

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Teaching Hate and Violence: Problematic Passages from Saudi State Textbooks for the 2018–19 School Year

In 2006, Saudi Arabia received its first U.S. waiver from penalties under the International Religious Freedom Act. This was due in part to the kingdom's explicit commitment to revise its textbooks to eliminate all incitement, removing "remaining intolerant references that disparage Muslims or non-Muslims or that promote hatred toward other religions or other religious groups." According to the U.S. government, Riyadh stated that this process was "scheduled to be completed in time for the start of the 2008 school year."

INTOLERANT LANGUAGE OF
ALL KINDS STILL ABOUNDS
IN SAUDI ARABIA'S
GOVERNMENT-
PUBLISHED TEXTBOOKS

A decade has passed since that deadline expired, and today ADL is disappointed to report that intolerant language of all kinds still abounds in Saudi Arabia's government-published textbooks for schoolchildren. The incitement is particularly egregious at the high school level.

This is at odds with a September 2018 statement by the Saudi foreign minister that incitement in Saudi textbooks is not "still continuing" because the curriculum has been completely "revamped" numerous times. He contended that any allegations about incitement in the books are merely an outdated "legacy issue" raised by ill-informed critics of the kingdom. It is also at odds with assurances

Saudi Arabia's Minister of Education made in October 2017 to U.S. officials in which he stated his intent to fully revise all textbooks by the 2018–19 school year.

This report demonstrates that the new Saudi state textbooks for the 2018–19 academic year still contain passages that encourage bigotry or violence against numerous categories of people, including Jews, Christians, Shi'ite or Sufi Muslims, women, people who engage in anal sex and anyone who mocks or converts away from Islam. Derogatory language against "infidels" – which is used in this context to refer to non-Muslims such as Christians and Jews – remains especially pervasive.

Eliminating the incitement from Saudi state textbooks is particularly important given the leadership role of the kingdom as custodian of the two holiest sites in Islam. Because of this special status, and thanks to the kingdom's considerable oil wealth, the kingdom's textbooks have been exported to a broad swath of countries on nearly every continent.

٣ - أن الكفار أعداء الإسلام وأهله, قال تعالى
> يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا لَا تَتَّخِذُوا الْيَهُودَ
وَالنَّصَارَىٰ أَوْلِيَاءَ بَعْضُهُمْ أَوْلِيَاءُ بَعْضٍ وَمَنْ
يَتَوَلَّهُمْ مِنْكُمْ فَإِنَّهُ مِنْهُمْ إِنَّ اللَّهَ لَا يَهْدِي
الْقَوْمَ الظَّالِمِينَ <

Translation: The infidels are the enemies of Islam and its people, the Almighty said: "Oh you who believe, do not take the Jews and the Christians as allies, they are allies of each other, and whoever among you takes them as allies is surely one of them, indeed God does not guide the evildoers ..."

While many of the passages highlighted in this report have their roots in religious teachings, very few are direct quotes from the Quran. Even in those instances, particular references to such teachings can be removed from textbooks, replaced or paired with more tolerant quotations from other authoritative sources, or interpreted or contextualized differently while still respecting Islam.

Such changes would no doubt be unpopular with some religious extremists, but the Saudi monarchy is nonetheless capable of implementing these reforms.

This report is organized according to the different categories of incitement in current Saudi textbooks. There are separate sections for problematic passages pertaining to Jews, Christians, “infidels” as a broader category, Shi’ite or Sufi Muslims, women, people who engage in anal sex and apostasy or perceived acts of sorcery.

**VIRTUALLY ALL OF THE MOST
PROBLEMATIC PASSAGES
IDENTIFIED IN RECENT STUDIES
REMAIN IN THE 2018–19
CURRICULUM**

All passages cited in this report are from Saudi state textbooks for the 2018–19 academic year. This report confirms that virtually all of the most problematic passages identified in recent studies remain in the 2018–19 curriculum.

To help address this issue, ADL endorses the bipartisan Saudi Educational Transparency and Reform Act in the U.S. House of Representatives. It calls upon Members of Congress to cosponsor this much-needed legislation and for Congressional leaders to help ensure that it comes up for a vote.



Saudi Education Minister Ahmed al-Eissa