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COMMISSION ON HUMAN RIGHTS
Sub-Commission on the Promotion
and Protection of Human Rights
Fifty-seventh session
Item 2 and 6 (c) of the provisional agenda

**QUESTION OF THE VIOLATION OF HUMAN RIGHTS AND FUNDAMENTAL
FREEDOMS, INCLUDING POLICIES OF RACIAL DISCRIMINATION AND
SEGREGATION, IN ALL COUNTRIES, WITH PARTICULAR REFERENCE TO
COLONIAL AND OTHER DEPENDENT COUNTRIES AND TERRITORIES:
REPORT OF THE SUB-COMMISSION UNDER COMMISSION ON HUMAN
RIGHTS RESOLUTION 8 (XXIII)**

**SPECIFIC HUMAN RIGHTS ISSUES: NEW PRIORITIES, IN PARTICULAR
TERRORISM AND COUNTER-TERRORISM**

**Joint written statement* submitted by Association for World Education and Association of
World Citizens, two non-governmental organizations on the roster and International
Humanist and Ethical Union, a non-governmental organization in special consultative
status**

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

[28 June 2005]

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

The Culture of Hate in Saudi Arabian Textbooks and Growing Arab Reactions

1. We refer to the Introduction to our written submission E/CN.4/Sub.2/2005/NGO/2¹ and to the report on Saudi Arabian school textbooks, published by the Jerusalem Center for Monitoring the Impact of Peace (CMIP): The West, Christians and Jews in Saudi Arabian Schoolbooks.²

Analysis of 93 Saudi Arabian school textbooks (1999-2001)

2. *The CMIP report on Saudi Arabian schoolbooks includes views expressed there on Christianity and the West. The report also dealt with Saudi notions of government, women's status and children's rights as taught in schools. For research purposes, 93 textbooks on various subjects for grades 1-10 (6-16 year-olds) were examined, mostly from the years 1999-2000, and some from 2001. All books but one were published by the Saudi Arabian ministry of education, the exception being a book issued by the women inspectors of the lower grades of girls' education in the Riyadh province.*

3. The CMIP report makes distressing reading. Islam is presented as the only true religion, whereas all others are false; Islam leads its followers to paradise whereas others lead their believers to destruction in hell. Saudi children are taught that they are superior, as Muslims, in both this world and the next. Christians and Jews are explicitly denounced as infidels, and are called the enemies of Islam and Muslims. They should not be befriended, nor emulated in any way, as this is forbidden. The West is the source of evil that has afflicted the Muslim world. Western democracy is totally rejected.

4. As for the Jews, the report cites references to them as a wicked nation – in their relations with Arabs and Muslims, and in the context of world history. Their disappearance is, therefore, desirable. Even the fraudulent Protocols of the Elders of Zion holds an honoured place in the curriculum for Grade 10 (2001), under: “Hadith and Islamic Culture”³ with that nauseous book of racist hate by Abdullah Al-Tall, The Dangers of World Jewry, which constantly refers to The Protocols as an authoritative source: “Anyone who reads them – and they were published in the nineteenth century – grasps today to what extent much of what is found there has been realized.”⁴ Israel is not recognized as a State, and a peaceful Middle East solution is not advocated. Rather war, Jihad and martyrdom are exhorted as religious duties.

5. A French edition of the CMIP report on Saudi Arabian schoolbooks is prefaced by Antoine Sfeir, director of the *Cahiers de l'Orient*, author of Dictionnaire mondiale de l'Islamisme,⁵ in which he warns:

“At a time when the Islamist terrorist threat to Europe is becoming clearer, it is urgent to fully understand one of its essential components: the Islamic Wahhabite ideology. This ideology, whose principal target is Western civilization – that is to say, democracy and modernity – is known only to a few specialists. It seems to be largely ignored by the media, as it is by the political class.”⁶

Saudi Arabian attempt to face the problem of controlling the teaching of extremist views in schools

6. Saudi and Egyptian delegates were not pleased when AWE circulated to all Sub-Commission members – and to some representatives of States and NGOs – copies of the CMIP reports on the teaching of hate in their schools; and especially that this subject was raised in NGO written⁷ and oral statements at the UN. Within a month – perhaps a coincidence, at the beginning of the Saudi school year – senior Saudi officials called upon teachers not to disseminate extremist views among their pupils. On 5 September, Crown Prince Abdallah bin Abd al-‘Aziz told senior education officials: “Watch your teachers.” In January 2005, an English translation was available on this “Public Debate in Saudi Arabia on Extremism in the School System”⁸ Unfortunately, this criticism was only against teachers and not the contents of the school textbooks. As District Governor Prince Fahd bin Sultan stated to members of the Tabouk Education Council on 12 September 2004: “It is unacceptable for one of us to disseminate extremism, fanaticism, terrorism, and apostasy”; he also called upon teachers to encourage the pupils to implement the principle of dialogue and to accept the view of the “other.”⁹

