

Report says UK publisher altered school textbooks in favor of Israeli regime

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London, April 2 (RHC)-- A group of academics have complained that British educational publisher Pearson has altered the content of two school textbooks in favor of the occupying regime of Israel and, as a result, failed to offer pupils a balanced view of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict.

The academics said in a report that the London-based publisher had made hundreds of changes to two GCSE textbooks used by UK high schools and distorted the historical record related to the conflict between Israel and Palestinians in the occupied territories.

The books, titled *Conflict in the Middle East* and *The Middle East: Conflict, Crisis and Change*, both by author Hilary Brash, are read by thousands of GCSE and International GCSE students annually.

The report, written by Professors John Chalcraft and James Dickins, Middle East specialists and members of the British Committee for the Universities of Palestine (BRICUP), found hundreds of changes to the textbooks, averaging three changes per page, that included alterations to text, timelines, maps and photographs, as well as to sample student essays and questions.

Highlighting multiple changes to the books, the report said the alterations had been made after an intervention by the Board of Deputies of British Jews working together with UK Lawyers for Israel (UKLFI).

The eight-page report said that many references to Jewish and Israeli violence or aggression had been removed or softened by Pearson, while references to Arab and Palestinian violence had been systematically added or intensified.

The Deir Yassin massacre, in which Israeli forces killed at least 107 Palestinian civilians, was described in the original version of the International GCSE textbook as "one of the worst atrocities of the [1948] war," while Pearson replaced the word "atrocities" with "acts" in the revised edition.

In another example the original version said: "International law states that a country cannot annex or indefinitely occupy territory gained by force," while the revised version replaced this with "Some argue that international law states that a country cannot annex or indefinitely occupy territory gained by force."

Professor Chalcraft, one of the authors of the report, said: "Overwhelmingly, the changes which have been made to these texts add or substitute statements, information and interpretations which favor an Israeli narrative, and remove or replace those that support Palestinian narratives." Chalcraft stressed that "the overall effect is to make these books dangerously misleading."

Khaled Fahmy, professor of Arabic Studies, King's College Cambridge, said, "While it is laudable that Middle Eastern history books are regularly revised and updated, the manner in which these two school textbooks have been revised is shocking and unacceptable."

"School textbooks should be revised based on the advice and expertise of academics and scholars, not by reviewers selected by an organization of lawyers whose rationale is advocating for" an illegal entity, he added.

The report concluded that "school children should not be supplied with propaganda under the guise of education," and called for their immediate withdrawal.

Moreover, the executive of the National Education Union (NEU) — the UK's main teaching union — expressed concern about the findings outlined in the report as well as the editorial process which led to the changes.

The NEU said it would be contacting Pearson for clarification. "Our core editorial principle is to support the teaching of this important period in Middle East history in a fair, neutral and balanced way," Pearson said in a statement after pausing distribution of the two textbooks. "We stand by our texts but had already taken the decision to pause further distribution while we discuss further with stakeholders," it added.

Israel was created in 1948 after a Western-backed military seizure of vast expanses of Arab territories. In 1967, it occupied the entire West Bank, including East al-Quds, following full-frontal military operations. Israel later annexed the territories.

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