IMPACT-se

The New Syria: Education Under al-Sharaa Review of Syria's National School Curriculum, 2025–2026

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Executive Summary

This IMPACT-se report examines 130 textbooks from the Syrian Arab Republic's national school curriculum for the 2025-2026 school year, the first under the new Syrian administration and the presidency of Ahmed al-Sharaa. The report analyzes textbooks for Grades 1-12 across the new Syrian national curriculum, comparing them with the respective Assad-era versions published between 2011 and 2023, using IMPACT-se's UNESCO-derived methodology for evaluating peace and tolerance in education. The study concentrates on humanities school subjects, such as Social Studies, History, Geography, Islamic Education, and Arabic Language, but incorporates textbooks from a wide range of other subjects, including Sciences, Music, English, and French. The study reviews and compares textbook content as a whole, but notably focuses on the multiple changes, additions, and omissions introduced as part of the relatively rapid post-civil war reforms of the Syrian national curriculum under the new administration. The curriculum changes, even though confined to specific chapters and passages rather than an overhaul of entire textbooks, are most insightful and indicative of the new Syrian administration's intent and priorities for shaping the national curriculum.

The findings reveal a broad ideological transformation of the Syrian curriculum. Assad-era Ba'athist, pan-Arabist, and Syrian-national content and narratives have been substantially replaced by concepts of Islamist political ideology, Sunni Muslim exceptionalism, and pan-Islamist nationhood. Across subjects and grades, the curriculum redefines Syrian identity, historical memory, and regional relations through a framework grounded in Sunni-Muslim Arab identity that marginalizes religious and ethnic minorities, rejects gender equality and restricts women's roles in society, normalizes violent conflict against the Other rather than seeking peaceful resolution, and limits exposure to pluralism and coexistence. This report finds that the intent behind the Syrian Ministry of Education's January 2025 paper of curriculum reform directives, as examined in IMPACT-se's February 2025 review, predominantly persists in the 2025-2026 curriculum reform. Many suggested changes outlined in the January 2025 paper have indeed been implemented in the new curriculum. Some deviations from the January 2025 paper are noticeable in the new curriculum, yet those appear unsystematic rather than indicative of a coherent alternative approach. For example, at times the same instruction was implemented in one textbook and overlooked in another.

The main themes which the report finds best reflect this ideological transformation are:

AN ISLAMIST IDENTITY FOR SYRIA

- **Islam is now presented as core to Syrian identity.** Loyalty to Syrian patriotic nationalism or to pan-Arabist sentiments is sharply reduced in favor of loyalty to the wider pan-Islamist nationhood of the *ummah*.
- **Civic discourse is increasingly replaced by Islamic conceptions of law, society, and political order.** Islamic civilization is presented as the main source of justice, human rights, legislation, and proper relations between the ruler and the ruled. New content elevates Islamic shariah, counsel (*šūrā*), and divine authority over secular state law, democracy, and state institutions.
- **Scientific and philosophical content is removed or religiously reframed to align with Islamic doctrine.** Evolution and the Big Bang Theory are deleted or altered, while scientific language is increasingly Islamized, such as replacing "Nature's gift" with "Allah's gift" in a Natural Sciences textbook.

SUNNI ISLAM DOMINATES WHILE LOCAL MINORITIES ARE MARGINALIZED OR ERASED

- **Sunni Muslim identity dominates, and most of Syria's minorities are marginalized or erased.** Islamic Education lessons promoting religious tolerance have either been removed or altered, as have secular references to equity and equality before the law, and historical examples of Muslim-Christian coexistence in early Islam. Christians remain acknowledged, shown as part of Syrian society, and their holy sites remain depicted, but new revisions insist that **Christian presence must be theologically subordinate to Islam** and Islamic law. **Other local minority groups such as Kurds, Turkmen, and Druze are almost entirely absent from the curriculum**, and historical figures from these communities are rarely identified as such. **Shi'i and Alawite symbols are actively contested**, such as delegitimizing the Shi'i Fatimid Caliphate and marginalizing Alawite leaders.

- **Jews are generally described in demonizing terms, denied collective history and often portrayed through antisemitic tropes** in their conflicts with the Prophet Muhammad and the early Muslims. On occasion, anti-Jewish collective stereotyping is extended beyond the early Islamic context, generalizing treachery, disloyalty and hostility as inherent and enduring characteristics of Jews. Jewish national identity is rejected outright, with Jews described as "a hodgepodge of peoples, not a single nation."

VIOLENCE IS GLORIFIED AND ISLAMIZED

- ***Jihad*, martyrdom, and self-sacrifice in battle are presented as central to identity and as legitimate, often desirable, ideals.** Sacrifice and martyrdom once made in defense of "the homeland" now become sacrifice "for the sake of Allah," "resistance fighters" become "*jihad* fighters", and martyrs who die performing jihad are promised "eternal life in Paradise."
- **Violence is glorified through graphic literary descriptions, religious teaching, and historical narratives.** Textbooks honor controversial historic figures who employed and promoted violent means and engaged in armed religious and nationalistic struggles, such as 'Izz al-Din al-Qassam and Dalal al-Mughrabi. Peace and reconciliation receive little attention.

PORTRAYALS OF WOMEN AND GENDER EQUALITY ARE DIMINISHED

- **Portrayals of gender equality and women's active role in society have been sharply reduced.** Women are now framed mainly as wives and mothers, expected to obey husbands. They are depicted in stricter Islamic dress, most often through the addition of a hijab to existing illustrations of girls and women. Revised content on appropriate Islamic attire now advocates the Salafi-standard full-body-covering *burqa'* for women. References to Syrian civic law guaranteeing gender equality were removed, as well as previous references to female public agency and representation.

THE ASSAD LEGACY IS REWRITTEN

- **The Assad personality cult is dismantled and replaced with an anti-Assad narrative.** Hafez and Bashar al-Assad are portrayed as corrupt, sectarian, authoritarian and destructive, while the 2011 uprising is portrayed as the morally and historically justified restoration of an authentic Islamic-Arab Syria.

HOSTILITY TOWARDS THE WEST PERSISTS

- **Europe and the West are predominantly portrayed through a hostile civilizational narrative.** Medieval Europeans are described as "backward" and driven by greed and colonial ambition, while Western colonialist states including France and Britain are repeatedly associated with exploitation, plunder, occupation, conspiracy and waging "war on the Arabic language." European achievements are frequently attributed to earlier Arab-Islamic civilization.
- **The United States is portrayed primarily as an imperial, violent and destabilizing power.** Textbooks accuse it of invading Iraq to seize its wealth and oil, destroying its infrastructure and "killing its learned men," and credit Iraqi resistance with inflicting "heavy losses" that forced the US withdrawal. The US is further accused of supporting Zionism, fueling instability in the region such as in Lebanon and South Sudan, taking over South America's economy, and pursuing global political and economic domination. The US is described as morally inferior to Islamic civilization by demonstrating how the nuclear bombing of Japan contradicts Islamic values. While the curriculum acknowledges the American Revolution as an anti-colonial struggle and credits the US with important inventions, these are immediately overshadowed by criticism of American foreign policy, militarism, and global hegemony.

SOME KEY REGIONAL RELATIONS ARE REPOSITIONED

- **Formerly praised Assad allies Iran and Hezbollah are now delegitimized, with Iran identified as an enemy** and no longer praised for the 1979 revolution, its support for Palestine and its technological and nuclear achievements. Hezbollah is no longer presented as a resistance movement but as an accomplice to Assad responsible for atrocities against Syrians.
- **Turkey and the historical Ottoman Empire are now both portrayed positively.** Revised maps now depict the Hatay Province as part of Turkey, indicating an abandonment of Syria's territorial claims over that region. References to the "Ottoman occupation" and "foreign Turkic rule" have been removed, and Arab nationalist resistance to Ottoman rule is recast as undermining Islamic territorial integrity and collaborating with foreign adversaries.
- **Israel remains consistently demonized and delegitimized.** Israel's existence is denied and it is referred to variously as "enemy," "thieving," and "filth." Palestinian violence against Israel is consistently justified and glorified, and military actions during the 1948 war by the Jewish side are compared to "Nazi crimes against the Jews." Historical peace agreements with Israel are presented in a negative light. Interest in the Golan Heights as a Syrian national issue has declined and it is now framed as one of many occupied Muslim lands.

Acknowledgments

IMPACT-se's research into national curricula involves the meticulous review of thousands of textbook pages, systematically evaluating their content against UNESCO-derived standards of peace, tolerance, and respect for the "Other." This rigorous methodology underpins our commitment to promoting education that supports coexistence and fosters constructive global citizenship.

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Introduction

This report presents a comprehensive analysis of the reforms introduced to the 2025-2026 Syrian national curriculum, the first national school curriculum under the new Syrian administration led by President Ahmed al-Sharaa. The new curriculum was issued in September 2025, shortly after the collapse of the Assad regime in December 2024, as part of the new Syrian administration's first attempt to consolidate authority over the Syrian state, society, and education system. In this context, official state school textbooks are more than instructional material. They serve as an effective state instrument for defining political legitimacy, religious authority, national identity, collective memory, social belonging, and the boundaries of acceptable citizenship. This report is therefore helpful in understanding the 2025-2026 curriculum as an early and particularly revealing indicator of how the new Syrian administration seeks to reshape the country after more than five decades of Assad family rule (1970-2024) and thirteen years of civil war (2011-2024).

Previous Research on the Syrian Curriculum

Previous research on the Syrian school curriculum, including earlier IMPACT-se studies, has established both the main features and ideological trends of Assad-era national education and the prospective direction of curricular reform announced by the new Syrian administration in early 2025. Together, these studies provide the comparative basis for assessing both continuity with and change from the Assad-era curriculum and the extent to which the new administration's announced reform agenda was ultimately implemented in the 2025-2026 curriculum. IMPACT-se's examination of the Syrian curriculum began with a study of textbooks produced under the Assad regime, at a time when regional peace initiatives raised the question of whether education was evolving to support reconciliation. The Center for Monitoring the Impact of Peace (CMIP) 2001 report on Jews, Zionism and Israel in Syrian school textbooks found that, despite diplomatic changes in the region, Syrian textbooks maintained a worldview shaped by Arab nationalism, armed resistance, and rejection of Israel's legitimacy.[1] Peace education was largely absent: Israel was omitted from maps, and neither Israelis nor Jews were presented as local groups with whom coexistence might be possible. At the same time, the report found that explicit religious hatred toward Jews was not the curriculum's defining characteristic. Rather, its central concern lay in the denial of Israel's legitimacy as a Jewish nation-state and the portrayal of the Arab-Israeli conflict as permanent and irreconcilable.

Nearly two decades later, and in the wake of the ensuing Syrian civil war, IMPACT-se's 2018 study of the revised curriculum issued by the Assad regime showed that the civil war had not produced a fundamental ideological transformation in state education.[2] The Assad regime's revised textbooks still emphasized a centralized Arab-Syrian identity, loyalty to the Syrian state, and pan-Arab belonging, while largely marginalizing Syria's ethnic, religious, and political diversity. Issues of peace, tolerance, and "the Other" remained problematic: Western influence was viewed with suspicion, Israel continued to be treated with hostility, and pluralism was formally acknowledged more than genuinely embraced. The curriculum's treatment of Syrian national identity revealed a striking continuity between pre-war and wartime education: even amid profound national fragmentation, the revised textbooks issued by the Assad regime sought to preserve a monolithic state narrative rather than cultivate inclusive citizenship or reconciliation.

A recent study by researchers at the University of Macedonia in Thessaloniki, comparing representations of "the Other" in both Emirati and Assad-regime Syrian school textbooks, found that Syrian history textbooks under Assad approached world history from a distinctly Arab nationalist perspective, presenting other peoples, civilizations, and historical actors primarily through their relationship with the Arab nation. Rather than encouraging students to understand the experiences and viewpoints of different societies on their own terms, the curriculum tended to evaluate other peoples and societies according to the manner in which they supported, opposed, or affected Arab nationalist interests. European colonial powers were often depicted as exploitative and oppressive, while the Jewish national movement and the Arab-Israeli conflict featured prominently as defining historical struggles. This produced a narrative in which "the Other" was frequently presented as a political rival, occupier, or external force rather than as a

1 Arnon Groiss and Yohanan Manor, "Jews, Zionism and Israel in Syrian School Textbooks," New York: CMIP, June 2001.

2 Eldad J. Pardo and Maya Jacobi, "Syrian National Identity: Reformulating School Textbooks During the Civil War," Jerusalem: IMPACT-se, July 2018, https://www.impact-se.org/wp-content/uploads/Syrian-National-Identity_IMPACT-se_July-2018-.pdf.

complex society with its own history and perspectives. The authors argue that this reflected the broader priorities of the Assad-era Baʿthist educational project, which used history education to strengthen Arab national identity and a sense of shared struggle, while leaving relatively little room for historical empathy, pluralism, or a more nuanced engagement with different cultures and peoples.[3]

HTS's experience of governing the opposition-held Idlib region through the Syrian Salvation Government during 2018-2024 is significant, as it provides a precedent for the 2025-2026 national-level curriculum revision. During the Syrian civil war, education in Idlib and surrounding areas did not develop from an entirely new curriculum model. Available reporting on northwestern Syria indicates that schools under the HTS-linked Syrian Salvation Government used a unified curriculum based on the pre-2011 Syrian curriculum, with deletions of material related to the Assad regime or considered contradictory to Islamic shariah.[4] This earlier opposition-held curriculum therefore already followed a method that resembles the 2025-2026 national revision: retaining the structure of older Syrian textbooks while removing regime-centered content and reshaping religiously sensitive material. While the 2025-2026 Syrian national curriculum should indeed be defined as a hurried post-Assad emergency measure, it can also be seen as a larger national-scale repetition of the hurried focused revision of existing Assad-regime textbooks practiced under the 2018-2024 Syrian Salvation Government in opposition-controlled Idlib.

Another such precedent is found in the Dar al-Waḥy al-Sharīf (DWS) school network, founded in 2017 under HTS patronage in northwestern Syria and is currently active across several Syrian provinces. Dar al-Waḥy al-Sharīf constituted an autonomous school network directly affiliated with HTS and teaching a curriculum aligned with its Islamist and jihadist ideology. Both its school network and curriculum were distinct from the Syrian Salvation Government's broader school system in Idlib and from its revised Syrian national curriculum. The Dar al-Waḥy al-Sharīf network has become the region's most expansive educational institution of its kind, serving around 16,000 children across more than seventy institutions by the 2024-2025 academic year. Its distinct curriculum combines religious scripture learning with Islamist pedagogy, and its motto "toward an exceptional Qur'anic generation" captures a curriculum designed to fuse religious, moral, and social instruction.[5] The network therefore offers an important comparison point for the 2025-2026 national curriculum. Compared with the model of Dar al-Waḥy al-Sharīf, the 2025-2026 Syrian national curriculum examined in the present report is assessed here as less ideologically coherent and less fully Islamized. Nevertheless, the school network helps clarify the educational ethos from which HTS-linked governance emerged: centrality of religious scripture, Islamic moral formation, controlled identity-building, and loyalty to an Islamist political order.

The latest IMPACT-se contribution to the study of Syrian textbooks shifts attention from the Assad regime to Hay'at Tahrir al-Sham's (HTS) proposed reforms to the Syrian national curriculum. In a February 2025 report, IMPACT-se reviewed the prospective changes decreed by the new HTS-led Ministry of Education in January 2025 for implementation during the 2024-2025 school year.[6] The proposed amendments marked a significant development and a new phase in Syrian curriculum research: the question was no longer only how the Baʿthist state had used education, but also how new authorities seek to reshape identity, religion, and their own political legitimacy through textbooks. The review found a deliberate effort to remove symbols associated with the Assad regime, including references to Baʿthist

3 Maria Darla and Panos Kourgiotis, "Teaching the Others' History in an Arab National Context: Comparing Emirati to Syrian School Textbooks," Genealogy 9(3): 91 (2025), https://www.mdpi.com/2313-5778/9/3/91.

4 Aamer Almustafa, "Education System in Northwestern Syria: A Long Road Ahead," The Tahrir Institute for Middle East Policy, June 9, 2023.

5 Omar Sayfo, "Toward an Exceptional Qur'anic Generation: How Dar al-Wahy al-Sharif Schools Shape Islam, Identity, and Power in Northwest Syria," International Journal of Middle East Studies 57, no. 4 (2025), pp. 604-622.
Tal Beeri and Dvir Peri, "What the World Does Not See: al-Sharaa's Islamist Education System – Will It Become Syria's Central Education System?", Alma Research and Education Center, December 28, 2025:
https://israel-alma.org/what-the-world-does-not-see-al-sharaas-islamist-education-system-will-it-become-syrias-central-education-system/;
Dvir Peri, "The 'Dar al-Wahi al-Sharif' School Network in Syria: Jihadist and Anti-Israel Indoctrination," Alma Research and Education Center, July 7, 2026:
https://israel-alma.org/wp-content/uploads/2026/07/The-Dar-al-Wahi-al-Sharif-School-Network-in-Syria-Jihadist-and-Anti-Israel-Indoctrination.pdf;
Dvir Peri, "Dar al-Wahi al-Sharif: Further Examples of Islamist, Jihadist, and Antisemitic Indoctrination in its School Textbooks", Alma Research and Education Center, July 26, 2026:
https://israel-alma.org/wp-content/uploads/2026/07/Dar-al-Wahi-al-Sharif-Further-Examples-of-Islamist-Jihadist-and.pdf.

6 Tomer Shporn, "A Review of Hay'at Tahrir al-Sham's Intended Changes to the Syrian Curriculum," London: IMPACT-se, February 2025, https://www.impact-se.org/wp-content/uploads/A-Review-of-Hayat-Tahrir-al-Shams-Intended-Changes-to-the-Syrian-Curriculum.pdf.

ideology, state-centered loyalty, Syrian and Arab nationalism, and the Assad personality cult. At the same time, the report identified HTS's aim to introduce a more explicitly Islamist political orientation by revising religious terminology, strengthening Islamic references across subjects, and reframing historical and cultural narratives through a Sunni Islamic lens, all at the expense of national, civic, and humanistic values. The report also highlighted concerns regarding HTS's approach to pluralism and inclusivity, particularly with respect to religious minorities and women.

A recent June 2026 study by Eldad J. Pardo and Carmit Valensi at the Institute for National Security Studies (INSS) likewise examined the new Syrian curriculum as an indicator of the emerging political and ideological direction of post-Assad Syria. The INSS study employed a more selective corpus of textbooks and assessed the 2025-2026 curriculum's overall content primarily as a whole, identifying broad characteristics such as conservative Syrian Arab nationalism, strengthened religious content, and the continued presence of anti-Israel narratives alongside certain instances of moderation.[7] This report adopts a different methodological emphasis, systematically comparing 130 textbooks with the earlier editions from which they were revised, treating the distinction between altered and retained material as analytically significant. This comparative approach also leads to a different weighting of the evidence in several areas, as the report finds that the pattern of deliberate revisions supports stronger conclusions than would emerge from a selective reading of the curriculum as a homogeneous whole.

The Founding of a New Syria: Historical and Ideological Background

Before examining the corpus of the reformed curriculum under the new Syrian administration, it is important to pay special attention to the political, ideological, and historical background that forms the broader context of these curriculum reforms. The new circles in power in the Syrian administration emerged largely from Sunni Islamist, jihadist, and Salafi-jihadist militant organizations. The current Syrian president, Ahmed al-Sharaa, also known by his former nom de guerre Abu Muhammad al-Jolani, was born in 1982 in Riyadh, Saudi Arabia, to a Syrian Sunni Muslim family originating from the Golan Heights. In 1989, al-Sharaa moved as a child with his family to Damascus, Syria, where he grew up, attended school, and began university studies. In 2003, al-Sharaa dropped out of university and travelled to Iraq to fight against the American-led invasion of Iraq, where he joined the Islamist-jihadist forces led by Abu Mus'ab al-Zarqawi (1966-2006), which in October 2004 pledged allegiance to Osama bin Laden and al-Qaeda's central leadership, and officially became al-Qaeda in Iraq (AQI). Around 2005-2006, al-Sharaa was captured and detained by American and Iraqi forces, including at Camp Bucca in Iraq. By 2011, al-Sharaa had been released and returned to his previous organizational allegiance, then operating as the Islamic State in Iraq (ISI) under the leadership of Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi (1971-2019). In August 2011, al-Sharaa was ordered by ISI, with the blessing of al-Qaeda's central leadership, to establish and lead a new al-Qaeda wing to operate in Syria under the name Jabhat al-Nusra. In 2013, when Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi attempted to incorporate Jabhat al-Nusra into his newly proclaimed Islamic State in Iraq and al-Sham (ISIS), al-Sharaa rejected the move and instead pledged allegiance directly to al-Qaeda's leader Ayman al-Zawahiri. Despite the later split of the Islamic State from al-Qaeda in 2014 and the following subsequent violent clashes between the two, Jabhat al-Nusra remained loyal to the authority and direct affiliation of al-Qaeda's central leadership. Jabhat al-Nusra consequently remained directly affiliated with al-Qaeda's central leadership, while Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi's ISIS increasingly broke with al-Qaeda. The organizational split culminated in al-Qaeda's formal disavowal of ISIS in February 2014 and subsequent prolonged violent clashes in Syria between al-Sharaa's al-Qaeda-affiliated Jabhat al-Nusra and Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi's independent ISIS.[8]

In July 2016, Jabhat al-Nusra publicly announced the severing of its formal ties with al-Qaeda and reconstituted itself as Jabhat Fath al-Sham (JFS), a move presented by al-Sharaa as intended to remove foreign pretexts for targeting the organization and to embed it more firmly within the Syrian revolutionary arena. In January 2017, JFS merged with several other Islamist jihadist armed factions to form Hay'at Tahrir al-Sham (HTS), which gradually developed

7 Eldad J. Pardo & Carmit Valensi, "The Collapse of the Assad Regime and Syria's Future Through the Lens of Syrian Textbooks", INSS, June 2026: https://www.inss.org.il/strategic_assessment/syria-books/.

8 On Ahmed al-Sharaa- / Abu Muhammad al-Jolani's trajectory from the Iraqi jihadist milieu to Jabhat al-Nusra, Jabhat Fatah al-Sham, and HTS, see: 'The rise of Abu Mohammed al-Jolani: From jihadist in Iraq to Syria's new strongman,' Le Monde, December 9, 2024; Charles Lister, The Syrian Jihad: Al-Qaeda, the Islamic State and the Evolution of an Insurgency, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2015; Charles Lister, 'Profiling Jabhat al-Nusra,' Brookings Doha Center Analysis Paper, no. 24, July 2016.

into the dominant military and governing force in northwestern Syria. Over the following years, HTS increasingly repositioned its ideology of global *jihad* and political Islamism around Syria, distancing itself organizationally from al-Qaeda's transnational command structure and agenda, suppressing or marginalizing some rival jihadist factions, consolidating territorial control, and building governance and administrative institutions across the Idlib region. This development reflected a significant strategic and political adaptation in which HTS combined continued Islamist and jihadist ideological commitments with increasingly pragmatic territorial governance and state-like administration. Under its consolidated rule over Idlib during 2018-2024, HTS had therefore become not merely the organizational successor to Jabhat al-Nusra, but a territorially rooted Islamist political-military movement whose leadership had increasingly prioritized Syrian governance, institutional consolidation, and political survival, while preserving and adapting substantial elements of its Islamist and jihadist ideological heritage.[9]

On November 27, 2024, a coalition of Syrian nationalist and Islamist rebel groups led by Hay'at Tahrir al-Sham (HTS, "The Levant Liberation Committee"), operating under the Military Operations Command, launched Operation Deterrence of Aggression (*Radʿ al-ʿUdwān*) against Syrian Arab Army (SAA) positions in northwestern Syria. The offensive began with the attempt to seize Aleppo, Syria's largest northern city and a major symbolic and strategic center of the civil war. Aleppo fell to rebel forces on November 30, creating the opening for a rapid campaign against other major regime-held cities. Hama was captured on December 5, Daraa on December 6, and Homs, Suwayda, and Quneitra on December 7. On December 8, 2024, rebel forces entered Damascus, ending more than five decades of Assad family rule under Hafez al-Assad and his son Bashar al-Assad. Bashar al-Assad and his wife left Syria for Moscow, bringing the Assad dynasty's control of the Syrian state to an end after thirteen years of civil war. The speed of the campaign gave the new authorities immediate control over state institutions but also left them facing the more difficult task of transforming military victory into political rule.[10]

Abu Mohammad al-Jolani, the commander of HTS, who has been indoctrinated by the radical Salafi-jihadi ideology of al-Qaeda and the Islamic State in Iraq and an ascending actor under Jabhat al-Nusra and later on its distant descendant HTS, now finds himself at the top of the shaky pyramid that is post-civil war Syria. Assuming the office of the President of the Syrian Arab Republic on January 29, 2025, al-Jolani had to work on two parallel courses, to consolidate his power on the one hand, and bring stability to war-torn Syria on the other hand.[11] On the international front, al-Jolani had to convince the world of his shift from the dogmatic and radical hotbed of global jihad to the pragmatic domain of politics and statehood. Presenting a new face and name to the world, al-Jolani, who had forsaken his *nom de guerre* and returned to his original name Ahmed al-Sharaa, used the first year of his term as President to initiate a diplomatic blitz. In the course of 2025, he conducted meetings with prominent state leaders, including French President Emmanuel Macron, Saudi Arabia's Crown Prince Mohammed Bin Salman, Turkey's President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan and Russian President Vladimir Putin, culminating in a meeting with US President Donald Trump at the White House[12] and a historic speech at the 80th session of the United Nations General Assembly in New York city.[13] Apart from holding these meetings, which *de facto* indicated recognition of the new Syrian governing authority, a major achievement contributing to al-Sharaa's efforts to push Syria forward was the lifting of sanctions on Syria and its figureheads.[14]

9 On the public break between Jabhat al-Nusra and al-Qaeda and its renaming as Jabhat Fatah al-Sham, see 'Al-Nusra Front cuts ties with al-Qaida and renames itself,' The Guardian, July 28, 2016; Everything You Need to Know about the New Nusra Front,' Time, July 28, 2016. On Jabhat al-Nusra and HTS in the Syrian jihadist field, see Charles Lister, *The Syrian Jihad: Al-Qaeda, the Islamic State and the Evolution of an Insurgency*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2015; Aaron Y. Zelin, *The Age of Political Jihadism: A Study of Hayat Tahrir al-Sham*, Washington Institute for Near East Policy, 2022.

10 For a timeline of Operation Deterrence of Aggression, see: Antoinette Radford, "The Assad regime ruled Syria for 50 years. Here's how it fell in less than two weeks", CNN website, December 9, 2024, https://www.cnn.com/2024/12/09/middleeast/timeline-syria-assad-regime-toppled-intl.

11 "General Command appoints Ahmed al-Sharaa as President of Syria", *Enab Baladi* website, January 29, 2025. https://english.enabbaladi.net/archives/2025/01/general-command-appoints-ahmed-al-sharaa-as-president-of-syria

12 "Syria, a (Former) Jihadist in Washington: What to Know about the Trump–Al-Sharaa Meeting", *Italian Institute for International Political Studies (ISPI)* website, November 11, 2025, https://www.ispionline.it/en/publication/syria-a-former-jihadist-in-washington-what-to-know-about-the-trump-al-sharaa-meeting-223137.

13 Al-Sharaa's full speech: "Syria - President Addresses United Nations General Debate, 80th Session | #UNGA", *United Nations* YouTube channel, September 24, 2025. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=jcyTMLGljzc.

14 Conor Lennon, "Security Council lifts terror-related sanctions on Syrian President", *United Nations* website, November 6, 2025, https://news.un.org/en/story/2025/11/1166303;
Sam Tabahriti and Daphne Psaledakis, "US, Britain remove sanctions on Syria's president", *Reuters* website, November 8, 2025. https://www.reuters.com/world/middle-east/britain-removes-sanctions-syrias-president-interior-minister-2025-11-07.

On the domestic front, al-Sharaa has been confronting the sectarian rifts that seem to have escalated during the Syrian Civil War, and even more so in its aftermath. The new regime under al-Sharaa opted for two conflicting courses of action. One is the violent persecution and oppression of any opposition or threat to the new government, which has been exercised on numerous occasions since al-Sharaa's rise to power. In March 2025, hundreds of civilians from the Alawite ethno-religious group, to which the Assad (originally al-Wahsh) family belonged, were massacred in the northwestern coastal regions by armed groups and volunteers aligned with the former HTS and the new Syrian government. Intermittent clashes between Bedouin tribes and Druze in Suwayda Province in southern Syria in April and July 2025 were mitigated by brutal intervention of the military and paramilitary forces of al-Sharaa's regime. In January 2026, and continuing at the time of writing, regime forces seized Kurdish-held territories that used to be controlled by the Syrian Democratic Forces (SDF) in northeastern Syria.[15] Additionally, a painful reminder of the presence of jihadi factions and non-governmental sectarian extremism was given in June 2025, when a suicide attack struck a church in the heart of Damascus, which was linked to a virtually anonymous Sunni Muslim group named Saraya Ansar al-Sunnah.[16] Despite the infrequent sect-based unrest, initial steps on the course of rehabilitating Syria's societal foundations have been observed, although they seemingly avoided the media spotlight. For instance, on December 31, 2024, a few weeks after the takeover of Damascus, President al-Sharaa met a delegation of clerics from different Christian sects, who affirmed to the new Syrian President that Christians "are an integral component of Syrian society".[17] On January 16, 2026, Ahmed al-Sharaa signed Decree No. 13, which grants citizenship to all Syrian Kurds and affirms that they are "an inseparable part of Syria's unified and diverse national identity", without hurting the particular characteristics that differentiate them as an ethnoreligious sect.[18] On January 18, 2026, just over a year into President al-Sharaa's rule, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs issued a statement affirming "that the unity and cohesion of the Syrian people, in all its components, is the solid foundation for any lasting stability."[19] With its unique diverse social tapestry, healing the bleeding wounds of sectarianism will likely continue to pose a complex challenge to al-Sharaa's regime. As this report demonstrates, these references to unity and cohesion often involve promoting a single dominant perspective rather than fostering the inclusion of Syria's diverse religious, ethnic, and social communities.

