IMPACT-se

Palestinians in Israeli Textbooks
2016 Update

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Introduction

Israeli curriculum research in the past two decades has acknowledged that attitudes toward the Arab and Palestinian "Other" have significantly improved in Israeli textbooks published throughout the 1990s and onward. These studies indicate that the Israeli-Palestinian conflict is currently depicted in a more balanced and objective manner in these textbooks than it was in the past, abandoning stereotypes and including more of the Palestinian point of view than their predecessors (Bar-Tal, 1998, 2004; Firer, 1998; Podeh, 2000; Manor, 2008; Adwan, Bar-Tal and Wexler, 2013). While the same scholars, as well as others (e.g., Firer and Adwan, 1997; Peled Elhanan, 2010) also contend that Israeli textbooks are inclined to present such trends as self-victimization, "siege mentality," ethnocentrism and bias, most large-scale Israeli curriculum studies show that these trends have dramatically decreased since the 1990s.

The current update report examines the messages found in 123 textbooks recommended by the Israeli Ministry of Education and provides an update to the IMPACT-se 2012 report on "Peace, Tolerance and the Palestinian Other in Israeli Textbooks" (Teff-Seker, 2012). The textbooks included in the study are for grades 7–12 of the Jewish state and state-religious sectors for the 2000–2017 academic years, and include the following academic subjects: history, civics, geography, Jewish heritage and religious studies, Hebrew language and literature and Arab language for the Jewish-Israeli sector.[1] The study examined messages found in these textbooks regarding the Arab-Palestinian conflict and its resolution and the portrayal of the Arab or Palestinian Other (including history, heritage and narrative). These representations were analyzed according to criteria with recommendations based on UNESCO-derived IMPACT-se guidelines regarding peace and tolerance education (see appendix).

Findings

Conflict and Conflict Resolution

While Israeli participation in past wars is often described in Israeli textbooks as a "necessary evil" or as forced upon the Israeli side by the Arab states surrounding it, peaceful conflict resolution is depicted in these books as highly desirable, and peace (with the Palestinians and other neighboring states) is presented not only as mutually beneficial and achievable but also as the ideal state to which all parties should aspire. This trend can be seen in all academic disciplines: Literature textbooks include poems exalting peace;

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1   This update does not cover the independent and semi-independent Haredi (Ultra-Orthodox) and state Arab and Druze curricula.

history textbooks portray war as negative and peace accords and peace talks as positive; geography textbooks describe the economic and political advantages of peace with the Palestinians and neighboring Arab states; civics textbooks promote messages of tolerance, pluralism and non-violent conflict resolution; Jewish religious and cultural studies textbooks show how the message of peace appears in ancient Jewish texts and is engrained in Jewish culture; Arabic textbooks promote religious and ethnic tolerance and coexistence of all faiths in and around Israel; and Hebrew grammar books include exercises that presuppose *peace* as the ultimate goal.

It should be added that the connotation of the word "peace" in these textbooks is not meant to describe a state of calm or general wellbeing, but as the opposite of war, and that of coexistence and amity with other nations—specifically between Israel and its Arab neighbors and especially the Palestinians— and related to an actual peace agreement between these parties. Some examples/exercises from the texts include:

▶ When, in your opinion, will the long awaited peace with the Arab states be achieved?[2]

▶ Write your vision of peace and how it would affect our society.[3]

▶ Peace is a blessing/Peace is a prayer . . . But peace, real 'peace' is a wish, is a dream. Peace that we all want/always peace, not battle, not fire. Therefore, we all aspire: Let there be peace upon Israel![4]

▶ Devise a plan for full cooperation between Syria and Israel and mention its benefits for both partners (for instance 'package tours,' industrial, agricultural, water and ecological cooperation, an international bridge).[5]

▶ When the permanent arrangements between Israel and the Palestinians will be discussed, there will be a need to discuss and decide about the matter of the use of the Jordan River's water by the Palestinians. . . . At any rate, it is clear that the water in the Judea and Samaria mountains will always be shared by Israel and the Palestinians.[6]

▶ When we try to create a balance of advantages vs. concerns, there is not a shadow of a doubt that the benefits of peace with Egypt outweigh the concerns and it is very clear that Israel must continue and nurture good relations between the two countries.[7]

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2   *Hebrew—Comprehension, Language and Grammar*, 2007, p. 159.
3   Ibid., p. 135.
4   *The Way of Words,* Book 2, 2007, p. 155.
5   *Geography of the Middle East: Changes on the Verge of the Twenty-first Century,* 2008, p. 307. Parentheses appear in the original version.
6   *Geography of the Middle East: Changes on the Verge of the Twenty-first Century*, 2008, p. 183.
7   Ibid., p. 293.

