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EU to probe Palestinian textbooks for incitement to hatred, violence

Foreign policy chief Federica Mogherini confirms move following study that found new PA curriculum to be more radical than in the past, 'abusing' European taxpayer money

By Michael Bachner

The Times of Israel (15.05.2019) - <http://bit.ly/2JwtViB> - The European Union will conduct an examination of new Palestinian school textbooks following a study that found them to be more radical than in the past and containing incitement and rejection of peace with Israel.

The EU's foreign policy chief, Federica Mogherini, confirmed the planned investigation in a statement on the EU website, the Institute for Monitoring Peace and Cultural Tolerance in School Education, or IMPACT-se, said Wednesday.

The development comes after the European Parliament in April 2018 passed legislation geared to prevent hateful content in Palestinian textbooks. In October the parliament's budgetary committee recommended freezing more than \$17 million in aid to the Palestinian Authority over incitement against Israel in its textbooks.

"It can be confirmed that an academic study on Palestinian school textbooks is planned. Necessary funds have been reserved in the 2019 budget," Mogherini said in response to a parliamentary question by Croatian MEP Marijana Petir.

She said the study would be carried out by an "independent and internationally recognized research institute" with the aim of "identifying possible incitement to hatred and violence and any possible lack of compliance with UNESCO standards of peace and tolerance in education."

Work has already started on the study, for which terms of reference were being prepared, Mogherini added.

"Incitement to violence is fundamentally incompatible with advancing a peaceful two-state solution and is greatly exacerbating mistrust between the communities," she said.

The NGO IMPACT-se last month published a 70-page document with what it said were select examples of incitement in new Palestinian textbooks.

The curriculum for 2018-2019 "deliberately omits any discussion of peace education or reference to any Jewish presence in Palestine before 1948," the document says.

"Most troubling, there is a systematic insertion of violence, martyrdom and jihad across all grades and subjects in a more extensive and sophisticated manner, embracing a full spectrum of extreme nationalist ideas and Islamist ideologies that extend even into the teaching of science and mathematics," it adds.

Among the examples is an image of a girl smiling at "heretics" being burned, a poem calling to "annihilate the remnants of the foreigners" after "eliminating the usurper," and the description of Jews as corrupt, liars, sexual harassers and "enemies of Islam" who killed Prophet Muhammad.

It calls for the end of the State of Israel and establishing a Palestinian state in all of what is today Israel, the West Bank and Gaza, and says the takeover will be violent. It denies any Jewish connection with the land or with holy sites in Jerusalem and elsewhere.

The EU hands the PA 360 million euros (\$404 million) per year, with most earmarked for its education ministry. In addition, the European body donates \$178 million to UNRWA, the UN agency for Palestinian refugees and their descendants, much of which goes to its schools that teach the PA curriculum.

IMPACT-se CEO Marcus Sheff said in a statement Wednesday that Palestinians have been for years "abusing" EU taxpayer money and goodwill.

"There is no excuse nor is there any justification. The PA takes hundreds of millions of euros and in return, teaches violence, hate and the sacrificing of young lives," he said. "We hope this study will help put an end to the abuse and finally allow young Palestinians to receive meaningful peace education."

Belgium suspends funds for two Palestinian schools over name change honoring terrorist

By Shlomo Papirblat

Haaretz (10.10.2017) - <http://bit.ly/2kKdS5g> - The Belgian government is suspending funding for two school construction projects in the Palestinian territories after it emerged that a school it backed was later renamed after a woman it considers a terrorist.

Belgium said it backed a school in the south of Hebron only to find out in 2013 that local authorities changed its name to "Dalal Mughrabi Elementary School." Belgian Foreign Minister Didier Reynders said that Mughrabi was "a Palestinian terrorist" who led a 1978 attack against Israel which killed 38, including 13 children.

"Belgium will not allow itself to be associated with the names of terrorists in any way," a statement from Reynders' office said. Two projects totaling \$3.9 million have been put on hold.

Belgian officials stressed today that the school's renaming in the name of the terrorist Dalal was carried out without their knowledge, and the reaction came as soon as the matter became known in Brussels.

The Mission of Palestine to the EU, Belgium and Luxembourg was asked to respond to the incident, the mission told reporters that they preferred to wait at this stage for the response.

Palestinian Education Minister Sabri Saydam said in a statement he regretted the Belgian action and invited the Belgian Consul General "to meet and discuss the matter."

Mughrabi is considered by many Palestinians to be a national hero. In March 1978, she entered Israel from Lebanon by boat, heading a squad of militants. They murdered the American photographer Gail Rubin on the beach and hijacked a bus on the coastal road. The militants blew up the bus and shot at the passengers who tried to escape. In an exchange of fire with the police, Mughrabi and other members of the squad were killed.

Hamas executes three Palestinians in Gaza, says they collaborated with Israel

By Nidal al-Mughrabi

Reuters (06.04.2017) - <http://reut.rs/2nHMNf6> - Gaza's ruling Hamas movement executed three Palestinians on Thursday convicted of collaborating with Israel, hanging the men during a campaign to persuade any Israeli-recruited agents to come forward in return for more lenient punishment.

Hamas leaders and officials, along with the heads of Gaza clans and local security chiefs, watched the execution in the courtyard of the enclave's main police headquarters.

The Hamas-run Interior Ministry said the men, aged 32, 42 and 55, were convicted of treason and spying for hostile foreign parties and had provided information that helped Israel track and kill Palestinians, including leaders of militant factions.

Their trials were conducted by Hamas-run security courts in the past two years and they were put to death after all legal procedures were exhausted, the ministry said.

Since seizing control of Gaza from Palestinian President Mahmoud Abbas's Fatah party in 2007, Hamas-run courts have sentenced 106 people to death and executed 22 of them, Palestinian and international rights groups say.

New York-based Human Rights Watch condemned Thursday's hangings.

"Hamas authorities will never achieve true security or stability through firing squads or by the gallows, but rather through respect for international norms and the rule of law." Sarah Leah Whitson, executive director of the group's Middle East division, said in a statement.

Hamas issued a public ultimatum for "collaborators" to turn themselves in after the killing last month of Mazen Fuqaha, a senior leader of its armed wing, accusing Israel or its local agents of assassinating him.

Punishment would be softened for those who surrender and they would remain anonymous, Hamas said, holding out the prospect of protecting their families from the stigma attached in Gaza to cooperating with Israel.

Hamas, which has arrested an unknown number of suspects in the investigation of Fuqaha's death, has not said if anyone has taken up the offer.

Suggesting that Fuqaha was assassinated as a result of internal rivalries, Israeli Defence Minister Avigdor Lieberman said in public remarks that Hamas should look at its own people to find the killers. Hamas officials said Lieberman was attempting to obscure Israel's role in the death.

Over the years, Israel has established a network of contacts in the Palestinian territories, using a combination of pressure and sweeteners to entice Palestinians to divulge intelligence.

Palestinian and International Human Rights groups have repeatedly condemned death penalty, and urged Hamas and the Palestinian Authority to suspend it. Palestinian law says President Mahmoud Abbas, who has no actual control over Gaza, has the final word on whether executions can be carried out.
