

Pro-terror education agenda: Is this New Jersey or Jenin?

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📷 A classroom at the Ziad Abu Ein School in Ramallah, September 8, 2018. (AP/Majdi Mohammed)

Teaching While Muslim seems intent on promoting a narrative in which Muslims are victims of bigotry and the West is evil.

By John Rossomando, [Middle East Forum](#)

Officials in two different school systems in New Jersey have disavowed educational materials produced by a for-profit organization that promotes anti-American and anti-Israel propaganda in the United States.

The organization, Teaching While Muslim, operates mostly in New Jersey public schools, describing itself as a “social justice, anti-racist, anti-Islamophobia organization.”

Nagla Bedir, an activist with ties to the Islamic Circle of North America, a well-known Islamist organization, serves as the organization’s executive director.

Its activities appear to offer an example of an Islamist attempt to make use of religious education to further a political agenda.

Teaching While Muslim’s troubles began in January when J. Scott Cascone, superintendent of New Jersey’s Holmdel Township School District, offered an apology after material produced by the organization found its way into an email sent to district staff on Jan. 4.

Recipients blasted the email as “biased and antisemitic.” Adding fuel to the controversy, a lesson plan produced by the group for Muslim Heritage Month spurred objections due to its political messages about Sudan, “Palestine,” and Israel.

“While the intention (of sharing Muslim heritage teaching resources) was positive, concerns arose due to the sponsoring organization’s expression of biased and antisemitic information and the appropriateness of some of the resources,” Cascone wrote in an email to the *Asb Park Press*.

“On Friday, Jan. 5, I promptly addressed this with our staff after further review of the material’s origin. In doing so, I emphasized that the Board of Education and administrator do not endorse the mentioned organization.”

A similar controversy erupted two months later when Kevin Gilbert, the acting superintendent of the South Orange-Maplewood School District in New Jersey, apologized on March 11 for the distribution of a leaflet produced by Teaching While Muslim at one of its high schools.

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The leaflet, which informed readers about the Muslim holiday of Ramadan, also described the U.S. as “a co-conspirator with Israel, preventing Muslim Palestinians from partaking in Ramadan as the Israeli Zionist occupation enacts a genocide against them.”

The entire staff at Columbia High School in Maplewood, N.J., received the document which was also circulated on social media.

“The document was not reviewed or approved by any district office or personnel, and while the intention of sharing the document was to provide a resource, serious content was overlooked,” Gilbert said. “This resource contained language that, at any time, would be inflammatory but, particularly now, is deeply problematic and inappropriate for schools.”

Instead of helping teachers and students address the challenges Islam and its adherents face in the modern world, Teaching While Muslim seems intent on promoting a narrative in which Muslims are victims of bigotry and the West is evil.

For example, the organization has partnered with the New Jersey Chapter of the Council on American-Islamic Relations (CAIR), producing a lesson plan that purports to instruct students about the impact of 9/11 on Muslims in the United States.

Other materials produced by the organization promoted late Stalinist professor Howard Zinn’s *A People’s History of the United States* which teaches that America is an irredeemably corrupt and racist country.

Teaching While Muslim also recently promoted a “Hands Off Yemen” poster on its website condemning the U.S. and U.K. for retaliating against the Iranian-backed Houthi rebels and their attacks on Red Sea shipping.

The poster states in Arabic, “From the Straits of Bab El Mandab to Beirut, the revolution never dies.” (Bab El Mandab is the mouth of the Red Sea the Houthis are trying to control.)

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Teaching While Muslim provides information such as a unit found in its “Teaching About Palestine” lesson plan for students in 6th and 7th grades that treats Palestinian terrorists as heroes, referring to them as a “liberation movement.”

The organization’s website calls on teachers to “Take kids through a visualization meditation practice. ... Ask them to imagine what it might feel like to have to fight for freedom, to be a part of a movement because a group of people that you identify with are being oppressed and hurt. What is that feeling like? What does it look like? Sound like?”

A unit for high school students produced by the organization refers to Palestinians as victims of “genocide” at the hands of the Israelis.

Other materials published by Teaching While Muslim discuss how to bring the Muslim holy month of Ramadan into public school classrooms for teachers “looking to start your own Ramadan traditions” in their class.

Bedir, the group’s founder and executive director, teaches at a high school in Perth Amboy, N.J., and works with ICNA’s dawah or proselytism arm “Why Islam?”

In a video for ICNA, Bedir described her work as an effort to counter “Islamophobia.”

In terms of Teaching While Muslim, our entire existence is based on not only countering Islamophobia, but really our vision is for the entire education system in the United States is [sic] to create schools and classrooms that are explicitly and adamantly anti-racist, anti-Islamophobic, and social justice based,” she said.

Attorney Dan Piedra, the former executive director of the Freedom of Conscience Defense Fund (FCDF), who successfully sued CAIR’s San Diego chapter over a more expansive anti-Islamophobia curriculum in the San Diego public schools, argued this curriculum is about Islamic proselytism, not about tolerance.

Piedra told Focus on Western Islamism that Teaching While Muslim is attempting to create a backdoor to introduce Islamic instruction in public schools.

He notes that CAIR claimed it was a religious organization in a 2017 National Labor Relations Board (NRLB) case, which means everything it does has a constitutionally questionable purpose in its public school activism.

He notes that Woke leaders let CAIR and other Islamists get away with religious activities that they never would let Christian organizations do.

“It brings to mind the concept of dawah (Islamic evangelization), and their mission is to infiltrate and subvert institutions, and the public school is exactly one of the institutions,” Piedra said.

“Their goal is simple. They want it so that every time a public school student turns around, Islam is portrayed positively ... to the point they will be influenced by it and accept Islam.”

“They gain the upper hand not through the force of arms but through subversion in a way similar to Marxism,” Piedra said, noting how Islamists resort to semantic games to undermine their opponents. “They use words and act on words that disarm people in a sense that they don’t raise red flags.”

Parents need to be on guard against the abuse of the classroom to promote an Islamist agenda, warns Zuhdi Jasser, president of the American Islamic Forum for Democracy (AFID).

“Twenty-three years, post-9/11, they are still recycling the same apologetics that basically now can piggyback onto the Woke movement and the Red/Green Axis — progressivist and Islamist movements,” he said.

“They can fool the West into believing that political Islam and these Islamic parties, the Muslim Brotherhood, and all of their tentacles don’t exist and that the linchpin revolves around the concept that Islamist terrorism is neither terrorism nor Islamism.”

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