

THE PILLARS OF ISRAELI EDUCATION

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The pillars of Israeli education

There has been much talk over the past ten years about the “new Middle East” which America has called for. This US project is based around four main areas:

1. The reformation of the political structure and governance in Arab countries.
2. Making fundamental economic changes.
3. Changing cultural values through the influence of the media.
4. Changing the educational curriculum.

The latter is the most serious of the four and the US administration has prepared a special report in this respect: “Washington's plan to change the curricula in Egypt and the Arab world”. This is at the core of the Greater Middle East Project. While America focuses on the curricula in use in Arab states, which are generally designed according to US-Israeli interests, Washington turns a blind eye to the racism endemic in Israel's state curricula.

A serious analysis of the Zionist movement will show that education has been a priority before and after the establishment of the state of Israel. During the period of the British Mandate in Palestine, the Zionists pushed the British authorities to grant the Jewish Agency the right to develop the curricula for Jewish students while depriving the same right to the original owners of the land, the Arab Palestinians. Moreover, the British official appointed as the head of the Palestinian Education Administration set the curriculum in compliance with the Balfour Declaration and the British Mandate instrument which had been provided to develop the Palestinians' economic and social conditions in preparation for the establishment of a Jewish national home in Arab Palestine.

Israel was established on 14 May 1948, when David Ben Gurion, the state's first prime minister, read the Declaration of Independence in Tel Aviv before a crowd of ultra-Zionists.

The document set out a number of key elements essential for the state's development. Key to this was the decision not to determine the nascent state's borders so that it could pursue an expansionist policy. Prompted by this, Israel developed an education philosophy to educate a young Zionist generation built upon the following concepts:



- Jews are a unified nation with one religion, one language and one home, Israel, and they must migrate to the new state.
- The land of Israel is the homeland of this nation to which Jews must return and stay attached.
- The Jewish nation will be reformed according to Jewish spirit, culture and religion, and the Hebrew language. This should apply to all Jews across the political spectrum, from the extreme right to the extreme left.
- The Torah in Hebrew will be considered as the main source of national history, geography of the country, the Hebrew language, Jewish history, national literature, and the basic content of nation's spiritual and moral traditions.
- The Jews are God's chosen people above all others. All gentiles (non-Jews) are there to serve the Jewish nation and all civilisations and sciences are inspired by the chosen people.
- Creating a permanent militarised society through military training of all citizens including the introduction of military training in schools and establishing organisations to stimulate the ideas of the younger generation towards hostility and contempt for Arabs.
- Feeding young Jews with the idea that the Arabs are working towards the extermination of the Jews and the destruction of the State of Israel. The school curriculum has been filled with pictures of Jewish heroes and the claim that God promised them power on the earth. Students are also reminded of the days of humiliation, [degradation](#) and genocide endured by the Jews at the hands of other people throughout the ages.



Sources of Zionist education

1. Researchers agree that the books that constitute the primary sources of Zionist education are the religious books of Judaism, particularly the Old Testament, along with commentaries and interpretations prepared by rabbis, known collectively as the Talmud. The latter contains original belief systems, moral guidance, historical judgements, and political, civil and religious laws. All represent the main source and bedrock of the educational process, in addition to the decisions of the Zionist leaders reached in 23 conferences over the years from 1897 to 1951.
2. The second source for Zionist education are the books of the founders of Zionism. For example, "Rome and Jerusalem" by Moses Hess (1812 -1875), "Self Liberation" by Benskr (1821-1891), and "The Jewish State" by Theodor Herzl (1860 -1904).

In addition, there are the writings of three intellectuals, which were milestones in Zionist history: Ahad Ha'am (1856-1927), the founder of cultural Zionist philosophy; Aharon David Gordon (1856-1922), and Vladimir Jabotinsky, who embraced the philosophy of power (1880-1940).

