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and Failures**

House Committee on Foreign Affairs

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Chairman Smith, Chairman Mast, Ranking Member Wild, Ranking Member Crow, Members of the Committee: thank you for the opportunity to submit evidence at this important hearing. My purpose is to demonstrate the central role played by UNRWA in the widespread indoctrination of antisemitism and incitement to violence throughout the Palestinian school system, including the Gaza Strip. This stands in violation of the values of the United Nations itself and many of its member states currently funding UNRWA, including the United States. I would like to ask that my full statement be ordered part of the record.

Introduction

The civilized world remains horrified and shocked at the unprecedented and barbaric assault on Israeli civilians on 7 October. It is a date which will be forever etched into the collective mind of the free world. Even the perpetrators of the most appalling crimes in modern history attempted to hide their crimes – The Nazis furiously burnt documents and tried to destroy the evidence of mass murder at concentration camps. Hamas did quite the opposite. They filmed and broadcast the horror of 7 October for all the world to see. They did so proudly.

Quite rightly, the world is asking how human beings reached such depths of depravity. I am here to provide a key answer. It is an answer which has also never been hidden from sight, but rather in full view of the world. Our institute, IMPACT-se has for many years [documented](#) the contents of textbooks in the Palestinian school system, including in the Gaza Strip. These textbooks profoundly influence millions of young, impressionable minds. Time and again, we have warned that today's Palestinian textbooks are producing the terrorists of tomorrow. Sadly and tragically, on 7 October, our worst fears came true.

Textbooks are unique documents. You will find no other document in which a government or ruling power encapsulates its ideas, values and hopes. For Hamas, the manual for the hatred and incitement which they crave, has been conveniently provided for many years by UNRWA schools and the textbooks that they use. UNRWA educates the majority of school children in the Gaza Strip, [operating](#) 183 Gazan schools, educating over 286,000 students.

UNRWA harnesses Palestinian Authority textbooks

UNRWA does [not produce](#) its own curricula. Instead, it has made the decision that its schools teach the curriculum and textbooks of the "host country." However, nowhere in the UN mandate given to UNWRA by the General Assembly does it state that UNWRA is forbidden to use non-host curricula. Nor does it state that UNRWA cannot alter problematic content in these curricula, as you would fully hope and

expect of a UN agency. UNRWA itself states that it is best practice to teach refugee populations with local curricula, but it is not required or codified as such.

Therefore, UNRWA has made the deliberate and conscious decision to teach the Palestinian National Authority (PA) curriculum in the UNRWA-run schools across the Gaza Strip, West Bank, and Jerusalem. IMPACT-se has been analyzing school curricula across the MENA region, including the PA school curriculum used by UNRWA for over two decades, assessing compliance with UN values, such as tolerance, non-violence, and peace-making. Our extensive research of [PA school textbooks](#) has consistently found a systematic promotion of violence, martyrdom, overt antisemitism, and jihad across all grades and subjects, with the proliferation of extreme nationalism and Islamist ideologies throughout the curriculum, including science and math textbooks.

For example, a grade twelve textbook warns students of “the danger” of the “People of the Book, especially the Jews,” who as a collective are described as treacherous, dangerous, hostile, and violent. A teacher’s guide on tenth grade geography and history instructs teachers to downgrade students who fail to connect the perpetration of massacres to Jewish religious thought. Beyond the naked antisemitism, these textbooks are rife with the glorification of terrorism. Even a fifth grade Arabic language reading comprehension lionizes Dalal Mughrabi, who murdered 13 Israeli children and 25 adults on a civilian bus. She is hailed as a hero whose footsteps should be followed as a national role model. A grade four math problem asks children to add the number of martyrs from the First and Second Intifadas, while grade seven physics is taught by asking students to calculate the velocity required to throw a rock at an Israeli soldier. Nowhere in this body of PA textbooks is peace mentioned as a possibility or a desirable outcome. Instead, the future envisaged for Palestinian children is tragically bleak – A grade five study card tells students that their duty towards the Al-Aqsa Mosque in Jerusalem is “committing jihad and dying as a martyr for the sake of liberating it.”