A further indication of al-Sharaa's attempt to institutionalize the new political order came with the reconstitution of Syria's People's Assembly. Following indirect elections and presidential appointments, the newly formed legislature held its inaugural session in Damascus on July 12, 2026, the first parliamentary sitting since the fall of the Assad regime. Al-Sharaa presented the Assembly as part of a broader process of consolidating state institutions and described consultation (*shūrā*), dialogue, and the rule of law as foundations of the new political order.[20] The move, however, also drew criticism from the Islamic State (ISIS), which continued to portray al-Sharaa's transition from Salafi-jihadist leader to head of the current Syrian state as an ideological betrayal. In an editorial published in its weekly *al-Naba*ʾ in early

15 On the recent clashes between the regime and the Kurds, see: "How Syria's Sharaa captured Kurdish-held areas while keeping the US onside", *Reuters* website, January 22, 2026.
https://www.reuters.com/world/middle-east/how-syrias-sharaa-captured-kurdish-held-areas-while-keeping-us-onside-2026-01-21;
Hugo Bachega, "Rapid rollback of Kurdish-led forces reshapes Sharaa's Syria", *BBC* website, January 22, 2026.
https://www.bbc.com/news/articles/c9311l0d40qo.
More on the confessional tensions in Syria under al-Sharaa, see: Philip Loft, "Research Briefing: Syria one year after Assad: Religious minorities", *House of Commons Library* website, December 11, 2025. https://commonslibrary.parliament.uk/research-briefings/cbp-10429;
Carmit Valensi and Amal Hayek, "The New Syria—One Year After al-Sharaa's Rise to Power", *The Institute for National Security Studies (INSS)* website, INSS Insight No. 2070, December 14, 2025. https://www.inss.org.il/publication/syria-year-after

16 Aaron Y. Zelin, "The Damascus Church Attack: Who Is Saraya Ansar al-Sunnah?", *The Washington Institute*, June 25, 2025,
https://www.washingtoninstitute.org/policy-analysis/damascus-church-attack-who-saraya-ansar-al-sunnah.

17 Souheil Lawand, "Hopes rise for Christians as Church leaders meet new Syria leader", *EWTN News* website, January 4, 2025,
https://www.ewtnnews.com/world/middle-east/hopes-rise-for-christians-as-church-leaders-meet-new-syria-leader.

18 "President al-Sharaa issues decree that confirms Kurds as basic part of Syrian people", *Syrian Arab News Agency (SANA)* website, January 16, 2026,
https://sana.sy/en/politics/2290787.

19 "Statement Issued by The Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Expatriates of The Syrian Arab Republic," MOFA Syria, (January 18, 2026)
https://mofaex.gov.sy/en/news/%D8%A8%D9%8A%D8%A7%D9%86-%D8%B5%D8%A7%D8%AF%D8%B1-%D8%B9%D9%86-%D9%88%D8%B2%D8%A7%D8%B1%D8%A9-%D8%A7%D9%84%D8%AE%D8%A7%D8%B1%D8%AC%D9%8A%D8%A9-%D9%88%D8%A7%D9%84%D9%85%D8%BA%D8%AA%D8%B1%D8%A8%D9%8A%D9%8604.

20 SANA, "Syria's New People's Assembly Holds Inaugural Session", July 12, 2026: https://sana.sy/en/syria/2328935/
Reuters, "New Syrian parliament meets for first time in Damascus", July 12, 2026:
https://www.reuters.com/world/middle-east/new-syrian-parliament-meets-first-time-damascus-2026-07-12/.

July 2026, ISIS attacked the formation of the People's Assembly as an illegitimate form of human-made legislation opposed to divine sovereignty and God's granted laws. Reporting on the editorial described how the Islamic State organization called for the destruction of "rule by the people" in favor of rule by God alone and treated the Assembly's reinstating as contrary to Islamic shariah.[21] This criticism is particularly significant because it illustrates an ideological distance between al-Sharaa's increasingly state-centered and institution-building approach and more uncompromising Salafi-jihadist conceptions of political authority.

This increasingly pragmatic political behavior should not necessarily be understood as evidence of an equivalent ideological transformation in every sphere of the new Syrian state. Al-Sharaa's transition from Salafi-jihadist commander to state president has required accommodation with foreign governments, international institutions, minority communities, and competing domestic constituencies, creating strong incentives for moderation in public rhetoric and political practice. The school curriculum, however, serves a different function. Unlike diplomatic statements or short-term political compromises, textbooks define the values, identities, historical narratives, and forms of political and religious legitimacy that the state seeks to transmit systematically to future generations. The curriculum can therefore provide a particularly revealing indication of the new Syrian administration's longer-term ideological priorities, including elements that may be expressed less openly in its external diplomacy or immediate political conduct. This distinction is important to this report: the ideological patterns identified in the 2025-2026 textbooks should not be read as a simple reflection of every policy pursued by al-Sharaa's government, but as evidence of the normative social and political order that the new Syrian administration considered sufficiently important to incorporate into the Syrian curriculum during their first year in power.

The contrast between al-Sharaa's political pragmatism and the ideological content of the curriculum becomes particularly significant when compared with criticism directed at him by more uncompromising Salafi-jihadist actors. The Islamic State has repeatedly attacked al-Sharaa for abandoning the absolutist political program of global jihad in favor of diplomacy, state institutions, consultation, and accommodation with foreign and domestic actors. Its July 2026 al-Naba' editorial on Syria's new People's Assembly, for example, rejected parliamentary legislation and popular political authority in favor of exclusive divine sovereignty, illustrating the ideological distance between ISIS and the institutional model now being developed in Damascus. Yet this political divergence does not mean that the new Syrian curriculum has abandoned the broader ideological repertoire from which al-Sharaa and HTS emerged. As this report demonstrates, the textbooks continue to elevate Islam as a principal source of political and moral authority, strengthen the role of shariah, privilege the Islamic ummah over competing national frameworks, and present jihad and martyrdom as elevated forms of sacrifice. The curriculum therefore occupies an important intermediate position: it does not reproduce the uncompromising doctrine or political and ideological Salafi-jihadi agenda, but neither does it simply mirror the pragmatic moderation visible in al-Sharaa's diplomacy and state-building. Instead, it preserves and institutionalizes significant Islamist and pan-Islamist elements that could be traced back to Salafi-jihadi ideological background within Syrian education while the government simultaneously pursues a more pragmatic political course.

21 Abdullah al-Bashir, "The new Syrian People's Assembly: priorities, powers and limitations", The New Arab (Damascus), July 7, 2026:
https://www.newarab.com/news/new-syrian-assembly-begins-priorities-powers-and-limitations,
Aymenn Jawad al-Tamimi, "Islamic State Editorial on the New Syrian Parliament", July 4, 2026:
https://www.aymennaltamimi.com/p/islamic-state-editorial-on-the-new-eb5?utm,
I24NEWS، 5 يوليو 2026، " ماذا وراء هجوم داعش على مجلس الشعب السوري والرئيس أحمد الشرع؟":
https://www.i24news.tv/ar/%D8%A3%D8%AE%D8%A8%D8%A7%D8%B1/middle-east/artc-ac414c24
RT، 4 يوليو 2026، "'داعش' يصوب على مجلس الشعب السوري ويواصل هجومه على الشرع":
https://arabic.rt.com/middle_east/1806986-%D8%AF%D8%A7%D8%B9%D8%B4-%D9%8A%D8%B5%D9%88%D8%A8-%D8%B9%D9%84%D9%89-%D9%85%D8%AC%D9%84%D8%B3-%D8%A7%D9%84%D8%B4%D8%B9%D8%A8-%D8%A7%D9%84%D8%B3%D9%88%D8%B1%D9%8A-%D9%88%D9%8A%D9%88%D8%A7%D8%B5%D9%84-%D9%87%D8%AC%D9%88%D9%85%D9%87-%D8%B9%D9%84%D9%89-%D8%A7%D9%84%D8%B4%D8%B1%D8%B9/
المرصد السوري، 4 يوليو 2026، "افتتاحية نارية لـ"النبأ".. تنـظـيم "الـدولـة الإسـلامـية" يهـاجـم مجلس الشعب ويكفّر أعضاءه":
https://www.facebook.com/syriahro/posts/%D8%A7%D9%81%D8%AA%D8%AA%D8%A7%D8%AD%D9%8A%D8%A9-%D9%86%D8%A7%D8%B1%D9%8A%D8%A9-%D9%84%D9%80%D8%A7%D9%84%D9%86%D8%A8%D8%A3-%D8%AA%D9%86%D9%80-%D9%80%D8%B8%D9%80-%D9%80%D9%8A%D9%85-%D8%A7%D9%84%D9%80-%D9%80%D8%AF%D9%88%D9%84%D9%80-%D9%80%D8%A9-%D8%A7%D9%84%D8%A5%D8%B3%D9%80-%D9%80%D9%84%D8%A7%D9%85%D9%80-%D9%80%D9%8A%D8%A9-%D9%8A%D9%87%D9%80-%D9%80%D8%A7%D8%AC%D9%80-%D9%80%D9%85-%D9%85%D8%AC%D9%84%D8%B3/1472177838273937/

The Syrian Ministry of Education 2024/25 Decree for Curriculum Reforms

On December 29, 2024, the Ministry of Education in Syria published an executive order (no. 3422/943) prescribing immediate directives for curriculum reform, implementing specific changes for the 2024-25 textbooks based on the 2023-24 editions. Reviewing what is hereafter referred to as the "Directives Matrix," in February 2025 IMPACT-se published a breakdown of the reform into official (declared) and unofficial (inferred) directives. These directives effectively called for the removal of Assad-Ba'thist era symbols of state and accomplishments, National (civic) Education textbooks, and negative references to the Ottoman Empire, as well as the Islamization of nationalistic elements and scientific concepts, the rejection of secular and foreign influences, and the marginalization of women. The report concluded that the changes are part of the regime's broader strategy to consolidate power and align the nation with its Islamist values, reflecting "a trend of curricular Islamification in accordance with Sunni Islamic values," while attempting to present a more moderate image internationally.[22]

The planned revisions by the Syrian Ministry of Education catalyzed immediate and widespread public opposition, characterized by nationwide calls for protests and demands for the resignation of Education Minister Nadhir al-Qadiri.[23] Critics and scholars expressed significant alarm over a perceived shift from a secular nationalist framework to an Islamist ideological interpretation of Syrian identity. Beyond the removal of the Ba'th or Assad legacy, the modification of phrases such as "defending the nation" to "defending Allah," the removal of fundamental scientific theories like Evolution and the Big Bang, the excision of pre-Islamic historical references—including the downplaying of Queen Zenobia–the deletion of texts describing the Ottoman Empire as a "brutal authority" and the deletion of sections on "Chinese philosophical thought" were viewed as an attempt to rewrite the nation's cultural history. These changes, which also included removing the "National Education" subject from the curriculum, instead bolstering religious studies instruction, fueled concerns that the new leadership intended to advance a more restrictive religious vision through the state's education system. Beyond general public dissent, the unilateral nature of these educational reforms has alienated civil society activists and ethnic or religious minorities, who fear the erosion of the government's promises of inclusivity and representative governance. While some segments of the population welcomed the removal of content glorifying the former Assad regime, activists argued that the broad erasure of historical fact and content on ancient civilizations threatens the pluralistic fabric of Syrian society.

In an attempt to mitigate this backlash, Minister al-Qadiri issued clarifying statements characterizing the modifications as "mere deletions" of regime-era propaganda rather than a comprehensive overhaul. He asserted that the curriculum would remain substantially unchanged until specialized committees could conduct a formal review, a move interpreted by some as a hasty retreat in the face of public indignation. To sidestep accusations of Islamism, an implicitly apologetic statement was recently made by Minister Al-Qadiri, who claimed "Our problem is not with the approved and internationally recognized Syrian curriculum [...], but with introducing thoughts and principles of the defunct [Assad] regime to our noble curriculum and attempting to plant [integrate] them–which represents a fabrication of the facts."[24] Interestingly, the former Minister of Education Darem Tabbaa supported Al-Qadiri and attempted to defend the reform, claiming "[The current] curriculum develops students' learning, critical thinking, analysis and synthesis skills, among others, and is based on international standards that take into account local cultural relevance."[25] Al-Qadiri similarly stressed to foreign media that the revision would be limited to "inaccuracies" in the

22 Tomer Shporn, "A Review of Hay'at Tahrir al-Sham's Intended Changes to the Syrian Curriculum," IMPACT-se, February 2025, https://www.impact-se.org/wp-content/uploads/A-Review-of-Hayat-Tahrir-al-Shams-Intended-Changes-to-the-Syrian-Curriculum.pdf.

23 NBC News, "Syria School Curriculum Changes: Islamist Rebels, Assad," https://www.nbcnews.com/news/world/syria-school-curriculum-changes-islamist-rebels-assad-rcna186078; Deccan Herald, "Assad is Out, but So is a Revered Queen: Textbook Changes Unsettle Syrians," https://www.deccanherald.com/world/assad-isout-but-so-is-a-revered-queen-textbook-changes-unsettle-syrians-2-3344190; The Wall Street Journal, "Syria's New Islamic Government Creates Controversy with Education Overhaul," https://www.wsj.com/world/middleeast/syrias-new-islamic-government-creates-controversy-with-education-overhaul-006cd52e; WorldCrunch, "Syria Islamists School Curricula," https://worldcrunch.com/world-affairs/syria-islamists-school-curricula.

24 Facebook, "Post by the Syrian Ministry of Education," December 20, 2024, https://www.facebook.com/permalink.php/?story_fbid=982116020608940&id=100064316544313.

25 "How Syria's Post-Assad Curriculum Reforms Reveal Political and Educational Tensions," The New Arab, January 8, 2025, https://www.newarab.com/features/inside-debate-over-curriculum-reforms-post-assad-syria.

Islamic Education curriculum.[26] In an interview to the Al-Arabiya channel, Al-Qadiri stated that the proposed changes would be forwarded to professional committees for evaluation.[27] In a separate statement for the Syrian state-run news agency SANA (Syrian Arab News Agency), Minister Al-Qadiri said the intended changes were only limited to removing content glorifying the Assad regime as well as the former Syrian flag.[28] He also stated that "changes and amendments to the curriculum will occur only after the situation stabilizes in Syria," stressing that "there is a significant difference between a comprehensive modification and the mere deletion of some paragraphs."[29] However, it is clear from IMPACT-se's analysis of the document's content that the directive extended well beyond these areas, affecting a wide range of other subjects.

In an interview to Al-Jazeera published in September 2025, Mohammed Sa'id Qaddour, Syrian Director of Education in the MOE, justified the sweeping curriculum reforms as a "professional and radical" correction of over 50 years of Ba'thist ideological distortion, asserting that it is the "legitimate right" of the revolution to provide an "honest narrative" of Syria's history. He detailed the systematic removal of content glorifying the former regime and the unprecedented inclusion of the 2011 Syrian Revolution, its symbols, and its victories, while also addressing previous omissions such as political maps in geography. Structurally, Qaddour noted that "National Education" has been replaced by a "Humanitarian Affairs" subject modeled after international standards, and Islamic Education has been simplified to prioritize linguistic benefits while avoiding "problematic issues." Finally, he emphasized a strategic shift toward "digital transformation" and interactive e-books designed to encourage independent scientific research, aiming to build strong student characters capable of resisting extremist ideologies found on social media.[30] The reform is therefore not merely an educational undertaking, but a highly sensitive redefinition of Syria's history, identity, and post-Assad national narrative–one that the MOE is heavily invested in publicly promoting and legitimizing.

The Directives Matrix provided an early indication of the trajectory of the new Syrian administration's educational reforms and, as such, attracted considerable international media attention. To properly assess the extent to which the regime has been able or willing to follow its educational vision, it is necessary to juxtapose the directives matrix with the published 2025-26 textbook editions. The Directives Matrix was an interim measure rather than a comprehensive list of reform directives. It was originally intended for the 2024-2025 textbooks, which remained in circulation. As a result, it reflected only the broad direction of the changes later implemented in the revised 2025-2026 curriculum, which ultimately underwent far more extensive revisions than the matrix itself indicated. There are varying degrees of implementation, ranging from full, through partial to none. It is unclear whether, and to what extent, media reporting and public backlash affected implementation. It may nevertheless be concluded that the implementation of the Directives Matrix was not systematic. Similar content or themes were subject to directives in some textbooks but not in others, and where directives did exist, their implementation often varied from one textbook to another. Likewise, the evidence does not show that any particular theme or subject was implemented more consistently than others. Coincidentally, some directives that have not been fully implemented were highlighted in media coverage (including that of IMPACT-se's February 2025 report); the section about female Syrian activist Nāzik al-ʿĀbid was retained despite intended removal, and the prescribed full deletion of a lesson on Chinese Philosophy saw only partial removal (see both cases below).

26 BBC News, "New Syrian government's school curriculum changes spark concern," https://www.bbc.com/news/articles/c1ln12056ppo; The Independent, "Syria School Curriculum Backlash," https://www.independent.co.uk/news/world/middle-east/syria-school-curriculum-backlash-b2673175.html; CNN, "Changes to Syria's School Curriculum Spark Online Outrage," https://edition.cnn.com/2025/01/02/middleeast/changes-to-syrias-school-curriculum-spark-onlineoutrage/index.html.

27 "The Syrian Minister of Education: 'Changing and Removing Everything Promoted by the Assad Regime via the Curricula,'" Al-Arabiya TV, January 5, 2025, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=FTK3KhN-wIQ; "Following a Dispute Triggered by Changes to the Curriculum: The Syrian Minister of Education Responds," Al-Jazeera TV, January 12, 2025, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=p-Q57VGJZ60.

28 Syrian Arab News Agency (SANA), "Minister of Education: We Will Not Modify Curricula", December 21, 2024, https://sana.sy/en/syria/343030/.

29 Chantal Da Silva and Ammar Cheikh Omar, "Anger over changes to school curriculum exposes Syria's fragile unity", *NBC News* website, January 4, 2025, https://www.nbcnews.com/news/world/syria-school-curriculum-changes-islamist-rebels-assad-rcna186078.

30 "With a new school year, the main changes in the Syrian school curricula," Al-Jazeera (September 25, 2025), https://www.aljazeeramubasher.net/news/2025/9/25/%D9%85%D8%B9-%D8%B9%D8%A7%D9%85-%D8%AF%D8%B1%D8%A7%D8%B3%D9%8A-%D8%AC%D8%AF%D9%8A%D8%AF-%D8%A3%D8%A8%D8%B1%D8%B2-%D8%A7%D9%84%D8%AA%D8%BA%D9%8A%D9%8A%D8%B1%D8%A7%D8%AA-%D9%81%D9%8A.

Additionally, many directives referred to textbook editions that were superseded by older editions when the 2025–26 curriculum was prepared, rendering the specific page references or wording of those directives largely irrelevant. This was mainly the case in Islamic Education, History, Geography, and Social Studies textbooks, regardless of the content. One example is the replacement of "commitment to the law" with "commitment to Islamic shariah" in an Islamic Education textbook. The change was not implemented on the page cited in the directive matrix because the new textbook was based on the 2017-2018 edition rather than the 2023-2024 edition referenced in the matrix, where the phrase no longer appeared. Nevertheless, the change was implemented elsewhere in the same textbook without a specific directive, demonstrating that the matrix set the broader tone for implementation.[31]

The following section demonstrates the extent to which selected directives were implemented in the 2025-2026 curriculum (most of these directives were flagged in IMPACT-se's February 2025 report): The Islamification of educational content constitutes a central principle of the proposed reforms to the Syrian curriculum. It covers not only Islamic Education, but most subjects within the curriculum, and entails the removal of content perceived as contradicting Islamic teachings or adapting them accordingly. For example, following the directives, a lesson about the "Origin of Life and its Development on Earth" from a Biology and Geology textbook was removed,[32] and the phrase "nature's gift" was changed to "Allah's gift" in a Sciences textbook.[33]

Syrian Arab Republic
Ministry of Education

الجمهورية العربية السورية
وزارة التربية والتعليم

تغيير عبارة عطاء الطبيعة لتكون عطاء الله	٥٢	الأول	الأول	

[...] [Grade] 1 – [Vol.] 1 – [Page] 52 – change phrase "nature's giving" to "Allah's giving"

However, some directives were partially implemented. For example, a directive calling for the removal of an entire paragraph on brain evolution was implemented only in part: while most of the text was deleted, the comparative illustration of the vertebrate brain was retained in modified form, being replaced with an illustration of the human brain alone.[34] Another directive was to delete a section on Chinese Philosophical thought, which was only partially implemented, removing the section on Yin and Yang but leaving the title and some of its content intact.[35] By contrast, some directives were not implemented. For example, a directive to remove an illustration of a sorcerer from a Grade 1 Mathematics textbook was not carried out, and the illustration remains unchanged,[36] despite the critical approaches from the Islamic perspective towards "sorcerers and conjurers" found elsewhere in the curriculum.[37] A directive to change the meaning of the "Straight Path" from the "path of good" to the "path of Islam" from a lesson on Surah al-Fātiḥa in the Grade 1 Islamic Education textbook was also not implemented.[38] Likewise, a line from a love poem which mentions supplication to the clouds to make rain fall was retained despite being directed for removal.[39] Another

31 *Islamic Education*, Grade 9, 2025-26, p. 105 (previously: *Islamic Education*, Grade 9, 2017-18, p. 106). The directive applies to 2023-24 edition, p. 20.

32 *Biology and Geology*, Grade 8, 2023-24, pp. 202-209.

33 *Sciences*, Grade 1, Vol. 1, 2024-25, p. 48 (previously: *Sciences*, Grade 1, Vol. 1, 2023-24, p. 52).

34 *Biology*, Grade 12 (Scientific Track), 2025-26, p. 12.

35 *Philosophy*, Grade 10 (Humanities Track), 2025-26, p. 22 (previously: *Philosophy*, Grade 10 (Humanities Track), 2023-24, p. 26).

36 *Mathematics*, Grade 1, Vol. 1, 2025-26, p. 30 (previously: *Mathematics*, Grade 1, Vol. 1, 2023-24, p. 37).

37 *Islamic Education*, Grade 12, 2025-26, pp. 75, 77 (previously: *Islamic Education*, Grade 12, 2017-18, pp. 71, 73).

38 *Islamic Education*, Grade 1, 2025-26, p. 10 (previously: *Islamic Education*, Grade 1, 2024-2025, p. 8; *Islamic Education*, Grade 1, 2023-24, p. 14).

39 *Arabic Language and its Literature*, Grade 10, 2025-26, p. 32 (previously: *Arabic Language and its Literature*, Grade 10 [Scientific and Literary], 2023-24, p. 43. For another unimplemented directive to change the phrase "The Straight Path - the Path of Goodness" to "The Path of Islam" in a lesson about Surah al-Fātiḥa, see *Islamic Education*, Grade 1, 2025-26, p. 10 (previously: *Islamic Education*, Grade 1, 2024-2025, p. 8; *Islamic Education*, Grade 1, 2023-24, p. 14).

example illustrating the unsystematic application of the Directives Matrix concerns Queen Zenobia of Palmyra.[40] While her removal was directed in a Grade 3 Islamic Education textbook, no equivalent directive was issued for the Grade 3 Arabic Language textbook, where references to her remain.[41]

This refers to material glorifying the Assad regime, Baʿthist nationalism, Syrian state symbols, and secular-nationalist narratives, replacing them with content more aligned with the Islamist ideological outlook of the new authorities. It also includes the erasure or reframing of Assad era achievements (such as wars with Israel) largely as failures. The fully implemented examples include replacing the old Syrian flag with the new one,[42] and removing references to the national anthem in some textbooks.[43] However, some directives within this theme were only partially implemented. For example, a lesson on national holidays that was intended to be removed in its entirety was instead revised: holidays such as Independence Day and Army Day were retained, while the accompanying images were removed.[44] Another example is a directive to remove the reference to the Assad regime's anthem from an Arabic Language textbook; the textbook, instead replaced the phrase "Repeating the Syrian Arab Anthem" with the phrase "I love my country."[45] Examples of unimplemented directives include a proposal to remove the lesson "Literature on National and Pan-Arab Issues," which teaches Arab resistance and independence poetry, including Palestinian literature and poems relating to the 1967 and 1973 Arab-Israel wars.[46] The treatment of the 1973 war provides another example of inconsistent implementation. In this lesson, as well as in others across the curriculum, it continues to be referred to as the "October Liberation War" despite directives to replace this terminology with "the 1973 war."[47] Another directive that was not implemented concerned the removal of an entire lesson titled "Syrian Influential Figures." The lesson remains in the curriculum and includes biographical profiles of Nāzik al-ʿĀbid, a Syrian nationalist and women's rights activist critical of Ottoman and French rule, Jules Jammal, a Syrian naval officer who died during the 1956 Suez Crisis, and other prominent Syrian figures.[48]

The proposed curricular changes strengthen themes of martyrdom, jihad, and armed struggle by introducing more explicit religious justifications for sacrifice and militancy within historical and Islamic educational contexts. However, the implementation of most directives relating to martyrdom cannot be assessed because they concerned Islamic Education textbooks whose 2025-2026 editions were based on the 2017-2018 (or earlier) editions rather than the referenced 2023-2024 versions. Nonetheless, a broader trend to distance depictions of martyrdom from non-religious settings can be observed elsewhere in the curriculum. One example appears in an Arabic language textbook, where illustrations of a girl and a boy in military uniform–accompanied by textboxes containing poetic verses praising martyrdom for the homeland–were removed from the 2025-2026 edition despite the absence of any official directive requiring their removal.[49] However, another Arabic Language textbook did not implement a directive requiring the removal of an activity in which students summarize a lesson on martyrdom and martyrs, including its emphasis on the sons of martyrs.[50]

The proposed directives promote a more favorable portrayal of the Ottoman Empire, softening or removing previous criticism and presenting Ottoman rule in a more positive Islamic-historical framework. The general directives in the

40 *Islamic Education*, Grade 3, 2023-24, p. 19.

41 *Arabic Is My Language*, Grade 3, Vol. 1, 2025-26, pp. 88-89 (previously: *Arabic Is My Language*, Grade 3, Vol. 1, 2023-24, pp. 98-99).

42 *Mathematics*, Grade 4, 2025-26, p. 75 (previously: *Mathematics*, Grade 4, 2023-24, p. 83).

43 *Arabic Is My Language*, Grade 2, Vol. 1, 2025-26, p. 5 (previously: *Arabic is My Language*, Grade 2, Vol. 1, 2023-24, p. 9).

44 *Social Studies*, Grade 3, 2025-26, pp. 109-110 (previously: *Social Studies*, Grade 3, 2023-24, pp. 123-124).

45 *Arabic is My Language*, Grade 2, Vol. 1, 2025-26, p. 7 (previously: *Arabic is My Language*, Grade 2, Vol. 1, 2023-24, p. 11).

46 *Arabic Language and Its Literature,* Grade 12 (Humanities Track), 2025-26, pp. 4-7 (previously: *Arabic Language and Its Literature,* Grade 12 [Humanities Track], 2023-24, pp. 8-12).

47 Ibid. In another such instance, while a directive to replace the term "the October Liberation War" with "the 1973 War" in a history textbook was irrelevant for the specific pages and section referenced in the directives matrix, it was nonetheless applied in a different section in the same textbook. *History*, Grade 12 (Humanities Track), 2025-26, p. 93 (previously: *History*, Grade 12 (Humanities Track), 2017-18, p. 96), The directive applies to edition 2023-24, pp. 143, 171.

48 Other figures include Ibrahim Hananu (1869-1935), a Syrian revolutionary of Kurdish origin who was a major figure in the Arab nationalist movement in northern Syria, leading a revolt against the French colonial presence in northern Syria in the early 1920s; Abu Khalil al-Qabbani (1833-1903), the "Father of Syrian theatre"; and Sulaiman al-Issa (1921-2013), a prominent Syrian poet and educator who advocated for Arab unity and nationalism. See Social Studies, Grade 3, 2025-26, pp. 96-99 (previously: Social Studies, Grade 3, 2023-24, pp. 110-113).

49 *Arabic is My Language*, Grade 5, Vol. 2, 2025-26, pp. 66-67 (previously: *Arabic is My Language*, Grade 5, Vol. 2, 2023-24, pp. 66-67).

