



The Representation of Palestinians in Israeli Schoolbooks

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"The national solution for Israel's Arabs lies elsewhere: in order to maintain a Jewish-Democratic state we must constitute two nation-states with clear red-lines. Once this happens, I will be able to come to the Palestinian citizens of Israel, whom we label Israel's Arabs, and tell them that their national solution is elsewhere."

(Tzipi Livni, 10.12.2008).

Preface

- Israel is defined by researchers as an "ethnic Democracy" or as an "Ethnocracy" namely a regime in which one ethnic group dominates other ethnic groups while denying or ignoring most of their social and cultural identities and rights (Yiftachel 2006).

- Although the Jewish Israeli group is the dominating one, the Jewish Israeli identity is an artificial one. Since features such as common territory, common language and common culture were not available to this modern Jewish-Israeli nation which is composed of many ethnic groups, they had to be manufactured through education, for the purpose of building a collective homogenous identity for all its members. This identity has been founded on the idea that Jewish-Israelis are both the descendents of biblical Hebrews and have a Western culture and on the denial of any other regional culture or narrative. The culture and 'lifeworld' of the indigenous population of Palestine have been completely erased from the Israeli narrative as it is ignored in Israeli current social, political and cultural life. The paper shows the ways in which the



Palestinians, are represented as the ‘others’, both verbally and visually in Israeli schoolbooks. The paper will argue that Israeli education promotes racism, both towards the Palestinian citizens and towards the Palestinian non-citizens.

- **Keywords:** Racism, Classroom Discourse, Semiotics, Multimodal Analysis, Schoolbooks

Introduction

- **THE DISCOURSE OF** identity is also the discourse of difference, inclusion and exclusion. The construal of identity, and especially of national identity, includes strategies of denying other identities that seem threatening. The Jewish Israeli identity is achieved, among other ways, through the exclusion and rejection of different ethnic groups – both Jewish and Muslim - whose national, territorial and cultural rights are denied. (Yona 2005).

- The discriminated groups are those who lived on the land before the establishment of the state of Israel, namely the Palestinians, the Druze, the Bedouins and other ‘non-Jewish’ groups, and those who came after the establishment of the state, Arab Jews, Ethiopian Jews, ex-Soviet Union Jews to name the largest groups.

- The nature of this paper is descriptive. Although it relies on studies made in different countries, such as Holland (Essed, 1991 Van-Leeuwen, 2000), Sweden and Australia (Van-Leeuwen, 1992), it does not compare Israel to other places, nor does it deal in depth with the social and psychological reasons for the racist discourse that is dominant in Israeli society, but rather describes one type of racist discourse prevalent in Israeli schoolbooks of History and Geography



for the representation of Palestinians. The racist discourse against Palestinians stems from an ideology of exclusion and is overtly compatible with the official discrimination against Palestinians. This sort of racism is compatible with Israeli-Zionist project to Jewify the Land and de-Arabize it (Yiftachel 2006). It presents reality from the sole point of view of the Jewish dominant group and is founded on the fundamental principle which serves as the ideological ‘common ground’ of Israeli education, namely that Israel is the state of all the Jews wherever they dwell and not the state of its non-Jewish citizens. As Smooha points out:

- “.... It is a diminished type of democracy for it takes the ethnic nation, not the citizenry, as the corner-stone of the state[...]. At the same time this democracy extends various kinds of [individual] rights to 1 million Palestinian-Arab citizens (16% of the population) who are perceived as a threat.” (Smooha, 2002:475-478).

- The de-Arabization of the Land finds its expression in all aspects of Israeli life. One example is Israel’s language policy: Although both Hebrew and Arabic are Israel’s official languages, there are no higher education institutes that teach in Arabic, no signs in Arabic at the airport etc. Other examples are the very recent law allowing the Jewish National Fund, which is responsible for allocating land, not to lease lands to Arab citizens, the blocking of most government posts against Arab citizens, and the discrimination in terms of budget both on the municipal and on the educational level. The Palestinians living in the occupied territories are deprived of all human rights and are treated as *Homines Sacri* namely as people who lack, or are forcibly denied, all social or legal status, and whom anyone can do away with.

