**The path to peace begins in the classroom**

By: Deborah Singer Soffen and Joan Lurie Goldberg

Times of Israel

October 8, 2018

<https://www.timesofisrael.com/the-path-to-peace-begins-in-the-classroom/>

UNRWA indoctrinates Palestinian kids into the culture of hate that calls a terror attack against Israelis a ‘barbecue party’

With the United Nations General Assembly meeting this week, they are keen to bring to the attention of the world the education that is being provided in UNRWA schools. We believe that the hate-filled education that has been provided to young Palestinians over the last three generations is a leading cause of the failure to achieve peace between the Israelis and the Palestinians.

Our message is simple: The education of Palestinian school children must change drastically if there is ever to be a lasting negotiated peace between Israelis and Palestinians. Why? Because these schools have been inciting three generations of young Palestinians to hate and kill Jews, and the only means of conflict resolution that these students have been exposed to is one of violence.

For children all over the world, the new school year is filled with promise and excitement, affording them the opportunity for personal development so that one day they may become productive citizens of their respective communities. The same cannot be said for Palestinian children.

UNRWA (United Nations Relief and Works Agency) and the Palestinian leadership have manipulated their education system to serve a different purpose. Rather than an education that strives to better the children, this system exploits their impressionable minds, indoctrinating them into a culture of hate, and thereby perpetuating the conflict, rather than resolving it. Until their education changes, the region is at least a generation away from a true, sustainable peace.

These Palestinian schools (in the PA-controlled West Bank, Hamas-controlled Gaza Strip, private schools belonging to the various Christian churches and Islamic charity foundations, as well as UNRWA schools) all receive their books from the Palestinian Authority Ministry of Education’s Curricula Center in Ramallah. As concluded by Dr. Arnon Groiss, whose research on the subject spans 18 years, the most recent set of books published in 2016/2018 are even more radical than their predecessors.

A curriculum of hatred permeates all subject matter, from elementary arithmetic to high school social studies and science. Martyrdom is glorified, any historical connection of Jews to their biblical homeland is fictionalized, contemporary maps of the region omit the existence of the UN member state of Israel, Jews are demonized, and terrorist/jihad concepts are woven into songs, plays, and academia. “The Right of Return” for over 5 million Palestinians is taught as a birthright — clearly an attempt to destroy the State of Israel. Summer camps for UNRWA school children in Gaza are essentially Hamas paramilitary training camps. It is nothing short of hair-raising to see an adorable schoolgirl demonstrate the best way to stab a Jew, or to hear a young schoolboy say that he dreams of one day becoming a martyr.

Below are several examples sited from the 2016-2018 books currently being used that illustrate this disturbing trend:

The terrorist Dalal al-Mughrabi, who led a terrorist attack in 1978, in which more than 30 men, women and children were murdered on a civilian bus, is extolled as a heroine and martyr of Palestine.

In a poem taught to third graders, there is a verse that talks about the fate of the six million Jews now living in Israel following its supposed liberation: “ And I shall remove the usurper (code name for Israel) from my country/ And shall exterminate the foreigners’ scattered remnants.” This is incitement to the perpetration of war crimes!

In a story published in one of the 2017 books, the victims of a terrorist attack in the Jewish settlement of Psagot are referred to as “a barbecue party.”

The United Nations Relief and Works Agency was set up in 1949 to provide social services, including education, to the Palestinian refugee population that resulted following the 1948 Arab-Israeli War when the newly declared State of Israel was attacked by its Arab neighbors. UNRWA schools employ 30,000 teachers, many of whom are products of these same incitement-filled schools. It comes as no surprise that peace in the region has been so elusive, or that so many Palestinian teenagers attending these schools have been willing to sacrifice their lives in order to murder Jews.

This phenomenon of a society indoctrinating its children is eerily similar to that of the Hitler Youth movement. The Nazis employed propaganda, hate-filled rhetoric, rabid anti-Semitism, paramilitary training, and the concept of self-sacrifice for the cause, in order to ensure that there would be a crop of new young soldiers at the ready to serve the Third Reich. To quote Adolf Hitler: “He who owns the youth gains the future.”

It has been a monumental error in judgement to ignore UNRWA’s complicity in allowing a hate-filled education system to function unfettered in its schools for all these years. If this indoctrination had been properly addressed decades ago, we would likely not be in the situation we are in today, faced with a population of Palestinians educated in UNRWA schools (for which the USA was the major donor) unwilling to even consider a peaceful resolution to a conflict that has cost way too many innocent lives, and benefits no one, certainly not Palestinians.

The indoctrination of impressionable children in a racist, violent ideology that encourages martyrdom and puts a child’s personal well-being in jeopardy should be considered a form of “Societal Child Abuse.” This concept is upheld by the statements of a number of organizations. For example:

“The Convention of the Rights of the Child,” ratified by the UN General Assembly in 1989, which recognizes and urges respect for the human rights of children. In particular, Article 19 calls for legislative, administrative, social and educational actions to protect children from all forms of violence.

The International Criminal Court (ICC), which in 2002 recognized that “conscripting or enlisting children under the age of 15 and using them to participate actively in hostilities” is a war crime.

The World Health Organization, whose definition of Child Abuse and Neglect includes “…exploitation which results in actual or potential harm to a child’s health, survival, development or dignity in the context of a relationship of responsibility, trust or power.” Certainly, teachers maintain such a relationship with their students.

Dr. Arnon Groiss published a comparative study in July 2018, entitled “The Attitude of the ‘Other’ and to Peace in Israeli and Palestinian Schoolbooks.” In it, he concludes: “…the Israeli schoolbooks are distinctively better than their Palestinian counterparts as far as their attitude to the rival ‘other’ and to the issue of peaceful resolution of the present conflict is concerned. In fact, the PA books do not yet constitute a peace curriculum, while the Israeli ones fairly meet that challenge.”

Whether UNRWA continues to function or ceases to exist, change in the Palestinian schools is long overdue. We will need to remain vigilant to ensure that, whatever entity assumes responsibility for the education of these children, real and verifiable reforms are put in place. UNRWA may have lost its US funding, but the Palestinian leadership has not lost its desired goal of seeing to Israel’s demise. If tolerance is to win over hate, the PA Ministry of Education’s schoolbooks must be re-written, removing the hateful incitement and incorporating a peace curriculum. Those teachers culpable in indoctrinating their students must be retrained or replaced with appropriately trained teachers. A system of accountability and oversight must be instituted. If not, we have not taken heed from lessons learned of Nazi Germany, and a lasting peace between Israelis and Palestinians will remain elusive.

*This article is dedicated to the memory of Ari Fuld, an American-Israeli father of four who was brutally murdered by a Palestinian youth who had been indoctrinated in a school using books provided by the PA Ministry of Education’s Curricula Center.*