50 *Arabic Language and its Literature*, Grade 11, 2025-26, p. 125. (previously: *Arabic Language and its Literature*, Grade 11 [Literary], 2023-24, p. 161).

above Directives Matrix instructed replacing the term "Ottoman occupation" with "Ottoman rule," underscoring the importance attached to revising the curriculum's portrayal of the Ottoman Empire. Additionally, a directive to remove a passage mentioning the "brutal Ottoman sultanate," "the Ottomans' injustice [...] oppression and torture they exercised against the Arabs" was removed,[51] and such changes are reflected across the curriculum. However, despite the directive for removal, one textbook retains a section praising Martyr's Day, commemorating the martyrdom of Syrian and Lebanese Muslims and Christian nationalists, who were executed on 6 May 1916 by the Ottoman governor of Greater Syria Djemal Pasha.[52]

The proposed curricular changes promote more conservative Islamic gender norms, including greater emphasis on traditional roles for women, modesty, and religiously framed conceptions of family and society. For example, a directive to remove references to the third-century Palmyrene queen Zenobia and the historically contested Islamic female warrior Khawla bint al-Azwar from a section on the contribution of Arab women to society in a Grade 3 Islamic Education textbook was effectively implemented. However, this was not because the directive itself was applied; rather, the 2025–26 textbook was based on the 2017–18 edition, which did not include the section, instead of the 2023–24 edition to which the directive referred.[53] However, in an English textbook, the directive to remove images which show girls and boys running with their bodies visible was only partially implemented. Rather than removing the illustrations altogether, they were replaced with images showing, only their faces.[54] Conversely, a directive to remove an illustration of a woman from a calculus exercise was not implemented,[55] and neither was a directive to remove pictures of girls in ballerina outfits from an English textbook.[56]

The planned revisions introduce more explicitly Islamic perspectives on religious minorities, including changes affecting the portrayal of non-Muslim and heterodox communities such as Jews, Christians, Druze, and Alawites, in some cases reinforcing exclusionary or sectarian narratives. Notably, an interpretation of the Qur'anic phrase "those who have evoked [God's] anger or those who are astray" (Surah al-Fātiḥa), commonly understood as referring to Jews, Christians, or idolaters, was instead explained in the Assad-era textbook as "those who have gone astray from the path of good." Instead of implementing the directed change to "the Jews and the Christians," the revised textbook adopts the more general formulations "those who knew the truth but deliberately abandoned it" and "those who abandoned the truth out of ignorance and deviation."[57] Further evidence of the directives' unsystematic and incomplete nature is provided by changes made to this theme despite the absence of prior instructions. This includes the mitigation of the role of the Syrian Alawite Salih al-Ali in leading the revolt against the French forces landing on the Syrian coast (1919-1921), relegating content on him to that of the Sunni Syrian rebel Shaykh Umar al-Bitar and removing his image featuring visible Alawite elements.[58]

These findings show that the Directives Matrix should not be understood as a comprehensive or systematically implemented blueprint, but as an early expression of the new authorities' broader ideological direction. Although implementation varied considerably and was often complicated by the reuse of older textbook editions, where the new editions were based on the 2023–2024 versions, most changes stipulated in the January 2025 decree were implemented, demonstrating the commitment and determination of the Ministry of Education under Muhammad Abd al-Rahman Turko since late March 2025. Overall, the curriculum reflects a shift away from Baʿthist secular nationalism toward a more explicitly Islamist narrative, including the reframing of national history, gender roles, martyrdom, Ottoman rule, and religious minorities. Changes made without corresponding directives further indicate that the matrix understated the reform's scope. The published textbooks therefore reveal an ideologically consequential and determined, yet administratively fragmented, reform process.

51 *Arabic Language and its Literature*, Grade 12 (Humanities Track), 2025-26, p. 43 (previously: *Arabic Language and its Literature*, Grade 12 (Humanities Track), 2023-24, p. 78).

52 *Arabic is My Language*, Grade 6, Vol. 1, 2025-26, p. 17 (previously: *Arabic is My Language*, Grade 6, Vol. 1, 2023-24, p. 24), Another mention of Martyr's Day in the Islamic Education textbook was replaced with a pan-Islamic message. *Islamic Education*, Grade 8, 2025-26, p. 101 (previously: *Islamic Education*, Grade 8, 2017-18, p. 103).

53 *Arabic Is My Language*, Grade 3, Vol. 1, 2025-26, pp. 88-89 (previously: *Arabic Is My Language*, Grade 3, Vol. 1, 2023-24, pp. 98-99).

54 *English*, Grade 10, Student's Book, 2025-26, pp. 81-82 (previously: *English*, Grade 10, Student's Book, 2023-24, pp. 87-88).

55 *Mathematics*, Grade 2, Vol. 1, 2025-26, p. 22 (previously: *Mathematics*, Grade 2, Vol. 1, 2023-24, p. 26).

56 *Emar – English Series* (Pupil's Book), Grade 1, 2025-26, p. 75 (previously: *Emar – English Series* [Pupil's Book], Grade 1, 2024-25, p. 75).

57 *Islamic Education*, Grade 1, 2025-26, p. 11 (previously: *Islamic Education*, Grade 1, 2023-24, p. 15).

58 *History,* Grade 12 (Humanities Track), 2025-26, p. 37 (previously: *History,* Grade 12 (Humanities Track), 2017-18, p. 38).

Essential Concepts and Key Terminology: Islamization, Islamism, and Pan-Islamism

The conceptual terminology used throughout this report is essential to understanding its evidence, analysis, and conclusions. The following key terms are therefore meticulously defined according to their use and meaning in this report. "Islamization" refers to the growing use of Islamic references, categories, values, and doctrinal boundaries as organizing principles of education, ideology, and social and political agenda.[59] "Islamism" or "political Islam" refers more specifically to political movements and ideologies that seek to use Islam as the main source of political inspiration, political authority, social order, law, and governance. An Islamist movement is therefore not merely a religious movement, but one that sees Islam, its commandments, textual sources, legal tradition, and moral worldview as the basis for organizing countries and societies.[60] This distinction is central to the chapter: the new curriculum does not simply include more religious material, but repeatedly presents Islam as the main framework for identity, authority, law, conflict, morality, knowledge, and social order. "Pan-Islamism" is a related but more specific idea. It refers to the belief that Islam should serve as the primary basis of political identity and collective self-determination, superseding divisions based on ethnicity, local geography, language, or nation-state borders. In pan-Islamist thought, Muslims are imagined first and foremost as members of a transnational Islamic community, the Islamic collective *ummah*, whose shared religious belonging is more politically meaningful than local, ethnic, or national differences. Historically, this idea developed in response to the weakening of Muslim empires, European colonialism, and the fragmentation of Muslim societies, and it later became central to many modern Islamist movements.[61] In the curriculum analyzed here, the pan-Islamist dimension appears when Syrian or Arab identity, the homeland or motherland, the Arab nation, local-national duty, or regional conflicts are reframed through Islam, Allah, the Faith, the lands of the Muslims, and the *ummah*.

These concepts are also part of the ideological environment from which Syria's new rulers emerged. Salafi-jihadi and Islamist militant movements such as al-Qaeda, ISIS, Jabhat al-Nusra, HTS, and other armed factions differ in doctrine, strategy, and political adaptation, but they share a broad ideological repertoire: Islam as the basis of legitimate order, the *ummah* as a transnational community of loyalty, shariah as a source of authority, *jihad* and martyrdom as elevated forms of struggle and sacrifice, and suspicion toward secular nationalism and non-Islamic sources of legitimacy.[62] This framework is especially relevant because Syria's new ruling networks emerged from Sunni Islamist, Jihadist, and

59 On Islamization as the reorganization of knowledge, education, and social meaning through Islamic principles and worldview, see Ismail Raji al-Faruqi, *Islamization of Knowledge: General Principles and Work Plan*, Herndon, VA: International Institute of Islamic Thought, 1982; Syed Muhammad Naquib al-Attas, *Islam and Secularism*, Kuala Lumpur: Muslim Youth Movement of Malaysia (ABIM), 1978; Rosnani Hashim, "Islamization of the Curriculum," *The American Journal of Islamic Social Sciences* 16, no. 2 (1999): pp. 27-43. For the broader "Islamization of knowledge" project as an educational and epistemological program seeking to integrate Islamic principles with modern disciplines, see also Isma'il Raji al-Faruqi and Abdullah Omar Naseef, eds., *Social and Natural Sciences: The Islamic Perspective*, Jeddah: King Abdulaziz University, 1981; Isma'il Raji al-Faruqi, *Al Tawhid: Its Implications for Thought and Life*, Herndon, VA: International Institute of Islamic Thought, 1982.

60 On Islamism or political Islam as the attempt to reshape political, social, economic, cultural, and legal order through Islamic principles, see John L. Esposito and Emad El-Din Shahin, eds., *The Oxford Handbook of Islam and Politics*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013; Shahram Akbarzadeh, ed., *Routledge Handbook of Political Islam*, London and New York: Routledge, 2012; Mohammed Ayoob, *The Many Faces of Political Islam: Religion and Politics in the Muslim World*, Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2008. See also Olivier Roy, The Failure of Political Islam, Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1994; Gilles Kepel, *Jihad: The Trail of Political Islam*, Cambridge, MA: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2002; Martin Kramer, ed., *The Islamism Debate*, Tel Aviv: Moshe Dayan Center for Middle Eastern and African Studies, 1997; Gudrun Krämer, "Political Islam," in Richard C. Martin, ed., *Encyclopedia of Islam and the Muslim World*, New York: Macmillan Reference USA, 2004.

61 On pan-Islamism as a transnational ideology of Muslim unity and collective political identity centered on the ummah, see Jacob M. Landau, *The Politics of Pan-Islam: Ideology and Organization*, Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1990. On its late Ottoman, colonial, and anti-imperial contexts, see Azmi Özcan, *Pan-Islamism: Indian Muslims, the Ottomans and Britain, 1877-1924*, Leiden: Brill, 1997; Kemal H. Karpat, *The Politicization of Islam: Reconstructing Identity, State, Faith, and Community in the Late Ottoman State*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001. For a recent global intellectual history of the modern idea of the "Muslim world" and its relationship to pan-Islamic political imagination, see Cemil Aydin, *The Idea of the Muslim World: A Global Intellectual History*, Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2017. See also Nile Green and James Gelvin, eds., *Global Muslims in the Age of Steam and Print*, Berkeley: University of California Press, 2014.

62 On Salafi-jihadism and global jihad as ideological fields, see: Quintan Wiktorowicz, "Anatomy of the Salafi Movement," *Studies in Conflict & Terrorism* 29, no. 3 (2006): pp. 207-239; Thomas Hegghammer, "The Rise of Muslim Foreign Fighters: Islam and the Globalization of Jihad," *International Security* 35, no. 3 (Winter 2010/11): pp. 53-94; Fawaz A. Gerges, *The Far Enemy: Why Jihad Went Global*, 2nd ed., Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009. On Jabhat al-Nusra and HTS in the Syrian jihadist field, see Charles Lister, *The Syrian Jihad: Al-Qaeda, the Islamic State and the Evolution of an Insurgency*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2015; Aaron Y. Zelin, *The Age of Political Jihadism: A Study of Hayat Tahrir al-Sham*, Washington Institute for Near East Policy, 2022.

Salafi-Jihadist militant organizations, and not from a secular-nationalist or liberal-democratic political tradition.[63] HTS and its allied factions formed the core military-political force that overthrew the Assad regime and elevated al-Sharaa to Syria's transitional presidency.[64] This does not make the 2025-2026 Syrian curriculum identical to the doctrine of these organizations. It does make the curriculum a necessary site of careful analysis, as networks rooted in this ideological milieu now control the new Syria's state institutions and can translate political victory into education, identity formation, and social authority.

Although the textbooks do not identically reproduce the full doctrines of al-Qaeda, ISIS, Jabhat al-Nusra, or HTS, it appears the curriculum draws heavily on the same broader Salafi-jihadi ideological repertoire of Islamism and pan-Islamism.[65] Islam makes the foundation of political and moral order, shariah is a source of authority, the Islamic ummah is the primary defining collective identity, *jihad* and martyrdom are frameworks of sacrifice, Islamic civilization is the superior historical reference point, and religious doctrine is the boundary of legitimate culture and knowledge. This is the key context for the examples that follow. Islamization also extends to altering examples so that they employ more accurate Islamic-specific terminology, as one finds in changing the Arabic word for Jerusalem *al-Quds to Bayt al-Maqdis*,[66] or the term for Crusaders *al-Ṣalībiyyūn* to *al-Faranjah*.[67] The curricular changes analyzed in this chapter show how the new Syrian state narrative is being constructed around Islam as the primary source of belonging, legitimacy, and public meaning.

Analytical & Methodological Challenges

The 2025-2026 curriculum should be read in light of the exceptional circumstances under which it was produced. The new textbooks were not the result of a long, stable, and comprehensive educational reform. They were prepared during a political transition, with consequent urgency, and often through revision of earlier Assad-era textbooks. This makes the pattern of changes especially important. Deletions, retained passages, altered wording, replaced images, and small graphic edits are not minor technical details; they show what the new authorities considered urgent enough to change, remove, preserve, or reshape during the first curriculum cycle under the new regime. The report therefore compares the 2025-2026 textbooks with earlier Syrian textbooks and with the January 2025 curriculum decree where relevant, while the full methodological framework is presented separately in the Methodology section.

The older Assad-era curriculum serves in this report as a baseline for comparison, not as a model of democratic education. The previous curriculum was shaped by authoritarian Baʿthist state ideology, Assad family rule, Arab nationalism, and regime-centered political loyalty. At the same time, it included civic, secular, and formal egalitarian language on citizenship, women's participation, constitutional rights, national unity, and interreligious coexistence.

63 On the Islamist and jihadist composition of the Syrian armed opposition forces led by HTS in the 2024 offensive, and on HTS's previous identity as Jabhat al-Nusra, al-Qaeda's Syrian affiliate, see Jason Burke, "Why did Syrian militants HTS seize Aleppo – and how did they do it so quickly?", *The Guardian*, December 2, 2024; "How HTS, an ex-branch of al-Qaeda, is softening its image to gain power in Syria," *Le Monde*, December 4, 2024. For background on HTS's military and governing role in northwestern Syria before the Assad regime's fall, see Aaron Y. Zelin, *The Age of Political Jihadism: A Study of Hayat Tahrir al-Sham*, Washington, DC: Washington Institute for Near East Policy, 2022; Jerome Drevon and Patrick Haenni, "How Global Jihad Relocalizes and Where It Leads: The Case of Hay'at Tahrir al-Sham, Syria," European University Institute, Middle East Directions, 2021.

64 On HTS and allied forces as the central military-political force in the 2024 offensive that brought down the Assad regime and formed the core of the new ruling order, see: "The Key Players to Know to Understand What's Happening in Syria," *Time*, December 11, 2024; "US drops $10M terrorism bounty offered for capture of Syrian rebel leader who ousted Assad," *Associated Press*, December 20, 2024; Jason Burke, "Why did Syrian militants HTS seize Aleppo – and how did they do it so quickly?", *The Guardian*, December 2, 2024; "How HTS, an ex-branch of al-Qaeda, is softening its image to gain power in Syria," *Le Monde*, December 4, 2024.

65 For studies of ISIS curricular production, textbook indoctrination, and the integration of religious and jihadist content into education, see: Jacob Olidort, *Inside the Caliphate's Classroom: Textbooks, Guidance Literature, and Indoctrination Methods of the Islamic State*, Policy Focus 147, Washington, DC: Washington Institute for Near East Policy, 2016; Olivier Arvisais and Mathieu Guidère, "Education in Conflict: How Islamic State Established Its Curriculum," *Journal of Curriculum* Studies 52, no. 4 (2020): pp. 498-515; Olivier Arvisais and Mathieu Guidère, "The Integration of Religious Elements into ISIS Textbooks," *Religion & Education* 47, no. 2 (2020): pp. 188-203. For HTS-linked education in northwest Syria, see: Omar Sayfo, "Toward an Exceptional Qurʾanic Generation: How Dar al-Wahy al-Sharif Schools Shape Islam, Identity, and Power in Northwest Syria," *International Journal of Middle East Studies* 58, no. 1 (2026): pp. 1-19; Tal Beeri and Dvir Peri, "What the World Does Not See: al-Sharaa's Islamist Education System – Will It Become Syria's Central Education System?", Alma Research and Education Center, Special Report, December 28, 2025. On HTS's wider ideological and organizational evolution, see: Aaron Y. Zelin, *The Age of Political Jihadism: A Study of Hayat Tahrir al-Sham*, Washington, DC: Washington Institute for Near East Policy, 2022; Jerome Drevon and Patrick Haenni, "How Global Jihad Relocalises and Where It Leads: The Case of Hay'at Tahrir al-Sham, Syria," European University Institute, Middle East Directions, 2021.

66 *History*, Grade 10 (Humanities Track), 2025-26, p. 154 (previously: *History of Civilizations*, Grade 10, 2014-15, p. 149).

67 *History*, Grade 10 (Humanities Track), 2025-26, pp. 156, 158 (previously: *History of Civilizations*, Grade 10, 2014-15, pp. 151, 153).

The comparison with earlier textbooks therefore helps identify the specific direction of the 2025-2026 revisions: what the new curriculum removed, what it preserved, what it intensified, and what it transformed. This distinction is essential because the report does not idealize the Assad-era curriculum; it uses it to measure the ideological priorities of the first post-Assad curriculum.

The following Main Findings section summarizes the report's central conclusions, while the Methodology section explains the textbook corpus, comparison method, and selection of examples. The thematic chapters then examine the revised curriculum's treatment of Islamization, minorities and other religions, Israel and Zionism, the Assad regime and its legacy, violence and self-sacrifice, the West, regional and intra-Islamic affairs, and gender roles and women's rights. Together, these chapters assess the first 2025-2026 curriculum as a key early document of the new Syrian administration's identity project.

This updated report aims to offer a fresh and deeper look into the state school curriculum of Syria to uncover its major themes and evaluate its adherence to international educational standards. As before, the study featured in this report employs the established IMPACT-se method of textbook content analysis, with textbooks analyzed individually on the basis of international education standards and scanned for overarching themes and issues. A total of 130 textbooks had been studied in full (see List of Analyzed Textbooks) from Grades 1 to 12. Textbooks were selected primarily from humanities subjects, i.e. Social Studies, History, Geography, Islamic Education, and Arabic, English and French literature and language.

As its second goal, this report also offers an insight into the transformation of Syrian textbooks during the time period encompassing the replacement of the longstanding Assad regime with the new HTS-led government. Regime change occurs rarely in history, and the opportunities to examine how it affects educational content, narrative and values are even rarer. In Syria's case, the modifications made to the curriculum in 2025–2026 are of exceptional interest. Syria's regime change took place in December 2024, a mere three months after the start of the school year, meaning that from the perspective of Syria's new government, schoolchildren across Syria were exposed to ideologically obsolete educational materials for much of the 2024-2025 school year; this likely created a sense of urgency to update textbooks as quickly as possible. At the same time, Syria's deficient means after a decade and a half of civil war means that the new government was forced to prioritize and focus on amendments it deemed the most important. Moreover, the new government was facing distrust, uncertainty and lack of confidence both at home and abroad regarding its future direction and sustainability, and thus had to carefully choose textbook modifications that would serve its interests without antagonizing various groups within and outside the country. As such, it would be extraordinarily illuminating to examine the curriculum amendments as soon as they are made, thereby gaining a valuable look into the new regime's priorities and internal thinking processes.

To a large degree, the current Syrian curriculum builds on previous iterations, displaying a tendency to make minor modifications to existing textbooks rather than introducing whole new ones. Therefore, wherever possible, textbooks were examined side-by-side with their previous versions to identify specific amendments and establish broad trendlines of change. In most cases, currently-taught Syrian textbooks were found to be amended from earlier Assad-era textbooks–typically those dated 2017-2018, with some going as far back as 2011-2012–rather than being based on the latest published edition before the regime changed, i.e. for the 2023-2024 school year. The reason for this is unclear. A preliminary examination of 2023–2024 textbooks did not reveal a significant change to the dominant pro-Assad narrative found in those older editions that ultimately served as basis for amendment. The upshot is that it is unlikely that anti-Assad officials would have found those older editions to be particularly 'compatible' with their intended educational reform in some special fashion. More likely, it may be speculated that the choice to ignore recent editions could reflect the age of textbooks that had been available to HTS-affiliated educational authorities during their control of Idlib, before they assumed control over the rest of Syria. This is supported by the existence of a small number of textbooks dated pre-2024 which were found to contain anti-Assad content, indicating that they were published by opposition factions while Assad was still in power. At any rate, for the purposes of this report, currently used textbooks were explicitly compared to their directly modified antecedent, regardless of dating, rather than their immediate chronological predecessor in 2023-2024, as this comparison method reveals the deliberate amendments made by education officials.

Future Reforms and Continuing Educational Contention

Recent reports and online evidence suggest that the January 2025 educational decree and its implementation a few months later were merely a first stage intended to provide an urgent and initial response to the new regime's need to consolidate power and assert dominance via the powerful and significant field of education. In early January 2026, "Informed sources" in the Syrian Education Ministry declared preparations to restructure the Islamic Education curriculum were underway and would include the insertion of content based on the legacy of "classic" religious scholars, such as the renowned medieval traditionist and theologian Taqi al-Din Ahmad Ibn Taymiyya, across the curriculum of the subject. More broadly, reports circulated in Syrian social media platforms claimed the Education Ministry intends to expand the scope of change and devise a new unified curriculum that will gradually span grades 1-12 over the course of three years: grades 1, 4, 7 and 10 in 2027, grades 2, 5, 8 and 11 in 2028, and finally grades 3, 6, 9 and 12 in 2029.[68]

Reports on this intended measure, which was justified by the need to "amend erroneous exegeses," were accompanied by an AI-generated image of the front cover of a grade 1 Islamic Education textbook, to which was added an image of Ibn Taymiyya alongside the illustrative title "Ibn Taymiyya's Epistemic Method."[69] While initial responses to this step were mixed in sentiment,[70] if the case of the January 2025 educational decree were to serve as a precedent, should this plan be complete, it is plausible that the level of concern and discontent will rise. On the other hand, a decision of the Damascus Education Ministry to reduce the class hours of Islamic Education met strong objection that was echoed in demonstrations and sit-ins in the public sphere.[71]

Another agent of agitation is the regime-minority tension, which has surfaced time and again in educational contexts in the form of disagreements and protest regarding attempts to impose the official curriculum of the new regime, sometimes referred to as "the Damascus curriculum", which would replace autonomous curricula that have been taught and learned by specific minorities for years, as a means for the new regime to expand its control and influence.[72] While several instances from different ethnoreligious groups have surfaced in the course of 2025, that of the Kurds living in the SDF-run Democratic Autonomous Administration of North and East Syria (DAANES) seems to be the most vociferous one thus far. Recently, under the cover of taking over parts of SDF-controlled territories, the Education Ministry of the al-Sharaa regime started to work on providing textbooks from the Damascus curriculum to the local Kurdish population.[73]

The 2025-2026 curriculum examined in this report has not remained a one-year transitional measure. In August 2026, the Syrian Ministry of Education officially announced that the same curriculum, referred to officially as the "Damascus curriculum," would remain in use during the 2026-2027 school year as well, and would be applied uniformly across all Syrian provinces. The Ministry presented this as a step toward unifying educational reference points and content throughout the country, while separately indicating that work had already begun on national standards for a future new curriculum. The Ministry of Education also announced that the next stage on its agenda is the creation of a complete new national curriculum.[74]

68 See for instance a post by Bariaa Misrabi, *Facebook*, December 27, 2025, https://www.facebook.com/61551935001684/posts/1222597003100645 00.

69 See for instance a tweet by @Dkhlakdotcom, *X (formerly Twitter)*, January 3, 2026, https://x.com/Dkhlakdotcom/status/2007376901266977182.

70 Cf. a tweet by @AlJolanigangs, *X (formerly Twitter)*, January 4, 2026, https://x.com/AlJolanigangs/status/2007924772039266483; a post by "The Secular Assembly for Illumination" (التجمع العلماني للتنوير), *Facebook*, January 4, 2026. https://www.facebook.com/groups/553883368850468/posts/1948613919377399.

71 "Amid direct threats to Minister of Educations | Residents stage sit-in protest in Hama, expressing rejection of reduction of Islamic Education class hours", *Syrian Observatory For Human Rights (SOHR)* website, October 2, 2025, https://www.syriahr.com/en/370904.

72 In the years of the Civil War in Syria, several curricula have been developed and taught as an alternative to the Assad regime curriculum; more on these, see Suzanne H. Hammad and Logan Cochrane, "Disrupted education a view from inside Syria: critical literature review and lessons for policy and practice", *Development in Practice*, Volume 35, Issue 5 (2025), pp. 719-736. Digital version: https://doi.org/10.1080/09614524.2025.2478496; Shavan Ibrahim, "Three Conflicting Curricula in Syria's Education System Today", *Daraj* website, January 24, 2025. https://daraj.media/en/three-conflicting-curriculas-in-syrias-education-sector-today

73 "Education Ministry works on providing the Syrian state curriculum in the recently liberated provinces" (وزارة التربية تعمل على توفير منهاج الدولة السورية في المحافظات المحررة حديثاً), *SANA* website, January 21, 2026. https://sana.sy/education/2380428

74 SANA، 17 أغسطس 2026، "وزارة التربية: مناهج دراسية موحدة في كل المحافظات للعام الدراسي 2026-2027": https://sana.sy/education/2555148/

Main Findings

This report finds that the 2025-2026 revisions to the Syrian national curriculum represent a broad ideological transformation of Syria's educational content. Assad-era Baʿthist, Syrian-national, and pan-Arabist content and narratives have been substantially removed, reduced, or rewritten. Instead, Arab Sunni Islam becomes the core shaping element of national identity, political and social order, historical memory, interdenominational relations, ethnic pluralism, gender dynamics, conflict and violence, and regional and global relations. The revisions in the new curriculum mark a clear shift from the old Baʿthist legacy of the Assad regime toward a set of new ideologies: political Islamism, Islamization of non-religious subjects, Sunni Arab supremacy, and pan-Islamist nationhood.

This curricular transformation was implemented largely through careful, selective revision of existing Assad-era textbooks rather than through the creation of an entirely new curriculum. Produced during a period of transition and time constraints, the 2025-2026 reforms are particularly visible in localized deletions, additions, altered terminology, replaced images, and rewritten passages. These revisions are therefore particularly insightful and reveal the new Syrian administration's intent and priorities regarding the national school curriculum. Many of the changes prescribed in the Syrian Ministry of Education's January 2025 curriculum revision proposal have indeed been implemented in the 2025-2026 curriculum, preserving the same transformative vision expressed in the original proposal. Implementation, however, is uneven and at times differs from the original January 2025 instructions. Additional revisions not explicitly prescribed in the January 2025 proposal further demonstrate that the 2025-2026 curriculum reform at times extends beyond the initial January 2025 directives

Islamization and Syria's New Islamist Identity

Islam is the central organizing principle of identity, morality, political and social order, culture, and knowledge in the revised 2025-2026 Syrian curriculum. Earlier Syrian-national, pan-Arabist, humanist, and secular content and narratives, as well as pre-Islamic Syrian heritage, are substantially reduced, subordinated, removed, or rewritten through an Islamic religious lens. Universal moral obligations previously directed toward people in general are in several instances narrowed specifically toward Muslims, while duties of loyalty, service, and sacrifice previously demanded for the sake of Syria or the Homeland are increasingly redirected toward Islam, the Faith, and the wider Muslim *ummah*. Pan-Islamist belonging consequently assumes a more prominent role in collective identity. Syrian nationalism and pan-Arabism lose much of their previous ideological dominance to Islamic civilization and Muslim unity.

Islamism becomes the dominant political ideology, while Islamization also extends into civic and political concepts. Secular state law and modern democratic terminology are increasingly replaced or reinterpreted through Islamic notions of legitimate authority, including shariah law, political counsel (*shūrā*), divine command, and concepts derived from early Islamic religious models of governance. At the same time, Pan-Arab causes, conflicts, and historical narratives are increasingly recast as Islamic ones. As such, national and Arab resistance is applied almost exclusively to the defense of Islam and Muslim lands, while references to "resistance" (*muqāwamah*) and resistance fighters (*muqāwimūn*) are in some cases replaced by jihad and jihad fighters (*mujāhidūn*). These changes present Islam not simply as a component of Syrian religious identity, but increasingly as a source of political legitimacy, collective obligation, and social order.

The same process is applied to cultural heritage and scientific knowledge. Pre-Islamic heritage, literary and cultural expressions, and practices considered incompatible with Islamic doctrine are removed, criticized, or rewritten according to Islamic religious boundaries. In the sciences, material concerning the Big Bang, evolution, biological development, and the origin and evolution of life is removed or substantially reduced, while natural phenomena are increasingly interpreted through divine creation and agency. The result is an Islamization of non-religious subjects spanning aspects of the humanities and science, in which religious doctrine increasingly shapes not only explicitly religious instruction, but also how students are taught to understand society, government, history, culture, nature, and rational knowledge. Islamization is also a cross-cutting theme across other areas of the curriculum, shaping the treatment of women and gender roles, minorities and religious difference, violence and conflict, and Syria's regional and global relations.

Violence, Armed Struggle and Self-Sacrifice

The curriculum continues to normalize and laud violence, armed resistance, martyrdom, and self-sacrifice as morally legitimate and often noble responses to conflict and perceived injustice. In this respect, the 2025-2026 curriculum displays substantial continuity with the previous curriculum, as much of the relevant content remains unrevised and the broader narrative of mobilization, resistance, and sacrifice is largely preserved. Armed conflict, whether termed "resistance," "liberation," "struggle," or "*jihad*," is presented as a defining feature of Islamic, Arab, and Syrian history and identity. Historical struggles, militant figures, and sites associated with violent conflict are commemorated as positive symbols of courage, steadfastness, and collective dignity, while preparedness to participate and sacrifice oneself in war is presented as an honorable civic, national, and religious virtue.

Violence and self-sacrifice are also repeatedly romanticized and aestheticized through literary and language instruction. Poetry, prose, grammar exercises, and reading comprehension activities normalize scenes of bloodshed, death, mutilation, martyrdom, and heroic sacrifice, presenting violent death as morally elevating and as an expression of dignity, resistance, and belonging rather than primarily as a tragic consequence of conflict. The Israeli-Palestinian conflict is the most prominent contemporary arena through which these themes are taught, with Palestinian resistance, martyrdom, and armed struggle presented as central expressions of Arab and Islamic solidarity and identity.

Islamic Education provides an explicit religious and legal legitimization of armed struggle. *Jihad* is presented both as a religious and moral ideal and a legally defined military obligation. In the curriculum's teaching, armed jihad becomes an individual obligation (*farḍ ʿayn*) when Muslim lands, honor, wealth, or holy places are attacked, and a collective obligation (*farḍ kifāya*) requiring sufficient participation and continued military preparedness when Muslim lands face threats. The curriculum also applies an asymmetric moral vocabulary to political violence, in which the identity and cause of the acting party strongly shape its moral classification: armed struggle undertaken by Muslims against designated enemies is legitimized as *jihad*, resistance, and martyrdom, while comparable violence attributed to adversaries is repeatedly condemned through the language of terrorism. Although the curriculum does include ethical restrictions on warfare, nonviolent forms of *jihad*, and the permissibility of temporary truces, these remain secondary to its extensive emphasis on armed struggle, military preparedness, martyrdom, and sacrifice; peace, reconciliation, and nonviolent conflict resolution are not comparably developed.