- The sample of schoolbooks from which the following examples are



drawn, was chosen according to the popularity of the books among teachers in mainstream secular Jewish elementary, middle and high schools, which constitute the majority of schools in Israel.¹ All books were published during the years 1996-2006, after the Oslo Peace agreements between Israel and the Palestinian Authority, in 1994. All books are currently used and all claim to reflect the national curriculum. All but one were authorized by the Ministry of Education.²

Methodology

- The paper presents a multimodal analysis of oral, written and visual discourses. The analysis relies mainly on the theory of Social Semiotics, founded by Halliday (1978) and developed by Kress and Van-Leeuwen. The main assumption is taken from Kress (2003 p.37):

“Since Meanings are made as signs in distinct ways in specific modes ... That which is represented in sign or sign complexes realizes the interests, perspectives, values and positions of those who make the sign [...] representation is always ‘engaged’. It is never neutral” (p.44).

This standpoint rejects the idea of arbitrariness (p.42) for ‘the relations between signifier and signified is always motivated, that is, the shape of the signifier, its “form”, materially or abstractly considered, is chosen because of its aptness for expressing that which is to be signified.’ Therefore, “We have to find ways of understanding and describing the interaction of such meanings across modes into coherent wholes, into texts.” (p.37).

¹ Israeli schoolbooks are trade books and teachers may choose which book to use. However, they all need to be authorized by the Ministry of education or at least be compatible with the national curriculum. I chose the textbooks that were mostly bought according to bookstore reports.



- The analysis uses the categories of ‘everyday racist discourse’ established by Essed (1991), as well as Van-Leeuwen’s critical-discursive categories regarding the representation of social actors (1996/2008), which were elaborated in Wodak and Reisigl’s extensive study of racist discourse in politics and in the media (2001).
- The visual analysis will follow the work of Kress and Van Leeuwen who laid the foundation of the grammar of visual design (Van Leeuwen 1992, 2000, Kress and Van Leeuwen 1996), especially Van-Leeuwen’s work concerning the racist visual representation of others in general and in text-books (1992, 2000).
- The analyses of maps in Geography text-books will also rely on observations made by geographers such as Bar-Gal, Yiftachel and Henrikson, especially regarding the manipulative use of cartography.
- Note: All the quotes and excerpts from schoolbooks and from teachers’ talk were translated from Hebrew by me and validated by professional translators. All bolds are mine.

A. Verbal and Visual Representation of Palestinians in Israeli Schoolbooks³

School books are still powerful means by which the state shapes forms of perception, of categorization, of interpretation and of memory, that serve to determine national identity. Schoolbooks use an array of visual and verbal

² *The Geography of the Land of Israel* does not have the authorization of the Ministry of Education, though it claims to be written according to the national curriculum and is sold and used in schools.



modes in order to transmit values and meanings. Therefore a multimodal analysis is required in the study of school books.

Israeli textbooks, though they vary in the way they teach the disciplines serve as relays of the Zionist message regarding the exclusive ‘historic rights’ of the Jews on the Land of Israel which includes Palestine (Bar Gal 1993a, Firer 1985, 2004). This ideology is the ‘common ground’ (Fairclough 2003:55) on which facts are selected and narratives are ‘carved’. The existence of Israel as a Jewish state and the crucial importance of a Jewish majority in Israel are the milestones of education, the basis on which all arguments and interpretations are founded. For instance, the importance of a Jewish majority serves as justification for the reluctance of Israel to annex the occupied Palestinian territories to the state of Israel and to accord civil rights to the inhabitants of these territories. As one History text book explains, such annexation would be a disaster whereby Israel would become “a bi-national state with an Arab majority – an absurd situation where the Jewish people would become a minority in their own land and the Zionist dream [would turn into] a south-African nightmare.” (*The 20th Century* p. 249).