It should, however, be noted that textbooks also describe the range of opinions on the political map in Israel—right and left—and cover such issues as the internal Israeli debate regarding the relinquishment of territories for peace. In some cases, students are presented with several political points of view or contradictory quotes regarding a certain issue.

> The results of war created much controversy in Israeli society regarding these areas, beginning with their definition—occupied territories or liberated territories. Many of the Jews in Israel see these territories as part of their homeland, and coming back to them as returning to the Land of the Forefathers [*Eretz Ha'Avot*], as well as territories that lend the state strategic depth and strengthen its security.
>
> Many others prefer to withdraw from the territories as part of a peace settlement, due to the problematic nature of controlling another people and a large Arab population, in order to prevent harm to the state's Jewish nature; to prevent the alienation of Israel by the rest of the world; and due to the eagerness to end the conflict between the Jews and the Arabs, in Israel and in the Middle East.[8]
>
> The Oslo Accords were of great importance to both sides. Through them, the first compromise between Israel and the Palestinians was achieved, a compromise that tried to open a door to a wider reconciliation process and improve the relationship between Israel and the Arab states. . . . However the Accords also had a harsh opposition in the Israeli public. . . . Most of the left wing supported the agreement and hoped it would bring an end to violence, while on the right there was harsh criticism of Yitzhak Rabin . . .[9]

Education for peace-making (see Appendix: IMPACT-se standard no.4) is thus translated to include a frank internal debate about the ways and modalities for achieving this goal, alongside the emphasis on peace as a central value.

Although war is generally portrayed as negative in Israeli textbooks, historic wars in which Israel took part are mostly shown as factual events and sometimes justified as a means of survival ("a necessary evil") for the Jewish side, with the Arab states and/or the Palestinians often shown as the instigators of conflict or violence. In some cases, the rationale or narrative of the other side (though not justification) is included, but in some cases the events are depicted without an explanation of the Other point of view. For example, the following quote regarding Palestinians includes the rationale to violent acts towards Israel, while the second (despite being otherwise historically accurate) does not:

8   *Being Citizens in Israel in a Jewish and Democratic State,* 2016, p. 467.
9   *Time Travel: Building a State in the Middle East,* 2009, p. 206.

> The conditions in the [Palestinian refugee] camps were difficult and the population living in them suffered from poverty and neglect . . . The underprivileged population of the Palestinian camps was the main source of 'intruders' into Israeli territory, and later on—became the core of terrorist organizations that acted against Israel.[10]

> The Arabs' violent acts [that took place between 1933–1939] focused on burning fields, setting fire to woods, destroying quarries, attacking Jewish roads. . . . However, harming property was not enough. Most of the terrorist acts were focused on taking lives, attacking Jewish neighborhoods and settlements.[11]

Representation of Palestinians—Identity, Narrative, Rationale

Israeli textbooks acknowledge a significant Arab (Palestinian) presence in pre–1948 Palestine and in its (Jewish and/or Muslim) holy places, and the Arab population is even (accurately) shown as larger than that of the Jewish population at that time, as in the following example:

> On the eve of the arrival of Zionist immigrants to Israel, it was not completely unoccupied. About four hundred thousand Arabs lived in it, as well as about twenty-five thousand Jews.[12]

Israeli textbooks recognize existence of the Palestinian National Movement and events regarding the Palestinian-Israeli conflict are, as a rule, given in a balanced and impartial manner, especially in comparison to textbooks published in previous years. Pre–2000 textbooks often used the terms "The Arabs of the Land of Israel" or "The Arabs of Israel" and did not often mention Palestinian nationality or national-political aspirations. In more recent (post-Oslo) textbooks, even when the term "The Arabs of Israel" is used, it is still synonymous with the term "Palestinians" when it describes the pre–1948 development of the Palestinian National Movement, as can be seen in the following example from a textbook published in 1999:

