

# Los Angeles Times | WORLD

LOCAL U.S. WORLD BUSINESS SPORTS ENTERTAINMENT HEALTH LIVING TRAVEL OPINION DEALS



WORLD NOW AFGHANISTAN WAR AFRICA AMERICAS ASIA EUROPE MIDDLE EAST

IN THE NEWS: HILLARY CLINTON | HIGH WINDS | CHRIS PAUL | OCCUPY L.A. | UCLA-OREGON | GRAMMYS 2012

Build Your City into a Kingdom  
 Make New Friends from All over the World  
 Play Free with 25 Million Gamers

**Play Now**

## East Jerusalem school textbooks are a war of words

Palestinian Authority-issued books are vying with Israeli-edited versions in classrooms. Israel says some passages incite violence. Parents and teachers are incensed.

Comments 168 Share 789 4 97 Recommend 281



Israel's edited version of a first-grade math textbook for Palestinian students in Arabic-language schools in East Jerusalem, right, omits a Palestinian flag flying over a school that is featured in the Palestinian version. (Edmund Sanders, Los Angeles Times / October 6, 2011)

Recommended on Facebook Like 158k

**Sign Up** Create an account or **log in** to see what your friends are recommending.

**Artifacts indicate a 100,000-year-old art studio**  
1,241 people recommend this.

**Dennis Ritchie dies at 70; computer scientist helped**

advertisement

### ALSO



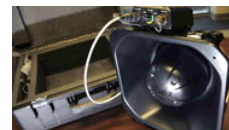
Mideast 'quartet' unveils eleventh-hour plan for peace talks

By Edmund Sanders, Los Angeles Times

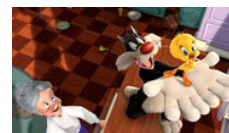
October 24, 2011 | 5:39 p.m.

Reporting from Jerusalem— When East Jerusalem teachers ask students to open their history books these days, pupils are wondering: Which one?

Two sets of textbooks are vying for the formative minds of thousands of Palestinian students in Arabic-language schools in East Jerusalem. One was written by the Palestinian Authority, and the other is a revised version reprinted by



Police add sound cannons as nonlethal weapons



Oscar race for animated short is down to 10



Cain accuser Bialek has no regrets



American Israeli to be freed in Israel-Egypt prisoner swap



Newly freed Israeli soldier finds himself in spotlight



**Opinion:** The danger of politicizing textbooks

ADS BY GOOGLE

#### Invest in Wine

High return - low risk, Vineyard Investments - your Free guide  
AlternativeMarkets.co.uk/Vineyards

#### 6 Alt Energy Stocks

Six trends that will lead the alt energy markets, new investor report  
EnergyandCapital.com/Alt\_Energy

חברת השמה המובילה בישראל  
השמת מקצועות ההיטק, ביוטק ושיוק ההון  
בהברת השמה עם יחס אישי ולייווי צמוד  
Ethosia.co.il

Israeli authorities.

It's a textbook war that underscores the long-running battle of narratives in the Mideast conflict, where the fight over the future is often rooted in understanding of the past, and schoolbooks can play a critical role.

At first glance, the textbooks, for the full range of course work, appear identical. But comparing the books page by page quickly becomes a game of Can You Spot the Difference? A small Palestinian flag flying over a picture of a school in one first-grade math book mysteriously disappears in the Israeli version.

Sometimes entire chapters or pages are excised. Other times it's just a word or line, leaving blank spaces that make passages incomprehensible and pages look like redacted CIA documents.

Although the Israeli government is demanding that schools use only its books, parents have gone class to class, backpack to backpack, to replace Israeli versions with the unedited ones. Officials estimate that most East Jerusalem schools are quietly using Palestinian versions, despite threats from the city to take action against schools that do.

Officials in Jerusalem, which funds about 50 public schools in Arab neighborhoods of East Jerusalem and provides partial assistance to dozens of private institutions, say they have the right to ensure textbooks are accurate, don't incite violence and respect Israel's legitimacy.

Much of the editing, they say, focuses on Palestinian poetry that promotes the role of children in the struggle against occupation or appears to glorify martyrdom. One eighth-grade textbook featured a poem that referred to the "ecstasy" of a child dying in martyrdom. Another stated that "if jihad could speak, it would call you to enter it."

Other cuts included a 10th-grade history lesson that described Zionism as a "racist" movement with "alleged" historical ties to the Holy Land. Another book featured a picture of a British Mandate-era postage stamp that had been digitally altered to remove a Hebrew inscription.

Palestinian parents, teachers and officials, however, say Israel's edits are politically motivated, essentially erasing all references and symbols relating to Palestinian identity, history and nationalism.