Minorities in Syria and Other Religions

The revised curriculum constructs a hierarchy of belonging in which Syria's religious and ethnic diversity is increasingly filtered through a new Arab-Sunni-Islamic national narrative. Earlier material promoting religious tolerance, shared citizenship, constitutional equality, and non-discrimination across religion, belief, language, and origin is reduced or removed, weakening both civic and religious arguments for pluralism that existed in the previous curriculum. Christianity remains the most visible minority religion in the curriculum, particularly through churches, holy sites, and historical monuments, but this visibility is mainly framed as merely a protected and tolerated presence under Islamic hegemony rather than equal civic belonging.

Judaism receives substantially harsher treatment. Jews are recognized as a religious category, but Syrian Jewish history and local communal belonging are completely absent. Islamic Education repeatedly presents Jews through theological error, hostility to Muslims and Islam, betrayal as an inherent collective trait, broken agreements, financial immorality, and divine punishment. Overtly antisemitic collective stereotyping appears in several textbooks, including the attribution of treason, backstabbing, and broken promises to Jews as a collective. Christianity and Judaism are both subordinated within a religious hierarchy of Islamic supersessionism, but Jews are subjected to a markedly more hateful and stigmatizing treatment.

The curriculum also presents Islamic history through an increasingly Sunni-centered perspective. Shiʿi-associated dynasties, traditions, and figures are delegitimized, subordinated, or reinterpreted through Sunni genealogical and doctrinal authority, while Sunni figures are elevated at the expense of others. This pattern is particularly severe in the treatment of the medieval Fatimid caliphate, which is recast from a major historic Islamic dynasty into a deceptive, extremist, anti-Sunni, and treasonous force. Alawite and Druze identities are likewise reduced not only through omission but through the rewriting of geography, historical memory, and cultural representation, with communal identities absent, renamed, displaced, or replaced by Sunni or Arab-national alternatives.

This exclusionary logic also extends to non-Arab ethnic communities. Kurds, Assyrians, Armenians, Turkmens, Circassians, and other non-Arab peoples and communities historically present in Syria are largely absent from the historical narrative, while ancient, Islamic, and modern history is repeatedly Arabized in ways that reduce the visibility of Syria's multiethnic past and present. The result is a curriculum that preserves selected forms of diversity but does not present Syria as a shared civic society composed of multiple religious and ethnic communities with equal historical legitimacy, cultural visibility, and belonging.

Gender Roles and Women's Rights

The revised curriculum marks a clear shift away from the civic and formally egalitarian treatment of women found in the previous curriculum and toward a Islamist traditionalist gender hierarchy. Earlier depictions of women as equal citizens, public actors, professionals, political participants, and figures of leadership are significantly reduced, while explicit teaching on constitutional equality between men and women is removed. Women are increasingly presented through family status, modesty, conditional public participation, institutionalized gender inequality, and differentiated gender roles rather than through equal civic belonging.

Women's and girls' visual presence in the textbooks is also systematically reduced, replaced, or Islamized. Images of women in public, civic, historical, educational, and social settings are deleted, replaced, or graphically altered, while uncovered female hair is repeatedly covered with hijab or stricter Islamic dress. In early-grade material, girls are in some cases removed from mixed or independent scenes of learning, cooperation, environmental care, and social interaction, or replaced by boys. These revisions establish a visual norm in which male presence in public and educational activity remains ordinary, while female visibility is more frequently conditioned by covering, restriction, or removal.

The curriculum continues to grant women certain rights and forms of agency, including property, inheritance, employment, financial support, and positive female role models, but increasingly confines them within Islamic law, family obligations, modesty requirements, and male authority. Women's employment is permitted under restrictive conditions, subordinated both to men's employment and to women's primary responsibilities as mothers and caretakers of the family. Marriage is presented through a male-led hierarchy in which the husband holds responsibility (*qiwāmah*) over the family and the wife is expected to obey him. Women's rights and social value are therefore preserved in conditional form, but separated from equal citizenship and individual autonomy and redefined within a traditionalist Islamic model of male-dominated gender relations.

The Old Ba'thist Regime and the Al-Assad Family's Legacy

The revised curriculum systematically dismantles the personality cult, propaganda, and symbolic legacy of the Assad era while replacing them with a new narrative centered on revolutionary victory, Islamic-Arab authenticity, and moral renewal. Compared with other thematic areas, the elimination of old Assadist content is among the most comprehensive and systematic aspects of the 2025-2026 curriculum revision. Earlier praise of Hafez and Bashar al-Assad is consistently removed and actively replaced with portrayals of the regime as authoritarian, corrupt, sectarian, criminal, terrorist, and destructive to Syrian society and Arab and Islamic causes. Assad-era symbols, including flags, portraits, institutional names, patriotic references, and figures associated with the former regime, are likewise systematically removed or replaced, substantially erasing Assadist influence from the curriculum's representation of Syrian public and national identity.

Modern Syrian history is correspondingly rewritten through a broad reversal of the former regime's historical narrative. Events previously celebrated as milestones of nationalism, modernization, resistance, and Ba'thist achievement are recast as authoritarian seizures of power, political failure, repression, corruption, sectarianism, and national catastrophe. The 1970 "Corrective Movement," which brought Hafez al-Assad to power, is reframed as a military coup that entrenched dictatorship, while the Assad period more broadly is associated with massacres, economic decline, political oppression, and the degradation of Syrian society. Even earlier regime narratives surrounding military and nationalist achievements are substantially revised, transforming the Assad era from a source of patriotic legitimacy into a cautionary historical period defined by repression and failure.

The most extensive reversal concerns the 2011 uprising, civil war, and the overthrow of Bashar al-Assad in 2024. Whereas earlier textbooks largely depoliticized the conflict and framed it as an externally imposed crisis driven by terrorism, the revised curriculum presents the uprising as a legitimate, peaceful, morally and religiously justified revolution against violent tyranny. The Assad regime is accused of severe repression and atrocities, while the revolutionary movement is portrayed as defending dignity, justice, freedom, and Syria's authentic Islamic-Arab identity. The narrative culminates in the "Blessed Revolution" of 2024, presenting Assad's fall not merely as political regime change but as the moral and historical restoration of the Syrian nation. The curriculum therefore removes Ba'thist propaganda and rewrites modern history, replacing one ideologically legitimizing narrative with another.

Regional and Intra-Islamic Relations

The Arab world remains the curriculum's principal regional frame of reference, but the ideological meaning of that regional identity is being substantially recalibrated. Arab states continue to be presented as a natural political and historical community linked by geography, shared history, common interests, and common enemies, yet the older pan-Arabist language of the "Arab Motherland" and Arab-national unity is noticeably reduced. Regional solidarity is increasingly selective, shaped not only by Arab identity but also by Islamic affiliation, attitudes toward the former Assad regime, and the political legitimacy assigned to particular states and movements.

The clearest transformation concerns Sunni-majority Turkey and the Ottoman legacy. The Sunni-dominant Ottoman Empire, previously portrayed largely as an oppressive Turkish foreign occupier, is rehabilitated as an Islamic political order: references to "Ottoman occupation" are systematically replaced by the more neutral "Ottoman rule," Ottoman expansion may be described through positive Islamic terminology, and Arab nationalist opposition to Ottoman authority is increasingly reframed as rebellion rather than liberation or independence. The Great Arab Revolt itself is reduced from a foundational Arab-nationalist movement to the "rebellion movement of Hussein bin Ali," the Sharif of Mecca of the Hashemite family. At the same time, Syria's longstanding historic territorial claim to Alexandretta/Hatay Province is overwhelmingly abandoned: maps are redrawn to incorporate the territory into Turkey and references to its recovery or occupation are removed, despite a small number of uncorrected examples.

Relations with the Shi'i-majority Islamic Republic of Iran and the Shi'i Islamist Lebanese militia Hezbollah undergo an equally sharp reversal. Hezbollah, previously associated with Lebanese resistance to Israel, is now explicitly condemned for supporting the Assad regime, accused of exposing its "sectarian face" and committing massacres against Syrians, while credit for Israel's withdrawal from southern Lebanon is redirected toward unnamed Lebanese resistance factions. Iran is likewise recast from an ally into an increasingly hostile regional actor: earlier praise for the 1979 Islamic Revolution, Iranian support for the Palestinian cause, and Iranian scientific and technological achievements is removed, while new material condemns Iran's treatment of its Arabic-speaking communities and in some contexts explicitly labels Iran an enemy. These changes do not amount to a simple replacement of pan-Arabism by pan-Islamism. Rather, the curriculum constructs a new hierarchy of regional loyalties in which Arab identity remains important, but is increasingly combined with Sunni-Islamic affinity, revolutionary legitimacy, hostility toward Assad's Shi'i allies, and a more favorable view of Sunni-majority Turkey and the Ottoman-Islamic past.

West and Global Connections

The West, including Europe and the United States, is constructed as the principal civilizational adversary against which Arab and Islamic identity is defined. Western societies and powers are frequently presented through colonialism, greed, military aggression, cultural arrogance, and domination, while Arab-Islamic civilization is placed in a morally and spiritually superior position. Colonialism and the negative traits attributed to it are treated not merely as a specific historical phenomenon but as a recurring and defining characteristic of Western conduct across different periods, extending even to the interpretation of the Crusades and other pre-modern encounters.

A clear moral asymmetry structures the curriculum's comparison of Western and Islamic history. Western wars, conquests, and interventions are generally portrayed as destructive, illegitimate, and driven by greed, domination, or disregard for human life, while Arab-Islamic wars and conquests are treated more favorably and Islamic historical models of warfare and governance are presented as morally superior. The curriculum consequently uses historical comparison not only to criticize Western power but to establish an ethical hierarchy in which Islamic civilization is presented

as offering more humane and legitimate principles of political and military conduct. Western scientific, technological, economic, and cultural achievements are acknowledged, but are often qualified by criticism of Western morality or explained through earlier Arab-Islamic contributions to world civilization.

The curriculum offers little sustained encouragement of inter-civilizational dialogue, forgiveness, or reconciliation with the West. Even material explicitly devoted to the "dialogue of cultures" emphasizes Western oppression and aggression toward Arab-Islamic and other civilizations rather than presenting reciprocal cultural exchange on equal terms. At the same time, this hostile civilizational narrative is not uniform across all subjects: foreign-language textbooks preserve the older curriculum's more ordinary and humanizing portrayals of European individuals, children, societies, and everyday life, while geography materials continue to acknowledge Western economic and cultural achievements. Russia remains a major exception to the broader treatment of Europe, preserving much of the unusually positive Assad-era coverage of its culture, development, and historical relationship with Syria. At the same time, the 2025-2026 curriculum introduces greater criticism of the Soviet Union, particularly for its repression of political freedoms and religion.

Israel, Palestinians and the Golan Heights

The Israeli-Palestinian conflict remains one of the curriculum's most prominent political themes and the Palestinian cause retains exceptional ideological importance as a central pillar of both Arab and Islamic identity. Support for the Palestinian cause functions as a defining test of political legitimacy and solidarity, while real or perceived support for Israel is used to discredit a range of foreign, regional, and historical actors such as the US and Britain. Israel itself is presented as a hostile state and an illegitimate political entity whose very right to exist is denied. Jewish national identity and Zionist claims to Jewish nationhood are rejected, while maps and terminology reinforce non-recognition by depicting Israel as "Palestine" or "Occupied Palestine" and referring to it through terms such as the "Zionist Entity" or "Zionist Enemy."

Israel is portrayed in consistently and overwhelmingly demonizing terms, with no identified humanizing or non-conflict-related portrayal of Israelis. Israeli actions are framed primarily through aggression, occupation, brutality, deception, and illegitimacy, while Palestinian armed violence is treated through an opposite moral vocabulary of resistance, martyrdom, defense of holy places, and legitimate struggle. Suicide bombings, rocket attacks, and other violent acts are therefore justified or glorified rather than presented through the same moral categories applied to Israeli violence. Peace agreements involving Israel are acknowledged in the curriculum, sometimes in relatively neutral descriptive terms, but they are frequently qualified or criticized, while Syria's own past negotiations with Israel are omitted. Peace and reconciliation are therefore not presented as a positive or desirable resolution to the conflict.

The curriculum continues to assert Syrian sovereignty over the Golan Heights and to portray Israeli control of the territory as occupation, but the Golan is now given less emphasis as a specifically Syrian-national territorial cause and is increasingly incorporated into a broader discourse concerning occupied Muslim lands and the wider Islamic community. In multiple revised lessons, specific references to the Golan are removed or replaced with broader references to Muslim countries, Islamic lands, or the wider Muslim community, while Palestine is more often retained as a distinct and prioritized cause. The result is not a relinquishment of Syria's territorial claim over the Golan, but an ideological transformation of the Golan from a specifically Syrian-national cause into part of a broader pan-Islamic geography of solidarity with Palestine and all occupied Muslim lands. Occasional removal or softening of anti-Israel language elsewhere in the curriculum reflects competing ideological priorities, particularly the new curriculum's overriding effort to delegitimize the Assad regime, rather than a substantive moderation of attitudes toward Israel.

Textbook Analysis Methodology

IMPACT-se's research goal is to provide an accurate and comprehensive assessment of a national system's school curriculum, by analyzing a large quantity of textbooks using international standards based on UNESCO and UN declarations as well as other international recommendations and documents on education for peace and tolerance. During research, the textbooks are read thoroughly, and individual examples are selected on the basis of relevance to research and criteria. The examples are then analyzed as is, without interpretation or paraphrasis, by trained experts and linguists, in terms of both their content and their didactic significance. Finally, the examples are generalized to establish the examples' significance in the overall narrative, determining the curriculum's adherence (or lack thereof) to international standards of peace and tolerance education.

Textbook research is a highly effective means to understand how the "Self" and the "Other" in a given society are conceptualized through educational materials. Two established approaches to qualitative textbook analysis are generally employed: *content* analysis, which examines the text itself, i.e. what it says in plain terms; and *discourse* analysis, which examines the language, narrative and context of the text, while paying close attention to omissions, contradictions and assumptions embedded in the text. This latter method provides insight into coded or implicit messaging. Elements of historical, political and religious background are also considered when they are deemed to provide further context. IMPACT-se research uses both methods simultaneously and in a complementary manner, thus allowing to reliably uncover the significance of the text and how it may be perceived by the intended reader, i.e. the student, and minimize the observer bias on the part of the researcher.

The diverse nature of textual analysis necessitates clearly defined scope and parameters. As such, the methods of textual analysis mentioned above are employed with a focus on pre-defined topics and themes. To assess compliance with international educational standards, textbooks are approached with attention to the conceptualization of the "Self" and the "Other" in environments of conflict, and messages involving violence and incitement to violence; hate and intolerance; and peace and peaceful conflict resolution. These issues may be identified with the help of research questions, which serve as suggested leads and prompts for the researcher in exploring the context, aspects, significance and potential ramifications of a specific content example.[75] Also explored are issues that arise from the source material itself, such as culture- or nation-specific issues. For example, the identity of the "Other" differs from one society to another, and in many cases, there are multiple groups of people labeled as such; the "Other" may be ethnic, religious, racial, national, socio-economic, gender, sexual, or any combination of the above. As such, each corpus of textbooks requires a unique set of criteria for identifying and collating content examples.

To ensure accuracy, research is conducted while taking into account known limitations and constraints. Since the contents of school curricula are created by multiple individuals and inconsistencies may occur even within a single textbook, the sample of textbooks to be researched is generally aimed to be as large as possible, encompassing multiple school grades and subjects. Favoring large samples also allows for a more accurate analysis of discourse and narrative that can only be perceived on a macro level, to pinpoint gaps and oversights, reach meaningful conclusions and facilitate actionable recommendations. Textbooks are selected for research after a preliminary study, on the basis of their verified use within the national education system and their assessed potential for relevance to pre-defined research topics.

In its assessment of educational materials, IMPACT-se employs UNESCO and other UN declarations, as well as international recommendations and documents on education for peace and tolerance. The use of internationally recognized standards allows for an objective, empirical and fair analysis of a wide range of educational materials from diverse societies, mitigating political, national or religious biases on the part of the researcher and preventing prejudice towards

75 Arnon Groiss, "Researching Schoolbooks of Societies in Conflict: Suggested Study Questions," 2013. https://www.impact-se.org/research-questions-2/; also see suggested frameworks for the application of research questions in identifying violence and intolerance in textbook research:
Georg Eckert Institute, "Inception Report for a Study on Palestinian Textbooks," 12 April 2019, pp. 20–21, deposited in UK Parliament Libraries 16 June 2020, ref. no. DEP2020-0322. https://depositedpapers.parliament.uk/depositedpaper/2282265/files

any particular group of people. The use of these standards for evaluating educational content has been endorsed by bodies of the European Union, among others.[76] These standards are as follows:

1. **RESPECT:** The curriculum should promote tolerance, understanding and respect toward the "Other," his or her culture, achievements, values and way of life.[77]
2. **INDIVIDUAL OTHER:** The curriculum should foster personal attachment toward the "Other" as an individual, his or her desire to be familiar, loved and appreciated.[78]
3. **NO HATE:** The curriculum should be free of wording, imagery and ideologies likely to create prejudices, misconceptions, stereotypes, misunderstandings, mistrust, racial hatred, religious bigotry and national hatred, as well as any other form of hatred or contempt for other groups or peoples.[79]
4. **NO INCITEMENT:** The curriculum should be free of language, content, and imagery that disseminate ideas or theories which justify or promote acts and expressions of violence, incitement to violence, hostility, harm and hatred toward other national, ethnic, racial or religious groups.[80]
5. **PEACEMAKING:** The curriculum should develop capabilities for non-violent conflict resolution and promote peace.[81]
6. **UNBIASED INFORMATION:** Educational materials (textbooks, workbooks, teachers' guides, maps, illustrations, aids) should be up-to-date, accurate, complete, balanced and unprejudiced, and use equal standards to promote mutual knowledge and understanding between different peoples.[82]
7. **GENDER IDENTITY AND REPRESENTATION:** The curriculum should foster equality, mutual respect, and should aim for equal representation between individuals regardless of their gender identity. It should also refrain from language, content, and imagery that depicts limiting and/or exclusionary gender roles.[83]
8. **SEXUAL ORIENTATION:** The curriculum should be free of language, content, and imagery that promulgates violence or discrimination on the basis of sexual orientation.[84]

76 European Parliament, Resolution with Observations Forming an Integral Part of the Decisions on Discharge in Respect of the Implementation of the General Budget of the European Union for the Financial Year 2022, Section III – Commission and Executive Agencies (2023/2129(DEC)), 11 April 2024, item no. 198. https://www.europarl.europa.eu/doceo/document/TA-9-2024-0228_EN.pdf

77 As defined in the Declaration of Principles on Tolerance Proclaimed and signed by Member States of UNESCO on November 16, 1995, Articles 1, 4.2. See also the UN Declaration on the Promotion among Youth of the Ideals of Peace, Mutual Respect and Understanding Between Peoples (1965), Principles I, III. Universal Declaration of Human Rights (1948): Education shall be directed to the full development of human personality and to the strengthening of respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms. It shall promote understanding, tolerance and friendship among all nations, racial and religious groups and shall further the activities of the United Nations for the maintenance of peace.

78 The goal of education for peace is the development of universally recognized values in an individual, regardless of different socio-cultural contexts. See Ibid., Article 6. See also, on exchanges between youth, the UN Declaration on the Promotion among Youth of the Ideals of Peace, Mutual Respect and Understanding between Peoples (1965), Principles IV, V.

79 Based on Ibid., Articles III.6, IV.7 and VII.39; and on the Integrated Framework for Action on Education for Peace, Human Rights and Democracy, approved by the General Conference of UNESCO at its twenty-eighth session, Paris, November 1995, Article 18.2.

80 As defined in Article 4 of the International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination (ICERD), adopted by the United Nations General Assembly Resolution 2106 (XX) on December 21, 1965. See also Article 20 of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR), adopted by the United Nations General Assembly Resolution 2200A (XXI) on December 16, 1966.

81 Based on the Integrated Framework for Action on Education for Peace, Human Rights and Democracy, approved by the General Conference of UNESCO at its twenty-eighth session, Paris, November 1995, Article 9; and on the Declaration of Principles on Tolerance proclaimed and signed by member states of UNESCO on November 16, 1995, Article 5.

82 Based on UNESCO recommendation concerning education for international understanding, cooperation and peace and education relating to human rights and fundamental freedoms, adopted by the General Conference at its eighteenth session, Paris, November 19, 1974, Article V.14.

83 The preamble to the Declaration of Principles on Tolerance proclaimed and signed by member states of UNESCO on November 16, 1995, notes the Convention on the Elimination of Any Form of Discrimination against Women and emphasizes respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms for all, without distinction as to gender.

84 Based on Resolutions 32/2 (adopted June 30, 2016) and 17/19 (adopted July 14, 2011) of the UN Human Rights Council, and numerous UN General Assembly resolutions expressing concern and condemnation of laws and practices around the world which target individuals based on their gender identity and/or sexual orientation for discrimination, violence, and even extrajudicial, summary or arbitrary executions—all of which contradict the most basic principles of the UN and have no place in education.

9. **SOUND PROSPERITY and COOPERATION:** The curriculum should educate for sound and sustainable economic conduct and preservation of the environment for future generations. It should encourage regional and local cooperation to that effect.[85]

The abovementioned standards are applied by the researcher in conjunction with specific guidelines for textbook development promoted by UNESCO itself. These include the following:

1. Treating textbooks as a tool for facilitating teaching and learning processes that foster peace, equality and mutual understanding;[86]
2. The integration of human rights principles and pedagogical processes that teach peaceful conflict resolution, non-discrimination and other practices and attitudes for "learning to live together";[87]
3. Incorporation of content that is free from harmful gender, religious and other stereotypes,[88] or generalizations that may oversimplify the representation of other groups or set one group against the other,[89] with the recognition that hate speech can be particularly dangerous in conflict situations, as it fuels violence and atrocity crimes.[90] Instead, educational materials should actively aim to challenge and eradicate underlying prejudices and stereotypes and contribute to overcoming their consequences,[91] and confront essentialist, generalizing ascriptions to entire populations;[92]
4. Adherence to factual information on other groups in a manner that facilitates understanding, providing neutral information about controversies,[93] alerting students to and "prebunking" conspiracy theories,[94] and rejecting denial or distortion of proven historical facts;[95]
5. Avoiding a dominant narrative voice associated with one particular ethno-racial or national structure, but critically question dominant narratives by means of counter-narratives and present the perspectives of different groups on current affairs and historical controversies;[96]
6. The promotion of peace, with attention to the emotive level of words, attitudes to different groups of people and nations, identifying and countering hate speech, and managing conflict through dialogue,[97]

85 Based on UNESCO recommendation concerning education for international understanding, cooperation and peace and education relating to human rights and fundamental freedoms, adopted by the General Conference at its eighteenth session, Paris, November 19, 1974, Articles III.6, and IV.7. On the imperative for developing "systematic and rational tolerance teaching methods that will address the cultural, social, economic, political and religious sources of intolerance," see the Declaration of Principles on Tolerance proclaimed and signed by member states of UNESCO on November 16, 1995, Article 4.2. On education for international cooperation, see also the UN Declaration on the Promotion among Youth of the Ideals of Peace, Mutual Respect and Understanding between Peoples (1965), Principle II.

86 *Textbooks and Learning Resources: Guidelines for Developers and Users* (Paris: UNESCO, 2014), p. 12 https://unesdoc.unesco.org/ark:/48223/pf0000226135_eng

87 *A Comprehensive Strategy for Textbooks and Learning Materials* (Paris: UNESCO, 2005), p. 11 https://inee.org/sites/default/files/resources/UNESCO-Comprehensive_Strategy_for_Textbooks_2005.pdf

88 Mahatma Gandhi Institute of Education for Peace and Sustainable Development, *Textbooks for Sustainable Development: A Guide to Embedding* (New Delhi: UNESCO, 2017), p. 29. https://unesdoc.unesco.org/ark:/48223/pf0000259932

89 *Making Textbook Content Inclusive: A Focus on Religion, Gender, and Culture* (Paris: UNESCO, 2017), p. 13 https://unesdoc.unesco.org/ark:/48223/pf0000247337

90 *Addressing Hate Speech through Education: A Guide for Policy-makers* (Paris: UNESCO, 2023), pp. 13, 14 https://unesdoc.unesco.org/ark:/48223/pf0000384872

91 *Recommendation on Education for Peace and Human Rights, International Understanding, Cooperation, Fundamental Freedoms, Global Citizenship and Sustainable Development* (UNESCO: Paris, 2023), p. 11 https://www.unesco.org/en/legal-affairs/recommendation-education-peace-and-human-rights-international-understanding-cooperation-fundamental?hub=87862

92 *Unmasking Racism: Guidelines for Educational Materials* (UNESCO: Paris, 2024), p. 27

93 *Making Textbook Content Inclusive: A Focus on Religion, Gender, and Culture* (Paris: UNESCO, 2017), pp. 15–16 https://unesdoc.unesco.org/ark:/48223/pf0000247337

94 *Addressing Hate Speech through Education: A Guide for Policy-makers* (Paris: UNESCO, 2023), pp. 32–33 https://unesdoc.unesco.org/ark:/48223/pf0000384872

95 *Recommendation on Education for Peace and Human Rights, International Understanding, Cooperation, Fundamental Freedoms, Global Citizenship and Sustainable Development* (UNESCO: Paris, 2023), p. 9 https://www.unesco.org/en/legal-affairs/recommendation-education-peace-and-human-rights-international-understanding-cooperation-fundamental?hub=87862

96 *Unmasking Racism: Guidelines for Educational Materials* (UNESCO: Paris, 2024), pp. 53, 61

97 Mahatma Gandhi Institute of Education for Peace and Sustainable Development, *Textbooks for Sustainable Development: A Guide to Embedding* (New Delhi: UNESCO, 2017), p. 166 https://unesdoc.unesco.org/ark:/48223/pf0000259932

7. The promotion of peace-*building*, that is, a broader concept of "positive peace" that is an expression of the fundamental dignity of and respect for life;[98]

8. Recognition of past violence and crimes, both local and global, such as the Holocaust, and discussion of the dynamics of identity-based hate that caused them;[99]

9. The use of tools such as literature to foster tolerance and empathy, helping students to see the world from the perspective of other people and to experience how others feel;[100]

10. The incorporation of real-life examples in science and mathematics to promote sustainable development, discarding impertinent political, violent, or conflict-oriented messaging,[101] and employing STEM subjects to build bridges between communities and transcend frontiers;[102]

11. Combating sexism and unequal gender representation in textbooks;[103]

12. Appropriateness to age, developmental needs and the mental wellbeing of students.[104]

In addition to UNESCO recommendations, IMPACT-se takes the following two criteria into consideration when assessing educational materials' compliance with international standards:

1. Educational material should respect international law, relevant resolutions, previous agreements and obligations. This may include, for example, the principle of a negotiated two-state solution to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict.

2. Educational material should be void of antisemitic content, which is to be evaluated on the basis of the International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance (IHRA) working definition of antisemitism.[105] While UNESCO has not adopted this nor any other single definition of antisemitism,[106] it has recommended teaching about contemporary (post-1945) manifestations of antisemitism,[107] with specific examples including Holocaust denial and the char-

98 *Textbooks and Learning Resources: A Framework for Policy Development* (Paris: UNESCO, 2014), p. 21
https://unesdoc.unesco.org/ark:/48223/pf0000232222

99 *Addressing Hate Speech through Education: A Guide for Policy-makers* (Paris: UNESCO, 2023), pp. 33–34, 42, 45, 46
https://unesdoc.unesco.org/ark:/48223/pf0000384872

100 Mahatma Gandhi Institute of Education for Peace and Sustainable Development, *Textbooks for Sustainable Development: A Guide to Embedding* (New Delhi: UNESCO, 2017), p. 175 https://unesdoc.unesco.org/ark:/48223/pf0000259932

101 Mahatma Gandhi Institute of Education for Peace and Sustainable Development, *Textbooks for Sustainable Development: A Guide to Embedding* (New Delhi: UNESCO, 2017), pp. 37–42, 67–100 https://unesdoc.unesco.org/ark:/48223/pf0000259932

102 *Recommendation on Education for Peace and Human Rights, International Understanding, Cooperation, Fundamental Freedoms, Global Citizenship and Sustainable Development* (UNESCO: Paris, 2023), p. 9
https://www.unesco.org/en/legal-affairs/recommendation-education-peace-and-human-rights-international-understanding-cooperation-fundamental?hub=87862

103 Carole Brugeilles and Sylvie Cromer, *Promoting Gender Equality through Textbooks: A Methodological Guide* (Paris: UNESCO, 2009)
https://unesdoc.unesco.org/ark:/48223/pf0000158897_eng

104 *Recommendation on Education for Peace and Human Rights, International Understanding, Cooperation, Fundamental Freedoms, Global Citizenship and Sustainable Development* (UNESCO: Paris, 2023), pp. 8, 10, 11
https://www.unesco.org/en/legal-affairs/recommendation-education-peace-and-human-rights-international-understanding-cooperation-fundamental?hub=87862

105 International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance (IHRA), Non-Legally Binding Working Definition of Antisemitism
https://www.holocaustremembrance.com/resources/working-definitions-charters/working-definition-antisemitism
Endorsed by the European Commission, Council, and Parliament as a "useful tool, in particular for education and training purposes for teachers, NGOs, state authorities and the media"
European Commission, "Definition of antisemitism", 2021;
https://commission.europa.eu/strategy-and-policy/policies/justice-and-fundamental-rights/combatting-discrimination/racism-and-xenophobia/combating-antisemitism/definition-antisemitism_en
European Parliament, Resolution on combating anti-Semitism (2017/2692(RSP)), 1 June 2017
https://www.europarl.europa.eu/doceo/document/TA-8-2017-0243_EN.html
Council of the European Union, "Fight against antisemitism: Council declaration," 6 December 2018
https://www.consilium.europa.eu/en/press/press-releases/2018/12/06/fight-against-antisemitism-council-declaration/

106 *Addressing Anti-Semitism through Education: Guidelines for Policymakers* (OSCE/ODIHR: Warsaw, 2018), p. 13
https://unesdoc.unesco.org/ark:/48223/pf0000263702

107 *Strategies to Counter Antisemitism: A Handbook for Educators* (Paris: UNESCO, 2025), pp. 14–15
https://unesdoc.unesco.org/ark:/48223/pf0000396116

acterization of Western support for the State of Israel in that context,[108] asking Jews to disavow their connection with Israel,[109] and criticism of Israel in cases where it is informed by antisemitic assumptions and beliefs that are simply applied to Zionism, Israel and the Israeli-Palestinian conflict.[110] UNESCO has also recommended teaching about the Jewish Holocaust,[111] local Jewish heritage,[112] the diversity of Jewish beliefs, commonalities with other communities, and positive contributions of Jewish individuals, as well as using a multi-perspective approach to teaching about the Israeli-Palestinian conflict.[113]

108 *Addressing Anti-Semitism through Education: Guidelines for Policymakers* (OSCE/ODIHR: Warsaw, 2018), p. 22
https://unesdoc.unesco.org/ark:/48223/pf0000263702

109 *Addressing Anti-Semitism through Education: Guidelines for Policymakers* (OSCE/ODIHR: Warsaw, 2018), p. 81
https://unesdoc.unesco.org/ark:/48223/pf0000263702

110 *Addressing Anti-Semitism through Education: Guidelines for Policymakers* (OSCE/ODIHR: Warsaw, 2018), p. 24
https://unesdoc.unesco.org/ark:/48223/pf0000263702

111 *Addressing Anti-Semitism through Education: A Guide for Policy-makers* (Paris: UNESCO, 2023), pp. 14, 33, 34, 46
https://unesdoc.unesco.org/ark:/48223/pf0000263702

112 *Strategies to Counter Antisemitism: A Handbook for Educators* (Paris: UNESCO, 2025), pp. 21–23
https://unesdoc.unesco.org/ark:/48223/pf0000396116

113 *Addressing Anti-Semitism through Education: Guidelines for Policymakers* (OSCE/ODIHR: Warsaw, 2018), p. 41
https://unesdoc.unesco.org/ark:/48223/pf0000263702

Islamization and New Syria's Islamist Identity

The 2025-2026 Syrian curriculum is Islamized through revisions across subjects and grades, with the addition of religious vocabulary or the expansion of explicitly Islamic content. The revisions examined in this chapter reorganize the hierarchy through which students are taught to understand moral obligation, collective belonging, history, conflict, political authority, cultural heritage, and knowledge. Broad human categories are narrowed toward exclusively Muslim communal obligation; the Syrian and Arab homeland is subordinated to the Islamic collective of the *ummah*; Arab nationalism and pan-Arab historical memory are displaced by reference to Islamic civilization; regional conflicts and self-sacrifice are reframed through Islamic and pan-Islamic concepts; political order is increasingly grounded in *shariah*, *shura*, and early Islamic governance; and cultural and scientific content is selectively filtered through Islamic doctrinal boundaries. Islamization therefore operates not through a single type of revision, but through a recurring set of mechanisms: replacement, narrowing, deletion, reframing, and selective preservation.