> During the 1930s, national Arab movements emerged across the Middle East. Many of the Arabs of Israel also began to develop national awareness, namely, that they were not only part of the great Arab nation but that they were also Palestinians, dwellers of Palestine.[13]

As awareness of the other side's point of view and narrative is considered an important factor in resolving an inter-group protracted conflict (Salomon, 2004a, 2004b), the extent and manner of representation of Palestinian self-perception, history, viewpoint and subjective experiences in the

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10 *The Main Mountain: Judea, Samaria, the Plain and the Jordan Valley*, 2002, p. 346.
11 *Revolution and Change between Two World Wars 1920–1939*, 2005, p. 73.
12 *1870–1970 The Era of Dread and Hope: History Chapters for High School*, 2001, p. 40.
13 *History of Today, the Twenty-first Century—on the Verge of Tomorrow*, 1999, P. 85.

Israeli textbooks were carefully inspected and analyzed. The historic Palestinian narrative or narratives are presented to students in most Israeli history textbooks. These provide students with some of the Palestinian perspective regarding the Israeli-Palestinian conflict and the subsequent Palestinian suffering, although any post–1948 direct narratives of Palestinians who are not Israeli citizens are relatively rare. In general, most Israeli history textbooks focus on events that took place until and including the 1948 war; there are also shorter descriptions of those that took place later on. However, some examples exist where this is not the case, as in the following:

> . . . In [Palestinian] refugee camps the population is fast growing and the conditions are very difficult – unemployment rates are high, dwellings are tight and run down, and the level of medical, educational and sanitary services is poor. The problem of the Arab refugees is a complicated one and a painful human issue, and it is one of the most difficult and complex issues in the long Arab-Israeli conflict.[14]

The Israeli curriculum fosters attachment toward the Palestinian Other as an individual (see Appendix, IMPACT-se standard no. 3). One example can be found in a poem by Palestinian national poet Mahmoud Darwish.[15] Another are the following heart-wrenching images intended to evoke emotional attachment to the plight of the Palestinians as suffering individuals:

פליטים פלסטינים.

שאלה: כיצד מדגיש הצילום את הקשיים במצבם של הפליטים הפלסטינים?

‏⟳ פליט, 2010. באדיבות הצייר אחמד כנעאן.

Left: "Refugee, 2010." Courtesy of the Painter Ahmad Canaan.[16] **Right:** Caption: "Palestinian Refugees." Text: "Question: How does this photograph emphasize the situation of the Palestinian refugees?"[17]

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14   *Man and Environment in the Global Age: Geography and Environmental Development*, 2013, p. 158.
15   *Being Citizens in Israel in a Jewish and Democratic State,* 2016, p. 466.
16   Ibid.
17   *In: Israel, Nationality—Building a State in the Middle East*, 2009, p. 107.

Books describe past and present difficulties and hardships of the Palestinian people (including experiences of banishment in 1948, living in refugee camps, the events of *Kfar Qassem* , the *Sabra* and *Shatila* massacres, Black September, etc.), and acknowledge some Israeli responsibility in some cases. Some Israeli textbooks also explain the controversial term "Nakba" (catastrophe), the name given by some Palestinians to the 1948 War, as an explanation of the past and current Palestinian view:

> The War of Independence is called different names that express different points of view on the war: The War of Independence; the 5708 [*Tasha'h*] War; the War of Liberation . . . and Al Nakba.
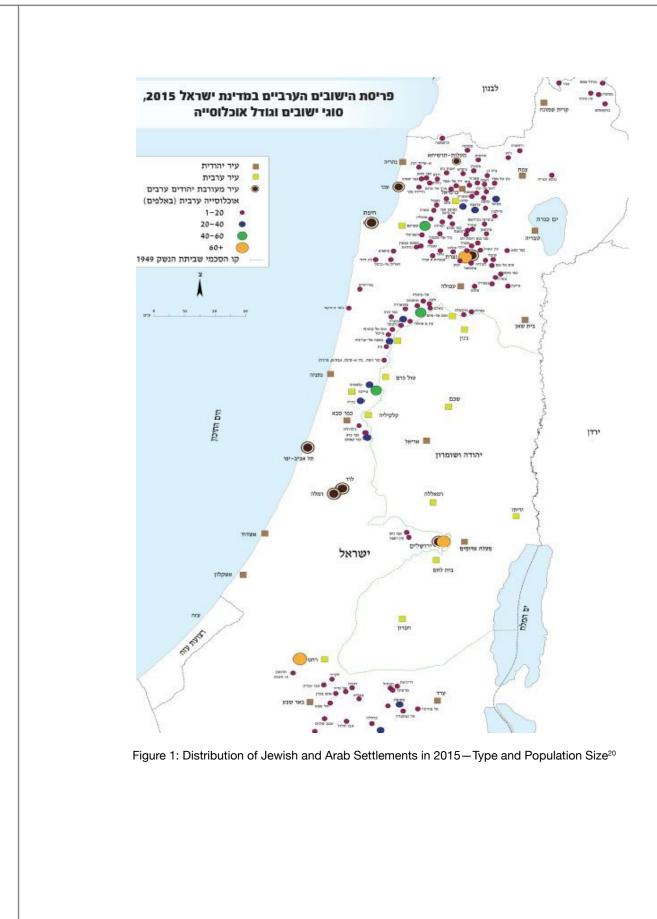>
> a.   Explain the significance of the names . . .
> b.   Explain the different points of view that lead to the giving of these names.
> c.   Make a poster to illustrate one of the names of the war.[18]

Maps

One manner in which a textbook can choose to represent, misrepresent or ignore another national group is by graphic and geographic representations. Palestinians and Palestinian settlements are often recognized in Israeli textbooks, and are always included in any political map or any other type of map that pertains to Israel's borders or settlements. Geography, history and civics textbooks feature maps that include the cease-fire line of 1949, and designate the Palestinian territories (the West Bank and the Gaza Strip) as special areas, separate from the rest of the state (e.g., by a dotted line or different color). In some cases, especially when Israeli-Palestinian relations are the focus, maps specifically mark "A" territories (those under full PA control), and at times also "B" and "C" territories, as designated in the Oslo Accords. Even in cases where this political-geographic distinction is not made, Palestinian cities and villages within and beyond the Green Line (e.g. Gaza, Jenin, Jericho) are clearly marked by name on the maps (as shown in the maps that follow):[19]

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18   *A Journey to the Past: Selected Subjects in History. The Nineteenth Century * The Twentieth Century*, 2007, p. 184.
19   The existence of settlements beyond the "Green Line" and/or occupation of these territories are described impartially, without support or judgment of either side. Moreover, Palestinian territories are occasionally referred to as such, but in some cases they are only given the names of their regions (Judea and Samaria, Gaza strip, etc.), without stating that they belong to one state or another.

Figure 1: Distribution of Jewish and Arab Settlements in 2015—Type and Population Size[20]

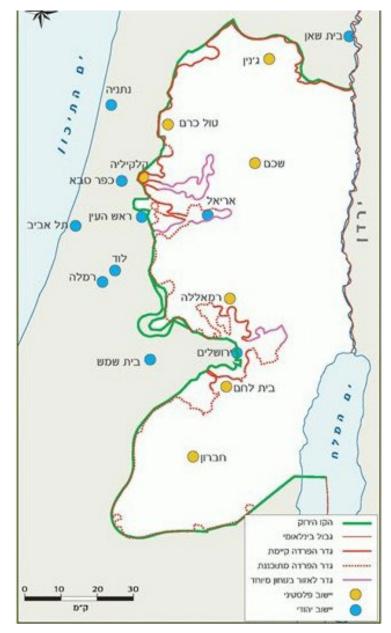20   *Being Citizens in Israel in a Jewish and Democratic State*, 2016, p. 464.

