

THE WEST,
CHRISTIANS,
AND JEWS IN
SAUDI ARABIAN
SCHOOLBOOKS

CENTER FOR MONITORING
THE IMPACT OF PEACE
AND THE
AMERICAN JEWISH COMMITTEE

**The West, Christians,
and Jews
in Saudi Arabian
Schoolbooks**

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Overview

This report presents the official Saudi worldview to which students between the ages of six and sixteen are exposed through the medium of subject textbooks. For this purpose, 93 books taught in grades 1-10, mostly from the years 1999-2002, were examined. Special emphasis was placed on the Saudi Arabian attitude toward the “other,” namely, Christians, Jews, and the West, as well as on the Middle East conflict, the concept of government, women’s status in society, and children’s status in the family. Following are the main findings.

Education in Saudi Arabia is centered on Islam, as stated in the Education Policy document (see preface and clauses 2, 11, 12, 13, 25, 28, 29, 31, 50, 60, 64, 74, 83, 95, 153, 209, and 232 of that document in Chapter One). Islamic studies constitute a major portion of the curriculum at all educational levels, and even science textbooks contain Islamic notions, as the example below demonstrates:

Instruction for the teacher: You are, no doubt, qualified for the job which you perform and aware of its educational and psychological dimensions and of their influence on our sons, as well as able—with God’s help—to direct them in the correct Islamic direction.... You will vigorously see to it that pure and unblemished Islamic ideas reach them, envisioning, while explaining the lessons, the Islamic goals to which the nation has aimed in bringing up its sons. We also stress, while having confidence in your understanding of the requirements of your mission ... that the book material presented [to the students] should not contradict [any] text in the Book [i.e., the Qur’an] or the *Sunnah* [the Prophetic Tradition], nor be incompatible with our true religion....

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Note: The teacher will emphasize the circulation of the sun and that texts within the Book and the *Sunnah* confirm the circulation of the sun, which makes it move constantly from one place to another, not [staying] fixed in it but [rather] floating in space....

Introduction, Fundamentals of Physical Geography, Grade 7, (2001) p. IV

Saudi Arabia is presented as a country where Islam plays the dominant role in state and society, in the judicial and educational systems, and in everyday life. Saudi Arabia assumes, in turn, a leading role in the Muslim world and sees itself as the champion of Islam.

The Kingdom of Saudi Arabia ... fulfills its role in serving Islam and calling for it[s adoption], which has made it assume its leading position in the whole Muslim world.... Try to perceive our country's role in supporting the Muslims from what you see in the [mass] communication media.

Remember:

Our country's rulers and religious scholars defend the faith and support the religion.

Our country has a special position in the Muslims' hearts.

[Footnote:] The teacher should clarify the efforts of the Saudi state in supporting Islam and urge the student to follow that [trend] in the [mass] communication media.

National Education, Grade 5, (1999) p. 42

Islam is presented as the only true religion, while all other religions are presented as false. Islam is the only religion leading its followers to Paradise, whereas no other religion can save its believers from Hell. The Muslims are, consequently, superior to followers of all other religions, in both this world and the next.

The religion of Islam is the true religion and any other religion is false. The religion of Islam is high and triumphant over all [other] religions.

[Qur'an] Commentary, Grade 9, (2000) p. 88

The Muslims are the leaders of the world.
Language exercise, Rules of the Arabic Language,
Grade 7, pt. 1 (2002) p. 13

Christians and Jews are denounced as infidels. Moreover, Christians and Jews are presented as enemies of Islam and of Muslims. Therefore, Muslims may not befriend them nor emulate them in any way, lest that lead to love and friendship, which is forbidden.

There is no doubt that the Muslims' power irritates the infidels and spreads envy in the hearts of the enemies of Islam—Christians, Jews, and others.... a malicious Crusader-Jewish alliance [is] striving to eliminate Islam from all the continents.
Geography of the Muslim World, Grade 8, (1994) p. 32

It is forbidden for a Muslim to be a friend of one who does not believe in God and his Messenger....

[Questions:]

1. Is it permissible to love the Jews and the Christians?

Monothelism, Hadith, [Islamic] Jurisprudence and [Qur'an] Recitation, Grade 5, pt. 1 (2001) pp. 14, 15

It is not permitted to emulate the infidels—Jews, Christians, and others.... Emulation of the infidels leads to loving them, glorifying them, and raising their status in the eyes of the Muslim, and that is forbidden.

