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ECONOMIC, SOCIAL AND CULTURAL RIGHTS

SPECIFIC HUMAN RIGHTS ISSUES

Written statement* submitted by the Association for World Education,
a non-governmental organization on the Roster

The Secretary-General has received the following written statement which is circulated in accordance with Economic and Social Council resolution 1996/31.

[13 July 2004]

* This written statement is issued, unedited, in the language(s) received from the submitting non-governmental organisation (s).

**Jihad & Martyrdom as taught in Egyptian
primary/preparatory/secondary school text books**

1. Sub-Commission Resolution 2003/5: United Nations Decade for Human Rights Education, 1995-2004, under “§2. *Recommends* that the human rights treaty bodies, when examining reports of State parties, devote attention specifically to human rights education.” This is a crucial point.
2. The Center for Monitoring the Impact of Peace (CIMP) has recently published an important Report: Jews and Christians, War and Peace in Egyptian School Textbooks (March 2004 172 pp). (Copies are available for members and delegates.) Since 2000, CIMP has published 8 studies on school text books used in Israel, Palestinian Authority, Syria, Saudi Arabia. (www.edume.org)
3. “This report by the Center for Monitoring the Impact of Peace (CMIP) surveys 103 Egyptian textbooks for use in primary, preparatory and secondary state schools and 16 textbooks for use in preparatory and secondary schools within the religious Azharite school system. The majority of the books were published in 2002 and the others – between the years 1999-2001. The books have been carefully scrutinized in accordance with specific criteria set by UNESCO and CMIP.” (p. 5)
4. We have focused here on one aspect of this Report, providing verbatim extracts from ch. 11: “Jihad and Martyrdom” (pp.146-56) with quotation marks before and at the end of para. 5 below.

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“5. Chapter Eleven: Jihad and Martyrdom

Jihad

The sometimes elusive concept of jihad is interpreted in the Egyptian school curriculum almost exclusively as a military endeavor. In religious terms, it is war against God's enemies, i.e., the infidels. In secular terms, it is war against the homeland's enemies and a means to strengthening the Muslim states in the world. In both cases, jihad is encouraged, and those who refrain from participating in it are denounced.

The Muslims' duty to fight the infidels vigorously

[One] of the rules derived by the [Muslim religious] scholars from these [Qur'anic] verses is the following:

1. Obligation to fight the infidels with utmost vigor and power until they become weak, their state disappears and they submit to the rule of the law of Islam. – Commentary on the Surahs of Muhammad, Al-Fath, Al-Hujurat and Qaf, Grade 11 (2002, pp. 312) p 24 [al-Azhar]

This noble [Qur'anic] Surah [Surat Muhammad]... deals with questions of which the most important are as follows:

- Encouraging the faithful to perform jihad in God's cause, to behead the infidels, take them prisoner, break their power, and make their souls humble - all that in a style which contains the highest examples of urging to fight. You see that in His words: "When you meet the unbelievers in the battlefield strike off their heads and, when you have laid them

low, bind your captives firmly. Then grant them their freedom or take a ransom from them, until war shall lay down its burdens."

– Commentary on the Surahs of Muhammad, Al-Fath, Al-Hujurat and Qaf, Grade 11 (2002) p. 9 [al-Azhar]

When you meet them in order to fight [them], do not be seized by compassion [towards them] but strike the[ir] necks powerfully.... Striking the neck means fighting, because killing a person is often done by striking off his head. Thus, it has become an expression for killing even if the fighter strikes him elsewhere. This expression contains a harshness and emphasis that are not found in the word "kill", because it describes killing in the ugliest manner, i.e., cutting the neck and making the organ – the head of the body – fly off [the body].

– Commentary on the Surahs of Muhammad, Al-Fath, Al-Hujurat and Qaf, Grade 11 (2000) pp. 19-20 [al-Azhar]

The rules of jihad in this context

Jihad is a religious duty of every individual at a time of general call to arms, and a religious duty of a sufficient number [of Muslims] in other times. Jihad is a firm religious duty and anyone [i.e., any Muslim] who repudiates it should be considered an unbeliever. Its being a religious duty is proven by the Book [i.e., the Qur'an], the Prophetic Tradition [Sunnah] and the [Muslim] nation's consensus. As for the Book, there are His words: "Fight those who do not believe in God, neither in the Last Day" and the rest of the verses regarding the command to fight the infidels. [As for] the Sunnah, [there are] the Prophet's words: "I have been ordered to fight the people until they say that there is no god except God...."

– Selections for the Explanation of [the Book of] "Selection", Grade 11, (2002, pp. 493) p. 329 [al-Azhar]

"[Question:]

What are the rules of jihad? What is the proof [of that]? When does it become a personal religious duty? When is it a collective religious duty? Give the evidence for what you say.

– Selections for the Explanation of [the Book of] "Selection", Grade 11, (2002) p. 483 [al-Azhar]

Anyone who fights so that God's word would be the highest one is [fighting] in God's cause.

– Selected Prophetic Sayings [Ahadith], Grade 10, (2002, pp.108) p. 82 [al-Azhar]

Jihad's various attributes

Jihad is a duty.