Although the West Bank has never been annexed to the state, Israeli curriculum planners have never resigned to man-made borders that seem to them an “accidental consequence of cease fire commands which paralyzed military momentum”(Bar-Gal 1993a:125), nor have they given up teaching about the Greater Land of Israel which they consider to be “a whole Geographic entity”(ibid.). Bar-Gal explains that Israeli students do not learn about “the

³ I thank the following publishing houses for letting me reproduce the photocopied pages from the textbooks: The Centre for Educational Technologies (People in Space), The Ministry of Education and Maalot Publishers (The Mediterranean Countries), Lilach Publishers (the Geography of the Land of Israel).



‘State of Israel’ which has achieved international legitimation, but about the ‘Land of Israel’ which has divine legitimation.” (1993b:430). That is because “In the field of Geography the curricula have always emphasized the nationalist goals as the principal goal.” (Bar-Gal, 2000:169). This goal has been “to know and love our homeland”, which is the biblical ‘promised land’ that includes Israel, Palestine, parts of Jordan (called Eastern Land of Israel) and portions of Syria and Egypt.

“The educational system continues, therefore, to present maps as a miniature model of reality, and less often emphasizes that this map is a distorted model, which sometimes can 'lie,' and contain items that are completely different from reality”.(Bar-Gal 1996:69).

This is the reason why none of the schoolbooks is called *The Geography of the State of Israel*. The titles are usually **Israel** or **The Land of Israel**, which entail the inclusion, in all maps, of territories beyond the state’s official borders, and occupied areas that were seized during the wars but whose legal status does not make them a part of the state of Israel. As Bar Gal emphasizes,

“The borders of Israel as presented on the map represent the right-wing ideological perception which refuses to see the area of the West Bank and Gaza as territory under a different sovereignty.” (Bar-Gal 1993a:125).

In order to legitimate and eternalize Israeli dominance in those areas schoolbooks use as a recurrent device, apart from ‘lying maps’, the insertion of biblical phrases that reiterate the divine promise, into their scientific texts. For instance, *The Mediterranean Countries*, a geography textbook for the 5th grade, mentions in the chapter One Sea with Many Names. But from the outset one



realizes that "many names" does not mean the names this sea has been given by the different nations living along its coastline but the Hebrew biblical names of the Mediterranean, along with biblical quotes:

“The Mediterranean sea is already mentioned in the bible. Is it also called the Mediterranean in the book of books?

Exodus 23/31: "And I will set thy bounds from the sea of Suf even to the sea of the Pelishtim, and from the desert to the river."

Deuteronomy, 11/24: "Every Place whereon the sole of your foot shall tread shall be yours.... From the river, the river Prath to the uttermost sea shall be your border."

Joshua, 1:4: "From the wilderness and this Lebanon as far as the great sea ...towards the going down of the sun, shall be your border.”

Genesis, 28:14: "And thou shalt spread out to the West and to the East and to the South and to the North (Yama-Kedma-Tzafona-Negba). The phrase means that your country will spread in the future to the North, to the South, to the east and to the West."

This intertextuality gives a holy stamp to the textbook and a scientific stamp of validity to the Bible (Lemke 1998).



Map no. 1: (TMC:11) : Yama-Kedma-Tzafona-Negba





Although Palestinian lands are depicted as part of the state of Israel (map no. 1), their inhabitants are never represented. These representations create “blind spots” where people are supposed to be seen but aren’t (Barthes 1980:855), or rather, as in Lacan’s example of the book which is absent from the shelf and whose non-occupied slot proves its existence as a missing book, they are represented as missing entities.

A cartographic way to deny Palestinian existence is through Fragmentation (Thompson 1987): separating people from places, or representing the land while ignoring or concealing the existence of its indigenous population. This is done by changing the names of places (the West Bank is called by its Hebrew biblical name: Judea and Samaria and so are all former Arab cities and villages), or by depicting Palestinian areas as colourless spots defined as “Areas without data”. (Map no. 2). This representation creates “toponymic silences, [...] “blank spaces, silences of uniformity, of standardization or deliberate exclusion, willful ignorance or even actual repression” (Henrikson, 1994:59). On map no. 2, which depicts Arab population, as in other maps in the same Geography schoolbook, the mixed Jewish Israeli-Arab cities such as Nazareth and Acre are not marked. These “toponymic silences” reinforce the Zionist slogan “A land without people for a people without land,” which has always justified the policy of occupation and colonization.