Among the cuts:

- Nearly all images of Palestinian flags, Palestinian Authority logos or references to Palestinians' right of return to homes they or their families fled during Israel's war for independence.
- An eighth-grade lesson about the environmental harm of Israeli settlements in the West Bank.
- A reference in a 10th-grade history book to the 1969 arson attack against Al Aqsa mosque by an Australian fanatic.
- An entire chapter on Palestinian history, including a picture of Palestine Liberation Organization founder Yasser Arafat.
- Palestinian population statistics in a sixth-grade civics book.

Palestinian Authority officials say Israel is censoring content it doesn't like.



**Opinion:** Exceptional? Not anymore, we're not

## LA DEALS



\$35 for team of 2 in City Race Urban Adventure Hunts (reg. \$70)

### Day-Lewis Becomes Lincoln

Michelle and the morning team talk about hot stories from the web - including a ...

Expand

Share Video: [t](#) [f](#) [m](#)

Most Viewed Most Emailed Latest News

Clinton meets with Myanmar opposition leader Suu Kyi 12/02/2011, 12:35 a.m.

L.A. sues to force pot dispensaries to close 12/02/2011, 12:03 a.m.

Kings defeat the Panthers for second win in a row 12/01/2011, 11:10 p.m.

Santa Ana wind damage stuns Southland residents 12/01/2011, 10:34 p.m.

High winds likely in the Valley, Hollywood Hills, Malibu 12/01/2011, 10:22 p.m.

"These changes cause the text to lose its soul and its meaning," said Dima Samman, head of the Jerusalem unit of the authority's Education Ministry, which has provided the curriculum for East Jerusalem schools since 2001 under an agreement with Israel. Before that, schools used Jordanian textbooks.

For several years, Jerusalem officials made minor edits to textbooks used in public schools, Palestinian officials say, using a black marker or stickers to cover up Palestinian Authority logos and other content deemed objectionable. Then the city began reprinting the textbooks entirely, allowing authorities to delete content digitally and permanently after discovering that many students simply peeled off the stickers.

This year city officials announced that their edited books would be introduced into several dozen semiprivate schools in East Jerusalem, but they assured parents that the changes would be minimal.

When the latest Israeli-edited textbooks were distributed last month, parents and students expressed shock, saying the omissions were heavy-handed.

"They are testing us," said Abdul Karim Lafi, who heads a parents association in East Jerusalem that is organizing a boycott of the Israeli textbooks. "If we stay quiet now, eventually they'll cancel the rest of the Palestinian curriculum within a few years."

Israeli officials say the dispute is not about rival narratives or opposing political views, but about preventing students from being exposed to teachings they say promote violence, intolerance and hatred.

"They are being misled and taught falsehoods," said Moshe Marzuk, a former army intelligence official and counter-terrorism expert who reviews the textbooks for the city. He said most of the books reject any Jewish connection to the land and emphasize the Palestinians' right of return.

"Censorship?" he said. "On the contrary. I view this as a humanitarian act of prevention, a system's act of self-defense against incitement to violence that will explode in its face sooner or later."

Part of the problem, some say, is Israel's somewhat crude method of editing, which relies chiefly on deleting words or images, sometimes in a manner that makes the textbooks unusable. Key words and phrases such as "martyr," "we shall return," or "usurp" are simply deleted without substitution.

Redactions only draw attention to the content that Israel is trying suppress, said one East Jerusalem teacher who did not want to be identified for fear of losing her job. She said most of her students look up the missing words and passages, usually with help from teachers.

"Kids are naturally curious, so this just makes them want to fill in the blanks," said the teacher. "In fact, they probably remember it even more than they would have. It just doesn't work."

[edmund.sanders@latimes.com](mailto:edmund.sanders@latimes.com)

News assistant Batsheva Sobelman in The Times' Jerusalem bureau contributed to this report.

Copyright © 2011, Los Angeles Times

Comments 168 Share 789 4 97 Recommend 281

« Previous Story More World - world news, international news, foreign policy news, foreign affairs news - latimes.com Next Story »



Syria faces Arab League deadline as 17 people are reported killed



Patching up ties between Pakistan and U.S. not a given this time

**MORE FROM THE TIMES**

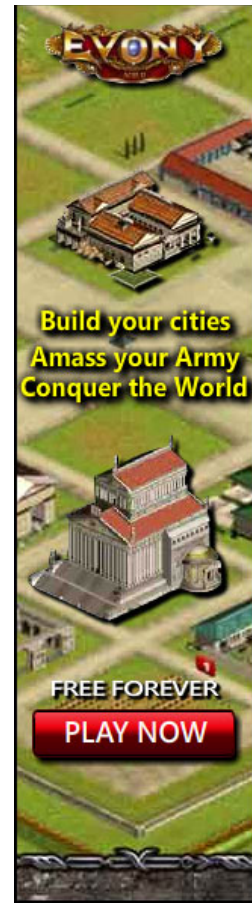
Demi Moore, Ashton Kutcher: Divorce's health consequences