What is just as troubling as this content itself, is the refusal of UNRWA to alter these materials. UNRWA’s current commissioner general testified before the European Parliament on 1 September 2021, [acknowledging](#) that antisemitism and the glorification of terrorism do indeed exist in Palestinian Authority textbooks used in UNRWA schools. UNRWA has claimed that it has internal mechanisms to ensure educational materials adhere to UN values. This includes UNRWA’s “rapid review process,” outlined in UNRWA’s [“Curriculum Framework,”](#) established in 2013 for the schools UNRWA operates. However, UNRWA has never published the complete content of the “Curriculum Framework,” nor how it is implemented practically.

UNRWA has also claimed that it now uses its “Teacher Centered Approach” tool, consisting of three documents to address all problematic material in the PA curriculum. However, these documents have never been made public, and there is no evidence of their use in UNRWA schools. No details of any review have been made public for external scrutiny.

The unavoidable impression is that UNRWA, as a UN organization, knowingly teaches highly inflammatory and inciteful material that is inconsistent with UN values in its Gaza Strip and West Bank schools. As a result, students in UNRWA-operated schools are exposed to extremist and violent indoctrination at any given moment.

UNRWA’s self-produced materials

As if exposing more than a quarter of a million children to the dangers of the PA curriculum were not alarming enough, UNRWA adds an additional layer of hate to its education via a plethora of supplementary study material produced by UNRWA staff.

In January 2021, IMPACT-se published a review of materials produced by UNRWA to facilitate at-home learning during the COVID-19 pandemic; it found that UNRWA staff drafted, approved, printed, and distributed content for well over 10 months that egregiously violated UN values, UNESCO standards, and UNRWA’s stated principles.

The report detailed numerous instances of content that contained antisemitism, calls for martyrdom, violence, and Jihad, and which are entirely devoid of any material that promotes peace and peace-making. It found materials branded with UNWRA’s logo that contained incitement to violence, demonization of Israel, endorsements of jihad and martyrdom, the promulgation of libels and antisemitic conspiracies, and failure to promote peace-making.

After publication of the report, UNRWA [acknowledged](#) it had “mistakenly” produced and distributed “inappropriate material” to Palestinian students. UNRWA stated that the issue had been rectified, and all instances of hate and incitement were removed and no longer being circulated. UNRWA also [promised](#) that any breach reported is dealt with firmly.

And yet, the proliferation of hate in these materials continues unabated. On four occasions since 2021, IMPACT-se has [reported](#) that such study content has been created by UNRWA staff. These teaching materials carry UNRWA’s logo, the names of its schools on cover pages, and list contributing UNRWA

staff, including school principals, vice principals and teachers, whose names are signed on the hateful content – in every respect, institutionally created, approved, and taught.

The latest such [report](#) in March 2023 found that 82 UNRWA teachers and other staff affiliated with over 30 UNRWA schools are involved in drafting, supervising, approving, printing, and distributing hateful content to students. One example is an Arabic reading comprehension exercise for 9th graders at UNRWA's AlMaghazi Middle School for Boys B (Gaza) which celebrates a Palestinian firebombing attack on a Jewish bus as a “barbecue party.” In another, fifth graders from UNRWA’s Al-Zaytun Elementary School (Gaza) were taught to glorify Dalal Mughrabi as a role model (Mughrabi murdered 38 Israeli civilians, including 13 children).

UNRWA has denied that such material was produced by UNRWA, [claiming](#) that identified materials were from an unnamed, private commercial website, which illegally utilized the agency’s logo and names of employees, and stated that the teaching materials in IMPACT-se’s report were “not authorized for use in any UNRWA school”. Yet, the agency admitted in its statement that the names of those that signed off on the materials listed in IMPACT-se’s report are indeed UNWRA staff.

UNRWA maintains that its online digital learning platform (DLP) launched in 2021 for remote learning is the only repository for UNRWA produced self-study materials. However, the DLP contains very limited material. Most sections contain no content whatsoever, and the minimal material within it does not include learning materials for Social Studies or Islamic Studies – subjects known to contain highly volatile content in the PA textbooks and UNRWA study cards. By any reasonable measure, the DLP is not an exhaustive collection of remote study materials.

UNRWA continues to be unable to adequately explain how and why hundreds of documented pages of harmful UNRWA branded material have been created and are taught in its schools.

