**The Cultural Diversity in Israel**

**Israeli Laws and Practices and Restricting the Right to Cultural Diversity**

Education is vital to preserve the cultural heritage and knowledge of minorities within the states in terms of language, arts, and history. Education is reflected in the form of laws and policies for countries that preserve the process of diversity and cultural acknowledgement of school curricula through specific legal and constitutional materials and public policies. And although Israel is a signatory to a set of various international covenants that guarantee the right to education for all citizens without discrimination, such as the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, the Convention on the Rights of the Child and the convention to combat discrimination in education.[[1]](#footnote-1) But, the Israeli multiple laws such as the Compulsory Education Law includes articles stressing the need to teach the history of Israel, the Torah, the history of the Jewish people, and the Jewish heritage and traditions without looking at other cultures, in a clear distinction against addressing cultural diversity in education[[2]](#footnote-2), which is reflected in the government's policy in educational curricula and represents non-compliance with international treaties signed by Israel.

On the level of government policies, and due to the absence of a constitutional and legal framework binding the state to represent the intellectual heritage and knowledge of all segments of society in the educational curricula, the Israeli occupation government has included the racist national law in its educational curricula in secondary schools, forcing students to study in preparation for the matriculation exam known as “Tawjihi”. The law contains articles acknowledging that Israel is the nation state of the Jewish people and demanding the state to teach Jewish history, language, and arts while ignoring the cultures and history of the rest groups of society, including Arabs and Muslims.[[3]](#footnote-3)

This represents a clear discrimination against Arab and Muslim students within the educational system who believe in the necessity of establishing a national homeland for Palestine along with providing an appropriate representation of Arab and Islamic culture in school curricula. As this discrimination jeopardizes the peaceful coexistence among all groups of society and promotes further cultural domination of one group of society in educational curricula by ignoring the intellectual heritage of other groups.

In this context, the Israeli Ministry of Education is continuously and periodically adapting some religious and cultural texts of Arabs and Muslims as to fit their educational curricula and replacing them with other texts containing false information to distort the image of Arab and Islamic culture, especially the curriculum of history and religion. Among these measures is the deletion of the interpretation of some verses from the Qur’an related to Jewish culture while changing everything relevant to the history of Palestine and teaching students a completely different view of reality from Arab Palestinian history[[4]](#footnote-4), in order to serve the Israeli government's political goals related to the legitimization of occupation and settlements, and exclude everything contracting this context even at the expense of cultural diversity among students.

Among the academic subjects that the Israeli government has deleted is the first lesson of the history book of the ninth grade, unit 4 unit, page No. 53, which discusses the Palestinian issue, as well as the image of the Palestinian soldier and the Palestinian flag were also removed from the oral expression in the Arabic book of the third grade, page number 20. This in addition to deleting the fourth paragraph, containing Quranic verse encouraging jihad for the sake of God, from the Islamic Education textbook of the sixth basic grade page 22. Notably, the deletion process has targeted only whatever regarded Palestinian, Arab and Islamic.[[5]](#footnote-5)

In this context, the Israeli government is constantly changing the school curricula to include more Jewish studies in primary and secondary schools at the expense of other religions, jeopardizing religious diversity of Israeli society[[6]](#footnote-6). It is worth noting that the Israeli Ministry of Education requires the replacement of Arabic curriculum taught in Palestinian schools with Israeli ones in exchange for more financial support to continue reforms related to logistical materials of the educational process, which represents pressure on them to accept and expresses the attempts ensuring the prevalence of a certain culture over others in society. This may be considered attempts to obscure the cultural identities of the components of society[[7]](#footnote-7), confirming that the Israeli Ministry of Education is adopting a national religious approach for developing and modifying the curricula instead of the consensual approach.