Figure 2: The Security Fence Borders[21]

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21   *Israel in the Twenty-first Century*, 2009, p. 17. Index: The Green Line; International Border
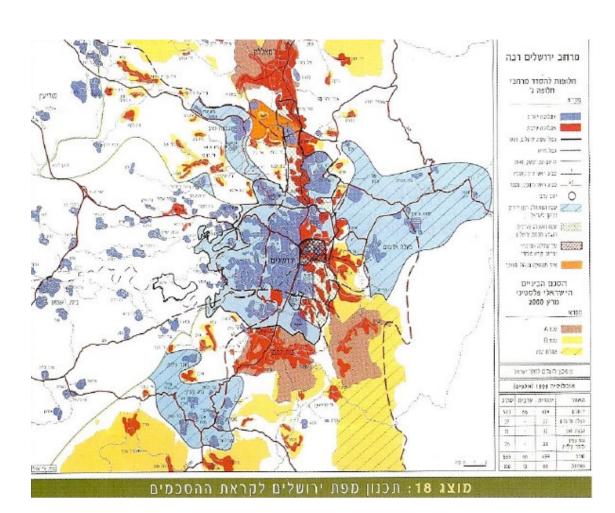
Figure 3: Title: Greater Jerusalem: Alternatives to Spatial Arrangement—Alternative C
[Legend]: . . . The Israeli Palestinian Interim Agreement March 2000
[Light brown]: "A" Territory; [Yellow]: "B" Territory . . .
Caption of Map: Exhibit 18: Planning a Map of Jerusalem Toward the Agreements[22]

Attitudes toward Muslim and Arab Minorities in Israel

Israeli textbooks show a respectful approach to the origins and religious precepts of Islam and Arab history and their heritage. (see Appendix, IMPACT-se standard no.1) This is especially common in Arabic language textbooks (intended for native Hebrew speakers) that include extensive quotes from the Qur'an as well as paraphrasing from other Muslim texts and precepts; occasionally such quotes also appear in other academic disciplines.

> Friday is a holy day in Islam, and it was said about it that: 'Friday is a great and significant day. It is the best of days about which the Prophet said: 'The best day in which the sun rose is the sixth day—on it the first man was created, on it he went into the Garden of Eden and on it he was removed from it. There is no better time to pray than on the sixth day.'[23]

22   *Mountains Surround It: Geography of Judea, Samaria and the City of Jerusalem*, 2003, p. 182.
23   *Koran Verses in the Eye of the Commentator*, 2000, p. 44.

> In the seventh century Islam began to evolve in the Arab peninsula. Its founder Muhammed, a merchant from the city of Mecca, called for the people of Mecca to relinquish paganism and believe in Allah, but they rejected his call.[24]

> In the Muslim empire culture and science thrived. Arab doctors performed complex surgery, recognized diseases and erected hospitals; Arab astronomers built an observatory and algebra was developed; the Arabs disseminated Indian numerals we use today . . . in the arts and in architecture the Arabs donated considerably.[25]

Israeli textbooks were found to describe Palestinian-Israeli, as well as other Muslim and Arab-Israeli minority communities in a respectful, detailed and impartial way, and to encourage students to learn more about them and their cultures.

> The differences between Arab and Jewish families are influenced by cultural differences that cause different customs and lifestyles of these populations.[26]

> Alongside those who deepen the national rift in Israel, governmental institutions and Jewish and Arab groups are making an effort to keep a respectful relationship, to ensure equality between citizens and to protect the stability of society and state.[27]

Civics and geography textbooks in particular emphasize the rights of Arab and Muslim minorities, and often relate to the minority rights promised in the Israeli Declaration of Independence.

> [Article 13 of the Israeli Declaration of Independence]: The State of Israel . . . will give complete social and political equality to all its citizens regardless of religion, race and sex; will ensure freedom of religion, conscience, language, education and culture; and will guard the holy places of all religions . . .