Public endorsement of hate and terror by UNRWA staff

It should come as no surprise that so much hateful material has been produced and taught by UNRWA staff. A [report](#) in 2023 identified 133 UNRWA educators and staff who were found to promote hate and violence on social media. Furthermore, as a [report](#) published by IMPACT-se in November 2023 reveals, at least 14 teachers and staff at UNRWA schools have publicly celebrated the October 7 massacre and other Hamas attacks on their social media accounts.

They include an UNRWA teacher in the school system in Gaza, Sarah Alderawy, who posted a [video clip](#) on the day of the massacre showing Hamas terrorists roaming the Israeli streets with rifles while shooting at Israeli cars and rocket attacks in Israel. The video is accompanied by a Quranic verse stating: “we will surely come to them with soldiers that they will be powerless to encounter, and we will surely expel them in humiliation, and they will be debased.”

In another example, Mahmoud Abu Adhm, an UNRWA employee in Gaza, has posted multiple times since October 7 displaying wholehearted support for the Hamas atrocities. On 10 October, he encouraged Hamas to kill Israeli hostages [saying](#), “Do not walk past a captive who has not been given amnesty without striking off his neck so as to terrorize the enemy”, citing Islamic texts that advocate harshness towards the enemy.

In short, far too many UNRWA staff hold views that go against everything that this House and indeed the entire civilized world believes in. These views appear to go way beyond a handful of individuals. Rather, they appear endemic within the UNRWA school system.

Nor are these simply privately held views, deeply troubling as that itself clearly is. There is evidence that these views are also being expressed in UNRWA-operated schools. The same November 2023 [report](#) also documents an official Facebook page belonging to an UNRWA elementary school in Nablus in which a video is [posted](#). It shows a school rally held on 26 October, which features a young boy, accompanied by what appears to be an UNRWA administrator, pleading victory to Hamas’s “Jihad warriors” in Gaza, evoking the defeat of the Jews at Khaybar at the hands of Muhamed’s forces. The student body collectively responds “Amen” to each line. Tellingly, the video also shows students reading from a grade five Islamic Education textbook, which encourages death through Jihad against Israel.

The deadly results of textbook incitement

Inevitably, the sheer weight of hatred and incitement featuring in UNRWA classrooms and being openly expressed by UNRWA staff has a powerful effect. It is no longer a matter of mere speculation that what UNRWA students are learning and hearing in school and from their teachers is being translated into terror.

The findings of an IMPACT-se [report](#) last year are stark. It reveals that at least one hundred Hamas members who have carried out terror attacks against Israelis over a number of years are graduates of the UNRWA education system. In the report, material uploaded to the Hamas website is analyzed and shows that many Hamas terrorists have attended UNRWA schools. They include the perpetrators of the Dee

family murders on April 7 and many other terrorists including suicide bombers. Their education in UNRWA schools is specified on the Hamas website, as if it were valued by Hamas as a stage in the development of each terrorist.

Given that more than half of the students in Gaza study in UNRWA-operated schools, it is statistically probable that the majority of the estimated 3,000 terrorists who committed acts of murder, rape, beheading, and abduction of Israelis on October 7 graduated from UNRWA's education program and schools.

Even in the short time following the massacre, IMPACT-se has uncovered disturbing links between UNRWA education and the atrocities of October 7. A recent [report](#) details a handwritten note discovered on the body of one of the Hamas terrorists who participated in the massacre. It cites Khalid ibn al-Walid, an Arab military commander and companion of the Prophet Muhammed, who is widely associated with violent jihad. Al-Walid is glorified as a hero of jihad in a Grade Five Arabic reading comprehension exercise titled "Hooray for the Heroes." Another October 7 terrorist was [revealed](#) to have been an UNRWA graduate after his UNRWA diploma was found in his vehicle.

Meanwhile, in November a leading Israeli journalist [reported](#) the testimony of a released Israeli hostage, apparently held captive by an UNRWA teacher in his Gaza attic for 50 days. In recent years, a number of former UNRWA teachers have been identified as senior terror figures. UNRWA school principal and Chairman of the UNRWA Gaza workers' union Suhail al-Hindi was elected to the Hamas Politburo. Hamas's former Minister of Economy Jawad Abu Shamala, was a longtime former UNRWA teacher. Hamas's former Minister of Interior, Said Siam served for 23 years as a teacher in UNRWA schools, during which he was arrested 4 times. While working as a teacher and director of UNRWA schools in Rafah, Awad al-Qiq also served as head of the engineering and weapons manufacturing unit of the Palestinian Jihad Islamic terror group.