Thus are Israeli students given comprehensive solutions to the issues arising from Zionism, notably the occupation of Palestinian land, settlements, immigration and the deportation of the Palestinians and their Arab neighbours, plus the frequent wars and military incursions through which Israel can occupy more land. Taking samples of the textbooks in use in Israeli schools, it is noticeable how aggression becomes part of the Israeli psyche; any land occupied by Israeli forces is de facto Israeli land. All the produce of the world is granted to the Jews from the Lord, and everything in the hands of the gentiles is nonetheless owned by Jews. Whatever is in the hands of gentiles should therefore be retrieved by all means for there is no life for the people of the earth without the Jews.

This education is not limited to older students; it starts at the [kindergarten](#) stage through stories read in the kibbutzim, settlements, villages and cities.



Israel's education objectives

1. Creating a unified society, as a prerequisite for the survival of the state. There are many Jewish sects and school is one place with various groups together.
2. Building a modern Jewish state based on civil and spiritual laws.
3. Preserving Jewish heritage in order to deepen and spread it among students in Israel. The Yearbook of Israel for the year 1956 confirmed that “one of the fundamental goals of education is to provide an in-depth knowledge of the Jewish cultural for the young Jews in Israel”.
4. Reinforcing Israel at the core of worldwide Jewry and their interests. [Levy Eshkol](#), Israel’s Prime Minister in the early sixties, explained this in a world conference for young Jews: “The Jewish life in the world will be of a greater mark when Israel becomes its homeland and centre and we will make strenuous efforts to inculcate the feeling of belonging to Israel and the Israeli people in the Jewish youth.”
5. The salvation of the Jewish people must not be merely a belief in the past, but should also reflect on today’s daily life.
6. The present must be subject to continuous evaluation in the light of the “Jewish people's dreams” and reminiscences, and the Jewish past must be reflected in the educational system, because memorising that history, paying attention to work, and keeping faith in the integrated-renewed Jewish community are components needed to build the Jewish education philosophy.

Recognition of Israel's racist education

Evidence for the racist nature of Israeli education can be found in the work of two men who prepared analytical studies of stories, books and the literature of childhood:

In “Ugly faces in the mirror” (Tel Aviv, 1985), Professor Adir Cohen writes:

There are more than 1,500 books of different categories in the hands of the young Jewish generation that represent what can be described from superstructure as arrogance and contempt for all that is Arab and Muslim. These books can be found in every street or library and in any town or settlement. From 1948 until today, books, stories and publications can be



incorporated into two classes: i) those which address the Jewish students in schools and the purely Jewish institutions; and ii) those which are imposed on Arab students in schools and Arab institutions in the Arab towns and villages in Occupied Palestine.

Nili Mendler, a journalist specialising in education affairs at *Haaretz* newspaper, wrote in a commentary on the direction taken by Zionism in addressing the minds of young Jews:

A rapid review of the contents of Human Science research books, including textbooks scheduled officially for students from first grade to the eighth grade (Israel's Readings) and (Israel's modern readings), would show how they are filled with words of contempt and savage inhuman descriptions (of Arabs). Books and references that are approved by the Israeli Ministries of Education and Culture as references for teachers and educators are more racist and more terrible than those used by the students themselves.

It should be noted that what has been mentioned in these books about the Muslims and Arabs is not a quirk of history. Editions published in the sixties and seventies are still in circulation and use, without having been revised. This is an important point, as data and statistics cannot be amended in case the changes reveal Zionist falsehoods about Arabs and Islam in [Palestine](#) and the rest of the region.

To explain how racial the Israeli curriculum is, it is necessary to take a look at some of the courses in more detail:

1. Religious Education

When the Zionist educational institutions depended heavily on religious faith, they were aiming to establish in the younger generation a belief that would make them hold to and be influenced by the rules of the religion; this was an approach which looked at the child's development physically, socially, emotionally and mentally through the Torah and stories from the Talmud. Zionist educators and intellectuals believe "that the success of religious education in educating the generations that are ready to convey the message of Zionism is the most conspicuous tool in achieving the Zionist goal by fashioning young Israelis and bringing them up in a way that will lead to achieving Israel's objectives and national ambitions and in order to prepare them to go through the fighting stage so as to achieve these goals."