When the excluded Palestinian inhabitants of these areas reappear in this text-book it is as “foreigners” or “host workers” – namely as illegal invaders or temporary human labour force:

“Some of the foreign workers are Palestinians who come from the areas controlled by the Palestinian authorities. They are employed in

unprofessional jobs and their wages are lower than that those of the Israeli citizens who work in the same jobs.... This is characteristic of all developed countries.” (IMS p.32)

This characterization of developed countries was regarded by Franz Fanon as “The other side of western modernity: colonialism, holocaust, slavery, imperialist domination and exploitation.” (quoted in Reisigl and Wodak, 2001:17).

Treating the Palestinians as foreigners points to an odd geographical perception: The Palestinian territories are presented as part of Israel, yet the inhabitants of these same territories are presented as foreigners. As Van Leeuwen notes, not representing people in contexts where, in reality they are present is a racist strategy of representing "others" (2000:349).



- Map no.2: Arab Population in the State of Israel 2000 (*Israel-Man and Space* 2003)
- *White Areas: ‘Area for which there are no Data’



Racist Verbal and Visual Discourse

Israeli educators and researchers are not always aware of the racist discourse of schoolbooks. In a recent study of Israeli textbooks Firer (2004:75) claims that “as political correctness has reached Israel it is no longer appropriate to use blunt, discriminatory language in textbooks,” and then adds that in the years 1967-1990 “the stereotypes of Arabs and Palestinians almost disappear” (ibid. p. 92). However, examining the schoolbooks that were published after 1994 (6), one cannot avoid noticing that Palestinians are still represented, visually and verbally – if at all - in a racist stereotypical way, as an impersonalized negative element, or as a non-entity. Palestinians are never depicted as modern, productive, individual human beings but as negative ‘types’. The most common types are the classical ‘primitive’ Arab with a mustache, wearing a kaffiyah and followed by a camel (usually in the form of a caricature as in figure no. 2 below), the ‘Oxfam images’ (Hicks, 1980:13) of the primitive farmer, ‘refugees’ shown from a very long distance, situated in non-places, and face-covered terrorists, namely the ‘problems’ or ‘threats’ they constitute for the Israelis: (‘Asiatic’) backwardness, terrorism and the refugee ‘problem’ which ‘stains Israel’s image in the eyes of the world’. (*The 20th Century*). "Depicting people as the agents of actions which are held in low esteem or regarded as subservient, deviant, criminal or evil , [or] in a negative cultural connotation," are strategies of racist representation. (Van Leeuwen 2000:349). None of these "Arabs" really represent the Arabs living and working in Israel or Palestine. The icon below, from the Geography book *Geography of The Land of Israel* does not represent any Arab citizen but is rather modeled after old European drawings of imaginary ‘Arabs’ as in the cartoon below. Van-

Leeuwen summarizes the motivation for such a cartoon-like presentation:

“Cartoons are general without being abstract [...] All Turks have moustaches and all Arabs have camels. This reality is replacing the reality of naturalism and individualism.”(1992:56)

This cartoon appears throughout the book, whenever Arabs are discussed, implying that "they all look alike" and restricting all Arabs to this ridiculous non-existent racial stereotype.



- Figure no. 1: “The Arabs [=Citizens of Israel] Refuse to Live in High Buildings and Insist on Living in detached one-storey Houses.” (*Geography of the Land of Israel* 2003:303).

This caption is elaborated in the verbal text (pp. 302-303)
 "The Arab society is traditional and objects to changes by its nature, reluctant to adopt novelties that may change the character of the village. Modernization seems dangerous to them for it jeopardizes the status of the elderly and the honourables. Therefore, villages that have to allocate land for the building of public roads, as the Jewish sector does, refuse to do so because ... they are unwilling to give anything up for the general good."

