and knoweth all things’ (Sura ‘The Spoils of War’, 61). Peace is the foundation, and war only the exception which is prescribed in case of self-defence, to remove oppression and obstacles to the progress of the Islamic mission (ad-Da’wa al-Islâmiya). The Most High says, ‘If they attack you, fight them likewise, such is the recompense of the unbelievers’ (Sura ‘The Cow’, 191). The Most High says, ‘Fight them so that the believers shall not be churned up (Fitna) and so that the Faith in God shall prevail’ (Sura ‘The Cow’, 193). The expansion of Islam was carried out with wisdom, friendly admonition and good treatment. The Most High says, ‘Invite to the way of thy Lord with wisdom and beautiful preaching; and argue with them in ways that are best and most gracious: for thy Lord knoweth best, who have strayed from His Path, and who received guidance.’ (Sura ‘The Bees’, 125).“ (ibid.: 58)

The intention of this section is doubtlessly laudable. The authors attempt to convey to the students that Islam has a generally positive attitude towards peace and allows war only as an exception. In particular, calling Islam a “religion of peace” and war an “exception” can help fostering ethics of peace among the students. Accordingly, people who speak out for peace do not have to justify their attitude, and the burden of proof generally lies with those who support non-peaceful means. The problem is that there is no detailed definition of reasons for war being said “exception”. “*Self-defence*” and “*removal of oppression*” are criteria which are wide open for interpretation. Does self-defence encompass individual, or national self-defence, or even self-defence of the whole Arab world? Does “*to remove oppression*” only justify the removal of obvious tyrants or could this also apply to all regimes

of the Middle East? Who is to judge in which cases “*self-defence*” or a “*removal of oppression*” are justified? And what does this concretely mean in the context of the conflict with Israel? All these questions remain unanswered.

Therefore the individual teacher’s interpretation is paramount for how this text will be read and understood. Provided the criteria for “war as an exception” are very limited, this text might serve as a good means to foster education for peace. If criteria are used very loosely this “exception” might easily become the rule. If, for instance, the formation of the State of Israel is deemed an illegitimate distribution of land by an occupying power (Great Britain) which would justify “self-defence” of Palestinians, and if Israeli occupation and military control of the West Bank and the Gaza Strip, respectively, are defined as “oppression” (*Zulm*), this section on peace could just as well serve as a means for religious justification of current violence. In this case the use of force would not only be justifiable, it would even be required by Islamic law as the text states that in these cases of exception war is *mandated by law* (al-Harb Hâla Istithnâ’iya *Shara’at li-’d-Difâ’*, *ibid.*: 57).

Even if the current situation is not mentioned during classroom discussion of this section and if the rights to self-defence and removal of oppression are not explicitly stated, the third criterion allowing for the exception of war is still highly problematic. If war is mandatory for all cases when “*obstacles to the progress of the Islamic mission*” arise, the threshold to war is placed so low that the claim of Islam being a religion of peace could easily be turned into its opposite – this could mean that in all cases when Muslims are not in a position of power, the use of military force would not only be justified but even mandatory in order to achieve this state.

Unfortunately this principle was frequently applied in Islamic history. The frequently quoted Koranic principle “*Let there be no compulsion in religion*” has by far not led to a purely defensive attitude in Islam. It was applied in Islamic history only *after* countries had already been conquered by use of military power or after at least a military threat had been created. The principle “*Let there be no compulsion in religion*” of Sura 2, 256, was preceded by a call for conversion to Islam, and – if this conversion was not accepted – invariably also by the Koranic principle of Sura 9, 29: “*Fight those who believe not ... until they pay tribute out of what they own and feel themselves subdued.*” (Vgl. Khoury 1994: 52) Islam’s tolerance was not reflected in a generally defensive attitude and pacifism in principle; rather, it was reflected by a high degree of tolerance (compared to the standards of the times) towards the already *conquered* nations. Only after supremacy of Islam was ensured, peace and tolerance

were possible.¹² Accordingly, the whole Western world is seen as “*Dâr al-Harb*” (house of war) while peace – in its Islamic definition – can only prevail in “*Dâr al-Islâm*”, i.e., in places where Islam is predominant.¹³

The textbook’s statements about the general inclination towards peace and the merely defensive nature of Islam are therefore, with regard to history and the present, not completely accurate, nor are they very helpful to facilitate a comprehensive understanding of Islam’s position on peace. A generally defensive attitude and pacifism in principle are certainly not proprietary characteristics of Islam. This would also be in conflict with Islam’s claim for universality. It would also be in conflict with the whole history of aggressive Islamic conquests which was already begun with the campaigns of conquest on the Arabian Peninsula spearheaded by Muhammad himself (see also the list of campaigns of conquest in the section on Ramadan). On the other hand it would not be completely accurate to call Islamic religion a “religion of the sword” as it quickly entered into agreements with the conquered nations, thus securing their lives, property and practice of faith to an extent which allowed for the survival of Christians and Jews (albeit as protégés with limited civic rights) in the areas of Islamic dominance until the present day (On the status of Christians and Jews in Islam, cf. Fattal 1958; Lewis 1987; Khoury 1994; Courbage/Fargues 1998; Bat Ye’or 2002). This was an enormous progress in the history of humankind towards a more humane society which should be recognized as such – similar achievements in Europe were made only after the Westphalian Peace of 1648.