The Islamization analyzed in this chapter also extends beyond the examples discussed here. Later chapters examine how the same broader ideological shift affects the treatment of religious minorities, women and gender roles, violence and self-sacrifice, neighboring states and intra-Islamic relations, the West, Israel, the Palestinians, and the Golan Heights. These subjects develop themes introduced here, including Islamic communal hierarchy, conservative religious norms, *jihad* and martyrdom (*šahādah*), pan-Islamic solidarity, and the moral boundaries of the *ummah*. This chapter therefore establishes the broader conceptual pattern within which many of the report's later findings should be understood.

From Humanist Moral Duty to Islamic Communal Obligation

The 2025-2026 curriculum repeatedly narrows broad humanist moral language into Muslim communal obligation. Previous references to "a human" (*al-insān*) and "people" (*al-nās*) are replaced in key places with references specifically to "a Muslim" (*al-muslim*) or "other Muslims" (*ǧayrihi min al-muslimīn*) as the primary subjects of moral expectation, religious instruction, and social duty. In earlier formulations, ethical obligations were expressed through broad human categories, allowing responsibility, dignity, and rights to be framed in universal terms. In the revised textbooks, these same duties are increasingly redirected toward the Muslim believer and the Muslim community. This change appears in both devotional instruction and interpersonal ethics: in one Grade 12 Islamic Education lesson, guidance previously addressed to "a human" is rewritten as guidance addressed to "a Muslim," while in a Grade 11 Islamic Education exercise, the obligation to protect the honor and rights of "people" is narrowed to protecting those of "other Muslims."[114]

In addition to this, the curriculum also absorbs universal moral claims into Islamic theological criteria. A newly introduced Grade 10 Islamic Education lesson teaches a Hadith from the Farewell Sermon (*ḫuṯbat al-wadāʿ*) in which Prophet Muhammad rejects the superiority of Arabs over non-Arabs and white people over black people. The lesson preserves a broad anti-racist message, yet it grounds human worth in Islamic piety (*taqwā*): the most noble people "according to God" (*ʿind Allāh*) are the ones who are the most God-fearing and pious.[115] Equality is therefore taught through Islamic moral hierarchy rather than civic equality, universal humanism, or equal citizenship. The pattern in this sub-chapter is clear: some examples narrow moral responsibilities from all people to Muslims, while others retain universal language but ground it in Islamic belief and piety. The revised curriculum therefore reshapes universal ethics into a Muslim communal and theological framework.

114 *Islamic Education*, Grade 11, 2025-26, pp. 65-66 (previously: *Islamic Education*, Grade 11, 2017-18, pp. 67-68).
Islamic Education, Grade 12, 2025-26, p. 19 (previously: *Islamic Education*, Grade 12, 2017-18, p. 15).

115 *Islamic Education*, Grade 10, 2025-26, pp. 48-50.

The following Grade 11 Islamic Education example shows how the revised curriculum narrows the moral community to which students are asked to apply ethical duties. In the older 2017-2018 textbook, a classroom exercise instructs students that a Muslim must protect "the honor of the people" (*ʿirḍ al-nās*) and must not violate their rights. This wording presents dignity and rights as obligations owed to all, irrespective of religion. The 2025-2026 textbook changes the sentence so that Muslims are instructed to protect the honor and rights of "other Muslims" (*ǧayrihi min al-muslimīn*) and must not violate their rights. The change is brief, yet its effect is significant: a duty previously applied to all people is now directed specifically toward fellow Muslims, marking a clear case of religion-based solidarity and moral obligation. The same exercise also replaces a previous statement that "love of the homeland is a sign of faith, and defending it is a religious duty" with one emphasizing the duty to defend Allah's worshippers and liberate usurped lands. Together, these changes move the exercise away from universal human rights and Syrian civic-national duty, and toward a religion-based moral and political community. The revised text therefore teaches students to imagine dignity, rights, defense, and obligation primarily through Muslim communal belonging rather than through people in general or the homeland as a shared civic space.

***Islamic Education,* Grade 11, 2025-26, p. 66 (previously: *Islamic Education,* Grade 11, 2017-18, p. 68)**

2017-18	2025-26
أستخلصُ وأوظّفُ • وجوبُ سلامةِ العقيدةِ وتنزيهِ اللهِ تَعالى عن الشّريكِ بصدقِ التّوجّهِ إليهِ في الأعمالِ. • على المسلمِ أنْ يصونَ كرامةَ النّاسِ ولا يعتدي على حقوقِهِم. • حبُّ الوطنِ دليلُ الإيمانِ والدّفاعُ عنهُ واجبٌ دينيّ. • أستخلصُ من الحديثِ الشّريفِ إرشاداتٍ أخرى.	أستخلصُ وأوظّفُ • وجوبُ سلامةِ العقيدةِ وتنزيهِ اللهِ تَعالى عن الشّريكِ بصدقِ التّوجّهِ إليهِ في الأعمالِ. • على المسلمِ أنْ يصونَ كرامةَ غيرِهِ من المُسلمينَ ولا يعتدي على حقوقِهِم. • مسؤوليّةُ الدفاعِ عن العبادِ وتَحريرُ الأراضي المُغتصبةِ. • أستخلصُ من الحديثِ الشّريفِ إرشاداتٍ أخرى.
Derive and Apply • *One must keep the creed intact, keep Allah the Almighty transcendence above all association (*širk*), and direct one's intentions sincerely toward Him in all deeds.* • *The Muslim must protect the honor of the people (*al-nās*) and must not damage their rights.* • *Love of the homeland is a sign of faith, and defending it is a religious duty.* • *I derive further guidance from the noble hadith.*	*Derive and Apply* • *One must keep the creed intact, keep Allah the Almighty transcendence above all association (*širk*), and direct one's intentions sincerely toward Him in all deeds.* • *The Muslim must protect the honor of other Muslims (*ǧayrihi min al-muslimīn*) and must not damage their rights.* • *Responsibility to defend the worshippers (*al-ʿibād*) [of Allah] and liberate the usurped lands.* • *I derive further guidance from the noble hadith.*

*Highlighted text shows altered content.

The following Grade 12 Islamic Education example shows another way that the revised curriculum narrows its moral and religious language. In the older 2017-2018 textbook, students were asked to derive guidance from Qur'anic verses through a partially open-ended exercise. The textbook instructed them to write the suitable Qur'anic excerpt above each divine instruction, leaving space for students to connect relevant Qur'anic verses to the lesson's moral claims. Two of these claims addressed "a human" (*al-insān*): "A human must turn to his Lord in all circumstances, and especially during calamities," and "a human must not be deceived by Allah's forbearance and mercy." By contrast, the 2025-2026 textbook removes the open-ended citation format and provides the guidance directly. It also changes both statements from "a human" to "a Muslim" (*al-muslim*), thereby further limiting the moral focus to Muslims.

The revision changes the lesson in two related ways. First, it narrows the moral and devotional subject from the broader human category to the Muslim believer. Turning to God in hardship and avoiding deception by divine forbearance are no longer phrased as instructions about the human condition in general, but as guidance addressed specifically to Muslims. Second, the revised textbook reduces the student's interpretive role by replacing an exercise of deriving guidance from Qur'anic excerpts with prewritten lessons. The result is a more closed and more communally bound form of religious instruction. The older version allowed universal human language and student derivation to remain part of the lesson; the revised version supplies the doctrinal guidance in advance and frames its main addressee as the Muslim.

This example therefore complements the previous Grade 11 change from "people" to "other Muslims": both revisions move moral responsibility and religious reflection away from broad humanist categories and toward explicitly Muslim communal obligation.

***Islamic Education*, Grade 12, 2025-26, p. 19 (previously: *Islamic Education*, Grade 12, 2017-18, p. 15)**

2017-18	2025-26
هَدْيٌ وإرْشَادٌ: أكتبُ فوقَ كلِّ هدي مما يأتي المقطعَ القرآنيَّ الذي يدلُّ عليه: ﴿.....﴾ ❖ الإلهُ الحقُّ الذي يَستحقُّ العبادةَ والطَّاعةَ واحدٌ لا يتعدَّدُ، فلا يُعبَدُ غيرُهُ. ﴿.....﴾ ❖ جميعُ النِّعمِ من اللهِ تَعالى، والواجبُ على الإنسانِ شُكرُ اللهِ تَعالى عليها. ﴿.....﴾ ❖ على الإنسانِ أنْ يلجأَ إلى ربِّهِ في جميعِ أحوالِهِ، وبخاصَّةٍ عندَ الشَّدائدِ، وهذا فِطْرَةٌ في النَّفسِ الإنسانيَّةِ الَّتي خلقَها اللهُ سبحانَهُ وتَعالى. ﴿.....﴾ ❖ أمرَ الإسلامُ بالعدلِ ونَهى عنْ كُلِّ أشكالِ الظُّلمِ، ومنْ أبشعِ أنواعِ الظُّلمِ التَّشاؤُمُ منَ الأُنثى، ووأْدُ البناتِ. ﴿.....﴾ ❖ وُجوبُ التَّمسُّكِ بالقرآنِ الكريمِ، فهوَ تبيانٌ للنَّاسِ، وهدىً للقلوبِ الضَّالَّةِ، ورحمةٌ لمَنْ تمسَّكَ بهِ منَ المؤمنينَ، وهُوَ فاصلٌ بينَ النَّاسِ في كلِّ ما يتنازعونَ فيه. دروسٌ مستفادةٌ من الآياتِ: على الإنسانِ ألَّا يَغْتَرَّ بحِلْمِ اللهِ ورحمتِهِ فإنَّه يُمهِلُ المُذنبينَ، ولا يُعاجِلُهُم بالعقوبةِ، ليترُكَ الفرصةَ لهم للإيمانِ والتَّوبةِ. – أتلو الآيةَ التي تشيرُ إلى هذا المعنى مراعياً فيها أحكامَ النونِ الساكنةِ والتنوينِ وأحكامَ الميمِ الساكنةِ. في قولِهِ تَعالى: ﴿لِتُبَيِّنَ لَهُمُ﴾ دليلٌ على حُجِّيَّةِ السُّنَّةِ؛ لأنَّ اللهَ سبحانَه وتَعالى أنزلَ القرآنَ على النَّبيِّ ﷺ، وكلَّفَهُ تبليغَ الرِّسالةِ وبيانَها، ولذا فنحنُ مكلَّفونَ باتِّباعِ كلِّ ما صحَّ عنِ النَّبيِّ ﷺ. – أعيدُ تلاوةَ الآياتِ التي تُشيرُ إلى هذا المعنى متدبِّراً معناها.	هَدْيٌ وإرْشَادٌ: ❖ الإلهُ الحقُّ الذي يَستحقُّ العبادةَ والطَّاعةَ واحدٌ لا يتعدَّدُ، فلا يُعبَدُ غيرُهُ. ❖ جميعُ النِّعمِ منَ اللهِ تَعالى، والواجبُ على الإنسانِ شُكرُ اللهِ تَعالى عليها. ❖ على المسلمِ أنْ يلجأَ إلى ربِّهِ في جميعِ أحوالِهِ، وبخاصَّةٍ عندَ الشَّدائدِ، وهذا فِطْرَةٌ في النَّفسِ الإنسانيَّةِ الَّتي خلقَها اللهُ سبحانَهُ وتَعالى. ❖ أمرَ الإسلامُ بالعدلِ ونَهى عنْ كُلِّ أشكالِ الظُّلمِ، ومنْ أبشعِ أنواعِ الظُّلمِ التَّشاؤُمُ منَ الأُنثى، ووأْدُ البناتِ. ❖ على المسلمِ ألَّا يَغْتَرَّ بحِلْمِ اللهِ ورحمتِهِ فإنَّه يُمهِلُ المُذنبينَ، ولا يُعاجِلُهُم بالعقوبةِ، ليترُكَ الفرصةَ لهم للإيمانِ والتَّوبةِ. ❖ وُجوبُ التَّمسُّكِ بالقرآنِ الكريمِ، فهوَ تبيانٌ للنَّاسِ، وهدىً للقلوبِ الضَّالَّةِ، ورحمةٌ لمَنْ تمسَّكَ بهِ منَ المؤمنينَ، وهُوَ فاصلٌ بينَ النَّاسِ في كلِّ ما يتنازعونَ فيه. ❖ في قولِهِ تَعالى: ﴿لِتُبَيِّنَ لَهُمُ﴾ دليلٌ على حُجِّيَّةِ السُّنَّةِ؛ لأنَّ اللهَ سبحانَه وتَعالى أنزلَ القرآنَ على النَّبيِّ ﷺ، وكلَّفَهُ تبليغَ الرِّسالةِ وبيانَها، ولذا فنحنُ مكلَّفونَ باتِّباعِ كلِّ ما صحَّ عنِ النَّبيِّ ﷺ.
Divine Guidance and Instruction: *Cite above every divine instruction the Quranic excerpt that it indicates:* *[...]* • *[...]* • *A human must turn to his Lord in all circumstances, and especially in times of calamities. It is an inherent nature of the human soul, which was created by Allah the Almighty, praised be He.* • *[...]* • *[...]* *Lessons Learned from the Quranic Verses:* • *A human must not be misled by Allah's forbearance and mercy, as Allah grants respite to the sinners and does not rush their punishment, in order to give them a chance to believe and repent.* *[...]*	*Divine Guidance and Instruction:* • *[...]* • *[...]* • *A Muslim must turn to his Lord in all circumstances, and especially in times of calamities. It is an inherent nature of the human soul, which was created by Allah the Almighty, praised be He.* • *[...]* • *A Muslim must not be misled by Allah's forbearance and mercy, as Allah grants respite to the sinners and does not rush their punishment, in order to give them a chance to believe and repent.* *[...]*

*Highlighted text shows altered content. *Red text shows removed content.

The following Grade 10 Islamic Education example further demonstrates that the revised curriculum does not remove every universal moral principle but absorbs universal equality into Islamic moral theology. A newly added lesson teaches a Hadith from the Farewell Sermon (*ẖuṭbat al-wadāʿ*) in which the Prophet Muhammad says that people share one Lord and one Father, and that no Arab has superiority over a non-Arab, no non-Arab over an Arab, no white person over a black person, and no black person over a white person, except through God-fearing piety (*taqwā*). The lesson therefore preserves a broad anti-racist message and rejects ethnic, racial, and social hierarchy as grounds for human superiority.

The significance of the new content lies in how equality is framed and justified. Human worth is not taught to be grounded in civic equality, universal humanism, or equal citizenship, but in a religious criterion: the most noble person "according to God" (*ʿinda Allāh*) is the most God-fearing and pious. This does not erase the anti-racist content of the lesson. It places that content inside an Islamic hierarchy of moral evaluation, in which equality across ethnic and racial categories is ultimately judged through Islamic belief and piety. Alongside the other examples in this section, this lesson illustrates a second mechanism of Islamization. Unlike passages that narrow moral duties from all people to Muslims, this one retains universal language but grounds it in Islamic belief and piety. Universal values therefore remain present but are framed through Islamic religious concepts rather than civic, secular, or broadly humanistic principles.

***Islamic Education*, Grade 10, 2025-26, pp. 48-50**

أقرأُ وأحفظُ :

عن جابر بن عبد الله رضي الله عنهما قال :
خَطَبَنا رَسُولُ الله ﷺ في وسط أَيّامِ التَّشْرِيق خُطْبَةَ الوَداعِ فقال :
« يا أَيُّها النّاسُ ! إنَّ رَبَّكُمْ واحِدٌ ، وإنَّ أَباكُمْ واحِدٌ ، ألا لا فَضْلَ
لِعَرَبِيٍّ على عَجَمِيٍّ ، ولا لِعَجَمِيٍّ على عَرَبِيٍّ ، ولا لأَحْمَرَ على
أَسْوَدَ ، ولا لأَسْوَدَ على أَحْمَرَ إلا بِالتَّقْوى ، إنَّ أَكْرَمَكُمْ عِنْدَ الله
أَتْقاكُمْ ، أَلا هَلْ بَلَّغْتُ ؟ قالوا: بَلى يا رَسُولَ الله ، قال :
فَلْيُبَلِّغِ الشّاهِدُ الغائِبَ ».

أخرجه أحمد والبَيْهَقيّ ، واللّفظ للبَيْهَقيّ (١)

I shall read and memorize:

On the authority of Jābir ibn ʿAbd Allāh, may God be pleased with them both, who said:

*"The Messenger of God – peace and blessings be upon him – delivered to us the Farewell Sermon during the days of Tashrīq [*ayyām al-tašrīq*; i.e. the days following Eid al-Adha during the pilgrimage], and he said:*

*"'O people, indeed, your Lord is one, and your Father is one. There is no preference [*faḍl*] of an Arab over a non-Arab, nor of a non-Arab over an Arab, nor of a fair-skinned person over a black person, nor of a black person over a fair-skinned person – except through God-fearing piety [*taqwā*]. Indeed, the most noble of you according to God are the most God-fearingly pious among you [*atqākum*]. Have I conveyed [the message]?'*

"They said: 'Yes, O Messenger of God.'

"He said: 'Then let the one who is present convey it to the one who is absent.'"

- Reported by Aḥmad [ibn Ḥanbal] and al-Bayhaqī, and this wording is according to al-Bayhaqī.

The findings in this sub-chapter show that the revised curriculum reshapes moral education through Islamic communal boundaries. Broad humanist categories such as "people" (*al-nās*) and "a human" (*al-insān*) are narrowed into Muslim communal categories such as "other Muslims" (ğayrihi min al-muslimīn) and "a Muslim" (*al-muslim*). Rights, dignity, devotional reflection, and moral responsibility are therefore redirected from humanity in general toward the Muslim believer and the Muslim community.

The curriculum also absorbs universal moral values into Islamic theological criteria. The Grade 10 lesson on the Farewell Sermon preserves an anti-racist message, but grounds equality in God-fearing piety (*taqwā*) before Allah rather than in civic equality, universal humanism, or shared citizenship. The sub-chapter therefore shows two connected mechanisms of Islamization: narrowing the moral addressee and subordinating universal values to Islamic moral hierarchy. Students are still taught responsibility, dignity, equality, and moral reflection, but increasingly through Muslim belonging, devotion to Allah, and religious evaluation as the primary sources of ethical meaning.

Replacing the Syrian & Arab Homeland with the Islamic Ummah

References to the Syrian or Arab "homeland" or "motherland" (waṭan), local-national belonging (*waṭaniyyah*), and pan-Arab belonging (*qawmiyyah*) are repeatedly replaced, redirected, or subordinated in the 2025-2026 curriculum by references to the faith (*al-dīn*), Islam, Allah, Muslims, and the Islamic ummah. In earlier textbooks, students were addressed as future members of a territorial national community whose love, service, loyalty, and defense of the homeland formed part of their moral and educational development. In the revised textbooks, the homeland loses its primary status as the main object of belonging, service, and duty. A Grade 11 Islamic Education lesson removes the "right to a homeland" from the list of rights protected by the Hadith of the "Seven Destructive Things" (*al-sabʿ al-mūbiqāt*).[116] Similarly, a Grade 5 Islamic Education chapter on "love for the homeland" is also removed.[117] These deletions form the background to the fuller examples below: the revised curriculum redirects the emotional, ethical, and geographic center of belonging from the Syrian or Arab homeland to the Islamic ummah.

This shift appears prominently in Islamic Education textbooks. In Grade 3, guidance for parents changes the stated aim of family and school education from preparing children to participate in "serving the homeland" (*al-waṭan*) to preparing them to participate in "serving the faith and the ummah" (*al-dīn wa-l-ummah*).[118] The revision changes the stated purpose of family and school education from preparing children to serve the homeland to preparing them to serve Islam and the transnational Muslim community. In Grade 7, an ethics lesson changes its focus from relations with "the sons of the homeland" (abnāʾ al-waṭan) to "the sons of the ummah" (*abnāʾ al-ummah*) and "the Muslims" (al-*muslimīn*).[119] The lesson continues to encourage students to reject hostility, maintain ties, pardon, and initiate good conduct, but these duties are directed toward members of the ummah rather than fellow citizens. The moral field of the child is therefore changed from civic-national belonging to religious communal belonging.

The same hierarchy of belonging enters Social Studies, where civic-geographic identity would normally be expected to remain national or Arab-national. A Grade 4 map retains the title "The Arab Homeland" (*al-waṭan al-ʿarabī*), but the revised 2025-2026 caption describes it as showing "Syria's location in relation to the Islamic ummah." By comparison, an earlier version of the same page, published in the Syrian Interim Government's 2013–2014 textbook and apparently based on the 2012–2013 Assad-era edition, described the map as showing "Syria's location in relation to the Arab Homeland."[120] The revised caption changes the interpretive frame at the point where students are asked to locate Syria geographically. Arab geography remains on the page, but its educational meaning is subordinated to a pan-Islamic collective. The map teaches students to see Syria through the Islamic ummah, even while the older Arab-national image remains visible.

116 *Islamic Education*, Grade 11, 2025-26, pp. 61-62 (previously: *Islamic Education*, Grade 11, 2017-18, pp. 63-64).

117 *Islamic Education*, Grade 5, 2017-18, pp. 84-87.

118 For replacing the "homeland" with the Islamic *ummah* see *Islamic Education*, Grade 8, 2025-26, p. 39 (previously: *Islamic Education*, Grade 8, 2017-18, p. 41); See also *Social Studies*, Grade 6, 2025-26, p. 67 (previously: *Social Studies*, Grade 6, 2012-13, p. 69).

119 *Islamic Education*, Grade 7, 2025-26, p. 77 (previously: *Islamic Education*, Grade 7, 2011-12, p. 80). See also *Islamic Education*, Grade 7, 2025-26, p. 116 (previously: *Islamic Education*, Grade 7, 2011-12, p. 119).

120 *Social Studies*, Grade 4, 2025-2026, p. 8 (previously: *Social Studies*, Grade 4, 2013-2014 Syrian Interim Government, p. 11; originally: *Social Studies*, Grade 4, 2012-2013 Assad Regime, p. 10).

Some Syrian exemplary figures remain despite being designated for removal in the directives matrix, including Syrian nationalist activist Nāzik al-ʿĀbid and naval officer Jules Jammal.[121] These retained cases show that the revised curriculum does not mechanically delete every national symbol or Syrian figure. The stronger finding is the hierarchy created by the revisions: when the curriculum changes the core language of service, moral relations, and geographic location, it repeatedly subordinates the homeland to the Islamic *ummah*. Syria and the Arab homeland remain visible, but they are pushed down in the hierarchy of identity. The revised curriculum increasingly teaches students to imagine themselves as members of a transnational Muslim collective whose claims of loyalty, service, and obligation exceed the boundaries of Syria and the Arab world.

The following Grade 3 Islamic Education example directly redefines the social purpose of teaching morality. In the older 2017-2018 textbook, guidance for parents states that family and school should develop cooperation and love in the student's heart in order to prepare a generation that participates in "serving the homeland" (*al-waṭan*). The older wording places childhood moral education inside a civic-national framework: the student is formed to love, serve, and contribute to the country. The 2025-2026 textbook keeps the same sentence structure but changes the object of service. The generation is now prepared to participate in "serving the faith and the ummah" (*al-dīn wa-l-ummah*). The change redirects the purpose of education from the Syrian homeland to a religious and transnational Islamic community.

This revision appears in guidance for parents as well as students, extending the change beyond the classroom. The textbook presents Islamization as a task of family formation as well as classroom instruction. The child's emotional and moral development is no longer directed primarily toward service to the homeland, but toward service to Islam and the Islamic communal collective–the *ummah*. The revised sentence therefore changes the imagined destination of social education: the student is not formed first as a civic member of a territorial nation, but as a member of a religious community whose obligations exceed the boundaries of Syria. This example gives this theme its clearest basic pattern: the homeland remains grammatically replaceable, while the Islamic ummah becomes the higher object of belonging, service, and moral purpose.

***Islamic Education*, Grade 3, 2025-26, p. 15 (previously: *Islamic Education*, Grade 3, 2017-18, p. 17)**

2017-18	2025-26
تنمية روح التّعاونِ والمحبّةِ في نفسِ التّلميذِ انطلاقاً من الأسرةِ ثمَّ المدرسةِ في سبيلِ إعدادِ جيلٍ يُسهِمُ في خدمةِ الوطنِ .	تنمية روح التّعاونِ والمحبّةِ في نفسِ التّلميذِ انطلاقاً من الأسرةِ ثمَّ المدرسةِ في سبيلِ إعدادِ جيلٍ يُسهِمُ في خدمةِ الدينِ والأمّةِ
To the Parents: *Develop a spirit of collaboration and love in the heart of the student, emanating from family and school, in order to prepare a generation to take part in serving the Homeland (*al-waṭan*).*	*To the Parents:* *Develop a spirit of collaboration and love in the heart of the student, emanating from family and school, in order to prepare a generation to take part in serving the Faith and the ummah* [i.e. the Islamic collective*].*

*Highlighted text shows altered content.

The following Grade 7 Islamic Education example shows how the revised curriculum changes toward whom students are taught to fulfill their moral duties. In the older 2011-2012 textbook, students are asked to reflect on a situation involving hostility toward anyone who is not among "the sons of his homeland" (*abnāʾ waṭanihi*). The same exercise later asks students to derive guidance from a Hadith "in regard to my relations with the sons of my homeland" (*abnāʾ waṭanī*). In both cases, the lesson frames moral conduct in terms of relations with fellow members of the homeland. The 2025-2026 textbook changes this framework. "The sons of his homeland" becomes "the sons of his ummah" (abnāʾ ummatihi), and "my relations with the sons of my homeland" becomes "my relations with the Muslims" (*al-muslimīn*).

The revision keeps the moral lesson but changes the imagined community that receives it. Students are still asked to reject hostility, love good-doers, advise neighbors, maintain ties, give, pardon, and initiate good conduct. Yet the

121 *Social Studies*, Grade 3, 2025-26, pp. 96-99 (previously: *Social Studies*, Grade 3, 2023-24, pp. 110-113).

applied framework is no longer the shared homeland but the Muslim community. This is stronger than a general increase in religious vocabulary. The exercise teaches students to move from civic-national belonging to religious belonging when thinking about social relations. The homeland is removed as the main field of interpersonal duty, while Muslims and the ummah become the relevant community of moral application. The example therefore extends the previous Grade 3 change: service is redirected from the homeland to the faith and the *ummah*, and ethical relations are redirected from compatriots to Muslims.

