

Hamas, PA, and UNRWA Educate Gaza Schoolchildren for Jihad



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COMMENTARY

Gaza Strip schools fostered the depraved sensibility that fueled the Oct. 7 butchery perpetrated by Hamas jihadists in southern Israel. While Hamas exercised dictatorial authority over the whole of jihadist indoctrination in Gaza, the Palestinian Authority (PA) produced the textbooks and lesson plans, and the United Nations Relief and Works Agency (UNRWA) in significant measure administered the schools. The defeat of jihadism in Gaza will not be complete without a fundamental reorientation of its educational system.

Given U.S. interests in Middle East stability in general and the post-Israel-Hamas war reconstruction of Gaza in particular, American policymakers must grasp the preaching of hatred, violence, and Islamist supremacy woven into Gaza education. One obstacle is that many U.S. diplomats – even more the younger career foreign service officers who staff them – will have been indoctrinated at American universities in opinions and ideas that bear an uncanny resemblance to certain ugly dogmas championed by the jihadists.

IMPACT-se (Institute for Monitoring Peace and Cultural Tolerance in School Education) provides indispensable English language documentation of the training for terrorism inscribed in UNRWA Arabic language textbooks and other Hamas educational materials. The training falsifies history, encourages submission to government-sanctioned doctrines, and fosters loathing of Jews, Israel, America, and the freedom and democracy central to the West. Hamas' savage rampage on Oct. 7 through Israel's border communities was not a hideous departure from central tenets of Gazan education but rather gave faithful expression to them.

In "Al-Fateh – The Hamas Web Magazine for Children: Indoctrination to Jihad, Annihilation and Self-Destruction," IMPACT-se examined 145 of the Hamas publication's issues, from September 2002 to April 2009. Al-Fateh's "consistent educational message to its young readers," according to IMPACT-se, "mirrors that of the Hamas movement's ideology and includes scathing hatred, disdain, delegitimization and demonization of the other – the West, especially the US and Europe, the Jews, Israel and Zionism – as well as a call for establishing an Islamic state in entire Palestine and the annihilation of the State of Israel through violent liberation of the land in jihad."

Al-Fateh – in Arabic, “The Conqueror” – portrays “Jews as enemies of mankind and killers of prophets,” IMPACT-se shows. Rejecting compromise, negotiations, and peace agreements – those in operation and the pursuit of new ones – Al-Fateh advocates “total commitment to an armed and violent jihad, especially of the suicidal kind.” Through “its pervasive indoctrination of the younger generation into the cult of martyrdom,” Al-Fateh contributed to forming “the next generation of suicide bombers to join the violent jihad.”

Many Oct. 7 jihadists – who murdered Israeli parents in front of their children and Israeli children in front of their parents; humiliated, maimed, and raped Jewish women; mutilated corpses; and kidnapped mostly civilians – and many Gaza Palestinians who cheered on the sadistic killers grew up on Al-Fateh’s poisonous tenets. They learned from the Hamas magazine that Israel and the United States, along with their friends and partners, are evil and implacable adversaries: “the Jewish enemy kills our people in beloved Palestine, while the United States, Britain and the other European countries, and India help it.” They read that the United States is an omnipresent and insidious menace: “America is the terror, my child ... she is the plague that destroys my liver ... she is the viper that scatters poison inside me.” And they were informed that Islam confronts a globe-spanning war: “Muslims and their children everywhere are under a siege of injustice – in beloved imprisoned Palestine, in wounded Afghanistan, in Kashmir, in Chechnya, and in other parts of the world which are controlled by the most despicable of God’s creatures: the Jews, and their agents in crusader America.”

In “Review of 2022 UNRWA-Produced Study Materials in the Palestinian Territories,” IMPACT-se surveyed the curriculum overseen by UNRWA in West Bank and Jerusalem schools as well as those in Gaza. Contrary to the UN charter and the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, which affirm basic rights and fundamental freedoms, UNRWA’s Palestinian schools promulgate intolerance and Islamic supremacy. UNRWA education features “a systematic insertion 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; rejection of the possibility of peace with Israel; and the complete omission of any historical Jewish presence in the modern-day territories of Israel and the PA.”

IMPACT-se released “UNRWA Education: Text Books and Terror” in November 2023. In addition to detailing praise that UNRWA staff members heaped on Hamas terrorists for the Oct. 7 slaughter and the role played by UNRWA school graduates in the barbarities, the report examines UNRWA educational materials that “either harness antisemitism or encourage martyrdom or violent jihad.”

For example, UNRWA teachers develop students’ reading comprehension through a story that celebrates suicide bombers and the decapitation of Israeli soldiers. A map for fourth graders in UNRWA schools erases Israel by placing a Palestinian flag over all the land between the Jordan river and the Mediterranean Sea. A fifth-grade reading lesson, “Hooray

for the Heroes,” glorifies Palestinians “associated with war, violence, religious extremism, and Terrorism” but “does not include scientists, doctors, engineers, or athletes.” UNRWA schools teach sixth-grade students that “The Zionists are the terrorists of the modern age, and they are fated to disappear.”

In addition, documents IMPACT-se, UNRWA teachers instruct students that in Israel’s 1948 War of Independence – five invading Arab armies sought to annihilate the newborn Jewish state – Zionists were compelled by Jewish religious belief to massacre Arabs. UNRWA school lessons disparage peaceful lives while glorifying martyrdom in the fight against infidels (most prominently Jews and Christians) as a noble act that Allah will reward in heaven. Gazan students learn that jihad to liberate Palestine is a “private obligation for every Muslim.” That obligation emphatically includes girls and women: “Palestinian girls are encouraged to kill, be killed, and send their children to die.”

Israel’s destruction of Hamas as a fighting force and governing authority in Gaza will provide at best temporary reprieve if, after major military operations end, the PA and UNRWA continue to propagate jihadism through the schools. The United States would be in a better position to assist in thwarting this abuse of UN institutions and Palestinian children if America’s own educational system were not itself saturated with concepts that bear an alarming resemblance to those of jihadist indoctrination.

Although the U.S. public only recently has taken serious notice of the problem, American colleges and universities have for many years promulgated as campus orthodoxy the multilayered accusation that the country is divided into white oppressors and oppressed people of color, that the American political system is racist to its core, and that social justice requires redistributing wealth and power by discriminating based on race. Institutions of higher education that have abandoned their mission, which is to transmit knowledge and cultivate independent thinking, in favor of the reproduction of hard-left ideology, cannot be expected to form diplomats capable of grasping the harms caused by the UN-sponsored Palestinian education for jihad or of possessing the judgment and motivation to implement the urgently needed correctives.

Here as elsewhere, effective U.S. foreign policy depends on thoroughly reforming higher education in America.

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