To illustrate the negative impact of some religious education on the younger generation, the following experiment was conducted by American social scientist, George Tamrin, Professor of Sociology at Tel Aviv University. He studied the values and ethics of children in Israeli schools by



examining the social and psychological impact on students of teaching passages from the Book of Joshua; a hero of the Torah and talmud, with particularly violent and chauvinistic imagery, as part of the curriculum. Using a sample of 1,066 students of whom 566 were males and 500 females from various schools, the students were read the passage before being asked to answer the following survey questions;

- 1) Do you think that Joshua son of Nun and the Israelis acted rightly or wrongly? Justify your viewpoint.
- 2) Suppose that the Israeli army occupied an Arabian village; do you see that the army should act as Joshua Ben Nun did with the Jericho people? Give reasons.

Sixty-six percent of the students supported Joshua's actions; 8% were unsure, while 26% opposed them.

Among the answers to the second question was: "I think that's good because what we want for our enemies is to fall in our hands, expand our borders, and kill the Arabs and exterminate them as Joshua and the sons of Israel did."

The researcher summarized thus: "The Jewish Ministry of Education has to choose positive models of Jewish heritage to be taught to the Israeli youth not the current models which raise hatred against the Arabs, national transcendence, and hatred of other peoples and other religions." The university administration reacted to [Tamarin's](#) conclusion by firing him from his post.

2. History

Most of the history textbooks have a selective approach and direction, and incite the reader against Christianity and Islam. The history textbook for class VII ("The Jews... between Christianity and Islam), published in 1973 by the curriculum centre of the Ministry of Education and Culture in Jerusalem, for example, alleges on p14 that "the masses of Christians did not only ban the construction of new synagogues or the renovation of old ones, but also the crowds that had been incited to action by Christian monks, passed by Jewish villages and attacked Jewish synagogues, robbed, looted and set fire to them." The same book went even further in looking at hatred towards Jews and Judaism, explaining that this hatred came about as a result of Christians in Europe in the Middle Ages feeling bitterness towards the Jews because of their economic progress, the fact that they lent money to Christians, and that they dealt with usury.



In the same book there is a distortion of Islamic Da'wa (invitation to accept the faith) and conquests; they are described as wars of extermination and extinction. On p29, for example, it says that “the Islamic principles that began in the Arabian Peninsula generated and awakened a deep concern in the hearts.” Prophet Muhammad, it is claimed, led “a war of extermination against all peoples and tribes that did not accept his principles, and accordingly he demolished a significant section of the Jews in the Arabian Peninsula.”

The Hebrew history books totally deny the existence of the Palestinian Arab people in Palestine, and even deny their existence anywhere else. Dr. Menachem Kidm's book, “A Brief History of Zionism” (1988), makes no mention of the Palestinians at all, and did not recognize Palestine as a geographical and historical fact of the history of human civilisation, even when it was called the land of Canaan.

Such books omit, as a matter of apparent editorial policy, Palestine and Jerusalem during the Islamic era (632 CE onwards) and pay little or no attention to the Christian and Muslim holy place such as the Church of the Resurrection in Jerusalem, the Church of the Nativity in Bethlehem, and the Dome of the Rock, from where the miraculous ascension of Prophet Muhammad took place.

Educational materials for History look at the Arab conflict with Zionism with two main objectives in mind:

- 1) The marginalisation of the Palestinian presence in the land of Palestine/Israel along with the marginalisation of the villages and towns from which 750,000 were driven by Zionist militias in 1948 in an act of what would today be labelled ethnic cleansing. There is no mention of any leading Palestinian figure in any of the textbooks; Palestinians figure only in terms of weakness.
- 2) The marginalisation of Israel's role in the Nakba (Catastrophe), holding the Palestinian people responsible for its consequences and the injustices inflicted upon them. The textbooks do not hold Israel accountable for the terrorism and disaster inflicted on the Palestinian people. The Palestinians, according to this Zionist narrative, brought the Nakba on themselves and must pay the price; Israel is innocent of the blood that was shed.