***Islamic Education*, Grade 7, 2025-26, p. 77 (previously: *Islamic Education*, Grade 7, 2011-12, p. 80)**

2011-12	2025-26
٢- أتأمّلُ المواقفَ الآتيةَ ، وأبيّنُ مُناسبَتَها لأُسُسِ عَلاقةِ المُؤمنِ بالآخرينَ : أ- يُعادي كلَّ مَن ليسَ من أبناءِ وطنِه . ب- يُحبُّ المحسنينَ ويمتدحُهُم . ج- ينصحُ أبناءَ حيِّه (قريتِه) بكلِّ ما هوَ خيرٌ . ٣- عنْ عُقْبَةَ بنِ عامرٍ ﷺ قالَ : قالَ لي رسولُ اللهِ ﷺ : (يا عُقْبَةُ بنَ عامرٍ صلْ مَنْ قَطَعَكَ وأعْطِ مَن حَرَمَكَ ، واعفُ عَمَّن ظَلَمَكَ)[٣] . أستفيدُ من الحديثِ الشريفِ في علاقتي مع أبناءِ وَطَني بأن : • أبادرَ بالإحسانِ إلى الناسِ حتّى ولو لَم يَفعلوا ذلكَ مَعي . • ..... •	٢- أتأمّلُ المواقفَ الآتيةَ ، وأبيّنُ مُناسبَتَها لأُسُسِ عَلاقةِ المُؤمنِ بالآخرينَ : أ- يُعادي كلَّ مَن ليسَ من أبناءِ أمتِه. ب- يُحبُّ المحسنينَ ويمتدحُهُم . ج- ينصحُ أبناءَ حيِّه (قريتِه) بكلِّ ما هوَ خيرٌ . ٣- عنْ عُقْبَةَ بنِ عامرٍ ﷺ قالَ : قالَ لي رسولُ اللهِ ﷺ : (يا عُقْبَةُ بنَ عامرٍ صلْ مَنْ قَطَعَكَ وأعْطِ مَن حَرَمَكَ ، واعفُ عَمَّن ظَلَمَكَ)[٣] . أستفيدُ من الحديثِ الشريفِ في علاقتي مع المسلمين بأن : • أبادرَ بالإحسانِ إليهم حتّى ولو لَم يَفعلوا ذلكَ مَعي . • ..... • .....
1. Reflect on the following stances, and explain their relation to the principles of the believer's relations with others: *A. He is hostile toward anyone who is not among the sons of his homeland [*abnāʾ waṭanihi*].* *B. He loves the good-doers and praises them.* *C. He advises the sons of his neighborhood (his village) on anything that is good.* *2. On the authority of ʿUqbah ibn ʿĀmir – may Allah be pleased with him – who said: "The Messenger of Allah PBUH said: 'O ʿUqbah ibn ʿĀmir, maintain ties with those who cut you off, give to those who deprive you, and pardon those who wrong you.'" In regard to my relations with the sons of my homeland [*abnāʾ waṭanī*], I draw from the Noble Hadith that:* *• I shall take the initiative in doing good to people, even if they haven't done so with me.* *[...]*	*2. Reflect on the following stances, and explain their relation to the principles of the believer's relations with others:* *D. He is hostile toward anyone who is not among the sons of his [Islamic]* ummah [abnāʾ ummatihi]. *E. He loves the good-doers and praises them.* *F. He advises the sons of his neighborhood (his village) on anything that is good.* *3. On the authority of ʿUqbah ibn ʿĀmir – may Allah be pleased with him – who said: "The Messenger of Allah PBUH said: 'O ʿUqbah ibn ʿĀmir, maintain ties with those who cut you off, give to those who deprive you, and pardon those who wrong you.'" In regard to my relations with the Muslims* [al-muslimīn], *I draw from the Noble Hadith that:* *• I shall take the initiative in doing good to people, even if they haven't done so with me.* *[...]*

*Highlighted text shows altered content.

The following Grade 4 Social Studies example shows the insertion of pan-Islamic identity into a civic-geographic lesson. The older version of the page, published in the Syrian Interim Government's 2013-2014 textbook and apparently based on the 2012-2013 Assad-era original, displays a map titled "The Arab Homeland" (*al-waṭan al-ʿarabi*) with the caption "Syria's location in relation to the Arab Homeland." The 2025-2026 textbook preserves the map's Arab-national title, "The Arab Homeland," but changes the caption below it to "Syria's location in relation to the Islamic ummah." The revision therefore alters the interpretive frame at the exact point where students are asked to understand Syria's geographic belonging.[122]

122 The older reference used here is the *Social Studies*, Grade 4, 2013-14 textbook published by the Syrian Interim Government (Syrian Opposition in Idlib), because the corresponding Assad-era original textbook was not directly available for this comparison. The Syrian Interim Government page appears, on the basis of its graphic design, map content, title, and caption, to preserve the older Assad-era page, originally *Social Studies*, Grade 4, 2012-13, p. 10. This inference is made cautiously. The analytical point does not depend entirely on proving direct preservation from the Assad original: the available 2013-2014 Syrian Interim Government version clearly frames the map as "Syria's location in relation to the Arab Homeland," while the 2025-2026 textbook changes the relevant caption to "Syria's location in relation to the Islamic *ummah*." The comparison therefore establishes a clear shift from the available pre-2025 version, and most probably from the Assad-era original as well.

This change creates a visible mismatch between the map's Arab-national title and the revised caption's pan-Islamic framing. The Arab homeland remains present as a geographic image, but Syria's location is now explained through the wider Islamic *ummah*. This is not a complete replacement of Arab geography; it is an ideological overlay. The older Arab-national map is retained, while its educational meaning is redirected toward a transnational Islamic community. Since this appears in a Social Studies textbook, a subject normally tied to geography, society, and civic-national belonging, the example shows that the shift from homeland to *ummah* is not confined to Islamic Education. Pan-Islamic identity is inserted into the basic geographic imagination of the country, subordinating Syria's Arab-national location to a broader religious collective.

***Social Studies*, Grade 4, 2025-26, p. 8 (previously: *Social Studies*, Grade 4, 2013-2014 Syrian Interim Government [Syrian Opposition], p. 11 [Originally: *Social Studies*, Grade 4, 2012-2013 Assad Regime, p. 10])**[123]

2013-14	2025-26
The Arab Homeland *[Map]* *Map 1: The location of Syria in relation to the Arab Homeland* [al-waṭan al-ʿarabī]	*The Arab Homeland* *[Map]* *Map 1: The location of Syria in relation to the Islamic* ummah [al-ummah al-islāmiyyah]

*Highlighted text shows altered content.

The examples in this sub-chapter show a substantial shift in belonging from homeland to *ummah*. The Grade 3 example changes the goal of family and school formation from service to the homeland to service to the faith and the Islamic community. The Grade 7 example changes the field of interpersonal ethics from relations with compatriots to relations with Muslims. The Grade 4 Social Studies map changes the frame through which students locate Syria from the Arab Homeland to the Islamic *ummah*. The shorter examples strengthen the same finding: the "right to a homeland" is removed, and a chapter on love for the homeland is deleted.

The curricular message is severe and direct. The homeland is consistently demoted as an object of loyalty, service, and civic belonging. The Islamic *ummah* is elevated above it as the higher community of duty. Syrian and Arab-national references still appear, and some Syrian figures remain, but they no longer consistently define the highest frame of collective identity. Students are taught to serve the faith and the *ummah*, to understand moral relations through Muslims and the *ummah*, and to locate Syria in relation to the Islamic *ummah*. The revised curriculum therefore turns pan-Islamism into an educational structure: Syria remains on the map, but the Islamic communal collective of the *ummah* becomes the superior community of belonging, obligation, and moral purpose.

123 See also *Social Studies*, Grade 4, 2025-26, p. 10.

Displacing Arab Nationalism with Islamic Civilization

Alongside the redirection of belonging from the Syrian and Arab homeland to the Islamic *ummah*, the 2025-2026 curriculum weakens earlier Arab-national and pan-Arab identity frameworks. In the Assad-era curriculum, Arab identity functioned as a central political and ideological framework, not only as a cultural or linguistic category. Syria was presented as part of a wider Arab nation, while Arab civilization, Arab unity, pan-Arab nationalism, anti-colonial Arab struggle, and cultural symbols such as the Syrian Arab anthem formed part of the curriculum's normative language of collective belonging. The revised curriculum lowers this framework in the hierarchy of identity. Arabness and pan-Arabism still appear, but they lose their former position as the highest civilizational and political frame. Islamic civilization, Islamic figures, and the Islamic *ummah* increasingly become the more authoritative categories through which students are taught to understand history, culture, resistance, unity, and political legitimacy.

This shift is evident in the stated aims of History education. In the Grade 9 History textbook's introductory "book map," the earlier aim of fostering "pride in Arab nationalism and Arabness" (*al-iʿtizāz bil-qawmiyyah al-ʿarabiyyah wa-ʿurūbah*) is replaced with "pride in Islamic civilization" (*al-iʿtizāz bil-ḥaḍārah al-islāmiyyah*). The surrounding values, including belonging to the homeland, respect for others' opinions, cooperation, volunteering, and preservation of local-national heritage, remain unchanged. The change therefore targets the civilizational horizon of historical education. Students are no longer explicitly directed to take pride in Arab nationalism and Arabness. They are directed to take pride in Islamic civilization.[124]

The same hierarchy appears in Social Studies. A Grade 6 passage changes "Arab civilization" (*al-ḥaḍārah al-ʿarabiyyah*) into "Islamic civilization" (*al-ḥaḍārah al-islāmiyyah*) and adds that Islam established this civilization on justice and non-discrimination. The revised passage retains Arab cultural elements such as classical Arabic, poetry, the market of ʿUkāẓ, courage, generosity, and cultural exchange, but places them under the religious frame of Islamic civilization. The revised passage adds a final sentence stating that "the Islamic religion was the strongest and most important bond in the shared Arab culture." Arab culture remains present, but Islam becomes the superior source of unity, identity, and civilizational meaning. Another Grade 6 Social Studies activity replaces "local-national figure" (*šaḫṣiyyah waṭaniyyah*) with "Islamic figure" (*šaḫṣiyyah islāmiyyah*) as the exemplary role model representing anti-colonial struggle. The previous version of the activity featured modern Syrian and Algerian anti-colonial figures, including Aḥmad Maryūd and Jamīlah Būḥayrid. The revised version removes these figures, retains ʿUmar al-Muḫtār, and adds Nūr al-Dīn Zangī. Anti-colonial memory is therefore reorganized under Islamic identity; students are redirected from civic-national and Arab revolutionary models toward Islamic figures of struggle.[125]

History textbooks perform the same demotion of Arab nationalism at the level of foundational pan-Arab narratives. The Grade 12 History lesson on the events of 1916-1918 changes "the Great Arab Revolt" (*al-ṯawrah al-ʿarabiyyah al-kubrā*) into "the rebellion movement of Hussein bin Ali." It changes liberation of the Arab lands from "Ottoman occupation" into "breaking the Arab lands from the Ottoman State," removes the language of "Unionist Turks," and replaces "liberating the peoples from the injustices of the Turks" with "expelling the Ottomans from the region."[126] The revision strips the revolt of its heroic Arab-national status and recasts Arab nationalist liberation as separation from the Ottoman-Islamic order. A later Grade 12 History example reflects the same pattern in its treatments of Gamal Abdel Nasser and the United Arab Republic. Nasser is cropped out of the image and removed from the caption, while the collapse of the union is explained through accumulating mistakes, concentration of power, security domination, and Nasser's collaboration with the Soviet Union, rather than through imperialist and reactionary hostility to Arab unity.[127]

124 For replacing "Syrian Arab people" with "Syrian people" see *History*, Grade 9, 2025-26, p. 10 (previously: History, Grade 9, 2017-18, p. 11).

125 See: *Social Studies*, Grade 6, 2025-2026, p. 98 (previously: *Social Studies*, Grade 6, 2012-2013, p. 102); *Social Studies*, Grade 6, 2025-2026, p. 78 (previously: *Social Studies*, Grade 6, 2012-2013, p. 80).

126 See: *History*, Grade 12 (Humanities Track), 2025-26, pp. 25-26 (previously: *History*, Grade 12 [Humanities Track], 2017-18, pp. 26-27).

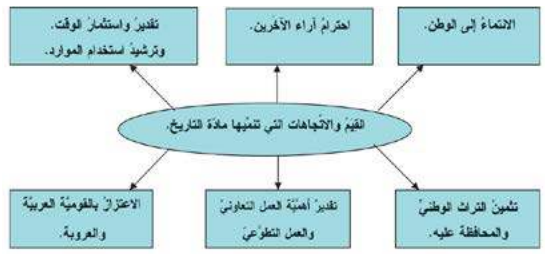
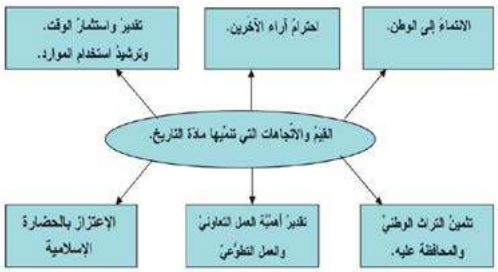
127 Removal of reference to the "progressive national and pan-Arab policy" introduced by the July 1952 Egyptian revolution, as well as the reference to the cooperation of the "Zionist entity" with colonial powers to launch wars against it. *History*, Grade 12 (Humanities Track), 2025-26, p. 129 (previously: *History*, Grade 12 (Humanities Track), 2017-18, p. 131). On the international interest in Syria at the time of the military coups see *History*, Grade 12 (Humanities Track), 2025-26, pp. 49-51 (previously: *History*, Grade 12 (Humanities Track), 2017-18, pp. 50-53). See also chapter 5.
For an example on the reframing of Syria's nationalist liberation approach, the Corrective Movement and the Liberation War of 1973, see *History*, Grade 12 (Humanities Track), 2025-26, p. 30 (previously: *History*, Grade 12 (Humanities Track), 2017-18, p. 31). See also chapter 5.

The same approach appears in cultural subjects. In Grade 8 Music Education, the revised textbook removes a lesson on "Defenders of the Homeland" (*ḥumāt al-waṭan*), which in the earlier edition included the singing of "The Syrian Arab Anthem" (*al-našīd al-ʿarabī al-sūrī*) and illustrations of students standing with the former Syrian flag. In Grade 4 Music Education, the revised textbook also removes the lesson entitled "The Soldier" (*al-jundī*), which focused on the Syrian Arab army and patriotic military music. These cultural deletions reinforce the pattern found in History and Social Studies. Arab identity, Syrian patriotism, and pan-Arab symbolism are relegated, while Islamic civilization and the Muslim collective become stronger frameworks of belonging, memory, and moral legitimacy.[128]

A clear example of this reorientation appears in the Grade 9 History textbook's introductory "book map," which sets out the values and themes taught throughout the subject. This example is significant, as rather than changing a single historical narrative, the revision changes the textbook's opening statement of the values and aims of History education. Most of the surrounding categories remain unchanged: students are still expected to develop historical thinking skills, life skills, a sense of belonging to the homeland, respect for others' opinions, appreciation of cooperative work, and preservation of national heritage. The specific value that changes is therefore highly visible. The older 2017-2018 version ended its list of values with "pride in Arab nationalism and Arabness" (*al-iʿtizāz bil-qawmiyyah al-ʿarabiyyah wa-ʿurūbah*). The 2025-2026 version replaces this with "pride in Islamic civilization" (*al-iʿtizāz bil-ḥaḍārah al-islāmiyyah*).

The revision changes the declared ideological purpose of History education. "Belonging to the homeland" and "local-national heritage" remain in the values map, but Arab nationalism and Arabness lose their place as the civilizational horizon students were explicitly taught to value. Islamic civilization takes that place. The revised textbook therefore redirects historical consciousness away from Arab-national pride and toward Islamic civilizational pride. This example shows that the shift from Arab nationalism to Islamic civilization is not incidental. It is stated at the level of the textbook's own educational aims, before students enter the historical units themselves.

***History*, Grade 9, 2025-26, p. 5 (History, Grade 9, 2017-18, p. 6)**

2017-18	2025-26
	
[In the middle:] *The Values and Approaches which History Subject Nurtures:* [From top right:] - *Belonging to the Homeland (waṭan)* - *Respecting the views of others* - *Appreciating and investing time, and well-channeled use of resources* - *Valuing local-national (waṭanī) heritage and preserving it* - *Appreciating the importance of cooperation and volunteering* - *Pride in Arab nationalism and Arabness*	[In the middle:] *The Values and Approaches which History Subject Nurtures:* [From top right:] - *Belonging to the Homeland (waṭan)* - *Respecting the views of others* - *Appreciating and investing time, and well-channeled use of resources* - *Valuing local-national (waṭanī) heritage and preserving it* - *Appreciating the importance of cooperation and volunteering* - *Pride in Islamic civilization*

*Highlighted text shows altered content.

128 *Music Education*, Grade 8, 2025-26 (previously: *Music Education*, Grade 8, 2023-24, pp. 30-31). See also *Music Education*, Grade 4, 2025-26 (previously: *Music Education*, Grade 4, 2023-24, pp. 22-23). For both examples see also chapter 5.

The following Grade 6 Social Studies example shows a direct reframing of civilizational identity. The older 2012-2013 textbook presented "Arab civilization" (*al-ḥaḍārah al-ʿarabiyyah*) as a framework built on values, freedom of thought, and non-discrimination among people. It explained Arab belonging through shared language, common culture, classical Arabic language, poetry, historic cultural markets such as the market of ʿUkāẓ, and values such as courage and generosity. The revised 2025-2026 version changes the subject from "Arab civilization" to "Islamic civilization" (*al-ḥaḍārah al-islāmiyyah*) and adds that Islam established this civilization on values such as justice (*al-ʿadl*) and non-discrimination between people (*ʿadam al-tamyīz bayn al-nās*).

The revised version preserves several Arab cultural elements, including the market of ʿUkāẓ, Arab poetry, classical Arabic language, courage, generosity, and cultural exchange. Yet these elements are now listed under the religious context of Islamic civilization. The new text states that after division and fragmentation, the Arabs were connected by one language, while non-Arab Muslims were connected to them through "one authentic, essential culture." The new addition of the final sentence makes the hierarchy explicit: "The Islamic religion was the strongest and most important bond in the shared Arab culture." Arab culture remains present, but Islam becomes the deeper source of unity, identity, and civilizational meaning. In a Social Studies discussion of public libraries, culture, and social development, the curriculum therefore subordinates Arab civilizational belonging to an Islamic civilization and religious context, teaching students to interpret Arab culture through Islam as its superior bond.

***Social Studies*, Grade 6, 2025-2026, p. 78 (previously: *Social Studies*, Grade 6, 2012-2013, p. 80)**

2012-13	2025-26
– في رأيك ما فائدة المكتبات العامة في تطوّر المجتمعات؟ قامت الحضارة العربيّة على مجموعة من القيم، وحريّة الفكر، وعدم التمييز بين الناس، فارتبطَ العربُ مع بعضهم بلغةٍ واحدةٍ، أنتجَتْ لديهم ثقافةً مشتركةً، حدّدت انتماءهم وهويّتهم؛ لأنّها من أهمّ مقوّمات الانتماء العربيّ. أدّت سوق عكاظ دوراً ثقافيّاً إلى جانب دورها التجاريّ وذلك تعزيز القيم كالشجاعة والكرم، و تبادل المعارف، و الثقافات بين الناس، وكان للشعر العربيّ مكانتُهُ الثقافيّةُ، الأمرُ الذي ساعدَ على انتشار اللُّغة العربيّة الفصيحة كعاملٍ موحّدٍ للقبائل العربيّة . سوقُ عكاظ تقعُ بين مكةَ والطائف، وكانت تستمرُ عشرين يوماً، وهي أشهرُ أسواق العرب، وأعرفُها، وأعظمُها شأناً في الجاهليّة والإسلام. وعكاظُ سوقُ أدبٍ يجتمعُ فيه الشعراءُ من كلّ ناحية كالنابغة الذبيانيّ. الموسوعةُ العربيّةُ العالميّة ج٢	– في رأيك ما فائدة المكتبات العامة في تطوّر المجتمعات؟ جاء الإسلام فأقام الحضارة الإسلامية على مجموعة من القيم كالعدل وعدم التمييز بين الناس، فارتبط العرب بعد تفرق وتمزق بلغة واحدة وارتبط معهم المسلمون غير العرب بثقافة واحدة جوهرية أصيلة. وقبل الإسلام كان للعرب في الجاهلية أسواق ثقافية كسوق عكاظ الذي أدى دورا ثقافيا إلى جانب دورها التجاريّ وذلك تعزيز القيم كالشجاعة والكرم، و تبادل المعارف، و الثقافات بين الناس، وكان للشعر العربيّ مكانتُهُ الثقافيّةُ، الأمرُ الذي ساعدَ على انتشار اللُّغة العربيّة الفصيحة كعاملٍ موحّدٍ للقبائل العربيّة، وكان الدين الإسلامي الرابط الأقوى والأهم في الثقافة العربية المشتركة سوقُ عكاظ تقعُ بين مكةَ والطائف، وكانت تستمرُ عشرين يوماً، وهي أشهرُ أسواق العرب، وأعرفُها، وأعظمُها شأناً في الجاهليّة والإسلام. وعكاظُ سوقُ أدبٍ يجتمعُ فيه الشعراءُ من كلّ ناحية كالنابغة الذبيانيّ. الموسوعةُ العربيّةُ العالميّة ج٢
- In your opinion, what is the benefit of public libraries in the development of societies? *The Arab civilization was established on a set of values, freedom of thought, and non-discrimination among people. Arabs were connected to one another by a single language, which produced a shared culture that defined their belonging and identity, because it was one of the most important components of Arab belonging. The market of ʿUkāẓ played a cultural role alongside its commercial role, strengthening values such as courage and generosity, and enabling the exchange of knowledge and cultures among people. Arab poetry had cultural status, which helped spread classical Arabic as a unifying factor for the Arab tribes.* *[...]*	*- In your opinion, what is the benefit of public libraries in the development of societies?* *Islam emerged and established the Islamic civilization on a set of values, such as justice and non-discrimination among people. After division and fragmentation, the Arabs were connected by one language, and non-Arab Muslims were connected with them through one authentic, essential culture. Before Islam, the Arabs had cultural markets in the Jāhiliyyah[16], such as the market of ʿUkāẓ, which played a cultural role alongside its commercial role, strengthening values such as courage and generosity, and enabling the exchange of knowledge and cultures among people. Arab poetry had cultural status, which helped spread classical Arabic as a unifying factor for the Arab tribes. The Islamic religion was the strongest and most important bond in the shared Arab culture.* *[...]*

*Highlighted text shows altered content. *Green text shows added content.

129 *Jāhiliyyah* – an Islamic term commonly used to refer to the pre-Islamic period in Arabia, often associated in Islamic tradition with ignorance, tribal disorder, and polytheism.

The following Grade 6 Social Studies example shows how the revised curriculum retains the theme of anti-colonial resistance while changing the figures that students are asked to admire and write about. The previous 2012-2013 activity presented resistance to colonialism through a Syrian-national and Arab revolutionary lens. Students encountered modern Arab figures associated with anti-colonial struggle, including the Syrian rebel leader Ahmad Maryoud (1886-1926) and the Algerian nationalist militant Jamila Bouhired (b. 1935), both of whom had fought against French colonial rule in their respective countries. The older version also included Omar al-Mokhtar (1858-1931), the Libyan Muslim leader who resisted Italian colonial rule. The final writing task asks students to select a "local-national figure" (*šaḫṣiyyah waṭaniyyah*) who struggled against colonialism.

The 2025-2026 version removes most of the modern nationalist frame. Ahmad Maryoud disappears. Jamila Bouhired disappears, along with the Assad-era reference to Bashar al-Assad awarding her the Syrian Order of Merit. The final task also changes, asking students to choose an "Islamic figure" (*šaḫṣiyyah islāmiyyah*) instead of a "local national figure." The activity retains Omar al-Mokhtar, whose anti-colonial struggle is incorporated into an Islamic frame, and adds Nūr al-Dīn Zangī (1118-1174), a pre-modern Turkmen Muslim ruler known for his piety and fervent struggle against the Crusaders in the Levant. The question "What is the role of resistance in liberating peoples from colonialism?" remains unchanged, preserving resistance as a positive value.

The revision therefore changes the identity through which anti-colonial resistance is made exemplary. Students are redirected from looking for a local-national figure who fought colonialism to an Islamic figure of resistance. The change also narrows the gender, national, and modern revolutionary dimensions of the older activity: the modern Algerian female revolutionary Jamila Bouhired is removed, while the added model is a male, pre-modern Turkmen Muslim ruler, Nūr al-Dīn Zangī. This example complements the previous Social Studies passage. There, Arab civilization is reorganized under Islamic civilization. Here, anti-colonial role models are reorganized under Islamic identity. The curriculum preserves the value of resistance but changes the kind of historical figure through whom students are taught to imagine legitimate struggle.

***Social Studies,* Grade 6, 2025-2026, p. 98 (previously: *Social Studies*, Grade 6, 2012-2013, p. 102)**

2017-18	2025-26
الأنشطة والتدريبات ١- ضع إشارة (✓) أمام العبارة الصحيحة، وإشارة (×) أمام العبارة المغلوط فيها: - ( ) ولد أحمد مريود في قرية جبّاتا الخشب، وتلقّى دراسته الابتدائية في مدينة القنيطرة المحرّرة. - ( ) قلّد الرئيس بشّار الأسد المناضلة الجزائريّة جميلة بوحيرد وسام الاستحقاق السوريّ من الدرجة الممتازة. - ( ) قاوم عمر المختار الاحتلال الإيطاليّ لليبيا منذ عام ١٩١١م. - ( ) التحقت جميلة بوحيرد بصفوف الفدائيّين، وكانت أول المتطوعات لمقاومة الاستعمار وهي في عمر الخامسة والعشرين. ٢- ماذور المقاومة في تحرير الشعوب من الاستعمار؟ ٣- اختر شخصيّة وطنية ناضلت ضدّ الاستعمار، واكتب عنها بضعة أسطر.	الأنشطة والتدريبات ١- ضع إشارة (✓) أمام العبارة الصحيحة، وإشارة (×) أمام العبارة المغلوطة : - ( ) قاوم عمر المختار الاحتلال الإيطاليّ لليبيا منذ عام ١٩١١م. - ( ) كان نور الدين زنكي زاهداً عابداً بعيداً عن حياة الترف. ٢- ماذور المقاومة في تحرير الشعوب من الاستعمار؟ ٣- اختر شخصيّة إسلامية ناضلت ضدّ الاستعمار، واكتب عنها بضعة أسطر.
Activities and Exercises *1. Place a check mark (✓) before the correct statement, and an (X) before the incorrect statement:* • *( ) Ahmed Maryoud was born in the village of Jabbātā al-Khashab, and received his primary education in the liberated city of Quneitra.* • *( ) President Bashar al-Assad awarded the Algerian fighter Djamila Bouhired the Syrian Order of Merit, Excellent Class.* • *( ) Omar al-Mukhtar resisted the Italian occupation of Libya from 1911.* • *( ) Djamila Bouhired joined the ranks of the Fedayeen, and was one of the first women volunteers to resist colonialism in the twentieth century.* *2. What is the role of resistance in liberating peoples from colonialism?* *3. Choose a local-national figure who struggled against colonialism, and write a few lines about them.*	*Activities and Exercises* *1. Place a check mark (✓) before the correct statement, and an (X) before the incorrect statement:* • *( ) Omar al-Mukhtar resisted the Italian occupation of Libya from 1911.* • *( ) Nur al-Din Zengi was an ascetic worshipper, far removed from a life of luxury.* *2. What is the role of resistance in liberating peoples from colonialism?* *3. Choose an Islamic figure who struggled against colonialism, and write a few lines about it.*

*Highlighted text shows altered content. *Red text shows removed content. *Green text shows added content.

The following Grade 12 History example rewrites one of the central origin stories of modern Arab nationalism. In the older 2017-2018 version of the textbook, the events of 1916-1918 were explicitly named "the Great Arab Revolt" (*al-ṯawrah al-ʿarabiyyah al-kubrā*) and were presented as an Arab liberation movement led by Sharif Hussein (1853-1931) after the Arabs sided with the Allies in World War I (1914-1918). Its goal was described as liberating the Arab lands from "Ottoman occupation" (*al-iḥtilāl al-ʿuṯmānī*) and from the rule of the "Unionist Turks." The quotation from the Anglo-French Declaration (November 7, 1918) was likewise translated through a strongly anti-Ottoman and liberationist vocabulary, stating that the purpose of the war in the East was "to liberate the peoples from the injustices of the Turks." The older version therefore taught the revolt as legitimate Arab resistance against oppressive Ottoman-Turkish rule.

The 2025-2026 version dismantles this Arab-nationalist framing. "The Great Arab Revolt" becomes "the rebellion movement of Hussein bin Ali," reducing a foundational Arab national revolt to a personally led rebellion. The goal is changed from liberating Arab lands from Ottoman occupation to "breaking the Arab lands from the Ottoman State." This phrasing no longer presents the Arab lands as occupied territory awaiting liberation. It presents them as lands detached from an existing Ottoman political order. The quotation from the Anglo-French Declaration is also revised: "liberating the peoples from the injustices of the Turks" becomes "expelling the Ottomans from the region." The previous edition's emphasis on Turkish injustice disappears, and the Ottomans are described through a dynastic-political category rather than as oppressive Turks.

The revision recasts Arab nationalist liberation as fragmentation of the Ottoman order. By replacing "Great Arab Revolt," "Ottoman occupation," "Unionist Turks," and "liberation" with "rebellion movement," "Ottoman State," "breaking," and "expulsion," the revised textbook strips the revolt of its heroic Arab-national status and undermines its moral legitimacy. This matters because the Great Arab Revolt has long been presented as a defining moment in the history of modern Arab nationalism. The revised version places less emphasis on that narrative, presenting the revolt as a rebellion led by Hussein bin Ali and a break from the Ottoman State rather than as the liberation of the Arab lands from Ottoman occupation. This pattern continues in the later treatment of Nasserism, the United Arab Republic, and twentieth-century pan-Arabism, where Arab-national projects are likewise diminished, criticized, or stripped of earlier prestige.