Such examples are merely a snapshot of individuals and content from open-source material. It is highly likely that many more who were educated or even teach in UNRWA schools have become Hamas terrorists or terrorists affiliated to alternative terror groups.

Regional textbook improvements show an alternative

While UNRWA continues to choose a hateful Palestinian curriculum for its schools, elsewhere in the region, countries are making meaningful and positive changes to their textbooks. In the [United Arab Emirates](#), textbooks have been revised to include the Abraham Accords, to emphasize tolerance,

coexistence, and friendly relations with non-Muslims. [Saudi Arabia](#) has eliminated practically all antisemitism from its national school curriculum over a four-year period. Meanwhile, the promotion of violent jihad and other extremist material has also been eliminated. In [Morocco](#), the curriculum now embraces minorities including Jews and Amazigh. Students learn that the Jewish community is an inseparable part of Morocco, and textbooks describe Jewish history, culture, and contributions to Moroccan society. Meanwhile, in [Egypt](#), a year-by-year reform of textbooks has seen major improvements in attitudes toward Jews and Judaism. In this regional context, it is apparent that the Palestinian curriculum as taught in UNRWA schools, is increasingly isolated in its promotion of hatred and violence.

United States support in the context of international aid

IMPACT-se has played a pivotal role in bringing the issue of Palestinian textbook incitement to the attention of decision-makers across the globe. The response of several governments has been instructive. The European Union froze all its funding to the Palestinian Authority of over 220 Million Euros in April 2021 for 13 months due to problematic content in textbooks following an EU funded report that found “antisemitic narratives and glorification of violence” in the curriculum. Furthermore, the European Parliament adopted four resolutions since 2020 which condemned the teaching of hate in Palestinian textbooks, expressed concerns of continued failure to remove content not in line with UNESCO standards, and called for conditioning funding on the basis of a curriculum reform.

The United Kingdom [announced](#) in October 2021 that it had ended all its direct funding of Palestinian education. Meanwhile, Norway [announced](#) in June 2020, that more than half of the year’s planned funding to the Palestinian ministry of education had been withheld until tangible “positive changes are seen in the Palestinian curriculum within a reasonable time,” while in 2018 Belgium cut all direct bilateral financial support to the PA Ministry of Education and ended ties with the Ministry over glorification of terrorists and terrorism through education.

In the wake of October 7, additional countries have followed suit. The European Union, [Sweden](#), [Denmark](#), [Finland](#) and [Austria](#) have all announced a suspension of aid to the Palestinian Authority, pending a comprehensive review of funding. In November, [Germany](#) announced that it is cutting funding to UNRWA in Gaza until further notice. In December, the [Swiss National Council](#) (lower parliamentary chamber) voted to cancel its entire UNRWA funding over hate education, although the Senate (upper parliamentary chamber) later overturned the decision.

[Canada](#), [UK](#), [European Union](#), [Australia](#), [Switzerland](#) and the [United Nations](#) itself have all publicly criticized or raised concerns over hate-teaching in UNRWA schools. Meanwhile, the director of Germany's Georg Eckert Institute for International Textbook Research [testified](#) before the EU Parliament in 2021, stating that the PA curriculum (as taught in UNRWA schools) as a whole, does not meet UNESCO standards.

It is against the backdrop of this trend, coupled with Washington's cast-iron opposition to Palestinian terror, that a full re-examination of the United States' support for UNRWA's education program is urgently required.

The United States is UNRWA's largest donor, funding its education program to the tune of over one billion dollars in the last five years. These US taxpayer dollars pay for both the production of inciteful school materials and the salaries of teachers in UNRWA schools – the majority of schools in Gaza - who are responsible for teaching them to students. The net result is a corpus of poisonous textbooks taught too often by hate-filled teachers. Quite simply, UNRWA's educational program is not fit for purpose.

As such, Washington must now demand that UNRWA play no further part in Palestinian education. Swathes of the international community are already reconsidering their support for UNRWA education. Especially in the wake of October 7, simply demanding greater oversight and accountability of UNRWA schooling is no longer enough. The agency has proven time and again that it cannot be trusted with the key task of shaping the next generation of Palestinians. If we want to prevent the next massacre of Jews, if we ever want to dream of peace – Then Palestinian children must be educated free from the harmful influence of UNRWA.