3. General Geography, Geo-political books and National Education:

Geography books in the primary, preparatory and secondary phases, as well as those used in community colleges and teacher training all follow faithfully the core Zionist values, to the extent that “Israeli territory” includes the land occupied and settled illegally by Israel since 1967 in addition to the land declared to be the Zionist state in 1948. In other words, the textbooks reflect the expansionism of Zionism. Accompanying and support [material](#) also refers to the Levant, Iraq and Egypt.

In “The geography of our country Israel” written by Ojaram Arte and Elisha Efra, there are no specified borders to the state of Israel as the current generally-accepted borders are subject to political change and do not represent the borders of ancient Israel. Among the book's most important objectives are:

- 1) Eradicate the name of Palestine as a distinct political entity and as part of the Levant.
- 2) Suggest that “Palestine” and the “Arabs” only arrived following the Islamic conquest.
- 3) Referring to natural landmarks and sites by their historical names (many of which are actually Arab Canaanite in origin) in support of the Zionist historical narrative, specifically the attachment to Judaism and the Torah.
- 4) Accusing the [Arabs](#) of destroying monuments and civilisation and allowing the spread of disease, and suggesting that they are a people who let the land of Israel/Palestine go to waste, only to be revived by the Zionists in the state of Israel. The book illustrates this with pictures of devastated land in Palestine compared with well-cultivated land in Israel.



4. The educational values of Zionism

It is easy to conclude that the education system in Israel is based on a spirit of militarism preparing the students from an early age for enrolment in the Israel Defence Forces. This has been the case since 1948 in an attempt to create “new Israelis” of the kind who “returned” after 2,000 years to “reclaim and rebuild” the land. The militaristic approach intensified after the war of June 1967 when Israel occupied more Arab land. It is in this sense which has permitted and encouraged retired military officers to take senior political roles in Israel. In such positions, they have been able to encourage Zionist education and have, in the process, become role models for young Israelis. Among the roll-call of such people are Yitzhak Rabin, Ezer Weizman, Ehud Barak, Ariel Sharon, Moshe Dayan, Yigal Allon, Yisrael Galili and Rehavam Zeevi, all pioneers of armed settlement on Palestinian land. Researcher and journalist Erna Cazin has said that anyone who studies the Israeli curriculum across all stages of education will notice that it is “based on nurturing the spirit of militarism and volunteering for the army, and preparing the child to grow up to become a combatant”.

According to Hagit Gur Ze'ev of the Centre of Critical Education at the Institute of Kibbutzim: “The education of militarization is being achieved in different ways; on Independence Day kindergarten kids climb on the tanks and decorate their classes with flags of the Israeli army units instead of celebrating the values of democracy, equality and peace. Even on other religious holidays, the messages conveyed to students are often related to military concepts and values. There is always a distinction between: ‘we and they’ and ‘good guys and bad guys’. We and they refer to the third party which is always the bad persons. For example, on Hannuka holiday (festival of lights) the others are being depicted as evil and the Jews are the good guys, and likewise the Egyptian pharaohs on the Easter holiday, the Arabs on Independence Day, and the Romans on the Pentecost holiday. Noticeably, the education system ignores the culture and meaning of democracy which are supposed to be circulated in these festivals.”



5. Israeli children's literature

Children's literature in the formal curriculum

In Israel's reading books for the third grade in 1971, there is a statement (p332) which refers to the method of expulsion and deportation to which thousands of Palestinians were subjected: "They fled across seven routes, were brought down, fell and were beaten painfully and thus those arrogant people were scattered."