***History,* Grade 12 (Humanities Track), 2025-26, pp. 25-26 (previously: *History,* Grade 12 [Humanities Track], 2017-18, pp. 26-27)**

2017-18	2025-26
قامتِ الثورةُ العربيّةُ الكبرى (١٩١٦–١٩١٨م) بقيادة الشريفِ حسينٍ، بعد وقوف العرب إلى جانب الحلفاء في الحرب العالميّة الأولى، وقد هدفتِ الثورةُ إلى تحرير البلاد العربيّة من الاحتلال العثماني وحكم الاتحاديّين الأتراك (١٩٠٨–١٩١٨م).	قامتِ حركة تمرد حسين بن علي(١٩١٦–١٩١٨م)، بعد وقوفه الى جانب الحلفاء وقد هدفَ التمرّد الى فصل البلاد العربية عن الدولة العثمانية.
The Great Arab Revolt (1916-1918) took place under the leadership of Sharif Hussein, after the Arabs stood by the side of the Allies in WWI. The goal of the revolt was to liberate the Arab lands from the Ottoman occupation and the rule of the Unionist Turks (1908-1918).	*The rebellion movement of Hussein bin Ali (1916-1918) took place, after he stood by the side of the Allies. The goal of the rebellion was to break the Arab lands from the Ottoman State.*
فيصلٌ من اللنبي عن الموقف، صدر **البيانُ الفرنسيّ-البريطانيّ**: الذي أكّد أنّ هدفَهما من خوض الحرب في الشرق هو تحريرُ الشعوب من مظالم الأتراك، وإقامةُ حكوماتٍ وطنيّةٍ تستمدُّ	فيصلٌ من اللنبي عن الموقف، صدر **البيانُ الفرنسيّ البريطانيّ**: الذي أكّد أنّ هدفَهما من خوض الحرب في الشرق هو اخراج العثمانيين من المنطقة وإقامةُ حكوماتٍ وطنيّةٍ تستمدُّ
[...] The Anglo-French Declaration was issued, which confirmed that the goal of waging war in the East was to liberate the peoples from the injustices of the Turks, and to establish national governments [...]	*[...] The Anglo-French Declaration was issued, which confirmed that the goal of waging war in the East was to expel the Ottomans from the region, and to establish national governments [...]*

*Highlighted text shows altered content.

The following Grade 12 History example shows the demotion of twentieth-century pan-Arabism through the treatment of Egyptian President Gamal Abdel Nasser (1918-1970) and the short-lived United Arab Republic (UAR, 1958-1961). In the older textbook, the UAR was embedded in a celebratory pan-Arab narrative. The image included both Syrian President Shukri al-Quwatli (1891-1967) and Gamal Abdel Nasser, while the caption identifies al-Quwatli as "the first Arab citizen," a title tied to Arab unity and to al-Quwatli's symbolic sacrifice for the shared political union. The older explanation of the UAR's collapse emphasized foreign hostility to Arab unity. It described the United States as opposing the emergence of a strong unified Arab state, presented the American landing in Lebanon and the British landing in Jordan as reactions to unionist ambitions to expand, and stated that imperialism collaborated with reactionary ideological groups that had suffered from the union to declare secession.

The 2025-2026 textbook changes both the visual and narrative center of the episode. Nasser is cropped out of the image and removed from the caption, leaving only "President Shukri al-Quwatli." The revised text preserves a positive passage discussing UAR achievements, agrarian reform, bank nationalization, the establishment of new ministries, support for Arab and international liberation movements, and stronger relations with socialist countries. Yet the surrounding editorial changes reshape the meaning of the episode. The collapse of the union is no longer explained primarily through foreign imperialist opposition and local reactionary hostility to Arab unity. It is explained through "accumulating mistakes," concentration of power, security domination over state resources, and Nasser's collaboration with the Soviet Union.

The revised presentation strips Nasserism and the UAR of much of their earlier pan-Arab prestige. Nasser loses visual presence, the caption no longer carries the same celebration of Arab unity, and the explanation of secession shifts from external conspiracy against a strong Arab state to internal failure, authoritarian control, and political misjudgment. The result is a more critical and diminished account of the pan-Arab unionist project. The curriculum retains some historical achievements of the UAR, but places them inside a framework of flawed governance and failed unity. This example completes the pattern of this sub-chapter's findings: Arab nationalism is removed from declared educational values, Arab civilization is subordinated to Islamic civilization, anti-colonial role models are Islamized, the Great Arab Revolt is recast as rebellion and separation from Islamic unity under the Ottoman state, and Nasserist Arab unity is visually and narratively downgraded.

***History*, Grade 12 (Humanities Track), 2025-26, pp. 50-51 (previously: *History*, Grade 12 [Humanities Track], 2017-18, pp. 51-52)**

2017-18	2025-26
[p. 51] الشكل (١٤) "المواطن العربيّ الأول" شكري القوتلي والرئيس عبد الناصر.	[p. 50] الشكل (١٤) الرئيس شكري القوتلي
Figure 14: "The first Arab citizen" Shukri al-Quwatli and President Abd al-Nasser	*Figure 14: President Shukri al-Quwatli*

(See the continuation of the example on the following page)

2017-18	2025-26
[p. 52] • الوحدةُ في ميزان التنافس الدولي: رأت الولاياتُ المتّحدة الأمريكيّة أنّ قيام دولةٍ عربيّةٍ قويّةٍ في المنطقة يعرقلُ مشروعاتها وبخاصّة الأحلاف، وبهذا أمنَ الكيان الصهيونيّ وسلامته ولذلك حاولت وقفَ المدّ الوحدويّ إلى الأقطار العربيّة الأخرى، فأنزلت قواتها في لبنان، ودفعت بريطانيا إلى إنزال قواتها في الأردن، كما شجّعت على إقامة اتّحادٍ هاشميٍّ بين الأردنّ والعراق كردّ فعلٍ رجعيٍّ على مشروع الوحدة، وتعاونت الإمبرياليّةُ مع الاتّجاهات الرجعيّة المتضرّرة من الوحدة على إعلان الانفصال في ٢٨ أيلول عام ١٩٦١م، فتشكّلت حكومةٌ برئاسة **مأمون الكزبري**، وانتُخبَ **ناظم القدسي** رئيساً للجمهوريّة.	[p. 51] • الانفصال في ٢٨ أيلول عام ١٩٦١م: استمرت الوحدة نحو أربع سنوات ، ولكن نتيجة الأخطاء المتراكمة وتفرد السلطة في دولة الوحدة وسيطرة الأجهزة الأمنية على مقدرات الدولة ، قامت مجموعة من الضباط في الجيش السوري بإعلان الانفصال عن مصر في ٢٨ أيلول عام ١٩٦١م ، فتشكلت حكومة برئاسة مأمون الكزبري وانتخب ناظم القدسي رئيساً للجمهورية العربية السورية. **يذكر أن جمال عبد الناصر قد تعاون مع الاتحاد السوفييتي**
• *The Union in Terms of International Competition:* *The United States of America believed that the establishment of a strong Arab state in the region would obstruct its enterprises, particularly alliances, and threaten the security and well-being of the Zionist Entity, and for that reason it decided to stop the "Unionist expansion" to other Arab countries. It landed forces in Lebanon, which led Britain to land its forces in Jordan. Additionally, [the USA] encouraged the establishment of a Hashemite union between Jordan and Iraq in reaction to the Union project. Imperialism collaborated with reactionist ideological groups that had suffered from the Union to declare secession on September 28, 1961. A government headed by Maamun al-Kuzbari was formed, and Nazim al-Qudsi was elected President of the [Syrian Arab] Republic.*	• *The Secession on September 28, 1961:* *The union lasted for about four years, but as a result of accumulating mistakes, the separation of power in the Union State and the control of state resources by the security apparatuses, a group of Syrian Army officers declared secession from Egypt on September 28, 1961. A government headed by Maamun al-Kuzbari was formed, and Nazim al-Qudsi was elected President of the Syrian Arab Republic.* *Notably, Gamal Abd al-Nasser has collaborated with the Soviet Union.*

*Highlighted text shows altered content. *Red text shows removed content. *Green text shows added content.

The examples in this sub-chapter show a systematic downgrading of Arab nationalism and pan-Arabism. The Grade 9 History values map removes Arab nationalism and Arabness from the textbook's declared educational values and replaces them with Islamic civilization. The Grade 6 Social Studies passage subordinates Arab culture to Islamic civilization and presents Islam as the strongest bond in shared Arab culture. The Grade 6 anti-colonial activity replaces the local-national figure with the Islamic figure and removes modern Arab nationalist role models. The Grade 12 History lesson on the Great Arab Revolt weakens a founding story of modern Arab nationalism by recasting Arab liberation as rebellion and separation from the Ottoman State. The Grade 12 treatment of Nasser and the United Arab Republic removes Nasser's visual presence and reframes pan-Arab unity through failure, authoritarianism, and political misjudgment. The Music Education deletions extend the same pattern into patriotic cultural symbolism. One field where these ideas were retained is Arabic literature, as Arab nationalism and pan-Arabism are still taught in lessons on literary prose and poetry dedicated to these topics. For example, despite the initial directive to remove the lesson entirely, the Grade 12 Arabic Language textbook teaches a lesson titled "National and Pan-Arab Issues Literature," which includes Arab resistance and independence poetry, Palestinian literature as well as poetry about the 1967 and 1973 Arab-Israeli wars.[130]

The curricular message is clear. Arab language, culture, and history remain present, but Arab nationalism no longer occupies the highest ideological position. Islamic civilization becomes the superior civilizational frame. Islamic figures become the preferred models of struggle. Ottoman rule is shielded from the older language of occupation and injustice. Nasserist Arab unity is stripped of much of its former prestige. The revised curriculum therefore does not merely reduce Assad-era Baʿthist propaganda. It demotes Arab nationalism as a source of legitimacy and reorganizes Arab history under Islamic civilizational authority. Students are taught to understand Arab identity as secondary to Islam, resistance as strongest when embodied by Islamic figures, and pan-Arab nationalism as a questionable political cause when presented in opposition to an Islamic or Ottoman-centered political order.

130 *Arabic Language and Its Literature*, Grade 12 (Humanities Track), 2025-26, pp. 4-7 (previously: *Arabic Language and Its Literature*, Grade 12 [Humanities Track], 2023-24, pp. 8-12).

Redefining Conflict as Religious Cause: From Homeland, Resistance, and Regional Disputes to Allah, Islam, and the *Ummah*

The 2025-2026 curriculum reframes the conflicts through which students are asked to imagine duty, sacrifice, solidarity, and moral concern. Earlier textbooks often presented regional disputes and armed struggle through Syrian-national, Arab, or Assad-era resistance vocabulary: the Golan Heights, Palestine, Iraq, the homeland, soldiers, resistance fighters, Independence Day, national defense, and state commemoration of martyrs. The revised curriculum preserves conflict, occupation, martyrdom, military duty, and concern for suffering communities as educational themes, but changes their ideological geography. Specific Syrian and Arab causes are repeatedly absorbed into broader categories such as "the lands of the Muslims," "the lands of Islam," "Islamic countries," "occupied lands of Islam," and the enemies of the Islamic *ummah*. In a Grade 3 Islamic Education example, "the Golan" is replaced by "Palestine" in an exercise asking students to compose a prayer expressing love for the Golan and al-Aqsa Mosque and wishing for their liberation, further reducing the specific Syrian territorial frame.[131] This particular change removes the specifically Syrian territorial reference to the Golan in favor of the broader Palestinian cause. The vocabulary of "resistance" (*muqāwamah*) and "resistance fighters" (*muqāwimūn*) is also replaced or subordinated in key examples by "*jihad*", "*jihad* fighters" (*mujāhidīn*), sacrifice for Allah, defense of the Faith, liberation of Muslim lands, and solidarity with Muslims.[132] A related Grade 9 History example applies the same logic to the anti-French struggle, reframing rebels against France as "*jihad* warriors" (*mujāhidūn*).[133]

This lexical shift is especially significant in the Syrian context. Under the Assad regime, "resistance" (*muqāwamah*) was closely tied to the regional "Axis of Resistance" (*miḥwar al-muqāwamah*) and to Syria's alignment with Iran, Hezbollah, the Houthis, Hamas, and other Iran-allied actors. The revised curriculum moves away from that Assad-era resistance register and toward a Sunni Islamist vocabulary of armed struggle. The terminology of *jihad*, *jihad* fighters (*mujāhidīn*), martyrdom (*šahādah*), Muslim lands, and enemies of the ummah resonates more strongly with the ideological world of Sunni Islamist and jihadist movements, including al-Qaeda, ISIS, HTS, and other Syrian opposition Islamist-jihadist factions from whose milieu the new ruling order emerged. The textbooks translate conflict into a moral language closer to pan-Islamist mobilization than to Syrian state patriotism or Assad-era resistance politics.

The fuller examples in this section show this shift across several grades and several forms of moral formation. In Grade 8 Islamic Education, two exercises on the campaign of Tabūk, Prophet Muhammad's expedition to northwestern Arabia near the Byzantine frontier in 630 CE, redirect students from Palestine, the occupied Golan, Palestinian resistance, patriotic poetry, soldiers, and defense of the homeland toward the lands of the Muslims, occupied lands of Islam, revolutionary *jihad* fighters, enemies of the *ummah*, aid to the Faith, and liberation of Muslim lands. In Grade 7 Islamic Education, a lesson on martyrdom changes heroes who defended the homeland, its borders, freedom, dignity, and occupied land into heroes who defend the Faith, the lands of Islam, Allah's servants, and the *ummah*. A later activity in the same lesson changes moral evaluation from concern for Palestine and the Golan Heights, pride in martyrs and resistance fighters, and respect for their families, into concern for Muslim lands, pride in martyrs and *jihad* fighters, sacrifice for Allah, and protection of the Faith, the *ummah*, and the lands of Islam.

A similar pattern appears even where fighting and martyrdom are not the immediate subject. In a Grade 3 Islamic Education textbook, a lesson on love and cooperation changes passages referencing concern for children suffering in the Golan Heights, Palestine, and Iraq into concern for "the children of Muslims" in Syria, Palestine, and Iraq.[134] The revision removes the Golan as a specific Syrian national reference, adds Syria in the post-civil war context, and reframes concern for children's suffering through Muslim communal identity. Another Grade 3 prayer example similarly replaces the previous formula asking God to support "the children of the Golan, Palestine, and Iraq" with the wording "the children of Muslims in Palestine," removing references to Syria's territorial dispute over the Golan Heights and the earlier American invasion of Iraq, introducing pan-Islamic communal identification and retaining the broader Palestinian

131 *Islamic Education*, Grade 3, 2025-26, p. 96 (previously: *Islamic Education*, Grade 3, 2017-18, p. 98).

132 *Islamic Education*, Grade 7, 2025-26, pp. 50-53 (previously: *Islamic Education*, Grade 7, 2011-12, pp. 53-56).

133 For the reframing of rebels against France as "*jihad* warriors" (*mujāhidūn*), see History, Grade 9, 2025-26, pp. 22-25 (previously: *History*, Grade 9, 2017-18, pp. 23-26).

134 *Islamic Education*, Grade 3, 2025-26, p. 15 (previously: *Islamic Education*, Grade 3, 2017-18, p. 17).

cause.[135] In another Grade 8 Islamic Education exercise, "our people in the Golan" confronting "the Zionist occupation" is changed in the revised curriculum to "our people in the lands of Islam" confronting "the tyrants and occupiers." This change expands the enemy category in two directions: outward to foreign occupiers of Islamic lands and inward to tyrants, a term that can include rulers or authorities deemed despotic, illegitimate, or hostile to Islam. Together, these examples show that the revised curriculum's pan-Islamic conflict frame begins in early moral education, intensifies in lessons on martyrdom and jihad, and expands from Syrian territorial disputes to a wider geography of Islamic struggle.

The following Grade 8 Islamic Education example shows the reclassification of regional conflicts and Syrian national defense into a broader Islamic geography of "the lands of the Muslims" (*bilād al-muslimīn*). The example appears in a lesson on the campaign of Tabūk (630 CE), Prophet Muhammad's expedition to northwestern Arabia near the Byzantine frontier. In Islamic tradition, the campaign is often presented as a test of Muslim commitment, sacrifice, readiness, and loyalty to the Muslim community. The historical setting is significant, as the revised textbook uses a lesson about early Muslim mobilization to reshape how students understand contemporary conflict, military aspiration, and communal duty.

In the 2017-2018 version, students were asked to respond to passages presenting indifference toward "what is happening in occupied Palestine and the occupied Golan," and to the wish to become "a soldier defending his homeland" (*waṭanihi*). These formulations placed political concern and military duty within Syrian-Arab geography: Palestine, the occupied Golan, and the homeland. The previous version connected the ethical lessons of Tabūk to regional Arab causes and Syrian national defense, whereas in the 2025-2026 version, these same duties are broadened and Islamized. "Occupied Palestine and the occupied Golan" become "the lands of the Muslims" (*bilād al-muslimīn*), and the soldier no longer defends "his homeland," but "the lands of the Muslims" (*bilād al-muslimīn*). The revised text redirects students from specific occupied Arab or Syrian territories to a more transnational Islamic field of concern and defense.

This revision does not erase Palestine from the exercise: the donation to "the children of Palestine" remains unchanged. Its significance lies in the hierarchy it creates. Palestine remains as a humanitarian and emotional cause, while Palestine and the Golan as occupied lands are absorbed into the wider religious category of Muslim lands. In particular, the Golan Heights loses its specific Syrian-national framing and becomes part of a generalized Islamic geography. The textbooks detach military aspiration from the homeland and instead link it to the defense of Muslim lands. The example therefore changes the student's imagined field of obligation: the duty to care, defend, and honor martyrs is preserved, but the community to be defended is no longer primarily Syria, the Arab homeland, or specific occupied territories; rather it becomes the transnational Muslim community and its lands. On the next page, the same lesson sharpens this shift by replacing the language of Palestinian resistance, patriotic commemoration, soldiers, and defense of the homeland with the language of *jihad*, *jihad* fighters (*mujāhidīn*), faith, the lands of Islam, and the enemies of the Islamic *ummah*. Together, the two pages show the same mechanism: contemporary conflict and military duty are moved from a Syrian-Arab national frame into a pan-Islamic frame of Muslim land, Muslim obligation, *jihad*, and sacrifice.

(See the continuation of the example on the following page)

135 *Islamic Education*, Grade 3, 2025-26, p. 30 (previously: *Islamic Education*, Grade 3, 2017-18, p. 32).

***Islamic Education*, Grade 8, 2025-26, p. 97 (previously: *Islamic Education*, Grade 8, 2017-18, p. 99)**

2017-18	2025-26
٤ – بيّنْ رأيكَ في المواقفِ الآتيةِ (مع التّعليل) مُسترشداً بدروسِ الغزوةِ وعِبَرِها: أ- لا يأبهُ لمَا يحصُلُ في فلسطينَ والجولانِ المُحتلّين. ب- تبرّعَ بما جمعهُ في حصّالتِهِ لأطفالِ فلسطينَ. ت- يحبُّ أنْ يُصبحَ جُنديّاً يُدافعُ عن وطنِهِ. ج- شاركتْ معَ زميلاتِها بكتابةِ مَجلّةٍ حائطٍ تتحدثُ عنِ الشُّهداءِ.	٤ – بيّنْ رأيكَ في المواقفِ الآتيةِ (مع التّعليل) مُسترشداً بدروسِ الغزوةِ وعِبَرِها: أ- لا يأبهُ لمَا يحصُلُ في بلادِ المُسلمينَ. ب- تبرّعَ بما جمعهُ في حصّالتِهِ لأطفالِ فلسطينَ. ت- يحبُّ أنْ يُصبحَ جُنديّاً يُدافعُ عن بلادِ المُسلمينَ. ج- شاركتْ معَ زميلاتِها بكتابةِ مَجلّةٍ حائطٍ تتحدثُ عنِ الشُّهداءِ.
4 - Explain your stances regarding the following situations (with providing arguments), seeking guidance from the lessons on the campaign [of Tabūk] and its examples: *a. Someone is indifferent to what is happening in occupied Palestine and the occupied Golan.* *b. Someone donates what he collected in his money-box to the children of Palestine.* *c. Someone wishes to become a soldier defending his homeland (*waṭanihi*).* *d. Someone participated with her classmates in writing a wall magazine telling about the martyrs (*al-šuhadāʾ*).*	*4 - Explain your stances regarding the following situations (with providing arguments), seeking guidance from the lessons on the campaign [of Tabūk] and its examples:* *a. Someone is indifferent to what is happening in the lands of the Muslims (*bilād al-muslimīn*).* *b. Someone donates what he collected in his money-box to the children of Palestine.* *c. Someone wishes to become a soldier defending the lands of the Muslims (*bilād al-muslimīn*).* *d. Someone participated with her classmates in writing a wall magazine telling about the martyrs (*al-šuhadāʾ*).*

*Highlighted text shows altered content.

A Grade 8 Islamic Education example demonstrates this shift in a more explicit ideological manner. The lesson centers around the campaign of Tabūk (630 CE), Prophet Muhammad's expedition to northwestern Arabia near the Byzantine frontier, which Islamic tradition presents as a test of Muslim commitment, sacrifice, readiness, and loyalty to the Muslim community. The 2017-2018 version used the vocabulary of Palestinian resistance, patriotic commemoration, soldiers, the homeland, Palestine, and the Golan Heights. Students were asked to respond to examples of people who failed to donate generously in support of "the Palestinian Resistance" (*al-muqāwamah al-filasṭiniyyah*), someone reciting a "nationalistic poem" (*qaṣīdah waṭaniyyah*) on Independence Day, appreciation for soldiers defending "the Homeland" (*al-waṭan*), and developments in Palestine and the Golan Heights. These terms placed the lesson's moral duties within the Syrian-Arab and Assad-era resistance framework: support for Palestinian resistance, reverence for soldiers, patriotic commemoration, and attention to Palestine and the Golan.

The 2025-2026 version removes almost all national-resistance vocabulary and replaces it with a pan-Islamic vocabulary of armed struggle. "The Palestinian Resistance" is replaced by "the revolutionary jihad fighters" (*al-mujāhidīn al-ṯāʾirīn*) in "the occupied lands of Islam" (*bilād al-islām al-muḥtallah*). In addition, the nationalistic Independence Day poem and references to soldiers protecting the homeland were removed. The passage referencing developments in Palestine and the Golan Heights is replaced by the term "the Islamic countries" (*al-bilād al-islāmiyyah*), while an additional sentence refers to Muslims who come to the aid of their "Faith" (*al-dīn*) and liberate their lands. The activity also introduces "acts of *jihad*," *jihad* fighters confronting "the enemies of the *ummah*" (*aʿdāʾ al-ummah*), and a letter to "the children of martyrs in Syria and the lands of the Muslims." The revised lesson therefore moves contemporary conflict from national resistance and Syrian-Arab patriotic defense into the language of *jihad*, Muslim lands, Islamic faith, martyrdom, and the Islamic *ummah*.

The revision changes both the geography and the conceptual vocabulary of conflict. The older version had framed Palestine, the Golan Heights, soldiers, Independence Day, and the homeland as the concrete objects of concern, commemoration, and defense. The revised version recodes conflict as an Islamic cause: the relevant lands are Islamic lands, the fighters are *mujāhidīn*, the enemy is the enemy of the *ummah*, and the duty is to aid the Faith and liberate Muslim lands. In the Syrian context, this shift is especially significant because "resistance" (*muqāwamah*) was closely tied to the Assad regime's regional alignment and the "Axis of Resistance" (*miḥwar al-muqāwamah*). The revised language of *jihad* and *mujāhidīn* resonates more strongly with Sunni Islamist and jihadist movements, including al-Qaeda, ISIS, HTS, and other Syrian opposition Islamist-jihadist factions from whose milieu the new ruling order emerged. The textbook does not reproduce the doctrines of these movements, but it moves students away from the older national-patriotic and Assad-era resistance categories toward a pan-Islamic framework of armed struggle, sacrifice, and liberation.

***Islamic Education*, Grade 8, 2025-26, p. 101 (previously: *Islamic Education*, Grade 8, 2017-18, p. 103)**

2017-18	2025-26
٤- بيّنْ رأيكَ في المواقفِ الآتيةِ مُسترشداً بما مرَّ معكَ منْ أحداثِ غزْوةِ تبوكَ: أ- يَبْخَلُ بعضُ النّاسِ عندما يُطلَبُ منهُ التّبرعُ لدعْمِ المقاومةِ الفلسطينيةِ. ب-يتدرّبُ على إلقاءِ قصيدةٍ وطنيّةٍ في ذكرى الاستقلالِ. ت-يُثمّنُ المَهمّةَ التي يقومُ بها الجُنودُ في حمايةِ الوطنِ. ث- يتابعُ ما يَحصُلُ في فلسطينَ والجولانِ. ٥- اكتبْ رسالةً توجهها إلى أبناءِ الشهداءِ في عيدِ الشهداءِ بما لا يتجاوزُ خمسةَ أسطرٍ. عزيزي الطالب: ستقدّرُ إجابتكَ في ضوءِ المعاييرِ الآتيةِ: - هلْ بيّنتَ بوضوحٍ الأدلّةَ والشواهدَ من القرآنِ الكريمِ والسُّنّةِ الشّريفةِ؟ - هلْ بيّنتَ شعورَكَ تجاهَ أبناءِ الشهداءِ؟ - هلْ نظّمتَ إجابتكَ بأسلوبٍ مقنعٍ وعبارةٍ جميلةٍ؟	٤- بيّنْ رأيكَ في المواقفِ الآتيةِ مُسترشداً بما مرَّ معكَ منْ أحداثِ غزْوةِ تبوكَ: أ- يَبْخَلُ بعضُ النّاسِ عندما يُطلَبُ منهُ التّبرعُ لدعْمِ المجاهدينَ الثائرينَ في بلادِ الإسلامِ المحتلّةِ. ب- يثمّنُ الأعمالَ الجهاديّةَ التي يسطرها المجاهدونَ بتصديهم لأعداءِ الأمّةِ. ت- يُتابعُ ما يَحصُلُ في البلادِ الإسلاميّةِ من أعمالٍ بطوليّةٍ يقدمها المسلمونَ نصرةً لدينهم وتحريرِ أراضيهم. ٥- اكتبْ رسالةً توجهها إلى أبناءِ الشهداءِ في سوريا وبلادِ المسلمينَ بما لا يتجاوزُ خمسةَ أسطرٍ. عزيزي الطالب: ستقدّرُ إجابتكَ في ضوءِ المعاييرِ الآتيةِ: - هلْ بيّنتَ بوضوحٍ الأدلّةَ والشواهدَ من القرآنِ الكريمِ والسُّنّةِ الشّريفةِ؟ - هلْ بيّنتَ شعورَكَ تجاهَ أبناءِ الشهداءِ؟ - هلْ نظّمتَ إجابتكَ بأسلوبٍ مقنعٍ وعبارةٍ جميلةٍ؟
4 - Explain your opinion regarding the following situations, seeking guidance from what you picked up from the events of the Campaign of Tabūk: *a. Some people are stingy when asked to donate in support of the Palestinian Resistance (*al-muqāwamah al-filasṭiniyyah*).* *b. Someone trains himself to recite a nationalistic poem (*qaṣīdah waṭaniyyah*) on Independence Day.* *c. Someone appreciates the important role performed by soldiers in protecting the Homeland (*al-waṭan*).* *d. Someone follows what is happening in Palestine and the Golan.* *5 - Write a letter addressed to the children of martyrs on Martyrs' Day, not exceeding five lines.* *Dear student, your answer will be evaluated according to the following criteria:* • *Did you clearly state the evidence and textual proofs from the Noble Qur'an and the Honorable Sunnah?* • *Did you express your feelings toward the children of martyrs?* • *Did you organize your answer in an engaging style and beautiful expression?*	*4 - Explain your opinion regarding the following situations, seeking guidance from what you picked up from the events of the Campaign of Tabūk:* *a. Some people are stingy when asked to donate in support of the revolutionary jihad fighters (*al-mujāhidīn al-ṯāʾirīn*) in the occupied lands of Islam (*bilād al-islām al-muḥtallah*).* *b. Someone values the acts of jihad carried out by the jihad fighters confronting the enemies of the [Islamic] ummah (*aʿdāʾ al-ummah*).* *c. Someone follows what is happening in the Islamic countries (*al-bilād al-islāmiyyah*), including heroic acts performed by Muslims coming to the aid of their Faith and liberating their lands.* *5 - Write a letter addressed to the children of martyrs in Syria and the lands of the Muslims, not exceeding five lines.* *Dear student, your answer will be evaluated according to the following criteria:* • *Did you clearly state the evidence and textual proofs from the Noble Qur'an and the Honorable Sunnah?* • *Did you express your feelings toward the children of martyrs?* • *Did you organize your answer in an engaging style and beautiful expression?*

*Highlighted text shows altered content. *Red text shows removed content. *Green text shows added content.

Building on the theme of struggle, the following Grade 7 Islamic Education example shows one of the clearest shifts from national sacrifice to religiously defined sacrifice. The lesson concerns martyrdom (*šahādah*), an Islamic concept of dying as a martyr (*šahīd*), especially in defense of faith, community, or a sacred cause. In the 2011-2012 textbook, martyrdom was framed through defense of the homeland (*al-waṭan*). The older passage stated that heroes protected the homeland, defended its borders, freedom, and dignity, and were ready to sacrifice their lives for its sake. It described the homeland as "the most precious thing a person can defend," and called on all sons of the homeland to preserve it free and dignified, repel aggression against it, and liberate every occupied span of it. The 2025-2026 textbook preserves the structure of the passage almost sentence by sentence but replaces the central object of loyalty. The homeland no longer calls upon its sons. The Islamic collective of the ummah now needs its sons, the heroes who defend the Faith, the lands of Islam, and the servants of Allah. Sacrifice is no longer made for the homeland, but "for the sake of Allah." The most precious thing to be defended is no longer the homeland, but the Faith. The final phrase also changes from liberating every occupied span of the homeland to liberating every occupied span of "the lands of Islam" (*bilād al-islām*).

The revision restructures the moral logic of martyrdom. The older version had taught students to imagine sacrifice through a territorially bounded national framework: the homeland, its borders, its freedom, its dignity, and its occupied land. The revised version teaches students to imagine sacrifice through a transnational Islamic framework: the *ummah*, the Faith, the servants of Allah, and the lands of Islam. This change does more than add religious language to a patriotic lesson. It transfers the highest object of sacrifice from the homeland to Islam. Martyrdom becomes less a form of national defense and more a form of religious service, in which the Muslim believer is called to defend Islamic faith, Muslim lands, and Allah's servants.