Verbally, Palestinians are represented through the discursive devices of Impersonalisation and Genericisation which means naming a whole population by “a generic name in the plural without the article,” (Van Leeuwen 1996:46), such as "non-Jews". The population in Israel is always divided into Jews



and non-Jews. The “non-Jews”, who are considered less advanced, are excluded from developmental graphs as in *People in Space*: p. 76: At the Bottom of a Graph depicting average age of marriage as differentiating between developed and non-developed countries we find a note: "The Israeli Data Refers only to the Jewish Population." The ‘non-Jews’, regardless of their origin and religion, are sometimes called by the generic hyperonym: Arabs. For instance, in *Israel –Man and Space* 2003, p. 12:

- “The Arab Population [in Israel]: Within this group there are several religious groups and several ethnic groups: Muslims, Christians, Druze, Bedouins and Circassians. But since most of them are Arab they shall be referred to henceforth as Arabs.”

Mental Maps and the Marginalization of Palestinian-Arab Citizens

‘Mental maps’ are ideological constructs which may have little to do with geographical evidence. They reflect individual or societal perception or reflection of the world. For instance, in European maps Europe is the centre of the world. As Henrikson points out: “mental maps are a critical variable – occasionally the decisive factor – in the making of public policy” (p. 50). Henrikson adds that, “The map has always been the perfect representation of the state [...] “Maps are powerful and persuasive sometimes explicitly and nearly always implicitly. Every map is some one's way of getting you to look at the world his own way. They do it by conveying they have no such interest. They are convincing because the interests they serve are masked.” (Henrikson, 1994: 58-59).

“It is through the lens of a map [...] that we see, know, and even create the larger world” (p.52).



Maps, Henrikson maintains, have a synoptic quality (show what is happening in an area), and a hypnotic quality – or a suggestive effect. “Cartohypnosis” (Boggs 1947) is the subtle persuasiveness of maps which “causes people to accept unconsciously and uncritically the ideas that are suggested to them by maps” (Henrikson 1994:50). For instance, maps can shift the centre by means of perspective and colour or differentiate between the centre and the focus of the map (Van-Leeuwen and Kress 1995).

In a History book for grade 9 called: *From Conservativism to Progress*, we learn that,

“In the years 1881-1882 thousands of people arrived at Jaffa port: From Russia, from Rumania, from the Balkan and even from far-away Yemen.” (p.269).

Needless to say, Yemen is almost the closest to Jaffa port, and the question is, why is it mentioned as the most “far away”? The only answer is that the implied centre of the “mental map” of the writers is still Eastern Europe, the spiritual centre of Zionism and the origin of the dominant social group in Israel. As Henrikson explains “One of the unfortunate consequences of colonialism and the condition it engendered, [...] is a feeling that the centre is elsewhere.”(Henrikson 1994:55-56)

The drawing of maps is highly influenced by mental maps or by the political ideologies the state is interested to diffuse. Thus, in spite of Israel’s ‘narrow waistline’ the non-Jewish citizens of Israel are pushed to the margins of consciousness and social reality, as it is well expressed in the following statement from *Geography of the Land of Israel*. (2003:197):



“Factors that inhibit the development of the Arab village: [...] Arab villages are far from the centre, the roads to them are difficult and they have remained out of the process of change and development, they are hardly exposed to modern life and there are difficulties to connect them to the electricity and water networks.”

Most of these “distant” villages are not specified on any map though they are all within the ‘narrow waistline of Israel’. However, Jewish top-sites that are built on top of the hills overlooking those villages, and Jewish colonies such as Riel, Alon-Shvut and Bet-El, that are beyond the official borders of Israel, are presented in the same chapter as examples of high standard of living and not as marginal far-away deprived settlements. But as Henrikson writes,

“The sensation of peripheralness itself cannot be altered, of course, by simply shifting or reducing the graphic frame of the map.”(1994:56).

Representation of Palestinians in the Occupied Territories

The Palestinian refugees, who were driven out of Palestine-Israel in 1948 and in 1967, are usually defined as ‘the Palestinian problem’. Van-Leeuwen (1996:60) counts as one of the features of racist discourse the reference to humans by an abstract noun that does not include the semantic feature “+ human”, and represents “social actors by means of a quality assigned to them” for instance “the quality of being ‘*a problem*’.” This is well expressed in the following example from *The 20th century* (p.244):

“This chapter will explore the Palestinian problem, which stands since the



beginning of the Zionist enterprise in the heart of the Middle Eastern conflict, and the attitudes within the Israeli public regarding the problem and the character of its solution”.