According to Professor Ader Cohen, Head of Education at the University of Haifa, the conclusion he reached when writing his book "The reflection of the Arab personality in Hebrew children's literature" (1985), was that "the students agree on a very serious viewpoint, which is expelling the Arabs from Palestine (Israel) and to expel the family of any Arab who stands in the way of Israeli government projects and aspirations". This was based on a survey of his students, who included 520 young Jews from the city of Haifa. Furthermore, he said: "In the eyes of the students, the Arabs hate the Jews and we cannot make peace with them, because they [the Arabs] believe that we took their land. These students believe that the Arabs should be moved to any possible state, because they have several Arab countries while the Jews have only one. Because of the bloodshed in this country, people like Meir Kahane and Rehavam Zeevi, who both advocated the 'transfer' of Arabs from Israel, and Ovadia Joseph, who called Arabs 'cockroaches in a bottle', demand the expulsion of Arabs from Israel."

[Professor Cohen](#) revealed publicly that the results frustrated him because Hebrew children's literature imposes a reality on Jewish children which takes away their childhood and innocence. They develop feelings of anxiety and tension and a constant fear of the unknown.

Children's literature beyond the curriculum

Books about [child-rearing](#) seek to develop their emotions and focus their minds and capabilities towards selfishness based on segregation, blatant discrimination and the denial of the other and the rights of the other; the latter are, of course, the Palestinians. Such books bring the readers up on cruelty, disregard for the lives and dignity of people and a fanatical nationalist extremism. Dozens of books, stories and anecdotes are devoted to feeding the young readers with hostility towards everything Arab. Among the best-sellers in this category are "Tchuptchik Girls" and "Four Friends and the Gish Etzion Operation" which are both written by Arnona Gadot; Rafael Sahar's book about children who "Break through the pyramids"; H. Orgil's book about a "Band of Friends After the Terrorists" and Haim Eliav's book about "The Children of the Old City Fight the Infiltrators". One book published by Haim Gibory is about a



courageous band named "Havuoaz" (literally translated means to 'give strength') who easily defeat all the stupid Arabs. But the real bestsellers, which have an almost legendary circulation, are the books of two authors who themselves have names of great significance: The first being Ido Seter ("Seter" meaning 'secrecy') whose hero is named "Oz Yaoz" ("Oz" meaning 'strength' and "yaoz" meaning 'will have courage') and the other being On Sarig ("On" meaning 'potency' and "Sarig" meaning 'grid') whose hero is Danidin—the invisible child.

Writing in Haaretz newspaper in Israel, education specialist Nili Mendler revealed the brainwashing that has been introduced in children's literature with regard to the image of the Arabs; as long ago as 1983 she acknowledged that the Arabs appear in Hebrew textbooks as "monsters and bastards". Dr. Daniel Bar Tal, an [education expert](#) at the University of Haifa, also described what was written in Jewish children's literature as brainwashing to hate Arabs.

The image of Arabs in contemporary Zionist literature

Describing clashes between Arabs and Jews around Safad in 1921, Ehud Ben Ezer writes, "The Arabs carried out brutal acts as they surprised the Jews, beat them and started to steal their property and to kill them." The story goes on to refer to Arabs as rapists and murderers and says that they only understand the language of force: "The harsher and stronger you treat" the Arab, "the more he respects you. If you treat him softly, he will think that you are scared of him and rebel."

Arab captives are characterised by [Nathan Shaham](#) in his series of short stories, The Green Fall, by their "cowardice, betrayal and lack of values". Further, when the soldier removed the chains, he says, "with great difficulty, I prevented the prisoner from kissing my hands, he did all what I ordered him to do; brought me the water along with other tasks that I assigned him. He returned back to me every time like a dog who returns to his hut."

Another character, an [Israeli soldier](#), says, "We fired a volley of machine-gun fire that killed him. I didn't like the way he died as I would have loved him to die with an explosion of a mine underneath him."

Religious education and religious schools in Israel

Due to its central role as a pillar of the state, education has been bolstered by successive laws passed by the Israeli Knesset (parliament). The Public Education Law, 1953 requires the state to manage the education in all official institutions and to oversee the curriculum approved by the Minister of Education. Article II says, "education in the State of Israel must be based on the



values of the Jewish culture, loyalty to the State of Israel and the Jewish people and the achievement of the principles of leadership in pioneering Zionist work.”