Pollsters call on Obama to step aside, make way for Clinton

**FROM AROUND THE WEB**

Eight Crappiest Things Airlines Are Doing To You | *LearnVest*

The problem with women (in engineering) | *Drive For Innovation*



**Southern California Close-Ups »**



11 itineraries for Pasadena and the San Gabriel Valley. [Travel guide](#) | [Photos](#)

Snipping the bud: Prep work is a payday in the marijuana business  
Palestinians ponder next step in their statehood bid  
U.S. blacklisting seems to have little consequence in Mexico

Pippa Middleton Shows Lots Cleavage, Susie Bubble's Suitcase and More From Around the Web | *Lucky*  
Pakistan Carts Its Nukes Around In Delivery Vans | *Wired*  
Greek rescue package may be destroyed by its own people | *BBC Podcast*

[what's this]

ADS BY GOOGLE

**Clean Energy through CCS**

Find how Carbon Capture and Storage will shape our Clean Energy future.

www.globalccsinstitute.com

**רק 78 ש"ח לחודש הראשון**

ביא להתאמן במועדון הכושר גרייט שייפ והיכנס לחווית כושר אהרת. היכנס

www.great-shape.co.il

**Memory Improvement Games**

Improve Your Memory with Scientifically Designed Games

www.lumosity.com

Comments (168)

Add / View comments | Discussion FAQ

**Jehudah Ben-Israel** at 11:22 PM October 30, 2011

Three points:

- 1) There isn't today and there has NEVER been a real concept called "East Jerusalem". Jerusalem has been a single city for more than 3,000 years and the capital of the Jewish people as well as its spiritual center since King David set it up as such. One can talk, instead, of neighborhoods of Jerusalem: in the north, south, east and west in which Jews as well as Arabs reside.
- 2) Jerusalem operates under a single municipality that sustains the educational system of the city. It would be unheard of anywhere that outside forces would come and attempt to dictate to the municipality that pays for the educational system how and what to teach, and Jerusalem, the capital city of the nation-state of the Jewish people, Israel, is not an exception.
- 3) As long as the Muslim-Arabs, local and regional, don't accept Israel's right to be, to exist as the independent nation-state of the Jewish people - based on the Jewish people's historic, ethical and legal rights - and continue to pursue the failed attempt to bring about Israel's demise, the conflict, including in the classroom, will continue.

**woobie** at 11:47 AM October 30, 2011

@NathanMartel

'Religious writings are not sources for secular historical information. Israel speaks of "independence" but exactly who are they independent from? In terms of self-support they are LESS independent now than ever before. World class moochers. Many of those squatters (illegal aliens) who hide behind the undeserved label "settler" know in their hearts that the Jewish state cannot endure - so they keep their American passports in their back pocket ready to return to Brooklyn when Israel collapses. They were safer under the Ottomans and the British Mandate. Statehood for Israel was a noble experiment but it doesn't work. It's time for a Plan B.'  
Yeah, Arabic kids somehow must be made fully aware that there was Hebrew on a stamp 50 years ago... oh and that Zionists now rule, steal and dominate their ancestors Lands. Great post there, American taxpayers pay nearly 300 million a month towards this ideological indoctrination and Military occupation. Im sure that coin would go a long way to help desperate US domestic issues!We close schools THEY Build settlements and infrastructure! What is wrong with that picture?  
We should cease all military aid until Israel sits down at the table.

**TruthandJustice1** at 11:29 AM October 30, 2011

Which textbooks are worse: those from Israel or those from Texas?

*Comments are filtered for language and registration is required. The Times makes no guarantee of comments' factual accuracy. Readers may report inappropriate comments by clicking the Report Abuse link next to a comment. Here are the full legal terms you agree to by using this comment form.*

### In Case You Missed It...



**Photos:** Comparing airlines' Airbus A380s



**Photos:** Overrated / Underrated



**Photos:** Consumer Reports' auto reliability ratings



**Photos:** Frank Lloyd Wright's Ennis House



**Photos:** 79 bizarre and unusual destinations

[More spotlights...](#)

---

[Corrections](#)

[Horoscopes](#)

[Media Kit](#)

[About Us](#)

[Contact Us](#)

[Site Map](#)

---

## Los Angeles Times

[Burbank Leader](#) | [Coastline Pilot](#) | [Daily Pilot](#) | [Huntington Beach Independent](#) | [News Press](#) | [Pasadena Sun](#) | [Valley Sun](#) | [KTLA](#) | [Hoy](#) | [Los Angeles Times Magazine](#)  
[Baltimore Sun](#) | [Chicago Tribune](#) | [Daily Press](#) | [Hartford Courant](#) | [Los Angeles Times](#) | [Orlando Sentinel](#) | [Sun Sentinel](#) | [The Morning Call](#)

[Terms of Service](#) | [Privacy Policy](#) | [About Our Ads](#) | Los Angeles Times, 202 West 1st Street, Los Angeles, California, 90012 | Copyright 2011

*A Tribune Newspaper website*