A basic problem of the wording of this textbook is the fact that it is mostly limited to quotes from the Koran but hardly makes any reference to the history of Islam. It would be just as reasonable to quote the sections encouraging to “love thy enemy” and “love thy neighbour” from the Bible to describe Christianity’s attitude towards peace – and ignore the history of Christendom. In addition, some of the Koran quotes cited here are elsewhere at times interpreted completely differently. For instance, the reference to Sura 2, 191 (the first part of which, “*And slay them wherever ye catch them, and turn them out from where they have*

¹² From a linguistic point of view the connection of Islam and peace (*Silm*), and well-being, integrity, peace (*Salâm*) is evident in Arabic. The 4th form of the principal verb *Salima* has a causal or factual connection to the principal form. From a merely grammatical point of view a Muslim is someone who facilitates or creates *Silm* (peace) and/or enters the realm of *Salâm* (of well-being, of peace).

¹³ When the expansion of the Islamic Empire started to slow down the obligation to Jihad was first restricted and revised. A temporary ceasefire could become a permanent state. Some Islamic scholars of law even accept an intermediary state between the “House of Peace” and the “House of War”. The terms “*Dâr as-Sulh*” (House of Ceasefire) and “*Dâr al-Ahd*” (House of Alliance) were used for non-Islamic countries which entered into a contractual relationship with the Islamic Empire, recognized Islamic supremacy and paid tribute, but retained a certain autonomy. Cf. Lewis 1982: 59-61; Heine 1987: 24-26.

turned you out” is simply omitted in the textbook) is used to reason for the defensive nature of Islam. The same quote currently serves many Islamist groups to reason that any kind of peace agreement with Israel is completely out of the question (Reiss 2002).

In summary it can be concluded that this section of the textbook does indeed attempt and intend education for peace, however, due to the broad range of possible interpretations, it also gives the opportunity to turn it into the opposite of an education for peace.

The topic of war is mentioned in yet another section, oddly enough in the context of a section on feasting. After initial explanations for the students – explaining what feasting means, what its purpose is and which feasting customs exist – additional information is provided (grade 6, vol. I, p. 33) under the heading “*Note/Useful Hint*” (*Fâ`ida*), intended to prevent misunderstandings (just like in the section discussed herein before):

“In the second year of the Hijra, God made feasting mandatory for Muslims. However, Ramadan is not a month of procrastination and inertia. Rather, it is a month of strength, of effort (Jihâd) and action. Muslims even achieved [during feasting periods] great victories which made Islamic history. Among the most outstanding ones are the Muslim victories in the following [historical] events: (1) the battle of Badr in the second year of the Hijra; (2) the conquest of Mecca in the 8th year after the Hijra; (3) the predatory attack of Tabûk in the 9th year after the Hijra; (4) the conquest of Spain in the year 92 after the Hijra; (5) the battle of Zalaqa in the year 92 after the Hijra between the Muslims and Franconians in Spain; (6) the battle of Ain Jalût in the year 658 after the Hijra between Muslims and Tatars in Palestine; (7) the victorious Ramadan battle in the year 1973 [AD] between Arabs and Israel.”

This list of Islamic victories with its slightly odd leaps from century to century is not just a list of glorious wars – rather, it is supposed to provide historical evidence that the feasting period is not a period of procrastination and that during such periods even great efforts were made and military victories achieved. The list of battles which took place during the month of feasting is evidence for the possibility of extreme (and successful) efforts during Ramadan. It is supposed to show that the month of feasting is truly a time “*of strength, of effort and action*” – including military Jihad. This part is therefore intended to praise achievements made despite/due to feasting and not so much to glorify war as such. Nonetheless this list is very problematic, mostly because only wars are represented as the

opposite of procrastination and rest from work. The possibility of cultural, economic or social efforts during Ramadan is completely ignored. Another problem is that mostly first strike wars, rather than defensive wars, are listed – which severely challenges the claim of the generally peaceful nature made in other parts of the textbooks. Should the best cause Muslims could engage in during Ramadan really be a first strike war or a war of annexation? Particularly problematic is the item “October war 1973” of this list. In the textbooks for Islamic Religion lessons this is the only instance of an explicit reference to a war against Israel. The reason why this war was included is first and foremost its designation as “Ramadan battle” in the Arabic language, however, used here with the epithet “glorious” (*Majīd*). It is questionable whether the use of this adjective is justified as this war ended – after some initial success – in a defeat of the Arab armies, limited only due to the fact that the US forced the Israeli troops that were fighting back.¹⁴ However, from a political point of view this war can be seen as crossroads in Middle Eastern politics because the myth of Israeli invincibility had been shaken by the initial Arab success. The “glorious” advance of Egyptian troops was also evidence for Israel’s military vulnerability which in turn fostered a willingness to find a political solution.¹⁵ Due to the petrol boycott, which increased Western awareness of the geostrategic importance of the Arab states, the West was now also more interested in finally safeguarding the Middle Eastern powder keg.