> a. Mark the expressions indicating that Arab citizens are also entitled to equal rights.
> b. What rights are given to a national minority in Israel?[28]

Finally, Israeli textbooks also include personal narratives, such as interviews, poems, stories or descriptions of everyday life related by members (real and fictional) belonging to different Arab and Muslim minorities, including Palestinian, Muslim, Druze, Christian, Bedouin, etc. This type of direct Arab-and Muslim-Israeli minority narrative is especially common in Arabic-language textbooks for (Jewish) Hebrew speakers, but can also be found in other textbooks, especially Hebrew literature and grammar, civics and geography.[29]

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24   *Travel through Time—Cities and Communities*, 2008, p. 30.
25   *Travel to the Past: From the Middle Ages until the Early Modern Period—History for Junior High School*, 1997, p. 14.
26   *Israel—Man and Space*, 2007, p. 30.
27   *Being Citizens in Israel in a Jewish and Democratic State*, 2016, p. 483.
28   *A Journey to Israeli Democracy*, 1994, p. 89.
29   See, for instance: *Step 1: Hebrew—Understanding, Expression and Grammar*, Vol. 2, 2006, p. 100; *To the Negev—*

Conclusions

The current report includes findings that are the product of a study of 123 Israeli textbooks approved and recommended by the Israeli Ministry of Education from 2000–2017 for grades 7–12. The study has examined these textbooks with a focus on instruction regarding Palestinians, the Israeli-Palestinian conflict and conflict resolution, and has found the following themes:

1. Israeli textbooks see peace as the ultimate goal, and depict it as highly desirable and achievable, while war is considered a negative event, though at times necessary;

2. The textbooks acknowledge a Palestinian presence in Israel before 1948, the development of a national Palestinian identity and different aspects of the Palestinian narrative, rationale and experiences (including Palestinian suffering);

3. Maps also recognize the physical presence of Palestinians in the area, including major Palestinian cities while marking Palestinian Authority territories, including the "Green Line" and at times detailing the A, B and C territories described in the Oslo Accords;

4. Israeli textbooks do not include messages of incitement or stereotypes against Palestinians;

5. In some cases, Israeli textbooks include themes such as ethnocentrism and a perception of Israel and Jews as the main victims of war and violence, who only react to Arab or Palestinian hostility. However, it could be argued that such trends of self-justification are natural for government-approved textbooks, especially for a society with a protracted conflict.

6. Israeli textbooks explain the complexities and political disagreements within Israeli society but maintain a clear message of tolerance and coexistence with regard to Arab and Muslim minorities, and toward Palestinian-Israeli citizens in particular. Textbooks include respectful representation of Arab and Muslim culture and heritage, including direct and personal narratives of Arab and Muslim minorities in Israel.

Chapters in Geography of the South of Israel, 2000, p. 140; *The Negev: Man and the Environment through the Ages*, 2004, p. 235; *A Good Word 1: Comprehension, Expression and Grammar*, 2008, p. 119.

Appendix:

The IMPACT-se Standards for Textbooks Analysis (based on UN and UNESCO recommendations)

The following is an updated condensed version of the IMPACT-se, UNESCO-derived standards for peace and tolerance in school education:[30]

1. **RESPECT:** The curriculum should promote tolerance, understanding and respect toward the "Other," his or her culture, achievements, values and way of life.[31]

2. **INDIVIDUAL OTHER:** The curriculum should foster personal attachment toward the "Other" as an individual, his or her desire to be familiar, loved and appreciated.[32]

3. **NO HATE:** The curriculum should be free of wording, imagery and ideologies likely to create prejudices, misconceptions, stereotypes, misunderstandings, mistrust, racial hatred, religious bigotry and national hatred, as well as any other form of hatred or contempt for other groups or peoples.[33]

4. **PEACE-MAKING:** The curriculum should develop capabilities for non-violent conflict resolution and promote peace.[34]

5. **UNBIASED INFORMATION:** Educational materials (textbooks, workbooks, teachers' guides, maps, illustrations, aids) should be up-to-date, accurate, complete, balanced and unprejudiced, and use equal standards to promote mutual knowledge and understanding between different peoples.[35]

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30   The methodology was initiated by Yohanan Manor. This is an updated version of the standards prepared by Eldad J. Pardo, Jean-Claude Nidam and Shimon Shetreet (May 2014). http://www.impact-se.org/methodology/

31   As defined in the Declaration of Principles on Tolerance Proclaimed and signed by Member States of UNESCO on November 16, 1995, Articles 1, 4.2. See also the UN Declaration on the Promotion among Youth of the Ideals of Peace, Mutual Respect and Understanding Between Peoples (1965), Principles I, III. Universal Declaration of Human Rights (1948): Education shall be directed to the full development of human personality and to the strengthening of respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms. It shall promote understanding, tolerance and friendship among all nations, racial and religious groups and shall further the activities of the United Nations for the maintenance of peace.