This law guaranteed the independence of public religious education although this shares a foundation with public non-religious education; the former has a religious curriculum absent from the latter. The ultra-Orthodox Jews don't follow the public framework and retain complete independence.

Amendments to this law in 2000 changed the objectives of public education to include consolidation of the principles and values which were announced at the establishment of the State of Israel, i.e. that Israel is a Jewish state; the study of the Torah and the history of the Jewish people; Israeli heritage and Jewish traditions.

Religious schools focus more on religious education than the ordinary public school; daily prayers are included in the timetable, male students must wear the kippah (skull-cap); Jewish holidays are celebrated and all students study the principles of [Judaism](#).

In Israel, religious people are divided into two basic trends:

1. The religious ultra-Orthodox, whose leadership came to an agreement with Israel's first Prime Minister, David Ben-Gurion, that their followers would be exempt from military service in order to devote themselves to study of the religion. Ultra-Orthodox Jews make up around 18% of the Jewish population of Israel. Their religious schools are called “Yeshiva”.
2. The Zionist religious current has considered itself, from the foundation of the state to be an integral part of the Israeli tapestry. Zionist religious Jews consider military service to be a religious duty as well as a civic duty. They represent around 7-10% of the Jews in Israel and have are generally represented in parliament by the Mefdal Party, to which most illegal settlers belong.

Until the late seventies, the proportion of religious people in the Israel Defence Forces was less than the percentage they represented in the total population. The secular kibbutzim (residents of the communal villages) dominated. Since then, however, that position has altered dramatically; more and more kibbutzim felt less inclined to view military service as a duty they owed the state, while religious Zionists began to push for “Yeshivot Hesder”, essentially military religious schools funded by the army and attended exclusively by members of the religious Zionist movement following their graduation from high school.



The rabbis who oversee these schools have sought to guide the motives of these young people so that they will volunteer to serve in combat and other select army units. To do so, the rabbis have emphasised the values of sacrifice for the homeland. In addition to preparing them mentally and philosophically for their time in the army, these schools taught students how to use weapons and took them on military exercises as part of their overall education. School fees are paid by the army, which also pays for the rabbis, who have full control over the curriculum. The government has no say over the education of students in such schools, to the extent that students are taught to reject democratic values of the type espoused, in theory at least, by Israel. Indeed, students receive an extremist religious education based on racism and xenophobia.

Most students spend eighteen months in the military schools, during which they fulfil their military service; post-graduation, they spend an additional thirty months in the IDF. There are 42 such schools, all of which operate with the slogan: "Military service and the fighting spirit are communal tasks imposed by religion for the leadership of the Zionist project." Students, therefore, do not view military service as something that lasts three years and is finished; it is a gateway to a role in the state machinery and the decision-making process.

Religious groups dominate the leadership of elite units in the military, up to 60% in some cases. Graduates of the Yeshivot Hesder are not only pushed towards leadership positions in the army, but also in the intelligence services. Although the identity of those in the Israeli intelligence agencies is usually kept secret, press leaks confirm that religious officers are common within the internal intelligence service Shin-Bet, which is the most influential of the agencies in decision-making circles in Israel. The police and border guards services also benefit from a high proportion of graduates from the religious-military schools.

Devotion to the culture of hatred and crime

Many religious legal opinions help to perpetuate a culture of hatred and encourage Jewish youth to adopt racist positions against Arabs and Muslims. Such rulings even pave the way for people to commit atrocities against the Palestinians. Perhaps the most serious rulings learnt by the students of the religious military schools are those issued by Rabbi Mordechai Eliyahu, former Chief Rabbi of Israel, and the most important religious authority of the religious Zionists.