In summary it can be concluded that said list of wars of annexation – in the context of a general willingness for peace with Israel and other non-Islamic states – is inappropriate evidence to explain that Ramadan is not a period of inertia. It would have been more appropriate to list cultural, religious and social achievements. While the October war is indeed a political landmark it should be discussed in a different context.

Under the heading “*A Muslim loving his Fatherland will defend it*”, lesson 15 of the same textbook again discusses the issue of war and peace. At first students are encouraged to reflect on (1) what the Fatherland consists of in their view, and (2) what students would like it to be. The answers to these questions are of tremendous political importance. However, the rest of the narrative does not provide any clear answers. Instead of defining the meaning of

¹⁴ On October 16, Israeli troops led by Ariel Sharon landed – to the surprise of the Egyptians – on the Western shore of the Suez channel and started intruding into Egypt’s hinterland, while the advancing Egyptian troops came to a halt. In Syria, Israeli troops advanced into Syria towards Damascus and came as close as 40 km. Cf. Naor 1996: 424-432.

¹⁵ The Suez fortifications (Bar Lev line) previously deemed insurmountable were crossed surprisingly fast by the Egyptians, while the Syrians came close to Tiberias during the first days of the war. Things changed only after American support lines were set up. Cf. Gilbert 1993: 82-95; Naor 1996: 426; Kriener/Sterzing 1997: 34.

“Fatherland/native country”, this text states that all humans love their Fatherland/native country, want to live there and love it so much that they are willing to defend it. It goes on to say that the “Fatherland Palestine” has special advantages – many prophets have lived there; the Prophet Muhammad himself rose to heaven from this place during the night; it hosts the Al Aqsa mosque – the third most important place of worship in Islam which is already mentioned as a blessed place in the Koran; it has been the cradle of some of the most ancient cultures of the World, before becoming an integral part of the Islamic Empire, after annexation (grade 6, vol. I, p. 66-67). The following paragraph of utmost importance follows under the heading “*The Love for the Fatherland in Islam*” (ibid.: 67-68):

“Islam does not disapprove of the Muslim’s love for his Fatherland, rather, it encourages it and asks him to defend it as a duty of all Muslims in case even a hand’s breadth of it is unlawfully dispossessed. As a Palestinian Muslim I love my country Palestine (Baladī Filastīn). At the same time I deem all Islamic-Arabic soil (Ard) an integral part of the great Fatherland (Watan) I love and cherish and whose unity I strive for.”

This text is problematic not so much with regard to its wording but with regard to its interpretation. In principle nobody can be denied the right to love his or her fatherland and to be willing to defend it. Nobody can deny the Palestinians the right to stand up against the Israeli occupation and expropriation of their country – which is in violation of international law as confirmed in numerous UN resolutions since 1967.

The unanswered yet important question is what is to be deemed the Fatherland and how this duty to defend it should be applied to current politics. Does the text refer to the settlements, or to the West Bank and Gaza Strip? Does it refer to the territory of the former Palestinian Mandate or does this call for defence even apply to the whole of the Arabic Fatherland?¹⁶ Which would be the legitimate means to defend it? Are these military as well as political means? Could this be used to justify the suicide attacks of militant Palestinian groups? How does the theory described here relate to today’s realities? If each and every “hand’s breadth of Arabic soil” must be defended, would this not necessarily include a

¹⁶ One of the questions referring to this text suggests that the Palestinian Fatherland referred to, which should be defended, is the West Bank and the Gaza Strip. The question is, ‘A large part of Palestinian land was taken out for the construction of settlements. How can this be confronted?’ However, all of Israel could be viewed as a colony of the Israelis who unlawfully settled on the territory of the former Palestinian Mandate. In this case said question would implicitly challenge Israel’s right to existence.

reconquista of Spain?¹⁷ This last question makes it clear that said text does not provide any helpful answers to the current issues of *Realpolitik*, even if the statements about each and every “hand’s breadth” of Arabic territory suggest a radical and uncompromising position. This radical position becomes clearly evident in the subsequent paragraph (grade 6, vol. I: 68) which states:

“Our Duty Towards Our Fatherland

Its people and its sons have numerous duties towards the Fatherland:

1. *To defend it by all possible ways (ad-Difâ‘ ‘anhu bi-kull Tarîq Mumkina). That is, Islam makes the defence of one’s Fatherland a religious duty. And that [man] who is killed while defending it is deemed a martyr. He deserves the highest of levels. The Most High said, ‘How could we not fight for the cause of God, seeing that he has turned us out of our homes and separated us from our sons?’ (Sura ‘The Cow’, 246).*
2. *To be vigilant that your land is used for housing and every hand’s breadth is beneficially used.*
3. *To care for its inhabitants, to foster co-operation and solidarity, to strengthen equality, justice and respect in the existing social relationships.”*

