European Parliament condemns incitement in Palestinian, UNRWA textbooks

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<https://www.timesofisrael.com/european-parliament-condemns-incitement-in-palestinian-unrwa-textbooks/>

The European Parliament has adopted a resolution condemning educational material produced by the Palestinian Authority and by the United Nations agency for Palestinian refugees for its role in inciting hatred against Israelis.

In a [document](https://www.europarl.europa.eu/doceo/document/TA-9-2024-0228_EN.pdf) adopted on April 11, the EP said that it ‘condemns the problematic and hateful contents encouraging violence, spreading antisemitism and inciting hatred in Palestinian school textbooks, drafted by [European] Union-funded civil servants as well as in supplementary educational materials developed by UNRWA staff and taught in its schools.’

The EP further recognized that those teaching materials, subsidized with European taxpayer money in the case of PA textbooks, had a role in radicalizing Gazans prior to the October 7 onslaught, in which 1,200 people were killed by Hamas and other terror groups in southern Israel, and 253 were taken hostage to Gaza.

‘[The EP] reaffirms in the context of the despicable terrorist attacks carried out by Hamas on 7 October 2023, that education to hatred [has] direct and dramatic consequences on the security of Israelis as well as on the perspectives of a better future for young Palestinians,’ the resolution read.

Palestinian textbooks have repeatedly [come under scrutiny](https://www.timesofisrael.com/unrwa-textbooks-were-pivotal-in-radicalizing-generations-of-gazans-watchdog/) for their alleged role in radicalizing generations of Gazans and West Bankers, inciting them against Israelis, spreading antisemitic tropes, glorifying terrorism and ‘martyrdom,’ and systematically erasing Israel’s existence.

The EP resolution further called for the conditioning of educational aid to the Palestinian Authority (PA) on the production of educational material ‘that is free from antisemitic contents and incitement to violence.’

The Parliament further noted that since 2016, it has requested five times that the European Commission, the body responsible for allocating foreign aid, scrutinize closely how EU funds to the PA are spent, and demanded that Ramallah modify its educational curriculum.

Textbooks used in schools throughout the Palestinian territories (West Bank and Gaza) are drafted by the Palestinian Authority. UNRWA schools, which cater to about 80 percent of the Gazan population, sometimes produce additional educational material, which often contains the same problematic incitement as Ramallah’s schoolbooks.

The EP acknowledged that, and called for diverting funding from UNRWA to diversify the channels used to deliver aid and services to Gazans, and relying on other ‘trusted partners, such as the WHO, UNICEF or different Red Crescent organizations,’ after ‘credible reports’ emerged that some UNRWA employees were involved in the October 7 atrocities.

The resolution was spearheaded by the liberal center-left Renew Europe party, which helped drum up support across the political spectrum.

French MEP Ilana Cicurel, a party member who sits in the EP’s Committee on Budgetary Control, was one of the main promoters of the resolution. In a statement to The Times of Israel, she highlighted that it was important to establish a link between the content of the Palestinian textbooks and the events of October 7.

‘I insisted on keeping the reference to the Hamas terrorist attacks of October 7 in this text because people must understand that they were a direct consequence of this education to hatred that is also taught in UNRWA schools, not only through textbooks but also through institutional teaching materials self-produced by the UN agency’s education departments,’ Cicurel said.

‘It shows it is a direct threat for Israelis to live in peace and security, and at the same time deprives Palestinian children from their fundamental right to education and perspectives of a better future,’ she added.

Marcus Sheff, CEO of the nonprofit IMPACT-se, which has been monitoring Palestinian schoolbooks for over two decades, welcomed the EP resolutions as a step in the right direction.

‘For years, we have warned that the textbooks taught to Palestinian children create the conditions for the barbarism we all witnessed. The EU Parliament is now saying, ‘enough.’ We need a new Palestinian curriculum,’ he wrote in a statement.

In addition to addressing necessary changes in Palestinian educational curricula, the EP also expressed its concern over the destruction and confiscation by Israel of [EU-funded schools in the West Bank](https://www.timesofisrael.com/israel-razes-eu-funded-palestinian-school-near-bethlehem/).

In its [2022 budget discharge](https://www.europarl.europa.eu/doceo/document/TA-9-2024-0228_EN.pdf), the European legislative body noted that 101 schools were demolished or seized by Israel in that year, for a total value of 337,000 euro ($358,000).

Israeli authorities routinely carry out demolitions of these structures when they are located in Area C and do not have building authorizations.

Area C makes up some 60 percent of the West Bank and is fully under Israeli security and administrative control. Israel rarely approves Palestinian construction in Area C, with the [overwhelming majority of requests being denied](https://www.timesofisrael.com/israel-razes-eu-funded-palestinian-school-near-bethlehem/). This has resulted in rampant illegal building, which is often demolished by Israel.