  While educational institutions teaching Palestinian educational curricula are systematically harassed and persecuted by the occupying Israeli government as they practice extremism and promote terrorism with their own school subjects, which leads to fueling international institutions against them with the claim of extremism and racial discrimination in their curricula. Here, the Israeli government uses various tools, such as its media and think tanks[[8]](#footnote-8) that work to improve the image of Israeli educational curricula, deny its racial discrimination, exclude other cultures and depict them as wholly inclusive curricula that contain all cultures and does not seek to reinforce the dominance of a certain cultural party over educational curricula,[[9]](#footnote-9) contrary to the truth according to the previous review of Israeli policies, practices and law and in accordance with the upcoming educational materials, texts and vocabulary within Israeli curricula that enhance the Jewish cultural polarization, at the expense of the rest of the community.[[10]](#footnote-10)

**The Absence of Cultural Diversity within the Israeli Curriculum**

To assess the Israeli educational system with regard to accepting the society’s cultural diversity in school curricula and textbooks, a set of educational materials have been analyzed; including history, geography, civic education, Religious studies (Judaism), Hebrew language studies and literature dealing with dominant issues and messages directed towards Muslims, Arabs and Palestinian as an essential component of the cultural components of Israeli society by using content analysis tools.

Among the texts highlighted are the number of images used in mathematics and geographical sciences books, which shows a person holding the Torah or performs prayers as logos within such textbooks, in addition to the frequent use of religious examples in history and literature textbooks[[11]](#footnote-11). This trend represents the use of the impressionistic pattern to legitimize Jewish religious discourse in all social and natural sciences through a set of images and emotional impressions that do not need coherent cognitive content insofar as it enhances the religious identity of Israeli students at the expense of other students with different cultural backgrounds. This greatly indicate the growing hatred and grudges of other different cultures and is considered a basic key characteristic of Israeli[[12]](#footnote-12) school curricula. It is noteworthy that this approach is continuously followed by the Israeli curricula. As the third part of the book “Awtar Tahek” that teaches the Hebrew language for the first grade, shows in one of its pages a set of pictures for children dressed in religious clothes.[[13]](#footnote-13)

In this context, the school curricula contain words and vocabulary aimed at justifying the Israeli occupation government policies against the marginalized groups of Palestinian society. It also seeks to obliterate the society’s different cultural identities, such as the Jewish vocabulary and phrases reading “Jews are the core of development in Palestine”, “Palestine and the Golan are Jewish territories”, “the neighboring countries are historically and religiously alien”, and “Arabs are nomads invaded Palestine[[14]](#footnote-14)”. Within the same framework, the Israeli curricula describe Arab Muslims as thieves in nature[[15]](#footnote-15), and all these hatred expressions promotes racism against other non-Israeli groups.

In exchange for focusing on the Hebrew culture in the Israeli curriculum, other cultures, such as Arabic language, and Arabian history and arts[[16]](#footnote-16), are ignored except from constant deformation, especially the texts on Islamic history.[[17]](#footnote-17)The Israeli textbook of geography uses strategies of racial visual representation in order to portray the Palestinians with very bad qualities, besides resenting hate speeches that make Jewish children feel superior than others (the theory of racial superiority), thus fueling the growing spirit of hatred and widening the gap among different groups in society.[[18]](#footnote-18)

In the context of the non-representation of Arab and Islamic culture in Israeli curricula, it is important to note that these curricula do not contain the names of Arab countries and their geographical locations, and do not include any Arab writers or biographies of Arab personalities within the cultural literature that is being taught. These textbooks also ignore the undeniable role of Arabs in developing sciences, especially mathematics and chemistry; moreover, the dates of the various violations committed by the Israeli government against the Palestinian people are being ignored and all their fundamental rights including the right to self-determination are being denied and not acknowledged. All this, indeed, have severe consequences on the cultural and social diversity in society and promotes the dominance of a given culture over the remaining ones.[[19]](#footnote-19)

**The Absence of Mechanisms to Review Educational Curricula Regarding Cultural Diversity in Israel**

One of the primary tasks of the Israeli Ministry of Education is to review educational books and various educational contents, but these revision are conducted, however, in a way that promotes the Israeli-Jewish cultural dominance over educational curricula in exchange for excluding the cultural heritage of other identities in society such as Arabs and Muslims, thus deleting the interpretation of verses from the Qur’an and verses from Palestinian national poetry, while ignoring the history of Arabs, the classical and Islamic Arabic poetry, and the contributions of Arab and Muslim scholars to various sciences, and even these curricula are replaced to serve the policies of the Israeli government and promote hatred towards other marginalized groups of society.[[20]](#footnote-20)