Opinions published by Rabbi Eliyahu have been turned into teaching materials used by other rabbis. He has called for the complete eradication of the Palestinians. Moreover, he considers



this as not just an opinion, but “a duty imposed by the Lord which must be implemented by the Jews.”

The students of Rabbi Eliezer Melamed, director of the [military school](#) in Tafoh settlement, were given his approval to steal crops from Palestinian farmers, as Palestinians were ruled to be part of the “third parties” from whom Jews might seize property.

Polls in Israel reveal that the vast majority of people believe that members of Ultra-Orthodox Jewish sects should serve in the military. In 2008, 800 members of the ultra-Orthodox groups left religious school and signed-up for military service, declaring that “the Torah is not our profession”. In 2009, this figure was 2,000, signalling a major change in the religious make-up of the Israel Defence Forces and leading to a blurring of the previous distinction between the religious and military spheres of life.

From the above it can be deduced that education has been transformed into a religious-military process influenced by prominent and very extreme members of the [rabbinate](#).

Opinion polls and studies on the racism of young Israelis against the Palestinians, especially Israel’s Palestinian citizens

A study by the Van Leer Institute in Israel questioned 600 young Israeli men and women on their opinion of the Arabs in Palestine. Those polled were aged 15-18 and the results of the survey were as follows:

- 92% believe in the Zionists' right to all of Palestine.
- 50% want to reduce the financial rights of the Arabs in Palestine.
- 56% reject complete equality with the Arabs and 37% want equality with Arabs only during military service.
- 40% have demonstrated their support for any underground movement to retaliate against the Arabs.
- 30% support the Kach terrorist movement.
- 60% would agree to the [expulsion](#) of every Arab from Palestine.

The President of the Follow-up Commission for Education Issues in 1948 Occupied Palestine, Hala Espanioly, sent a sharply-worded letter to Israel’s Minister of Education, Gideon Saar, denouncing the ministry’s plan for dealing with Israeli students’ tendencies towards nationalism, racism and anti-democracy. The letter referred to the worrying degree of racism



among young Jews. Surveys show, for example, that 50% refuse to learn in a class with an Arab student; 70% believe that in the event of a conflict between state security and democratic values, security should prevail; and 50% refuse to live with Arabs in the same neighbourhood.

Dr. Espanioly added that what makes the matter worse are Israeli government policies which have introduced changes to the civics curriculum and trips to the occupied city of Hebron, and the enactment of the Nakba law which suppresses the Palestinian historical narrative and leads to the intimidation of teachers for the mere mention of the word Nakba in schools. She warned that such policies strengthen nationalist and anti-democratic tendencies among Jewish students, which, in her opinion, undermine the pillars of the democratic system. In her [conclusion](#), she demanded changes to the plan to focus on the values of democracy, pluralism, tolerance and mutual respect, in addition to the allocation of resources and efforts to combat the rising racism in Israeli society.

It has also been recognised by Dr. Espanioly that despite the attempt made in 1999 to introduce a simple modification to the objectives of education as set out in the official Israeli Education Act, followed by the attempt of her committee to legalise objectives for Arab education, there was no response from members of the [Knesset](#) or the parliamentary education committee.

Were Israeli curricula amended after Oslo?

A group of education specialists studied Israeli textbooks, children's books and novels in an effort to demonstrate that the “demonisation” of the Arabs and Palestinians permeates most of the literature, distorting history to offer a cover of legitimacy to the Zionist entity. According to these scholars, Israeli curricula have gone through three stages of development; the most recent is the post-Oslo period which saw partial recognition of the Palestinian people's history through the “new historians” and their work. However, a new phase can be observed which returns to the racist roots of Zionism and portrays Palesinians, Arabs and Muslims in the ugliest possible fashion.