[Islamic] Jurisprudence, Grade 9, (2000) p. 76

The West, in particular, is the source of the past and present misfortunes of the Muslim world, beginning with the Crusades, through modern imperialism, and ending in the establishment of the State of Israel. However, the West's most dangerous effect on Muslim society nowadays is its cultural and intellectual influence in various fields. This includes the spread of Western practices and habits, from Western democracy to alcoholic drinks; influence in the fields of literature, art, music, the media, and fashion; West-inspired ideologies such as nationalism, including its Arab version, Communism and secularism; influence on education and research, including research on the Muslim

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world (“Orientalism”), Christian missionary work, Western humanitarian and medical aid, and even West-invented computer games.

The Muslim countries were a target for European imperialism ... The European imperialists’ goal behind the domination of the Muslim world was humiliating the Muslims, crushing their power, and impoverishing them....

Biography of the Prophet and History of the Muslim State, Grade 10, (2001) pp. 106-107

The West itself is a decaying society on its way to extinction, the symptoms of which are the absence of spirituality, the practice of adultery and sodomy, which increases the number of AIDS cases, and the large number of suicides in Western society.

Western civilization, which has lost the meaning of spirituality, finds itself in its turn on the verge of an abyss. It is a civilization on its way to dissolution and extinction.

Biography of the Prophet and History of the Muslim State, Grade 10, (2001) p. 71

Adultery generates mental, heart and bodily diseases.... Western mass media still disclose to us the fear which prevails over their societies from the disease of the present age—the acquired loss of immunization, the so-called AIDS.... The terrible numbers that indicate the extent of this disease’s spread among them is a great indicator of their fall into a deep abyss, which shows signs of their imminent end.

[Islamic] Jurisprudence, Grade 10, (2001) pp. 75-76

It [i.e., sodomy] is a prominent reason for being afflicted by dangerous diseases that spread in society. Among these diseases [is] the infectious AIDS disease which has disturbed the West and robbed them of their sleep, to such a degree that they have demanded the isolation in designated places of those who are afflicted by sexual digression.

[Islamic] Jurisprudence, Grade 10, (2001) p. 79

The abundance of suicide cases in Western societies is surely because of their [great] distance from the true divine source.

[Islamic] Jurisprudence, Grade 10, (2001) p. 19

According to the Saudi textbooks, the Jews are a wicked nation, characterized by bribery, slyness, deception, betrayal, aggressiveness, and haughtiness. They were a negative element in Arabia even before Islam and cooperated with Muhammad's enemies after the emergence of Islam, for which they were punished by the Prophet with exile and, in one case, putting to death of the men and enslavement of the women and children. In spite of this they remained disloyal to Islam and created dissension within it. Their present occupation of Palestine constitutes a danger to the neighboring Muslim countries. The Jews have been a harmful element in world history, and are responsible, inter alia, for the French and Bolshevik revolutions and for the outbreak of World War I. In order to illustrate the negative role of the Jews to Saudi Arabian students, the *Protocols of the Elders of Zion* are presented to them as an authentic historical source. They are said to have been the secret resolutions of the First Zionist Congress that was convened in Basel, Switzerland, in 1897. One textbook mentions that perdition is the desired fate of the Jews.

Now it [Palestine] is occupied by the Jews, a people of treachery and betrayal, who have gathered there from every place: from Poland, Spain, America and elsewhere. Their end, by God's will, is perdition.

Dictation, Grade 8, pt. 1 (2000) p. 24

The Protocols of the Elders of Zion

These are secret resolutions, most probably of the aforementioned Basel Congress. They were discovered in the nineteenth century. The Jews tried to deny them, but there was ample evidence proving their authenticity and that they were issued by the elders of Zion. The [aims of the] *Protocols* can be summarized in the following points:

1. Upsetting the foundations of the world's present society and its systems, in order to enable Zionism to have a monopoly on world government.
2. Eliminating nationalities and religions, especially the Christian nations.

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3. Striving to increase corruption among the present regimes in Europe, as Zionism believes in their corruption and [eventual] collapse.

4. Controlling the media of publication, propaganda, and the press, using gold for stirring up disturbances, seducing people by means of lust, and spreading wantonness.

The cogent proof of the authenticity of these resolutions, as well as of the hellish Jewish schemes included therein, is the [actual] carrying out of many of those schemes, intrigues, and conspiracies that are found there. Anyone who reads them—they were published in the nineteenth century—grasps today to what extent much of what is found there has been realized. (See *The Danger of World Jewry*, by Abdullah al-Tall, pp. 140-141 [Arabic].)

Hadith and Islamic Culture, Grade 10, (2001) pp. 103-104

Zionism is presented as an evil movement, based on ancient Jewish notions, chief among them being the idea of the “chosen people,” which is presented in the Saudi Arabian textbooks as a belief on the part of the Jews that they have been chosen to be masters of the world. Accordingly, Zionism strives toward world domination or, at least, toward territorial expansion in the Fertile Crescent and Arabia. It uses evil means to direct world history, including some non-Jewish auxiliary organizations, like the Freemasons and the Lions and Rotary Clubs.