- Or in *Modern Times II* 2000:239: “The ‘Palestinian Problem’ incubated in the poverty, the idleness and the frustration that were the lot of the refugees in their pitiful camps.”

This problem has no human face in any of these schoolbooks. It usually materializes in empty shanty towns or empty flooded streets, in hordes of faceless refugees or face-covered terrorists, all of which endow the ‘problem’ with the appearance of danger, security threats, environmental or ecological hazards.

The only information the reader receives about the Palestinian “problem” is that of a sad “lot” or of unfavourable circumstances that are presented in one of the following fashions (Van Leeuwen 1996:97):

1. In terms of ‘existentialization’ or ‘naturalization’, where action is represented as something that ‘simply exists’, natural and outside temporal boundaries. For instance:

“The population in the refugee camps is growing fast and the conditions of life are very hard, the rate of unemployment is high, the houses are crowded and poor and the standard of health services, education and hygiene is low.” (People In Space 1998:110).

By using the auxiliary verb ‘to be’, the above quote presents Palestinians’ dire situation as devoid of human agency or cause.

2. As a self-directed phenomenon, that acts independently of human social actors:

“Although Israel came victorious out of the survival-war that was forced upon her, the Palestinian problem would poison for more than a generation



the relationships of Israel with the Arab world and with the international community.” (*Modern Times II*: 239).

The ‘Palestinian problem’ is presented as an agent that acts on its own, to the disadvantage of Israel. It is not the problem the Palestinians have as a result of Israeli occupation, expulsion and domination but the problem of the Israelis themselves who are inflicted with this ‘trouble’.

Visually "the Palestinian problem" is always shown as empty places struck by poverty and dirt. For instance, in a chapter discussing "refugees running for their lives in the world" the only refugees that are not represented as human beings are the Palestinian ones. These are represented by an aerial photograph shot from a very long distance or from the angle of “the pilot who flies too high to be able to see the people on whom he is dropping his bombs... It is the angle of the ‘objective knowledge’ that causes detail (and people) to disappear and it is the kind of knowledge which education is still primarily concerned to reproduce.” (Van Leeuwen 1992:49).

- Unlike the description of other case-studies in this chapter, neither the caption nor the heading of the Jabalia photograph mention who lives in this refugee camp and why, thereby emphasizing the photograph is a depiction of a site, a phenomenon, not of people. The caption says: “Refugee Camp Jabalia in the Gaza Strip. One of the refugee camps where the inhabitants live in over crowdedness, poverty and distress”. (*People in Space* 1998:153)

Legitimation and Justification of Massacres



‘Justification’ and ‘Legitimation’ primarily refer to controversial acts or event of the past, which may influence the narrative of national history (Wodak, 2002).

Coffin (1997:220) argues that in History textbooks events “are appraised in their capacity to bring about good and bad changes.” Three major massacres of Palestinians, out of all the massacres that occurred during the various wars (Pappe 2006), are reported in the more ‘progressive’ text books. These reports seem to researchers as a courageous educational act (Firer 2004, Podeh 2002), although they are never told from the victims’ point of view and although rhetorically, the reports are constructed in a way that legitimates them, for they have all brought about positive consequences for the Israelis. For instance, the massacre of the “friendly village” Dier Yassin in 1948 (*The 20th Century* p.184-195), “did not inaugurate the ‘Panic-stricken escape’ of the Arabs... but accelerated it greatly”. Both ‘inaugurate’ and ‘accelerated it greatly’ are positive if not festive terms. The ‘panic-stricken flight’ of the Palestinians, caused by this and other massacres, brought about a positive change for the Jews, and as the text emphasizes, “even a moderate Zionist leader such as [the first president] Haim Weizman, considered it as a miracle”, for it solved “a horrifying demographic problem”, which could have been an obstacle on the way of “the realization the dream the Zionist movement fought to realize for more than half a century: the declaration of the state of the Jews” (*The 20th Century* p. 195).