In the post-Oslo period in the nineties, when the Zionist “moderates” dominated education, most Israeli textbooks said that the cause of the conflict between the Palestinians and Israelis is the cultural difference between the two peoples and not the colonialist nature of the Zionist movement. A grade nine history book written by Eyal Naveh and titled, “The twentieth century: on the threshold of tomorrow”, belongs to the new historians' school and has tried to remove racism, offered some indirect acknowledgement of the Nakba without mentioning it: “The Arabs saw the Zionists as a strange element for several reasons, including the Western and



modern lifestyle which they brought and which was inconsistent with the lifestyle of the traditional Arab community.” Hence, the resistance of the Palestinians against the Zionists was not based on nationalism, patriotism or civilisation, but on fear of “modern Western life”.

In chapter IX, Naveh writes: “The Arab Palestinians were not organized, yet in the framework of political movements and institutions, as the Zionist movement was. The overwhelming majority, which consisted of cultureless farmers, was subject to the influence of religious and traditional preachers who thought that the Zionist settlement is a type of sorcery that affects the Muslim holy places and is contrary to the Arab traditions. Any possibility of cooperation between Jews and Arabs has been prevented in advance despite the efforts of the British to establish cooperation between the two communities.” This was what the new historians said when re-writing the history of the Zionist entity with some recognition of the Palestinian people. However, they rigged Palestinian history and did not recognise the right of Palestinians to their land and a right to return.

It is noted by some critics that the maps published in these “moderate” textbooks do not recognize the “Green line” (armistice boundary) and that there is no reference to Nazareth or to any other Arab city in Israel. In most of the maps in geography or civics books, the illegal settlements in the West Bank are regarded as part of Israel. One Israeli researcher has questioned this: “When Palestinians write the name Palestine on their maps, it is considered incitement. If so, what can we say about the books that call the West Bank [Judea and Samaria](#)?

A number of researchers deny any change, even small, in Israeli curricula after Oslo. In the mid-nineties, Bar Tal examined Hebrew books for literature, history, geography and civics, and found that they glorified the Israeli-Arab conflict. In the books used by the ultra-Orthodox groups, the conflict was portrayed in the darkest colours and the Arabs in very negative stereotypes. Reserach in 1997 found that Hebrew teaching books were still using outdated material which did not reflect the supposed peace process.

One researcher said: “It seems that peace has remained outside the boundaries of the school, as it is perceived as something that belongs to politics which opinions differ about, or as a slight deviation from the course of Israeli history that is full of wars. And this indirectly implies the question: What is the use of changing the books if peace, according to the above perspective, is a short chapter that won't last for long?”

The period when Limor Livnat, from the Likud party, took responsibility for Israel's Ministry of Education (2001-2006) was marked by the rise of the extreme right-wing in charge of the Israeli



education system. The Israeli researcher Sami Shalom Shitrit believes that the Livnat era was “the most dangerous period for Israeli education, to which not much credit could be given”, in a way that, according to him, can be considered as fully fascist. The first symptom of this period, which must be researched at some stage, is the adoption of new-right curbs on “liberalising” [textbooks](#). In practice, this meant the exclusion of textbooks which didn't promote the Zionist narrative in history.

From the above, it is clear that the education system in Israel produces racist graduates hating everything Palestinian and Arab. Settlers have been observed running over Palestinian children and then leaving them with no care for what has happened to them. They also desecrate places of worship, especially mosques, many of which have been destroyed altogether in West Bank villages. There is, however, little or no international pressure brought to bear on Israel to change the curricula in use; on the contrary, pressure is placed on the Palestinian Authority and Arab countries to remove allegedly “anti-Semitic” material from their textbooks and the Palestinian narrative of their land’s history. The aim is to ensure that the Zionist perspective dominates, even in Arab classrooms.

The international community uses developmental funding to sway authorities in this respect, and threatens the withdrawal of funds if this is not done. On another level, UNRWA has a project for Holocaust education in its schools in Palestinian refugee camps in the occupied Palestinian territories and the neighbouring Arab States under the guise of the so-called “culture of peace”. This recognises the Zionist entity and promotes the acceptance of injustice, displacement and the loss of Palestine, but we don't see any pressure put on Israel to teach Palestinian perspectives as part of the same peace initiative.