Arab-Muslim voices speak out against ‘Jihad Ideology’ and appeal for sweeping reforms

7. More and more voices in the Arab world are speaking out against such inflexible Jihadist attitudes. Two substantive UN studies by Arab intellectuals, sponsored by the regional bureau for Arab states, may have sparked some of the strong reactions by Arab intellectuals.¹⁰ On 10 July 2004, two weeks before the Sub-Commission’s 56th session began, an Egyptian weekly had published a strong criticism by Sayyed al-Qimni, a progressive writer at Cairo University and lecturer on the sociology of religion. He stated that Al-Azhar University’s key curricula encourage extremism and terror, giving many examples to prove his point, including what he called the disgusting attitude toward *dhimmi*s, considered as infidels: “What kind of thinking are we teaching our next generation, that it has the right to attack other countries in order to convert them to Islam?”¹¹

8. Only a few days after AWE’s oral statement to the Sub-Commission, Jordanian author and journalist Dr. Shaker al-Nabulsi condemned the growing support for terrorism and extremism in the Arab world, and the rejection of moderation and reason. He insisted: “The Arabs are still slaves to a medieval mentality,” adding: “We have become the most terrorist nation and the greatest spillers of blood in the world.” He scathingly condemned “the rule of the dark religious educational system which incites to war against modernity, democracy and the new liberalism...”¹² On 13 September 2004, Mudir Badr Haloum, a lecturer at a Syrian university, made a strong plea in *Al-Safir*, a Lebanese daily; stating that “Islam is in the names of all the organizations that decapitate using knives, all the while saying the *Fatiha* [the first Sura of the Koran, said as a prayer] before the slaughter,” he concluded: “This is the need for people who are capable of fearlessly acknowledging that terrorism nests within us as Muslims and that we must exorcise it (...) The reform will take a long time and the price will be high, but it is the only path to our return to history as Muslims and not as terrorists.(...)”¹³

9. In a blunt article, posted on 24 November 2004, Sayyid al-Qimni again spoke out, attacking those who shape Muslim public opinion, and clung to Islamic traditions that are out of touch with modern times. He concluded by asking: “Are there any wise [men] in the nation of Bedouin [sic]? Is anyone listening? I call upon you (...) to awaken from the death throes of

your legends, because every one of us has children whom we want to live in a different time and a different culture.”¹⁴

10. Such critical remarks became even more outspoken among moderate Muslims following a *fatwa* (3 September 2004) by Sheikh Yousef al-Qaradhawi – a key leader of the Muslim Brotherhood, foremost religious authority, and friend of the Mayor of London – calling for the abduction and killing of U.S. citizens in Iraq. On 24 October 2004, two liberal Arab websites published a manifesto and petition, initiated by Dr. al-Nabulsi and signed by 2000 people worldwide within 24 hours. This petition to UN Secretary-General Kofi Annan came soon after the passing of UN Security Council Resolution 1566 on terrorism (8 October 2004) and called for the establishment of an International Tribunal for the prosecution of terrorists. The terrorists were named in the petition that condemned: “the purported religious pronouncements (*fatwas*) issued by ... dogmatic Muslims encouraging the commission of terrorist acts in the name of and under the banner of Islam.” Also: “By these *fatwas* all terrorists have died, or will die, fully convinced that they will immediately enter Paradise”, and it noted that “The *fatwa* issued by Sheikh Yousef al-Qaradhawi permitted the killing of ‘fetuses’ (unborn) Jews (...) On 3 July 2004, he had issued another *fatwa* (*Al-Ahram al-Arabi*), permitting the killing of Muslim intellectuals as being apostates, claiming that Islam justifies the killing of such apostates.”¹⁵ This Arab criticism of Muslim extremist activities in the West continued into 2005.¹⁶

Second decade of UN human rights education (2005-2014) should firmly condemn hate teaching

11. At the start of a second UN decade for human rights education (2005-2014), it would be timely for UN bodies to speak out firmly in regard to human rights educational attitudes in general, and toward peace and the “other”; and also to condemn any teaching of “Jihad and Martyrdom” bombing (wrongly called “suicide bombing”). It is time to examine systematically school textbooks used by all states members of the United Nations, especially the 53 members of the CHR and any future HR Council.

12. So long as the CHR and its Sub-Commission, and other human rights bodies particularly UNESCO, do not address the blatant misuse of schoolbooks in Saudi Arabia and elsewhere in the Middle East (and not just schoolbooks)¹⁷ there can be little hope of attaining peace and reconciliation throughout the world among peoples and religions.