Zionism is a nationalist, racist and aggressive movement whose aim is establishing a national homeland in Palestine for the Jews of the world and establishing the greater State of Israel from the [area] north of Mosul to Alexandria and from the [area] south of Basra to the [area] south of Medina.

Biography of the Prophet and History of the Muslim State, Grade 10, (2001) p. 112

The Foundations of the Zionist Ideology

1. The Jews are God's chosen people. The souls of the Children of Israel are part of God, while others' souls are satanic and resemble animals' souls.

2. This world is the property of the Israelite. It is his right to take

over and have control over the world, because he out of all human beings is [one of] the chosen people in the eyes of God.

3. Palestine is the basic target of the Jews. It is the base from which their world domination will begin. It is there that their state should be established because it is the promised land.

Hadith and Islamic Culture, Grade 10, (2001) p. 102

Israel is not recognized as a sovereign state in Saudi Arabian textbooks, and its name does not appear on any map. Instead, all maps bear the name Palestine. Israeli regions, such as the Negev, and cities such as Haifa and Acre are presented as Palestinian. Palestine is presented as a Muslim country occupied by foreigners who defile its Muslim holy places, especially the Al-Aqsa Mosque in Jerusalem. The occupation of Palestine is portrayed as the most crucial problem of the Arabs and the Muslims, who should all join forces for the total liberation of Palestine and for its purification from the Zionist filth:

All Muslims stand together for the realization of their common goals, such as:

1. Purification of Jerusalem from the filth of Zionism, and the liberation of Palestine.

Geography of the Muslim World, Grade 8, (1994) p. 37

Peace between Muslims and non-Muslims is not advocated. Instead, the Saudi Arabian textbooks, even grammar books, are full of phrases exalting war, jihad, and martyrdom, as indicated by the following examples:

I saw a soldier decapitating his enemies.

Facilitating the Rules of the Arabic Language, Grade 9, pt. 2 (1999) p. 57

Jihad against the enemies is a religious duty.

Facilitating the Rules of the Arabic Languages, Grade 9, pt. 1 (1998) p. 14

Holy jihad is the Muslims' path to the recovery of Palestine. Clarify that.

[Literary] Study, Grade 10, (2001) p. 110

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All forms of terror are rejected by the Saudi Arabian textbooks. However, it appears that such prohibitions do not apply to cases that fall in the categories of jihad and martyrdom. Saudi Arabian textbooks use the term “*Fida'i*” in a positive way, which seems to indicate support for terrorist activity carried out by members of the Palestinian armed organizations, who are called “*Fida'is*” throughout the Arab world.

The Palestinian *Fida'is* face great difficulties.
History of the Saudi Arabian Kingdom, Grade 6, (2001) p. 60

The *Fida'is* terrorized the enemies.
Language exercise, Rules of the Arabic Language, Grade 7, pt. 1 (2002) p. 63

The two *Fida'is* are the best ones among men.
The female *Fida'is* are the best ones among women.
Facilitating the Rules of the Arabic Language, Grade 9, pt. 2 (1999) p. 72

The Saudi Arabian textbooks reject Western democracy. Instead, they praise the type of regime Saudi Arabia has embraced, the character of which is attributed to Islamic directives. Within this framework, the subjects are expected to remain loyal to the ruler under all circumstances—even if the ruler is oppressive—so long as he does not order them to act in a way contrary to Islamic law. On the other hand, the Saudi Arabian textbooks emphasize the “family-like” relationship between the ruler and the ruled.

It is clear from the Book [i.e., the Qur'an] and from the Prophetic Tradition [*Sunnah*] that Islam has imposed on the citizens obedience to their rulers and governors, and has forbidden any Muslim from disobeying those in charge, as long as they do not order [him] to disobey God. Being obedient to those in charge includes compliance with their orders, loving them, and praying for their well-being.
National Education, Grade 7, (2001) p. 34

It is not permissible to stage a revolt against those in charge, nor to desist from obeying them—even if they are oppressive—nor to pray against them.

[Islamic] Jurisprudence, Grade 10, (2001) p. 111

The Interconnection between the Ruler and the Ruled

Interconnection between the ruler and the ruled in our homeland, the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, is considered one of the most important characteristics of Saudi society. That is [done] through the pursuit of the “open-door” policy to which our leaders are committed.... Their doors are open to all, and every citizen can reach them, so that they will listen to his opinion or complaint or demands, solve his problem, facilitate [the conduct of] his affairs, and implant confidence in his soul.

National Education, Grade 7, (2001) p. 29

Women’s legal standing and their status vis-à-vis men, including their own husbands in matters of divorce, are elaborately dealt with in the Saudi Arabian textbooks. Specific attention is paid to the various rules that prohibit direct contact between men and women, and the importance of women’s dress code.