The first part can be construed not only to legitimise the use of force, including suicide attacks, it may even be seen as a call for it, because it explicitly states that *all possible ways for defence* should be used. As this book is published while suicide attacks are happening frequently, only one interpretation is possible – suicide attacks are not only justified, but encouraged and deemed a religious duty (even if they are not explicitly mentioned here as justified means). Such a statement has no place in a book which was issued by the Palestinian Authority and co-financed by the UNESCO and European governments. It needs to be immediately removed from the textbook. It should also be pointed out that this position does not comply with the traditions of Islamic law which, already very early, imposed restrictions on the use of force. According to traditional Islamic law armed conflicts ought not to turn against women, children, or other defenceless people, or against those whose pacifism is implied (e.g., priests and monks). Some scholars even believed that peasants or merchants not involved in the conflict ought not to be the target of attacks (Cf. Heine 2001: 29; Ferchl 1991: 316). In Sura 17, 33 the Koran itself states the principle that revenge for those who have been

¹⁷ Cf. Heine 2001, 23: “Once a territory was part of the ‘Dâr al-Islâm’ this status was irrevocable, even if military fortune turned against the Muslims so that they had to relinquish the territory in question.

unjustly killed is legitimate, while “excessive killing” cannot be justified.¹⁸ The call to defend one’s country by all means and ways therefore does not reflect Islamic law but only its misinterpretation by militant fundamentalist groups (Cf. Heine 2001: 124-132) which is completely inappropriate for a Palestinian textbook. Instead there should be a clear definition of what the Palestinian Fatherland to be defended is supposed to include and which means for its defence are legitimate.

Under the heading “*Note/Useful Hint*” a typographically emphasized box on the opposite page of the section discussed here (grade 6, vol. I, 69) contains some statements about a controversial issue which was vividly discussed by Israel and the PNA during the peace talks. The issue is whether or not Palestinian refugees have the right to return and whether or not they belong to the Palestinian nation. This short text states as follows:

“The camp is not deemed the original home of the Palestinian refugee. Rather it is a provisional location where he was forced to live. However, all Palestinians wait to come home to their village or town from where they have fled.”

These few lines are intrinsically explosive as they incite hopes and expectations which are unrealistic and which may counteract a peaceful solution of the Palestinian conflict. Repatriation of all refugees "to their respective village and town" is probably not possible simply because many of these towns and villages have ceased to exist and because an actual repatriation would entail financial and economic disaster for the Palestinian government. The case is different with the theoretical right to repatriation and claims to compensations. Such a solution could be possible in case of a peace agreement which, however, should be the subject of future peace talks. It would be helpful to explain to the students that a complete repatriation can hardly be implemented due to political restraints – not only because of Israel’s resistance to it but also because many refugees, for economic and personal reasons, have lost interest in returning to their homeland. Another obstacle is the enormous challenge of integrating all refugees into the Palestinian society. Therefore a Palestinian state (just like the State of Israel!) will have to accept the fact that a majority of the population regarding Israel and Palestine their respective homelands will, in reality, stay in exile. If such an issue is raised in a textbook, it should be reduced to a general right of return or these limitations should also be made very clear – because otherwise students are given utopian hopes and expectations which

Accordingly, parts of the Balkan or of the Iberian Peninsula are still part of the ‘Islamic territory’.”

¹⁸ In this respect America’s right to revenge after the terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001, is justifiable for Muslim scholars. Remains the question whether or not the US have been more than excessive in this revenge.

are rather likely to hinder the creation of a Palestinian state and a peaceful solution of the Middle East conflict. At least it should be stated that a return does not necessarily mean going back to one's exact house, village or city in which they lived 55 years ago as it is expressed in the text. The idea of return should be that refugees have the right to live in the state of Israel or Palestine and/or that they receive compensations and help for establishing a new existence in their homecountry or any other country.

Judaism and the people of Israel

Only few statements are made about Judaism and the people of Israel, and these only in the context of historical and theological discussions. This issue, just like Christianity or any other religion is nowhere discussed as an issue in its own right. The two other monotheistic religions are mentioned only indirectly in the paragraphs on the Pillars of Islam, in the discussion of the prophets, the Holy Scriptures and revelation. The first such instance is in a textbook for grade 3.

The lesson titled "*The Belief in the Prophets*" states that Noah, Abraham, Moses and Muhammad have to be counted among the greatest prophets. The students are asked to look up the prophets mentioned in Sura 61, 82-86, and to write down their names (grade 3, vol. I, 15-17). Apart from the persons mentioned above this Sura mentions the Jewish progenitors Isaac and Jacob, King David and King Solomon, as well as Lot, Job, Joseph und Aaron. Elijah is mentioned here in connection with Zachariah, John und Jesus referenced in the New Testament (ibid.: 15-17). The people of Israel is first mentioned in the subsequent lesson titled "*The Heavenly Scriptures*" (ibid.: 20). According to this lesson the Holy Koran quotes the following "Heavenly Scriptures":

1. *"The Scriptures (Suhuf) of Abraham – Peace be with him. They called his people to believe in God, the Strong and Powerful, to worship Him and to develop the virtuous qualities. Says the Most High, 'This is written down in the Scriptures revealed before, and this is in the Books of the earliest (revelation), the Books of Abraham and Moses.' (Sura 'The Most High', 18-19).*
2. *The Torah: It was revealed to Moses – Peace be with him – as an offering for the people of Israel.*