Notes

1. This text is adapted from the same Conference text indicated in the prior NGO written statement, §2. For a fuller documentation on this subject, see the article by David G. Littman, “A Culture of Hate Based on ‘Jihad and Martyrdom’: Saudi Arabian and Egyptian Schoolbooks Today,” *Midstream* (New York), March/April 2005, pp. 6-11

2. CMIP, The West, Christians and Jews in Saudi Arabian Schoolbooks, Christians, War and Peace in Egyptian School Textbooks, Compiled, trans. & ed. by Dr. Arnon Grois s. New York & Jerusalem: CMIP, January 2003. For other CMIP publications, including the hate propagated in the Palestinian Authority’s textbooks, see their website: www.edume.org; and, in French, Yohanan Manor, les manuels scolaires palestiniens: une génération sacrifiée (Paris: Berg International, 2003)

3. (Arabic, 2001), pp. 103-4, Ibid, p. 81.
4. Arabic ed., pp. 140-41, referred to in CMIP, *ibid.*, p. 81.
5. Paris: Plon, 2002.
6. *La démocratie en danger: l'enseignement scolaire saoudien* (Compiled, trans. and ed. by Dr. Arnon Groiss), preface by Antoine Sfeir. Paris: Berg International, 2004, p. 9.
7. E/CN.4/Sub.2/2004/NGO/27
8. MEMRI, Special Dispatch Series – N° 840, Jan. 5, 2005. English tr. www.memri.org/bin/opener_latest.cgi?ID=SD84005.
9. *Al-Yawm* (Saudi Arabia), September 13, 2004, in MEMRI, *ibid.*, note 6.
10. United Nations. *Arab Human Development Report 2002. Creating Opportunities for Future Generations*. New York: UN Development Programme. Sponsored: Regional Bureau for Arab States, 2002); *Arab Human Development Report 2003; Building a Knowledge Society*. New York: UN Development Programme. Sponsored: Regional Bureau for Arab States, 2003.
11. *Roz Al-Youssef* (Egypt), 10 July 2004. English trans. in MEMRI, Special Dispatch Series – No. 790, 27 Sept. 2004: www.memri.org/bin/opener.cgi?Page=archives&ID=SP79004
12. Arabic: www.rezgar.com, 14 August 2004. Excerpts appeared in an English translation by MEMRI, Special Dispatch – Reform Project, 20 Sept. 2004, N° 786: www.memri.org/bin/opener_latest.cgi?ID=SD78604.
13. 26. *Al-Safir* (Lebanon), 13 September 2004.. English trans. in MEMRI. Special Dispatch Series – N° 787, 22 September 2004: memri.org/bin/opener.cgi?Pagearchives&ID=SP78704
14. MEMRI. Special Dispatch Series – N° 847. www.memri.org/bin//opener_latest.cgi?ID=SD84705: “Egyptian Progressive Criticizes Muslim Intellectual Doublespeak,” English translation of article on www.mettransparent.com (November 24, 2004).
15. www.memri.org/bin/opener_latest.cgi?ID=SD78704. MEMRI Special Dispatch – Syria/Reform Project, 22 Sept. 2004, N° 787. In 1988, an Egyptian Islamist monthly, *Liwa’al-Islam*, commemorated the 60th anniversary foundation of the Muslim Brotherhood (1928) with a publication showing two crossed swords and a Koran, with a black text in the sky: “The Muslim Brotherhood / Sixty Years of Jihad,” Johannes J.G. Jansen, *The Dual Nature of Islamic Fundamentalism* London: Hurst & Co., 1997 (cover). On this form of terrorism, see Patrick Sookhdeo, *Understanding Islamic Terrorism: The Islamic Doctrine of War*. With a foreword by General Sir Hugh Beach. Pewsey, Wiltshire -UK: Isaac Publishing, 2004.
16. See our subsequent written statement E/CN.4/Sub.2/2005/NGO/4, covering a recent MEMRI Special Dispatch – Reform Project, 10 June 2005, No. 921, entitled “Arab Criticism of Muslim Extremist Activities in the West”
17. Saudi Iqra TV aired a Jordanian-produced series during February 2005, titled: “Stories from Behind the Verse Came Down” – How the Jews Distorted the Torah and Rejected, Cursed, and Hated Muhammad. MEMRI – Special Dispatch – Saudi Arabia /Antisemitism Documentation Project, 1 June 2005, No. 915. See several hate texts, illustrations and references – from MEMRI – “La Représentation du Juif dans les Télévisions Arabes,” *L’Arche* (Paris), juin 2005, No 566, pp. 30-51.
