

ARTICLE

## Books, incitement and incitement reports

Although the Israeli Ministry of Education should continue to re-evaluate and improve the books it approves, claiming incitement where there is none, is really a form of incitement in itself



What are Israeli children learning at school?



By [Nir Boms](#) and [Yael Teff-Seker](#)

on 11 June 2012 at 7am



total rating of 5.00

Sponsored Message:



The issue of incitement has always been a source of heated debate between Israel and the Palestinian Authority. Israel, on its part, built an “incitement index” with the aim of monitoring the changes of anti-Israeli rhetoric. The Palestinians followed suit and decided to produce a report of their own with its second addition appearing last week. While studying the issue of incitement with the aim of decreasing it on both sides is a worthwhile undertaking, a closer look at such discourse is also due.

“Israeli textbooks foster hate” heralds the title of the Palestinian report, stating that “there is evidence that Israeli schools teach racist textbooks.” The “evidence” comes in the form of four examples of such “incitement”, three of which are taken from the book *Geography of the Land of Israel* (2002), which has since been taken off the approved reading list of the Israeli Ministry of Education. The illustration it includes, of an Arab in traditional attire holding a camel, is indeed somewhat stereotypical (though hardly inciting) and was probably the trigger for taking the book off the approved reading list.

Other “incitement” examples given by the report protest against the name “Judea and Samaria” for that particular area, and the reluctance of the textbooks to present Jerusalem as Palestinian territory. But is this “incitement”? Jerusalem is currently under Israeli control and therefore an accurate geography book could not depict matters otherwise. Secondly, the technical (Hebrew) geographic name for the above mentioned area is, actually, Judea and Samaria, and therefore its use

shows no political prejudice. Thirdly, the map featured in the report clearly indicates the 1967 line, Gaza and the West Bank. Lastly, the Palestinian report chose to ignore the Hebrew caption on the right of this "inciting" map, stating that the book chooses not to depict clear borders due to the fact that a final peace agreement has not been signed.

[Follow @TheCommentator](#)

It's therefore hard to believe that the book "incites" its readers against Palestinians or denies the territories to be under the control of the Palestinian Authority.

Many current geography books have an even clearer border demarcation and some, like *The Main Mountain: Judea, Samaria and the Jordan Valley* (2002: 365) or *Mountains Surround It – Geography of the Judea Mountains, Samaria and the City of Jerusalem* (2003: 182) include notation of all the negotiated control territories (areas A, B and C) where Israel and the PA share different degrees of civic and military control as per the Oslo Agreements.

But more importantly, what do the other hundreds of approved Israeli textbooks say? These books, most of which were recently studied by The Institute for Monitoring Peace and Cultural Tolerance in School Education, not only recognize the Palestinian Authority and its territories according the Oslo Agreements, but also acknowledge Palestinian presence in the Land of Israel prior to Jewish immigration in the late 1800s, present the Palestinian point of view in regard to the Arab-Jewish conflict, refer to the expulsion of Palestinians from their homes in 1948 and describe the hardships of the Palestinian refugees.

For instance, a sympathetic depiction of Palestinian refugee camps is given in the geography book *Mountains Surround It*: "People with no citizenship or nationality, without rights, politically underprivileged, economically dependent. People who wish to belong, to have their own country." (p. 127).

Another book, *Nationality - a Beginning*, proposes the following exercise: "Describe the development of the new settlement in the Land of Israel through the point of view of a Jew from the "Old Settlement" and from the point of view of an Arab villager." (p.165).

Similarly, the history textbook *Israel in the 21st Century* makes the following statement: "The conflict regards the territories that the Jews call "The Land of Israel" and see it as part of their homeland, while the Arabs call it "Falastin" and see it as part of their homeland" (p. 18).

Such excerpts can be found in most textbooks that refer to Palestinians. Therefore, although textbooks are predominantly interested in presenting the Israeli position, history and narrative, a clear effort is made to add balance and to promote the values of peace and tolerance, as well as to exclude any text promoting racism or violence.

The effort to monitor incitement in textbooks in order to reduce it makes good sense and should be encouraged, as all textbooks should aspire to promote peaceful conflict resolution and exclude any statements which are counterproductive to that effort. However, although the Israeli Ministry of Education should continue to re-evaluate and improve the books it approves, claiming incitement where there is none, is really a form of incitement in itself.

***Yael Teff-Seker is a researcher and Nir Boms is a member of the board, both at the Institute for Monitoring Peace and Cultural Tolerance in School Education***

Tags: [Geography of the Land of Israel](#), [Israeli Ministry of Education](#), [Israeli incitement](#), [Israeli textbooks](#), [Judea and Samaria](#), [Nir Boms](#), [Oslo Agreements](#), [Palestinian incitement](#), [Yael Teff](#), [gaza](#), [geography in Israeli classrooms](#), [incitement](#), [is Israeli incitement comparable to Palestinian incitement?](#), [palestinian authority](#), [west bank](#)

COMMENTS ()

[Print](#)

Like

Add New Comment

[Login](#)



Showing 1 comment

Sort by popular now ▾



JT

Oh, please! What have facts to do with this? Don't you know how strongly Arabs feel about their connection to this land?

6 days ago

[Like](#) [Reply](#)

[✉ Subscribe by email](#) [RSS](#)

MOST POPULAR