3. *The Book of Psalms: It was revealed to David – Peace be with him. It contains admonitions and guidance for the people of Israel.*
4. *The Gospel: It was revealed to Jesus – Peace be with him – as an offering for the people of Israel and to confirm what Moses had handed down.*
5. *The Holy Koran: It was revealed to Muhammad – God bless Him and avail Him well-being – to call all humans to worship God, the Strong and Powerful. This is the last of the Heavenly Scriptures which God commanded to protect from loss and amendment.”*

The subsequent section (p. 21) specifies the belief of the “*Believers of the Heavenly Religions*” in more detail:

- *“The Jews: They believe in what has been revealed in the Torah and the Book of Psalms.*
- *The Christians: They believe in what has been revealed in the Torah, the Book of Psalms, and the Gospel.*
- *The Muslims: They believe in all Heavenly Scriptures but use the Holy Koran only, because it is the Seal of these Scriptures and comprises everything they contain of the Commandments of God, the Strong and Powerful, as well as His guidance. There has been no amendment or falsification in it, unlike what happened to the Heavenly Scriptures that preceded it. Says the Most High, ‘We have revealed the admonition and guard it [forever]’ (Sura ‘Al-Hijr’ [Hijr is the name of a valley]’, 9).“*

This information is examined word by word in the assessment part and supplemented by an exercise – reading Sura 3, 3, which, however, provides no additional information. This reflects the traditional Islamic view of these two monotheistic religions, a view which differs substantially from how they see themselves. Judeo-Christian tradition is not aware of any scriptures revealed to Abraham. Also the Hebrew Bible consists of more than only the Torah and the Book of Psalms – it consists of the Torah, the Prophets (Nevî’im) and the historical scriptures (Ketûvîm), which reflect a history spanning several centuries and which have been recorded during a long process – while not all of them have been “revealed” to Moses. The Book of Psalms in the Hebrew Bible consists of more psalms than those attributed to David, and at least modern research challenges the thought that all of the Torah should be attributed to Moses. Apart from the collection of scriptures mentioned herein before, the Holy Scripture

of Christians comprises several (!) Gospels, the Acts, the letters of the Apostles and the Revelation of John. There is no indication whatsoever that Jesus received the words of the New Testament or the Gospel by way of a revelation. Rather, these are records made after Jesus' death which reflect the Christian community's belief in his resurrection. The textbook therefore contains a direct projection of the Islamic concept of revelation onto the Jewish and Christian concept and has nothing to do with how Judaism and Christianity see themselves and their respective scriptures. Another ignored fact is that neither the Jewish nor the Christian religions see themselves as religions restricted to certain groups of people without any claim of universality (Zirker 1992: 264-272; Zirker 1999: 1-44). Texts like the pilgrimage of nations to Mt. Zion (Isaiah, 2), the expectation of the Last Day and of the Messiah, as well as the concept of the „God-fearing ones“, demonstrate that there were and are concepts aimed at all nations. This applies even more so for Christianity which has a universal mission (Matthew 28) just like Islam and decided in its beginnings to carry its message also to pagan nations (Council of Apostles in Acts 15 and Galatians 2).¹⁹ Similarly, Christians believe the revelation in Christ to be already the substantive and final revelation.

It would therefore be wrong to allege that the textbook talks about Judaism and Christianity as they exist in reality. Rather, the concepts conveyed reflect Islam's allochthonous view of these religions. The explanations tell a lot more about Islam than about the other religions. It would be desirable to bring about change in this respect, but also unrealistic for the time being, as this would affect fundamental principles of Islam according to which the Koran is not something which has evolved in history but is God's words which were directly dictated, words that prevail over the preceding scriptures received by way of revelation. Accordingly, if the Koran says that the Holy Scripture of Christianity consists of only one of the Gospels this ought to be the plain truth from an Islamic perspective, even if Christians since the 2nd century both recognize and read several Gospels and Epistles as Holy Scriptures. If the textbook would make it clear that this is the Islamic view of Christianity and Judaism only and not their respective understanding of themselves, it would be a noteworthy

¹⁹ In this context the textbook for grade 7 (Islamic Education, grade 7, vol. I, 44-46) elaborates that the message of the preceding prophets was aimed only at one particular people (Israel) of a certain time, while Muhammad's message is for all humans and valid irrespective of time. Of course, this again is only the Islamic view on the two preceding religions. These religions take a completely different stand and certainly understand this message, while recognizing its historic nature, as a message valid for humankind today. Otherwise reading and interpreting the Holy Scriptures in both synagogues and churches would not make sense.

progress. However, in the long term it would be desirable that Muslims also deal with how Judaism and Christianity see themselves.²⁰

