



Press Release

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
July 15, 2008

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New Report Shows Saudi Ministry Textbooks Still Teach Extreme Intolerance State Department-Negotiated Deadline for Reform Nears

Washington—Today the Center for Religious Freedom of the Hudson Institute released a 90-page [report](#), *2008 Update: Saudi Arabia's Curriculum of Intolerance*, with a foreword by R. James Woolsey. It was prepared in consultation with the Washington-based Institute for Gulf Affairs.

This report compares the 2007-2008 textbooks that are currently posted on the website of the Saudi Ministry of Education with those analyzed in our 2006 study, and shows that the same violent and intolerant teachings against other religious believers noted in 2006 remain in the current texts.

They assert that unbelievers, such as Christians, Jews, and Muslims who do not share Wahhabi beliefs and practices, are hated “enemies.” Global jihad as an “effort to wage war against the unbelievers” is also promoted in the Ministry’s textbooks: “In its general usage, ‘jihad’ is divided into the following categories: ...Wrestling with the infidels by calling them to the faith and battling against them.” No argument is made here that such references to jihad mean only spiritual and defensive struggles.

Lessons remain that Jews and Christians are apes and swine, Jews conspire to “gain sole control over the world,” the Christian Crusades never ended, the American universities of Cairo and Beirut are part of the continuing Crusades, the Protocols of the Elders of Zion are historical fact, and on Judgment Day “the rocks or the trees” will call out to Muslims to kill the Jews.

They teach that it is permissible for a Muslim to kill an “apostate,” an “adulterer,” and those practicing “major polytheism.” Shiites are among those identified as “polytheists.” One lesson states that “it is not permissible to violate the blood, property, or honor of the unbeliever who makes a compact with the Muslims,” but is pointedly silent on whether security guarantees are extended to non-Muslims without such a compact. Other lessons demonize members of the Baha’i and Ahmadiyya groups.

A lesson from a tenth grade text now posted on the Saudi Ministry’s website sanctions the killing of homosexuals and discusses methods for doing so.

In the lessons examined in this report, the Saudi government discounts or ignores passages in the Qur’an to support tolerance.

All of these textbooks have been reissued at least once and all but two of them reissued twice, yet overall the changes to the passages in question have been minimal, and the degree of substantive change has been negligible. Taken together, the report concludes, revisions in the currently-posted texts amount to moving around the furniture, not cleaning the house.

This analysis is issued as a deadline nears for the removal of intolerant teachings from all Saudi textbooks. This commitment stems from the Saudi government’s “confirmation” of policies that resulted from extensive bilateral negotiations with the U.S., and which policies were publicly announced and lauded as “significant developments” by the State Department in July 2006. Whether Saudi Arabia’s “comprehensive revision of textbooks” will be achieved by the start of the September 2008 school year remains to be seen. As the report documents, thorough textbook reform has not yet occurred.

Saudi King Abdullah is taking a leading role in interfaith dialogue initiatives, including convening a conference in Madrid later this week. The report notes that the Saudi Education Ministry’s continued teaching of hatred and violence against other religious believers raises concerns about whether the Saudi government has a genuine desire to find common ground with other religions.

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