While the Official Education Law in Israel gives parents the right to interfere in setting 25% of the supplementary education curriculum by submitting an application to the school principal to amend the curriculum, with a letter, attached to the application, explaining the school subjects to be replaced from the complementary curriculum with a list of study materials, its special content and the budget required to implement it. The principal, for his part, study and deliberate the proposal with the staff of the teachers and the school inspector, and writes up a deliberation summary to the Minister of Education within 14 days after submitting a proposal expressing his opinion and situation, and summarize the discussion held with the teachers and the school inspector to the minister for approval through the Official Education Inspector, who examines the proposal. If the proposal found appropriate and in line with the educational level and basic educational policies, it shall be applied. Although this right is considered a very good mechanism for representing the various cultural groups in society in developing educational curricula[[21]](#footnote-21), this right is restricted by some articles of the educational law that carry within it texts stressing the inviolability of Jewish culture and history, and therefore social groups such as Arabs and Muslims cannot contribute to the process of developing study materials reflecting their intellectual heritage, therefore this mechanism is proven ineffective.

**Conclusion & Recommendations**

Finally, it can be said that the Israeli government law and policies and the academic content of some educational materials of the Israeli curriculum promote the lack of cultural diversity for all groups of society. Some educational laws emphasizes the inviolability of the Jewish state, its identity and history, which affects the Arabic and Islamic culture. While on the level of governmental policies, constant attempts are being conducted to emphasize the identity of the Jewish state, whether by incorporating the racist national law into the curricula of secondary schools, or removing some cultural content, whether historical or religious, from the Educational curriculum and replace it with other one, serving the political goals of the Israeli government at the expense of the cultural and intellectual diversity of other marginalized groups within society. Ignoring the Arabic and Islamic intellectual heritage of language, history, and art within the Israeli school curricula, compared with the dominance of Jewish thought, history and culture, jeopardizes the cultural diversity of Israeli society, in addition to the growing spirit of hatred resulting from some of the texts used in educational curricula and the spread of some Jewish religious texts In all school materials, using impressionist discourse to create a racist spirit for the culture of other non-Jewish societal groups; therefore, **Egypt Peace Foundation for Development and Human Rights recommends the following:**

* The Israeli occupation authorities should amend the Israeli Education Law to include the removal of any materials that distinguish Jewish cultural heritage, including language, history, religion, and art, over any other cultures of Israeli society.
* The necessity of introducing a set of articles in the Education Act to ensure representation of marginalized groups within the school curricula to reflect the preservation of their rights in curricula that address their intellectual heritage of history, art and language.
* The need to adopt and announce a written policy to achieve equality and prohibit discrimination on the basis of religion, race, ethnicity or gender in school curricula.
* The necessity of forming a committee to review all educational materials and remove various materials that express racial discrimination and offense toward Arabs and Muslims, while adding study materials that guarantee cultural representation appropriate for Arabs and Muslims, provided that the committee includes a multicultural staff that reflects all aspects of society.
* The necessity of withdrawing the inclusion of the racist national law in educational curricula in secondary schools, while stopping practices that represent a constraint on teaching Palestinian curricula.
* The necessity of encouraging Arab and Muslim parents to interfere in setting 25% of the complementary education curriculum in accordance with the Israeli Education Law.

1. مواطنون من الدرجة الثانية: التمييز ضد أطفال العرب الفلسطينيين في مدارس إسرائيل “، مراقبة حقوق الإنسان ، <http://bit.ly/37dCdTT> [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. الفكر الصهيوني المعاصر في المناهج المدرسية الإسرائيلية، مركز رؤية للتنمية السياسية، ديسمبر 2016 <http://bit.ly/2H7kAKL> [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
3. إسرائيل تدرج قانون القومية العنصري في المنهاج الدراسي ، مركز العودة الفلسطيني ، أغسطس 2019 ، <http://bit.ly/2ODaaXm> [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
4. المناهج التعليمية الإسرائيلية تغزو مدارس القدس ، ساسة بوست، 2016 ، <http://bit.ly/2vXPAKR> [↑](#footnote-ref-4)
5. التعليم في القدس تحديات وثبات ، الجزيرة مباشر مصر 2016 ، <http://bit.ly/2vkdPCE> [↑](#footnote-ref-5)
6. סקר: רוב ההורים בחינוך הממלכתי אינם חוששים מהדתה ، <http://bit.ly/2vmGg2P> 2017 يمثل هذا رفض لمجموعة من الأشخاص على قرار وزارة التربية والتعليم الإسرائيلية بهذا التوقيت [↑](#footnote-ref-6)
7. **هجمة أخرى على المنهاج الفلسطيني في القدس، البناء،** [**http://bit.ly/2S9O6WG**](http://bit.ly/2S9O6WG) [↑](#footnote-ref-7)
8. إسرائيل تحرض الاتحاد الأوروبي ضد المناهج الدراسية الفلسطينية، العربي الجديد، 2019، <http://bit.ly/3799qQb> يمثل هذا الخبر مثال واضح لتحريض الصحف الإسرائيلية على المناهج الدراسية الفلسطينية متمثل في صحيفة "إسرائيل اليوم بتحريض الاتحاد الأوروبي على التحقيق في واقع تمييز بالمناهج الفلسطينية [↑](#footnote-ref-8)
9. المقصود هنا بهذا الطرف هي الحكومة الإسرائيلية والطرف اليهودي في مقابل ثقافات العرب والمسلمين [↑](#footnote-ref-9)
10. Peace and conflict in Israeli state-approved textbooks: 2000-2018 . Institute for Monitoring Peace and Cultural Tolerance in School Education . 2020 <http://bit.ly/39lJiDc>