Another reference to Jews is found in the textbooks in connection with the agreement of Medina. Until the present day this agreement is deemed an ideal example for any Islamic society. The lesson at first (grade 7, vol. I, 74-75) explains that the local population consisted of three groups, (a) the Muslim émigrés from Mecca, (b) the followers of Polytheism, and (c) the Jewish tribes Banû Qainuqâ‘, Banû an-Nadîr, and Banû Quraiza. The agreement was intended to regulate the relationship to the converts, as well as the relationship to the Jewish population. The text states about the first part that the émigrés and the local converts form one community without discrimination, that no Muslim shall kill another Muslim because of an unbeliever, and that no believer supports an unbeliever against another Muslim. The relationship to the Jews is then characterised as follows (ibid.: 75):

“The Relationship of Muslims to the Others

The Prophet – God bless Him and avail Him well-being – organised the relationship between the Muslims as a community different from the rest of humankind (Umma min Dawn an-Nâs) and from the Jewish tribes that lived in the Enlightened City and its surroundings. These tribes did not welcome the emigration of God’s Prophet – God bless Him and avail Him well-being – and of the Muslims of Mecca to the Enlightened City, although they did not resist it or start any dispute. In the agreement with them He allowed them unlimited freedom in their religion and their property. Among the most important clauses contained in this agreement are [the following]:

- *Jews have their own religion and Muslims have their own religion;*
- *That they shall support each other against those who wage war on the population of this side or [support each other] against those who attack Yathrib;*
- *That there shall be councils and consultations between them, and that righteousness without sacrilege shall prevail;*

²⁰ Evidence for the fact that Muslims are capable of this can be found in a volume by Muhammad ibn Abdallah ash-Shahrastânî, consisting of three parts (edited and translated by Haarbrücker 1969). Shahrastânî lived in Iran during the 12th century and provided a differentiated presentation of other religions, attempting a rather objective analysis. Shahrastânî is aware of the most important Jewish groups and their specific qualities, as well as of the various Christian churches, their structure and their differences in doctrine. He offers the text of the Nicene Creed in a correct Arabic translation and presents the issues of Trinity and Christology with near-accuracy. Using this book an Arabic Muslim could, even today, get a rather accurate perspective of Judaism and Christianity, their organisation and doctrine.

- *That as soon as something happens on this side or if a dispute arises which causes concern that it could overstep the mark, that this shall be brought before God, the Strong and Powerful, and before Muhammad – God bless Him and avail Him well-being.*“

The summary of the wording of the “Constitution of Medina” – with its general distinction between the relationships among Muslims on one side, and the relationship to non-Muslims on the other side (whose life, property and practice of faith was tolerated, provided however, that they recognise the supremacy of the Muslims and support them) – is historically correct (Cf. the entire text of the deed, in: Rotter 1976: 109-111). This text could serve as a basis to justify from a historical and theological perspective, a contractual settlement with Jews (and other non-Muslims) as possible in principle and worth striving for. Unfortunately the authors do not seize this opportunity in the subsequent exercises and questions. One homework even points into another direction (grade 7, vol. I, 77):

“The Prophet – God bless Him and avail Him well-being – strived to create a good and clear relationship between the émigrés and local Muslims on one side, and the polytheists and Jews on the other side. Look it up in the readings on the Prophet’s biography²¹ and write a report on how the Jews behaved with regard to this relationship.”

If you look it up in the biography you will find that the Jews denied Muhammad’s prophecy (Rotter 1976: 113-120), that the tribe of the Banû Nadîr attempted to assassinate Muhammad and were therefore expelled (ibid.: 157). During the trench battle the Jews encouraged fighting against Muhammad, while Muhammad (and/or God) in turn cursed them forever in Sura 4, 51-55 (ibid.: 162-173). The Jewish tribe of the Banû Quraiza was attacked because they insulted the Prophet. Consequently they were besieged, all men were executed and the women and children enslaved (ibid.: 173-178). The Jews of Khaibar had to surrender to the siege, while those of Fadak surrendered without fighting. However, these two groups

²¹ The textbook gives no clear indication as to which of the biographies of the Prophet should be used. However, it stands to reason that the biography in question is the *as-Sîra an-Nabawiya* by Ibn Ishâq (704-767) which, since the revision by Ibn Hisham (dec. 834) is deemed “the epitome of *Sîra* (biography) [and] the most famous biography of the Prophet until the present day” in the Islamic world (Rotter 1976: 12). Cf. Cahen 1968: 126: „The most important historical volumes of very early Islam are the *Sîra* by Ibn Ishâq (dec. 767) which, in the revised form of Ibn Hishâm (dec. 834) are still the Prophet’s official biography today.” Another clear indication is the fact that all paragraphs of the textbooks referring to the Prophet’s life obviously refer to texts by Ibn Ishâq and sometimes even quote them word by word (without recognising the quote).

managed to negotiate that they may stay and may till their land (for the time being), provided they paid half of what they yielded as tribute to the Muslims (ibid.: 201-204).

