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CMIP launched in Congress [September 1998]

Following the completion of CMIP's report on the PA textbooks, CMIP leadership presented their findings in Washington to members of Congress and the U.S. Administration.

Many Congressional members expressed their utter disapproval with the anti-Semitic and anti-Israeli texts found in the PA schoolbooks and initiated a series of actions:

1. The material was shared publicly with colleagues in both houses. Congressman Steven Rothman was instrumental in promoting awareness of the problem.
2. A letter was sent to Secretary of State, Madeleine Albright, signed by 8 Congressmen and Senators stressing that "schoolbooks should be about learning, not about teaching one people to despise another" and urging "as proponents for a lasting peace between Israel and the Palestinian people", ...to use her good offices "to ensure that UNESCO and the World Bank stop supporting the publication of hate-filled textbooks being produced by the P.A."
3. Congressman Peter Deutsch denounced the PA school books in a speech in Congress.
4. A demand was forwarded to UNRWA from the US Congress to stop using these textbooks in UNWRA run schools.
5. CMIP received a letter from Michael Ten-Kate, of the U.S. General Accounting Office (GAO) [the audit arm of the U.S. Congress] requesting as follows:

"We have been asked to collect funding data pertaining to the schooling of Palestinian children in the West Bank, Gaza.... Since your report on "Palestinian Authority School Text Books" was the catalyst for this review, it would be helpful if you could clarify a couple of issues for us...."

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CMIP in the Peace Process

CMIP's report on PA textbooks was given by PM Netanyahu to President Clinton and later to PA Chairman Arafat, during meetings in Washington prior to the negotiations at Wye River.

The problem of incitement to terror and violence in both PA media and PA textbooks was addressed in the Wye River negotiations, based in part on the material in CMIP's report, and it led to a separate article in the Wye Agreement [section II, A (3)], entitled "Preventing Incitement", that reads as follows:

"a. Drawing on relevant international practice and pursuant to Article XXII(1) of the Interim Agreement and noted for the Record, *the Palestinian side will issue a decree prohibiting all forms of incitement to violence and terror*. This decree will be comparable to the existing Israeli legislation, which deals with the same subject.

"b. A US-Palestinian-Israeli committee will meet on a regular basis to monitor cases of possible incitement to violence and terror and to make recommendations and reports on how to prevent such incitement. The Israeli-Palestinian and US sides will each appoint a media specialist, a law enforcement representative, an educational specialist and a current or former elected official of the committee."

This trilateral committee has held four meetings since November 14, and the editing of schoolbooks has been discussed during these sessions. However, until now there has been no willingness or even agreement regarding procedure for this editing. Moreover, in an article in the Arabic language Al-Quds a member of the Palestinian legislative council attacked the inclusion of education within the realm of the committee as follows: "Regarding the difficult aspects for the Wye agreement this [the anti incitement] is the most dangerous as it touches on the national ideology and national consciousness... The inclusion of education is the most dangerous part of the agreement." CMIP's Director of Research, Itamar Marcus, was appointed by the Israeli government to be a member of the committee.

Palestinian Reactions

Several Palestinian personalities have already reacted to the findings of the report on the Palestinian textbooks.

While acknowledging that some sections were genuinely racist and anti-Semitic, one argued that the rest reflects a misreading of, or a dwelling on "occupation-era rhetoric" that was being removed from the new textbooks developed by the PA authority.

For instance, in their eyes, the study conveyed a terrorist definition of Jihad that was unacceptable to most Muslims, who see Jihad as a positive value, not as a cry for the blood of the Jews.

Unfortunately, as shown in the study, a substantial number of passages in these textbooks did direct the Jihad, not with the value of making an effort upon oneself, but with the liberation of "Palestine" from its "thieving conquerors", an expression used to name Israel and the Jews.

It was also claimed that the omission of Israel from the maps displayed in these textbooks was the Palestinian reply to Israeli maps that omit the PA or Palestine, and Israeli teaching about the Greater Land of Israel.

This reaction by the PA is unfounded. Israel is a state that has existed for 50 years, and the PLO recognized Israel's existence in the Oslo agreements. There is no justification to delete Israel from maps, ***to omit it from the listing of countries in their atlas***, or to call Israel "occupied Palestine", waiting for liberation.

It was also argued that it was unfair to monitor PA-published textbooks, based for the most part on Jordanian or Egyptian books, as there is no other alternative, until their replacement by new Palestinian textbooks currently being prepared by the PA.

CMIP's response has been that it does not matter to the child learning that Jews are the evil enemy, and that Israel needs to be destroyed, whether the books are published by the Palestinian Authority directly, or based on other books. The influence on the children is the same.

Moreover, while editing could have been undertaken in an efficient manner to make the books presentable, the PA has actively chosen to publish these books with the hateful material in place. Even today, the option to edit these books and make them acceptable exists.

Finally, even in the new original Palestinian publications, Israel and Jewish history in Israel do not exist, and all of Israel is still portrayed in maps and in texts as Palestine.

CMIP visit to Amman

CMIP's heads met with Prince Firas Ben Ra'ad, advisor to King Hussein on Health and Humanitarian issues, on October 22, and asked him to forward to His Majesty the King, our wishes for his rapid recovery. Prince Firas stressed the overwhelming and decisive importance of political progress in the Israeli-Palestinian negotiations before embarking on joint projects aimed at developing mutual respect and esteem between former enemies. This could be initiated with success when the present deadlock in the peace process is overcome.

King Hussein sent a moving letter thanking the Chairman for his sincere concern for his well being.

Clinton's visit to the Region 12/98

During President Clinton's visit to Israel and the Palestinian Authority to witness the cancellation of the PLO Charter, CMIP placed an ad in the Jerusalem Post showing that many clauses in the charter, including those calling for Israel's destruction are actively being taught in the PA school books."

During his visit, Clinton referred to the importance of "education for peace", citing it as "the most important element" in order "for peace to be sustainable". In an address to the people of Israel, broadcast on December 13th 1998, he stated, "Our aspiration of peace is not enough. We must insist for education, reconciliation, end the violence, end of this terrible bloodshed [...] and that's

actually one of the fundamental elements that we have set up at Wye [...] Education for coexistence and not war."

At the end of his visit to Israel and Gaza, President Clinton expressed the wish that school books would reflect the hope for peace that he has seen in Gaza.

This awareness for the importance of education for peace is due, at least in part, to the work of the CMIP and the impact of the CMIP report on the PA textbooks.