    هذه دراسة لمعهد مراقبة السلام والتسامح الثقافي في التعليم المدرسي المتخصص في دراسة المناهج التعليمية والثقافية وتماشيها مع التنوع الإيديولوجي وانعكاس قيم التسام بها بالمجتمع، تناولت الدراسة المناهج التعليمية في إسرائيل وحاولت تحسين صورتها بأنها تسعي لتعزيز الديمقراطية و تعكس التمثيل الثقافي للمجتمع ما إلي ذلك، وهو معهد إسرائيلي ، وهي مثال لما تم ذكره بمتن الدراسة. [↑](#footnote-ref-10)
11. جوني منصور ، **التديُّن في مناهج وكتب التعليم في إسرائيل، المركز الفلسطيني للأبحاث والدراسات الاستراتيجية** ، 2018 ،هذه الأمثلة موجودة بشكل دوري خلال الدراسة [↑](#footnote-ref-11)
12. التنظيف الافتراضي:"غسيل المعلومات"..محاولة لتفسير الكراهية الإلكترونية عربيًّا ، مركز المستقبل للدراسات السياسية والاقتصادية ،2016

    <http://bit.ly/2RPY7YP> تم استخدام النمط الانطباعي طبقًا لهذا المقال لتحليل النصوص الدينية المختلفة بالمناهج الدراسية الإسرائيلية مع استخدام أداة تحليل المحتوى [↑](#footnote-ref-12)
13. مرجع سابق ذكره [↑](#footnote-ref-13)
14. كيف تحولت المناهج الإسرائيلية إلى "المحضن" الأبرز لتغذية الحقد والعنصرية، عدنان أبو عمر ، <http://bit.ly/39hM2BJ> [↑](#footnote-ref-14)
15. صورة العرب والمسلمين في مدارس إسرائيل: تحليل المناهج الدراسية في التعليم العام ، العبكيات ، 2011، ص 70 <http://bit.ly/3bpmCny> [↑](#footnote-ref-15)
16. حاضرتان غائبتان الحرم الجامعي الإسرائيلي وتعامله مع اللغة والثقافة العربية صورة الوضع ، مؤسسة سيكوي للدراسات ، <http://bit.ly/2H7194R> [↑](#footnote-ref-16)
17. عبد الكريم القالي ، البيان ، التمـييز العنصري في مناهج التعليم الصهيونية ، 2011 <http://bit.ly/31ElXKo> [↑](#footnote-ref-17)
18. فلسطين في الكتب المدرسية في إسرائيل ، الجزيرة ، 2013 <http://bit.ly/2OCWZ9a> [↑](#footnote-ref-18)
19. تمثيل وحضور المجتمع العربي في المواد التعليمية الإسرائيلية ، مركز سكوتش ، 2019 ، <http://bit.ly/37dXfBP> [↑](#footnote-ref-19)
20. مناهج التعليم العربي في إسرائيل دراسات نقدية في مناهج اللغة العربية والتاريخ والجغرافيا والمدنيات ، المنهج التربوي العربي ، 2014 ص 36 و 59 [↑](#footnote-ref-20)
21. حول قانون القومية والمدارس ولجان الأولياء ، عرب 48 ، 2018 ، <http://bit.ly/31GwvZm> [↑](#footnote-ref-21)