This homework can be used to list problematic historical events mentioned in the Prophet's biography which indicate that despite Muhammad's initial efforts a peaceful co-existence with the Jews was not attained. It is possible that during classroom discussion of this homework general anti-Jewish stereotypes will be deducted, just like it happens with Egyptian textbooks. However, this is mere speculation and not necessarily the case. Not to be ignored is the fact that, for instance, the agreement of Khaibar later on became the foundation of provisions regulating the relationship to non-Muslims in the conquered countries – and for centuries this provided a legal status for Jews which was far better than in Christian territories (Lewis 1987: 20). The wording of the textbooks should be credited for the fact that it contains no explicit references to all the negative things Islamic tradition has in store with regard to the Jews. However, it remains open which relationship to the Jews should be deducted from these texts. This is tremendous progress in comparison to the Egyptian textbooks – as those not only list each and every anti-Jewish phrase from the Prophet's biography, but also deduct generalising anti-Jewish positions that allegedly applied in the past as well as today (Reiss 2002).

Apparently the radical anti-Jewish statements which can still be found today in the Egyptian textbooks (which were used in Palestine until recently) were intentionally deleted from the Palestinian Curriculum. At least they are not contained in the textbooks issued until now for the subject of Islamic Education. With regard to reducing the hostile concepts of Israel and Judaism this must be seen as great progress.²² It would be desirable for the future that (instead of the silence about the relationship to the Jews and a mere reference to the Prophet's biography) the agreement of Medina is used to reason that Islam generally strives to regulate the relationship to Judaism peacefully by way of contracts and that it is possible in principle to give Jews a guarantee for their lives, their property and the practice of their faith, and to co-exist on a constrained territory. If such a generalising statement were added it would be a meaningful step towards peaceful co-existence in Israel/Palestine.

²² Regarding the textbooks newly issued by the PNA even the extremely critical Centre for Monitoring the Impact of Peace has seconded this observation. During a seminar about 'The Image of the Other in Mid-Eastern Textbooks', held in January 2001 at the Hebrew University in Jerusalem, the former CMIP Director of Studies confirmed that the "unambiguous call for the annihilation of Israel which could be found in older textbooks [from Egypt and Jordan] does not exist anymore." He also admitted that also "those paragraphs where Jews and Israelis were called 'traitors' or 'devilish enemies' have disappeared". Quoted from Haaretz, January 2, 2001.

Tolerance

Tolerance towards non-Muslims is mentioned in several places, albeit exclusively on the periphery as the textbooks for the subject of Islamic Education focus only on the Islamic community in Palestine.

The religion textbook for grade 2 quotes the Koranic principle “*I worship not that which ye worship, nor will ye worship that which I worship*” from Sura 109 which in some dialogues is sometimes quoted as an expression of Islamic tolerance. However, the provided short explanation “*My Religion is Islam and you are blasphemers/unbelievers*” points in a diametrically opposite direction. It means that only one’s own religion is regarded the right one, while religion of others is fundamentally wrong and talking about it is therefore futile. This explanation reflects disdain for other religions rather than tolerance.²³

The textbook for grade 3 contains a lesson with the heading “*The Respect for Others*”. This is mainly understood as a polite and helpful attitude towards older people and disabled people. However, later on there is a generalising statement according to which the Prophet has commanded to “respect others, regardless whether they are big or small, rich or poor, Muslims or non-Muslims” (grade 3, vol. I, p. 67). Obviously this is more about manners in general and not so much about a specific tolerance towards non-Muslims. However, it is the obvious intention that non-Muslims should be granted this same politeness. Credit should be given for this intention. Nonetheless this textbook – unlike the subject Civil Education which offers a similar lesson for the same grade (Civil Education, grade 3, vol. I, p. 22-27) – does not endorse general freedom of faith and provides no practical assistance as to how religious tolerance can be learned. This is regrettable and shows that the authors of the textbooks for Civil Education who strive for a secular society are much more interested in a peaceful co-existence of religions than the authors of the textbooks for Islamic Education – despite the fact that the latter claim that Islam is specifically characterised as a religion of peace.

The textbook for grade 7 mentions as one of the reasons for the expansion of Islam that non-Muslims living in the conquered territories were treated “*justly and mercifully*” (see section above on war and peace) and that “*Islam guaranteed their property, security and religious and protected them from hostility*” (grade 7, vol. I, p. 57). Apart from this single

²³ Compare the introduction to the Koran translation, authorized by the Al-Azhar, of Sura 109, in al-Muntakhab 1999, 1047: “This Sura of Mecca, consisting of 6 verses, authorises the Ambassador to discontinue talking to the unbelievers. He is told to tell them that a compromise is out of the question. Each side insists on its faith. They do not want to recognise the revealed Divine Truth and continue the pagan tradition. He, however, clings to the religion God has chosen for Him.”

brief statement no further information is given in this context. However, the topic is discussed again in the last lesson of a textbook for grade 8. This lesson titled “*Tolerance*” first discusses tolerance inside the Muslim community in more detail, and goes on to discuss “*Tolerance towards non-Muslims*” (grade 8, vol. I, p. 81-82) in a second paragraph. It states as follows:

“Islam creates relationships between humans on the basis of justice, mercy and protection of human dignity. It encourages relationships between Muslim and non-Muslim citizens of the Islamic society which are based on the solid foundations of tolerance, justice, and mercy. Thus said the Praised One, ‘God does not forbid you respecting those who have not made war against you on account of your religion, and have not driven you forth from your homes, that you show them kindness and deal with them justly; surely God loves the doers of justice. (Sura ‘The Examining One’, 8)

The Koran has put an end to the dispute between the people of the Scriptures about who is better. Also it allowed to marry their women and to eat their slaughtered animals. The Prophet – God bless Him and avail Him well-being – deemed hostility towards them and oppressing them a major sin. He said, ‘Who fights an agreement shall not smell the scent of Paradise whose fragrance lasts 40 years’ (transmission of Bukhârî).