– Our Beautiful Language: Grammar and Grammatical exercises, Grade 8, Part 1, (2002, pp.61) p. 7 [State]

Jihad is honor. Inability to perform it is a cause for grief.

– Islamic Education, Grade 10, (2002, pp. 111) p. 69 [State]

The best means of profit is Jihad, because it combines the attainment of profit, the strengthening of religion and the vanquishing of God's enemy.

– Selections for the Explanation of [the Book of] "Selection", Grade 9, (2002, pp. 361) p. 297 [al-Azhar]

Jihad is one of Heaven's gates. Whoever desists from it willingly is humiliated by God...
– Arabic Literature: Literature, Texts, Eloquence, Grade 9, (2002, pp. 201) p. 144 [State]

Emphasizing the importance of jihad

A day in a fighting position in God's cause is better than this world and whatever is in it.
– Selected Prophetic Sayings [Ahadith], Grade 10, (2002, pp. 108) p. 85 [al-Azhar]

The importance of jihad is explicitly taught to students of the eighth grade:

The essence of the focus in this curriculum is helping the students to deepen their Islamic perception and their understanding of the matters of religion, Islamic values and social systems, as well as emphasizing the belief in the divine mystery and the importance of jihad in God's cause.

– Introduction, Islamic Religious Education, Grade 8, Part 2, (2002, pp. 61; pages not numbered) [State]

Jihad in God's cause is a religious duty, and staying behind is disobedience [of God], which necessitates penitence.

– Islamic Education, Grade 11, (2002, pp. 120) p. 47 [State]

Staying behind in the jihad in God's cause is disobedience, which necessitates penitence.

– Islamic Education, Grade 11, (2002) p. 48 [State]

The jihad fighters get the fruit of their jihad.

– Grammatical Exercises, Grade 9, (2002, pp. 148) p. 110 [State]

Jihad in the Palestinian context

The ongoing violence in the Holy Land is termed jihad. Also, Jerusalem must be liberated by jihad.

The Palestinian people still fight a jihad in the cause of attaining the rest of its rights, establishing its state on its land and making noble Jerusalem its capital.

– Social Studies: Geography of the Arab Homeland and Milestones of Islamic History, Grade 7, Part 1, (2002, pp. 111) p. 24 [State]

Here I am! O Jerusalem of peace. Welcome the jihad fighters who will respond to the call for your rescue. Let eternal damnation be upon those who do not hurry to jihad!

– Our Beautiful Language: Reading and Texts, Grade 7, Part 1, (2002, pp. 62) p. 30 [State]

Martyrdom

...The books define the martyr, talk of his high status in God's eyes and of his reward in Heaven, provide the students with examples of heroic martyrdom, both in Islamic and modern history, and feature expressions of readiness for martyrdom.

The martyr's reward

The Messenger of God said: "A martyr is given six rewards: At the first drop of his blood all his sins are forgiven, he is shown his place in Paradise, he is made to marry the virgins of Paradise [Hur al-ayn], he is reassured regarding the great fear [of the Last Judgment] and regarding the grave torment [by interrogating angels, according to Muslim belief], and he is adorned with the decoration of belief."

– Commentary on the Surahs of Muhammad, Al-Fath, Al-Hujurat and Qaf, Grade 11, (2002) p. 28 [al-Azhar]

Expressions of readiness for becoming a martyr

The martyr died repeating ... [the phrase]: "Praise to God, for I have done my duty."

– Arabic Language: Read and Discuss, Grade 5, Part 1, (2002, pp. 67) p. 58 [State]

Making the students ready for martyrdom is an explicit goal of one of the lessons:

What do we learn in this lesson?

- That I [should] fight in God's cause until I attain one of the two best things: martyrdom or victory."

– Islamic Religious Education, Grade 7, Part 2, (2002, pp. 60) p. 53 [State]

And a more vivid description of readiness for martyrdom is given in a poem intended for fifth grade students.

The Hymn of My Country

O my country, my country, Feel secure and comfortable

I will let you drink my blood in times of thirst.

– Islamic Religious Education, Grade 5, Part 1 (2002) p. 41 [State]"

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6. Egypt's status within the Arab world is unique. It has a well-established educated elite, close ties with Western countries, and has a significant role within UNESCO that has placed it in an advantageous position to promote education for peace and tolerance, and the recognition of the 'Other.' These findings, therefore, are a great disappointment. In the various areas surveyed the textbooks have failed to meet the standard that could be anticipated from a country in this special position of influence. They do not conform to the specific criteria set by UNESCO.

7. School teaching on 'Jihad and Martyrdom' – and many attitudes to the 'Other', whether about 'Jews' or 'Christians' – to be found in these State and Al-Azhar school textbooks is in total contradiction with UN standards and the International Bill of Human Rights, to which Egypt is a Party. Sub-Commission resolution 2003/5 *Encourages* Governments ... and NGOs: "to explore further the potential support and contribution to human rights education of all relevant partners."

8. On this last year of the United Nations Decade for Human Rights Education (1995-2004), the Association for World Education calls on this Sub-Commission, and all UN bodies, to act firmly.