The massacre in Kafer Kassim (on the first day of the 1956 war) had – according to the school-books positive results both for the Israelis and for the Palestinian citizens themselves, because it was a starting point of a long process at the end of which the military government in which Palestinian citizens lived



since 1948 was abolished.

- *The 20th Century* (p. 211) reports as follows:
 - “The 1956 war was a good turning point for Israel’s Arabs although it began with the tragedy of Kafer Kassim[...] but in the long run, the smashing victory, the relative peace on the borders and the self confidence of the Jewish population turned the military government into an unbearable moral and political burden and ten years later it was abolished altogether.”

Students learn from this report that immoral deeds towards Palestinians are not corrected because they are wrong but because they may be a political burden to victorious, self-confident conquerors and have undesirable political implications. They also learn that the Palestinian suffering does not deserve too much ‘paper time’ probably because for them ten years of living under curfew pass very quickly. As for the Israelis, this massacre brought about the enlightened decision made by the Israeli court against obedience to ‘manifestly unlawful orders’ (*The Age of Horror and Hope*, 2001). As minister Yuli Tamir reminded us on the 12.2. 2009, while speaking to high school students during the last raid on Gaza, "The Massacre of Kafer Kassem and the trial it entailed have become milestones in the national consciousness of the Israeli society, and has inculcated to generations of commanders and soldiers of the IDF the moral limitations of action.”

Visually, the soldiers who committed the massacres are always mythicized by glorifying layout where photographs – placed above or aside mythicizing songs - depict them as handsome heroes. For instance the photograph inserted into the reports about the massacre in the Palestinian village of Kibya in Jordan, in 1953, headed by former prime-minister Ariel Sharon and committed by the soldiers of the infamous 101 unit he commanded, shows the



soldiers with the late chief of staff and minister of defense Moshe Dayan, who came to congratulate them after the killing of 69 men, women and children in their homes at night during this ‘punishment operation’. All of them are smiling.

- Although in the main text the book explains that most of the victims were “Arab villagers [separated] from their lands, [who] attempted to return to their homes,” the caption of the glorifying picture of the killers turns these villagers to terrorists:

“The soldiers of unit 101 excelled in their daring. One of its actions was the invasion of the village Kibya in the Samaria region, a village that served as a departure point for **the terrorists**. The soldiers destroyed 45 houses and killed 69 men, women and children.” (*Modern Times II*. P. 273)

This massacre is justified for its positive consequences for it “has restored somewhat the confidence of Israeli citizens” (*The Age of Horror and Hope, 2001*) and “the morale and dignity of the IDF, helping the army to become a vigorous, bold army whose long arm could harm the enemy deep in its own territory. The IDF improved its operational capacity and its deterrent capacity.” (*Fifty Years of Wars and Hopes, 2004:244*).

To sum: As Coffin (1997:205) argues, history (and one should add Geography) textbooks often use the discourse of politicians, lawyers and other manipulators of language, who employ linguistic and discursive devices in order to persuade the reader to accept interpretation as fact or truth, thereby putting the disciplinary politics of truth at stake.

The discourse used in Israeli textbooks regarding the Palestinians serves an explicit political agenda of exclusion. A recent example for the continuing efforts to be rid of the Palestinian-Arab citizens is found in Zipi Livni's



declaration that

Reality is presented in Israeli schoolbooks from the point of view of the dominant Jewish group, who sees Palestinians as a primitive, vile, threatening and undesirable element. The maps conceal Palestinian existence and show disregard for international laws and decisions. Human-caused evils are presented as natural processes and the killing and expelling of the indigenous population is legitimized in the name of the highest cause - the existence of the Jewish state.

Israeli students may be drafted to the army without ever having seen a Palestinian face to face let alone having talked to one. However, the information they receive from their school books prepares them to treat their neighbours as unwanted invaders and to feel no compassion for their suffering.

This education is far from encouraging peace and co-existence.

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