Islam refuses to force anybody to convert to it. For thus said the Praised One, ‘Let there be no compulsion in religion’ (Sura ‘The Cow’, 256). Rather he commands to fight the oppressors and usurpers who drive people out of their homes, make them stray from their religion and deprive them of their freedom of faith. These have no right to their property and to support. Thus said the Praised One, ‘God only forbids you affiliating with those who fought you on account of your religion, and drove you forth from your homes and backed up others in your expulsion. These are the oppressors.’ (Sura ‘The Examining One’, 9.)

Islam has confirmed the freedom of faith and of worship for non-Muslims in society. This is already included in the agreements and treaties which the Prophet – God bless Him and avail Him well-being – and his companions – may God rejoice in them – made with them, the people in the conquered countries, according to the example of the Omar Agreement. In this [agreement] Omar – may God rejoice in him – gave the people of Jerusalem security for their lives, their property, their churches and crosses. [He guaranteed] that their churches shall not be dispossessed or destroyed [by the Muslim conquerors], nor their property affected. This great tolerance which Islam called for and which makes

the Muslims outstanding is one of the most important reasons for the rapid expansion of Islam and for people embracing it.”

There is no doubt that Islam was capable of a degree of tolerance towards people of other denominations (which the Christian Occident for many more centuries to come was not capable of) that needs to be recognized, just as the fact that this general tolerance ensured the survival of the Christian and Jewish minorities in many countries up to the 20th century. However, condition precedent of this tolerance was their submission and payment of tribute. The non-Muslims faced an enormous economic and social pressure and Islamic society was based on discrimination in principle of the non-Muslim minorities. Furthermore this tolerance was not a tolerance in principle but depended on how the subjects behaved, so that in reality acts of arbitrariness against Jewish and Christian subjects took also place frequently (Bat Ye’or 1985; vgl. a. Lewis 1987; Khoury 1994; Courbage/ Fargues 1998). In this respect said statement of a very general nature is only partly correct. It should be explained in more detail which kind of tolerance was practiced, and what its limitations were (see above p. 14). The case is similar with the reference to the Omar Agreement as only the positive aspects of this agreement are mentioned. Apart from the guarantee for life, property and practice of faith this agreement also stipulated that non-Muslim subjects had to pay high amounts of tribute (land tax and poll tax), that they were not allowed to build new churches and had to publicly humiliate themselves before Muslims – which represents a general discrimination from the Muslim. In addition, it contained stipulations regarding clothing and restrictions regarding the public practice of their religion which are in sharp contrast to today’s understanding of freedom of faith and of tolerance (full wording of Omar’s stipulations in: Turtûshî 1872: 135-136).

Particularly problematic is the reference to Sura 60, 8-9. If peace can be made only with those who have not expelled Muslims from their homes, and have not fought them by reason of faith, this bids the question if this perspective allows for Israel as a partner for peace. There is no doubt that a majority of the Palestinian population agrees that the formation of the state of Israel in 1948 has given rise to a major disaster (an-Nakba) during which a large part of the Palestinian population was expelled. Also the international community does not have any doubts that, during the last decades and in the course of Israel’s continuing settlement policy, there have been expropriations of land in violation of international law – nor any doubts that this process of expulsion and expropriation including arbitrary military action, demolition of houses, blockades and deportations, and the public debate in Israel on the “transfer of the

Arabs” continues until the present day. A Palestinian Muslim student therefore will have to construe this text (not providing any commentary) in such a way that any compromise or peaceful reconciliation with Israel are precluded from a religious point of view. Therefore the intention of this chapter on “*Tolerance*” will be turned into its opposite if the current reality is taken into account – in that case this chapter preaches intolerance and an uncompromising position towards Israel.

It would be a little too easy to just ask for a removal of these parts from the textbook. The most problematic phrases are not written by the authors of the textbooks – they are quotes from the Koran. Also, cause and effect ought not to be confused. The text would be best softened by discontinuing the settlement policy as soon as possible, by putting an end to the debate on the “transfer of the Arabs”, by stopping the expropriation of Palestinian land and the expulsion of Palestinians, by Israeli concessions in the negotiations on the repatriation of Palestinian refugees, and by entering into negotiations on reparations for those cases where restitution of property is not possible anymore. If the state of Israel would demonstrate clear signs for reconciliation even said Sura 60,8 could unfurl its positive character, as an “*amicable and just*” solution of the Middle East conflict would then also be thinkable from an Islamic religious point of view. The Palestinian side should be asked to elaborate on the concrete application of this section to the conflict with Israel, i.e. under which circumstances Israel can be seen as a partner for peace with whom a peaceful solution may be found – and under which circumstances this is precluded.

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