As for women, their testimony is not accepted in [matters of] legal punishments [*Hudud*] and homicide cases [*Dima*].

[Islamic] Jurisprudence, Grade 10, (2001) p. 74

[One] of the most difficult matters for a sensible woman is threatening her with divorce. The matter becomes more difficult if [the husband] replaces her with someone who is better than she is.

[Qur’an] Commentary, Grade 9, (2000) p. 151

Privacy and mingling [between the sexes]

The presence in private of a man with a strange woman, as well as [social] mingling of women and [nonrelated] men, are [two] of the most serious things leading to adultery and of the greatest [sources of] harm. Therefore, God’s Messenger forbade such mingling....

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[One] of the manifestations of a forbidden privacy nowadays is a woman who sits in the car with the [strange] driver with no relative male [*mahrim*]. It is best for a woman to protect herself from going out of home whenever possible.

[Islamic] Jurisprudence, Grade 10, (2001) pp. 67-68

The Muslim woman should adhere to [the rules of the] ... veil and observe its conditions. What some women do, i.e., being tolerant regarding the veil in front of men foreign to her, such as exposing the face, or the hands, or the legs, etc., is a great sin and a big error.

[Islamic] Jurisprudence, Grade 9, (2000) p. 65

The Saudi Arabian textbooks emphasize the child's duties toward his parents, of which first and foremost is obedience. Obedience is also demanded from the students to their teacher.

Obedying one's parents: God has commanded us to obey [our] parents.... It is impossible for a family to function in a natural manner if there is disobedience of the parents, as it is a great crime and one of the greatest sins which decrees a punishment in this world and entering the fire [of Hell] in the hereafter....

Obedying the teacher: My brother the student, your teacher is a lamp that lights the way for you. Therefore, you should obey him....

National Education, Grade 7, (2001) p. 36

It should be noted that the Saudi Arabian foreign minister, Prince Sa'ud al-Faisal, referred to the issue of Saudi textbooks being a clear example of hate literature against anything Western, Christian, and Jewish during an interview on CBS's *60 Minutes* program in September 2002. He said that a survey of Saudi Arabian textbooks carried out on his orders revealed that only 5 percent of the material therein was "abhorrent," while another 10 percent was "questionable." He said these materials had been changed (see Appendix A for a transcript of his statement). It is too early to determine whether such reform is taking place, but CMIP and AJC hope that the present report contributes to meaningful progress on this important issue.

Introduction

School textbooks are one of the most crucial means for a nation to pass on to its younger generation a certain worldview, determined according to parameters set by the educational establishment. As such, they open a window on to what the educational system in a specific country wishes to instill in the students' minds.

The Center for Monitoring the Impact of Peace (CMIP), which has already conducted surveys of Israeli, Palestinian, and Syrian school textbooks, has undertaken a similar survey of Saudi Arabian textbooks, with the cooperation of the American Jewish Committee. However, unlike the former surveys, this present one has attempted to broaden its perspective to include the Saudi Arabian outlook on Christianity and the West and does not limit itself to the Middle East conflict.

For the purpose of this research, 93 Saudi textbooks on various subjects for grades 1-10, mostly from the years 1999-2002, have been examined (see List of Sources). All books except one were published by the Saudi Arabian Ministry of Education (the exception being a book issued by the female inspectors of the lower grades of girls' education in the Riyadh Province). The material has been scrutinized according to the criteria of both UNESCO and CMIP.

UNESCO relevant criteria:

1. Are the data given accurate and complete?
2. Are illustrations, maps, and graphs up-to-date and accurate?

3. Are the achievements of others recognized?
4. Are equal standards applied?
5. Are political disputes presented objectively and honestly?
6. Is wording likely to create prejudice, misapprehension, and conflict avoided?
7. Are ideals of freedom, dignity, and fraternity advocated?
8. Is the need for international cooperation, the formation of common human ideals, and the advancement of the cause of peace, as well as for the enforcement of the law, emphasized?

CMIP criteria of analysis:

1. The image of other peoples, religions, and communities: Are they recognized, accepted as equal, and respected; or are they stereotyped and prejudiced?
2. Peace and the peace process: Does education foster peace? Does it support the peace process? Is there any room for improvement in this respect?

In line with CMIP's methodology, the present report consists mainly of quotations from the books, organized into chapters according to subject. The extent of analysis here is minimal, to allow the material to speak for itself. Occasional explanatory remarks have been added for clarification—either in footnotes at the end of a chapter or in brackets within it. Qur'anic verses follow in most cases N. J. Dawood's translation of the Qur'an, published in the Penguin Classics series. *Hadith* texts have been freely translated.