32   The goal of education for peace is the development of universally recognized values in an individual, regardless of different socio-cultural contexts. See Ibid., Article 6. See also, on exchanges between youth, the UN Declaration on the Promotion among Youth of the Ideals of Peace, Mutual Respect and Understanding between Peoples (1965), Principles IV, V.

33   Based on Ibid., Articles III.6, IV.7 and VII.39; and on the Integrated Framework for Action on Education for Peace, Human Rights and Democracy, approved by the General Conference of UNESCO at its twenty-eighth session, Paris, November 1995, Article 18.2.

34   Based on the Integrated Framework for Action on Education for Peace, Human Rights and Democracy, approved by the General Conference of UNESCO at its twenty-eighth session, Paris, November 1995, Article 9; and on the Declaration of Principles on Tolerance proclaimed and signed by member states of UNESCO on November 16, 1995, Article 5.

35   Based on UNESCO recommendation concerning education for international understanding, cooperation and peace and education relating to human rights and fundamental freedoms, adopted by the General Conference at its eighteenth session, Paris, November 19, 1974, Article V.14.

6. **GENDER:** The curriculum should foster equality and mutual respect between women and men. It should refrain from stereotyped gender roles.[36]

7. **SOUND PROSPERITY and COOPERATION:** The curriculum should educate for sound and sustainable economic conduct and preservation of the environment for future generations. It should encourage regional and local cooperation to that effect.[37]

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36 The preamble to the Declaration of Principles on Tolerance proclaimed and signed by member states of UNESCO on November 16, 1995, notes the Convention on the Elimination of Any Form of Discrimination against Women and emphasizes respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms for all, without distinction as to gender.

37 Based on UNESCO recommendation concerning education for international understanding, cooperation and peace and education relating to human rights and fundamental freedoms, adopted by the General Conference at its eighteenth session, Paris, November 19, 1974, Articles III.6, and IV.7. On the imperative for developing "systematic and rational tolerance teaching methods that will address the cultural, social, economic, political and religious sources of intolerance," see the Declaration of Principles on Tolerance proclaimed and signed by member states of UNESCO on November 16, 1995, Article 4.2. On education for international cooperation, see also the UN Declaration on the Promotion among Youth of the Ideals of Peace, Mutual Respect and Understanding between Peoples (1965), Principle II.

List of Textbooks Quoted

The IMPACT-se Israel monitoring project includes 123 school textbooks.
Following are the textbooks quoted in the current update:

1870–1970 The Era of Dread and Hope: History Chapters for High School, 2001.

A Good Word 1: Comprehension, Expression and Grammar, 2008.

A Journey to Israeli Democracy, 1994.

*A Journey to the Past: Selected Subjects in History. The Nineteenth Century * The Twentieth Century*, 2007.

Being Citizens in Israel in a Jewish and Democratic State, 2016.

Geography of the Middle East: Changes on the Verge of the Twenty-first Century, 2008.

Hebrew—Comprehension, Language and Grammar, 2007.

History of Today, the Twenty-first Century—on the Verge of Tomorrow, 1999.

Israel—Man and Space, 2007.

Israel in the Twenty-first Century, 2009.

Israel, Nationality—Building a State in the Middle East, 2009.

Koran Verses in the Eye of the Commentator, 2000.

Man and Environment in the Global Age: Geography and Environmental Development, 2013.

Mountains Surround It: Geography of Judea, Samaria and the City of Jerusalem, 2003.

Revolution and Change between Two World Wars 1920–1939, 2005.

Step 1: Hebrew—Understanding, Expression and Grammar, Vol. 2, 2006.

The Main Mountain: Judea, Samaria, the Plain and the Jordan Valley, 2002.

The Negev: Man and the Environment through the Ages, 2004.

The Way of Words, Book 2, 2007.

Time Travel: Building a State in the Middle East, 2009.

To the Negev—Chapters in Geography of the South of Israel, 2000.

Travel through Time—Cities and Communities, 2008.

Travel to the Past: From the Middle Ages until the Early Modern Period—History for Junior High School, 1997.

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