***Islamic Education*, Grade 7, 2025-2026, p. 51 (previously: *Islamic Education*, Grade 7, 2011-2012, p. 54)**

2011-12	2025-26
الأبطالُ يَحمُونَ الوطَنَ : لا يستغني الوطن وأبناؤه عن المدافعين الأبطال عن الحدود والحريّة والكرامة ، أولئك المستعدون في كلّ لحظة لبذل أرواحهم رخيصة في سبيله ، ذلك أنّ الوطن من أغلى ما يدافع عنه الإنسان ، وواجب أبنائه كلّهم أن يحافظوا عليه حرّاً كريماً ، ويتهيؤوا في كلّ وقتٍ لردّ أيّ عدوان عنه ، ولتحرير كلّ شبر مُحتَلٍّ منه .	الأبطالُ يحمون الدينَ والبلادَ والعبادَ: لا تستغني الأمة وأبناؤها عن المدافعين الأبطال عن الدين والبلاد والعباد ، أولئك المستعدون في كلّ لحظة لبذل أرواحهم رخيصة في سبيل الله ، ذلك أنّ الدّين أغلى ما يدافع عنه المسلم ، وواجب أبنائه كلّهم أن يحافظوا عليه ، ويتهيؤوا في كلّ وقتٍ لردّ أيّ عدوان عنه ، ولتحرير كلّ شبر مُحتَلٍّ من بلاد الإسلام.
*The heroes protect the Homeland (*al-waṭan*):* *The Homeland is always in need for her sons to defend the borders, freedom, and dignity. Those are prepared at every moment to sacrifice their lives cheaply for her sake, because the Homeland is the most precious thing a person can defend. It is the duty of all her sons to preserve it free and dignified, and to rush at every moment to repel any aggression against it, and to liberate every occupied span of it.*	*The heroes protect the Faith, the lands [of Islam], and the servants [of Allah]:* *The* ummah *is always in need for its sons, the heroes who defend the Faith, the lands, and the servants [of Allah]. Those are prepared at every moment to sacrifice their lives cheaply for the sake of Allah, because the Faith is the most precious thing a Muslim can defend. It is the duty of all its sons to preserve it, and to rush at every moment to repel any aggression against it, and to liberate every occupied span of the lands of Islam.*

*Highlighted text shows altered content.

The same Grade 7 Islamic Education lesson later applies this reframing to students' moral judgments concerning regional conflict, replacing Palestine, the occupied Golan, and resistance fighters with the lands of the Muslims and jihad fighters (*mujāhidīn*). The activity translates the lesson's theological framing of martyrdom (*šahādah*) into applied ethical evaluation. In the 2011-2012 version, students were asked to evaluate concern for "Palestine and the occupied Golan," pride in "martyrs and resistance fighters" (šuhadāʾ wa-muqāwimīn), respect for their families, and fear of battle with the enemy. The homework activity then asked students to write about the duty of every "person" (*insān*) to protect his precious life, spend it in doing good, and sacrifice it for "the truth in which he believes," as a "resistance fighter" (*muqāwim*) defending his homeland (*waṭanihi*) and sanctities. It also asked students to explain the status of martyrs in the Syrian Arab Republic and the state's honors for them, their families, and their children. The older version therefore combined Islamic martyrdom with Syrian-national, state-centered, and Assad-era resistance language.

The 2025–2026 version retains the same structure but replaces its vocabulary with more explicitly Islamic and transnational terms. Palestine and the occupied Golan become "the lands of the Muslims" (*bilād al-muslimīn*) suffering "injustice and despotism" (*ẓulm wa-istibdād*), and "resistance fighters" become "jihad fighters" (*mujāhidīn*). The homework activity no longer asks about every person, but about every Muslim. The purpose of sacrifice changes from "the truth in which he believes" to "for the sake of Allah." The exemplary fighter is no longer a resistance fighter defending his homeland and sanctities, but a *jihad* fighter (*mujāhid*) defending his Faith (dīnihi) and sanctities. The final task no longer asks students to describe the state's honoring of martyrs in the Syrian Arab Republic. Rather, it asks them to explain the role of martyrs and *jihad* fighters in protecting the Faith, the Islamic *ummah*, and the lands of Islam.

This revision brings together the section's central mechanisms. National geography is replaced by Muslim lands. Resistance vocabulary is replaced by *jihad* terminology. The generic human subject is replaced by the Muslim. Sacrifice is detached from individual conviction, homeland defense, and state-centered martyr commemoration, and is redirected toward Allah, the Faith, the *ummah*, and the lands of Islam. The older activity had situated martyrdom inside a hybrid framework of religion, Syrian state memory, Palestinian resistance, and homeland defense. The revised activity makes the framework more explicitly pan-Islamic and militant: students are taught to evaluate conflict through Mus-

lim victimhood, *jihad* fighters, enemies, martyrdom, and defense of Islamic lands. The moral imagination of sacrifice is therefore relocated from national resistance and state memory to religiously defined armed struggle.

***Islamic Education*, Grade 7, 2025-2026, p. 53 (previously: *Islamic Education*, Grade 7, 2011-2012, p. 56)**

2011-12	2025-26
٤ – بيّنْ رأيَكَ مع التّعليلِ تجاهَ المواقفِ الآتيةِ : • يبدي اهتماماً بما يَجري في فلسطينَ والجولانِ المحتلّ . • يعتزُّ بالشّهداءِ والمقاومينَ ويرجو أن يسيرَ على نهجِهم . • يكرمُ أسرَ الشّهداءِ والمقاومينَ وأبناءَهم . • يخافُ منَ المعركةِ مع العدوِّ فيفكّرُ بالفرارِ . نشاطٌ لا صفّيّ : اكتُبْ مقالاً تُوضّحُ فيهِ واجبَ كلِّ إنسانٍ في صونِ حياتِهِ الغاليةِ ، واغتنامِ عُمْرِهِ في عملِ الخيرِ ، وبذلِها رخيصةً في سبيلِ الحقِّ الذي يُؤمنُ بِهِ ، مُقاوماً مُدافعاً عنْ وطنِهِ ومُقدّساتِهِ ، مبيّناً مكانةَ الشّهداءِ في الجمهوريّةِ العربيّةِ السوريّةِ ، وما قدّمتهُ الدولةُ منْ تكريمٍ لهم ولأُسرِهم ولأبنائهم .	٤ – بيّنْ رأيَكَ مع التّعليلِ تجاهَ المواقفِ الآتيةِ : • يبدي اهتماماً بما يَجري في بلادِ المُسلمينَ من ظُلمٍ واستبدادٍ. • يعتزُّ بالشّهداءِ والمجاهدينَ ويرجو أن يسيرَ على نهجِهم. • يكرمُ أُسرَ الشُّهداءِ والمجاهدينَ وأبناءَهم . • يخافُ منَ المعركةِ مع العدوِّ فيفكّرُ بالفرارِ . نشاطٌ لا صفّيّ : اكتُبْ مقالاً تُوضّحُ فيهِ واجبَ كلِّ مسلمٍ في صونِ حياتِهِ الغاليةِ ، واغتنامِ عُمْرِهِ في عملِ الخيرِ ، وبذلِها رخيصةً في سبيلِ اللهِ تعالى، مُقاوماً مُدافعاً عنْ دينِهِ ومُقدّساتِهِ ، مبيناً دورَ الشّهداءِ والمجاهدينَ في حمايةِ الدينِ والذودِ عنِ الأمّةِ والبلادِ.
4 - Explain your opinion, providing arguments, regarding the following situations: • *Someone shows concern about what is happening in Palestine and the occupied Golan.* • *Someone takes pride in the martyrs and resistance fighters (*al-muqāwimīn*), and hopes to follow their path.* • *Someone honors the families of martyrs and resistance fighters (*al-muqāwimīn*), and their children.* • *Someone fears the battle with the enemy, so he thinks of escape.* *Non-class activity:* *Write an article in which you explain that every person (*insān*) must protect his precious life, spend his life in doing good, and sacrifice it as if it were nothing for the sake of the truth in which he believes, as a resistance fighter (*muqāwim*) defending his Homeland (*waṭanihi*) and sanctities. Explain the status of martyrs in the Syrian Arab Republic, and what the state has provided to honor them and their families and children.*	*4 - Explain your opinion, providing arguments, regarding the following situations:* • *Showing concern about the injustice and tyranny (*zulm wa-istibdād*) which are happening in the lands of the Muslims (*bilād al-muslimīn*).* • *Someone takes pride in the martyrs and jihad fighters (*mujāhidīn*), and hopes to follow their path.* • *Someone honors the families of martyrs and jihad fighters (*mujāhidīn*), and their children.* • *Someone fears the battle with the enemy, so he thinks of escape.* *Non-class activity:* *Write an article in which you explain that every Muslim must protect his precious life, spend his life in doing good, and sacrifice it as if it were nothing for the sake of Allah, as a jihad fighter (*mujāhid*) defending his Faith (*dīnihi*) and sanctities. Explain the role of martyrs and jihad fighters (*mujāhidīn*) in protecting the Faith, the [Islamic] ummah, and the lands [of Islam].*

*Highlighted text shows altered content. *Red text shows removed content. *Green text shows added content.

The following Grade 3 Islamic Education example shows how the revised curriculum presents regional suffering within an Islamic framework from the early grades. The example appears in a lesson on love and cooperation, where young students are asked how they would respond to everyday situations such as sharing an umbrella, resolving a quarrel between classmates, helping a classmate who falls in the school courtyard, and hearing about children suffering from displacement and hardship. Unlike the Grade 7 and Grade 8 examples above, this activity does not concern fighting, martyrdom, or *jihad*. Its significance lies in the formation of empathy: the textbook teaches children which suffering communities should enter their moral imagination.

In the 2017-2018 version, students were asked to respond to the suffering of "the children of the Golan, of Palestine, and of Iraq." The reference to the Golan Heights placed the exercise within a Syrian national context, while Palestine and Iraq situated Syrian concern within a broader Arab regional framework. The earlier version therefore encouraged concern for children in specific conflict zones associated with Syrian and Arab political memory. In the 2025-2026 version, the Golan Heights reference is removed and Syria is added, while the children are no longer identified only by place. Instead, they are described as "the children of Muslims in Syria, Palestine, and Iraq." The revision changes the basis of empathy from regional position and pan-Arab solidarity to Islamic communal belonging.[136]

136 For the removal of "Golan" and "Iraq" from a prayer formula for God to grant support to the "children of the Golan, Palestine, and Iraq", and the signification that they are Muslim, see *Islamic Education*, Grade 3, 2025-26, p. 30 (previously: *Islamic Education*, Grade 3, 2017-18, p. 32).

***Islamic Education*, Grade 3, 2025-26, p. 15 (previously: *Islamic Education*, Grade 3, 2017-18, p. 17)**

2017-18	2025-26
٣- ماذا تفعلُ في المواقفِ الآتيةِ ؟ • طَلَبَ زميلُكَ منكَ أن يستظلَّ بمظلَّتِكَ . _____ • وجدتَ زميلينِ لك مُتخاصِمَينِ . _____ • وقعَ زميلُكَ في باحةِ المدرسةِ . _____ • علمتَ بما يُعاني أطفالُ الجولانِ وفلسطينَ والعراقِ من تشرّدٍ وعذابٍ . _____	٣- ماذا تفعلُ في المواقفِ الآتيةِ ؟ • طَلَبَ زميلُكَ منكَ أن يستظلَّ بمظلَّتِكَ . _____ • وجدتَ زميلينِ لك مُتخاصِمَينِ . _____ • وقعَ زميلُكَ في باحةِ المدرسةِ . _____ • علمتَ بما يُعاني أطفالُ المُسلمينَ في سُوريا وفلسطينَ والعراقِ من تشرّدٍ وعذابٍ . _____
3. What would you do in the following situations? • *Your classmate asks you to seek shelter under your umbrella.* • *You find two classmates arguing.* • *Your classmate falls at the school courtyard.* • *You learn about the children of the Golan, of Palestine, and of Iraq suffering from displacement and hardship.*	*3. What would you do in the following situations?* • *Your classmate asks you to seek shelter under your umbrella.* • *You find two classmates arguing.* • *Your classmate falls at the school courtyard.* • *You learn about the children of Muslims in Syria, in Palestine, and in Iraq suffering from displacement and hardship.*

*Highlighted text shows altered content.

The following Grade 8 Islamic Education example shows the same expansion of conflict geography in a concise but politically significant form. In the 2017-2018 version, the exercise directed students toward a specific Syrian national cause: "our people in the Golan" confronting "the Zionist occupation." The wording placed the conflict within the context of Syrian territorial loss and the Israeli occupation of the Golan Heights, a Syrian territory captured by Israel in 1967 and later annexed in 1981. It also framed solidarity as a duty toward a defined national community, "our people," located in a specific occupied Syrian territory and facing a specific external enemy: Israel.

The 2025-2026 version generalizes both the location and the adversary. "The Golan" becomes "the lands of the Muslims" (*bilād al-muslimīn*), and "the Zionist occupation" (*al-iḥtilāl al-ṣahyūnī*) becomes "the tyrants and occupiers" (*al-ṭuġāh wa-l-muḥtallīn*). This change redirects the exercise from a Syrian national affair with an external enemy to a pan-Islamic perspective concerned with Islamic lands and their enemies. The reference to "occupiers" retains the external conflict frame but broadens it from Israel to any power occupying Muslim lands. The word "tyrants" adds an internal enemy category: rulers, regimes, or authorities that can be portrayed as despotic, illegitimate, or hostile to Islam, even if they themselves are Muslim. The revised wording therefore expands the field of confrontation in two directions at once, outward against occupiers and inward against local Muslim leaders.

This short revision captures the sub-chapter's identity argument in concentrated form. Regional conflicts are not removed or softened. They are reclassified as Islamic causes. The imagined field of solidarity expands from Syrian territory to the lands of Islam, while the enemy category expands from the Zionist occupier of the Golan Heights to both external occupiers and internal tyrants. The exercise therefore teaches students to translate a concrete Syrian territorial issue into a wider Islamist conflict geography, in which Muslims are called to confront enemies of Islamic lands from outside and illegitimate ruling authority from within.

***Islamic Education*, Grade 8, 2025-26, p. 33 (previously: *Islamic Education*, Grade 8, 2017-18, p. 35)**

2017-18	2025-26
٤- اكتبْ ثلاثةَ مُقترحاتٍ جديدةٍ لأهلنا في الجولانِ تحثُّهم فيها على مواجهةِ الاحتلالِ الصّهيونيِّ.	٤- اكتبْ ثلاثةَ مُقترحاتٍ جديدةٍ لأهلنا في بلادِ الإسلامِ تَحثُّهم على مُواجَهةِ الطغاةِ والمُحتلّينَ
4. Write three new proposals to our people in the Golan that would motivate them to confront the Zionist occupation.	*4. Write three new proposals to our people in the lands of Islam that would motivate them to confront the oppressors and occupiers.*

*Highlighted text shows altered content.

The examples in this sub-chapter show a systematic redefinition of conflict as a religious cause. Earlier textbooks had connected concern, defense, martyrdom, and sacrifice to concrete Syrian, Arab, and Assad-era resistance categories: Palestine, the Golan, Iraq, the homeland, soldiers, resistance fighters, Independence Day, national defense, and state honoring of martyrs. The revised curriculum relocates these themes into a pan-Islamic geography of Muslim lands, lands of Islam, Islamic countries, the Faith, Allah, *jihad*, *jihad* fighters, the *ummah*, Allah's servants, and the tyrants and occupiers who threaten Islamic lands.

The shift works through three connected mechanisms. First, national and regional geography is expanded into Islamic geography: the Golan, Palestine, Iraq, and the homeland are replaced, removed, or absorbed into "the lands of the Muslims" and "the lands of Islam." Second, resistance vocabulary is replaced by *jihad* vocabulary: resistance fighters become *mujāhidīn*, patriotic defense becomes defense of the Faith, and sacrifice is made for Allah rather than for the homeland or an individually held truth. Third, the enemy category expands beyond a specific external adversary, such as "the Zionist occupation," to a broader field of occupiers and tyrants, including both foreign powers and internal rulers who can be framed as illegitimate or oppressive from an Islamist perspective.

The curricular message is severe. Students are still taught to care about suffering, occupation, defense, martyrdom, and sacrifice, but these themes are increasingly detached from Syrian civic-national belonging and Assad-era Arab resistance. They are reorganized around Islamic solidarity, Muslim victimhood, *jihad*, and defense of the *ummah*. The revised curriculum therefore turns regional conflict into a religiously defined field of obligation: suffering communities become Muslim communities, occupied territories become Islamic lands, fighters become *jihad* fighters, and sacrifice becomes service to Allah, Islam, and the *ummah*.

Islam as Political Inspiration: From State Law to Islamic Shariah and Governance

The curriculum's Islamization also extends to the sphere of political authority, civic order, and legitimate governance. In earlier textbooks, students were more likely to encounter state law, civic responsibility, and modern political concepts such as democracy as frameworks for regulating public life and defining the relationship between the individual, society, and the state. In the 2025-2026 curriculum, this state-centered and modern civic vocabulary is increasingly redirected toward Islamic legal and political categories. Respect for man-made state "law" (*al-qānūn*) is revised into respect for "Islamic *shariah*," while Islamic civilization is presented as a source of justice, human rights, legislation, and an example of proper relations between ruler and ruled.

The same tendency appears in History textbooks, where an older reference to democracy in the selection of rulers is replaced by the Islamic principle of shura/council (*šūrā*).[137] One example is the addition of the requirement that students "explain the principles of democracy and human rights in Arab-Islamic civilization," along with a new Grade 10 History lesson on "Features of Islamic Civilization and Contemporary Human Values" in the unit on the Islamic Golden Age.[138] This does not mean that the revised curriculum entirely rejects rights, order, or civic responsibility. Rather, it increasingly absorbs them into an Islamic framework, presenting Islamic *shariah* and Islamic models of governance as the proper basis for moral discipline, social regulation, and political legitimacy. At the same time, the curriculum avoids presenting religiosity as fanaticism: a Grade 10 Islamic Education lesson defines religiosity as adherence to Allah's commands and prohibitions "without bigotry or rigidity."[139] Taken together, these examples suggest that the curriculum does not simply reject civic and political content. Rather, it redefines civic and political order through Islamic categories, grounding legitimate authority less in secular state law or modern democratic vocabulary than in shariah, shura, obedience to divine command, and Islamic governance.[140]

The clearest legal expression of this shift appears in the Grade 9 Islamic Education textbook, where a lesson on family upbringing replaces respect for state law with respect for Islamic shariah. In the 2017-2018 textbook, the title of the section was "Respect for the Law" (*iḥtirām al-qānūn*); the text went on to state that one of the family's roles is to raise

137 *History*, Grade 10 (Humanities Track), 2025-26, pp. 131-132 (previously: *History of Civilization*, Grade 10, 2014-15, pp. 160-161).

138 *History*, Grade 10 (Humanities Track), 2025-26, p. 105 (previously: *History of Civilization*, Grade 10, 2014-15, p. 109).

139 *Islamic Education*, Grade 10, 2025-26, p. 71.

140 For a section on the dangerous ramifications of adultery changed to include not only on the society but also the individual, see *Islamic Education*, Grade 12, 2025-26, p. 55 (previously: *Islamic Education*, Grade 12, 2017-18, p. 50).

children to observe the law, just as they are required to observe Islamic legislation. The earlier version therefore presented state law and Islamic law as parallel normative frameworks. Both were described as regulating relations, protecting individuals and property, and producing a responsible person who knows his rights and fulfills his duties. The 2025-2026 textbook changes the heading to "Respect for Islamic Shariah" (*iḥtirām al-sharīʿah al-islāmiyyah*). The family's role is now defined as raising children to commit to the rulings of *shariah*, and the individual is no longer described as obliged to respect "the rules of the law," but as obliged to respect "Islamic *shariah*." The paragraph otherwise preserves the same civic functions: regulating relations, protecting individuals and property, and forming a responsible person who knows his rights and fulfills his duties.[141] The revision therefore transfers the language of order, rights, and responsibility from a general legal framework to an explicitly Islamic legal framework. Civic responsibility remains present, but its normative basis is shifted from state law to Islamic *shariah*.

***Islamic Education*, Grade 9, 2025-26, p. 105 (previously: *Islamic Education*, Grade 9, 2017-18, p. 106)**

2017-18	2025-26
ج. احترام القانون: مِنْ وظائفِ الأسرةِ أن تُربّي الأولادَ على التزامِ القانون، وأنَّ الفردَ مطالبٌ باحترامِ قواعدِ القانون كما هو مُطالبٌ باحترامِ التَّشريعِ الإسلاميّ، لأنَّها تهدفُ إلى تنظيمِ العلاقاتِ وحفظِ الأفرادِ والممتلكات، وبذلك تُنشئُ الأسرةُ الإنسانَ المسؤولَ، الذي يَعرِفُ حقوقَهُ، ويؤدّي واجباتِه.	ج. احترامُ الشَّريعةِ الإسلاميَّة: مِنْ وظائفِ الأسرةِ أن تُربّي الأولادَ على التزامِ الأحكامِ الشَّرعيَّة، وأنَّ الفردَ مطالبٌ باحترامِ الشَّريعةِ الإسلاميَّة كما هو مُطالبٌ باحترامِ التَّشريعِ الإسلاميّ، لأنَّها تهدفُ إلى تنظيمِ العلاقاتِ وحفظِ الأفرادِ والممتلكات، وبذلك تُنشئُ الأسرةُ الإنسانَ المسؤولَ، الذي يَعرِفُ حقوقَهُ، ويؤدّي واجباتِه.
*C. Respect for the Law (*al-qānūn*):* *One of the family's roles is to raise its children with commitment to the law. The individual is obliged to respect the rules of the law, just as he is obliged to respect Islamic legislation, because they aim to regulate relations, and protect individuals and property. Thus, the family creates a responsible individual who knows their rights and fulfills their duties.*	*C. Respect for the Islamic* shariah*:* *One of the family's roles is to raise its children with commitment to the rulings of the* shariah*. The individual is obliged to respect the Islamic* shariah*, just as he is obliged to respect the Islamic legislation [*sic*], because they aim to regulate relations, and protect individuals and properties. Thus, the family creates a responsible individual who knows their rights and fulfills their duties.*

*Highlighted text shows altered content.

The next examples, from a Grade 10 History textbook, show how the revised curriculum removes explicit references to democracy from an earlier discussion of Arab-Islamic civilization and political order. The revised textbook continues to present Arab-Islamic civilization as a foundational source of human rights in war and peace, and as a contributor to contemporary human values. The change lies in the political vocabulary through which this legacy is described. In the 2014-2015 version, the introductory box stated that Arab-Islamic civilization entrenched "the principles of democracy and justice." The later paragraph on the era of the Rightly-Guided Caliphs (*al-ḫulafāʾ al-rāšidīn*) made this point even more explicitly, stating that the Rightly-Guided Caliphs approved "the principle of democracy in the selection of rulers." The old version therefore connected Islamic political history to the modern concept of democracy, presenting Islamic governance as compatible with democratic principles.

In the 2025-2026 version, the explicit reference to democracy is removed. The introductory box now says that Arab-Islamic civilization entrenched "justice" (*ʿadl*), replacing democracy with the Islamic concept of shura, or council of the ruler with senior members of the Islamic community. The paragraph still praises the caliphs for formulating legislation that preserved people's rights, but the statement that they approved democracy in the selection of rulers is removed. The exercise that previously asked students to identify the democratic aspects of this system is replaced with a comparison between the ethics of war under Abu Bakr and those of US President Harry S. Truman, focusing on the United States' conduct during the Second World War and the atomic bombings of Japan in 1945. The result is not an abandonment of rights discourse, but a change in its framing. Rights, justice, legislation, and political order remain associated with Islamic civilization, but the explicit modern-democratic vocabulary is removed. This example shows that the revised curriculum continues to present early Islamic governance as a model of just rule but no longer does so through the language of democracy. Instead, it presents Islamic political history in a more explicitly Islamic framework, avoiding modern democratic terminology.

141 The directives matrix included a reference to a separate yet similar section from a different edition (2023-24) and on a different page (p. 20).

***History*, Grade 10 (Humanities Track), 2025-26, p. 131 (previously: *History of Civilization*, Grade 10, 2014-15, p. 160)**

2014-15	2025-26
الدرسُ الأوّلُ سِماتُ الحضارةِ العربيّةِ الإسلاميّةِ والقيمُ الإنسانيّةُ المُعاصرةُ وضعتِ الحضارةُ العربيّةُ الإسلاميّةُ أسساً ثابتةً لحقوقِ الإنسانِ في الحربِ والسلمِ، ورسّختْ مبادئَ الديمقراطيّةِ، والعدالةِ، والعلاقةِ بينَ المُواطنِ والدولةِ، واحترمتْ حضاراتِ الشعوبِ الأُخرى وإبداعاتِها، فحافظتْ عليها وأضافتْ إليها، وهذا ما جعلها حلقةً أساسيّةً في التطوّرِ الحضاريِّ الإنسانيِّ، وأساساً راسخاً لحقوقِ الإنسانِ، والقيمِ الإنسانيّةِ المعاصرةِ.	سِماتُ الحضارةِ العربيّةِ الإسلاميّةِ والقيمُ الإنسانيّةُ المُعاصرةُ وضعتِ الحضارةُ العربيّةُ الإسلاميّةُ أسساً ثابتةً لحقوقِ الإنسانِ في الحربِ والسلمِ، ورسّختْ العدالةَ، والعلاقةَ بينَ المُواطنِ والدولةِ، واحترمتْ حضاراتِ الشعوبِ الأُخرى وإبداعاتِها، فحافظتْ عليها وأضافتْ إليها، وهذا ما جعلها حلقةً أساسيّةً في التطوّرِ الحضاريِّ الإنسانيِّ، وأساساً راسخاً لحقوقِ الإنسانِ، والقيمِ الإنسانيّةِ المعاصرةِ.
The Qualities of the Arab-Islamic Civilization and Modern Humanist Values *Arab-Islamic civilization laid firm foundations for human rights in war and peace, entrenched the principles of democracy, justice, and the relationship between the citizen and the state. It respected the civilizations of other peoples and their innovations, preserved and added to them, and thus made them a basic link in human civilizational development, and a foundation firmly rooted in contemporary human rights and human values.*	*The Qualities of the Arab-Islamic Civilization and Modern Humanist Values* *Arab-Islamic civilization laid firm foundations for human rights in war and peace, entrenched justice and the relationship between the citizen and the state. It respected the civilizations of other peoples and their innovations, preserved and added to them, and thus made them a basic link in human civilizational development, and a foundation firmly rooted in contemporary human rights and human values.*

*Red text shows removed content.

***History*, Grade 10 (Humanities Track), 2025-26, p. 132 (previously: *History of Civilization*, Grade 10, 2014-15, p. 161)**

2014-15	2025-26
ثالثاً- في العصر الراشدي: أكّدَ الخلفاءُ الراشدونَ في علاقاتِهم السياسيّةِ على المبادئِ التي وضعها الرسولُ (ص) للدولةِ العربيةِ الإسلاميةِ، فإنْ لم يكنْ هناكَ نصٌّ صريحٌ لما استجدَّ في الدولةِ، اجتهدوا على وضعِ تشريعاتٍ تحفظُ حقوقَ الناسِ، وإقرارِ مبدأِ الديمقراطيّةِ في اختيارِ الحكّامِ. بعد قراءتك للنص المجاور ما الجوانبُ الديمقراطيّةُ التي تستنتجها من هذه الخطبة؟ ... ما الحدودُ التي فرضتها الخليفةُ على سلطته؟ " أيّها الناسُ: لقد وُلّيتُ عليكم ولستُ بخيركم، فإنْ أحسنتُ فأعينوني وإن أسأتُ فقوّموني، الصدقُ أمانةٌ والكذبُ خيانةٌ، والضعيفُ فيكم قويٌّ عندي حتّى آخذَ الحقَّ له، والقويُّ فيكم ضعيفٌ عندي حتى آخذَ الحقَّ منه إن شاءَ اللهُ تعالى، لا يدعُ قومٌ الجهادَ في سبيلِ اللهِ إلا خذلهم اللهُ بالذلِّ، ولا تشيعُ الفاحشةُ في قومٍ إلا عمّهم اللهُ بالبلاءِ، أطيعوني ما أطعتُ اللهَ ورسولَه، فإذا عصيتُ اللهَ ورسولَه فلا طاعةَ لي عليكم. (من خطبة أبي بكر الصديق) (السيوطي، تاريخ الخلفاء، ص ٦٩	ثالثاً- في العهد الراشدي: أكّدَ الخلفاءُ الراشدونَ في علاقاتِهم السياسيّةِ على المبادئِ التي وضعها الرسولُ ﷺ للدولةِ العربيةِ الإسلاميةِ، وحين لم يكنْ هناكَ نصٌّ صريحٌ لما استجدَّ في الدولةِ، اجتهدوا على وضعِ تشريعاتٍ تحفظُ حقوقَ الناسِ، وإقرارِ مبدأِ الشورى في اختيارِ الحكّامِ. وبعد أربعةَ عشرَ قرناً، يُفترضُ أن القوى الكُبرى قد ارتقتْ بحضارتِها وقيمِها الإنسانيّةِ. إلاّ أنّ الواقعَ يشيرُ إلى عكسِ ذلك. اقرأ النصَّ المجاورَ، وقارنْ بين أخلاقيّاتِ الحربِ التي أمرَ بها الخليفةُ أبو بكرٍ الصديقُ وتلك التي أمرَ بها الرئيسُ الأمريكيُّ ترومان. ١- أوصى الخليفةُ أبو بكرٍ الصديقُ جيوشَه قائلاً: "لا تخونوا، ولا تغدروا، ولا تمثّلوا، ولا تقتلوا طفلاً ولا شيخاً كبيراً ولا امرأةً... ولا تقطعوا شجرةً مثمرةً، ولا تذبحوا شاةً ولا بقرةً ولا بعيراً، ودعوا النسّاكَ في صوامعهم يتعبدون". ابن الأثير، الكامل في التاريخ، ج٢، ص ٢٢٧ ٢- أمرَ الرئيسُ الأمريكيُّ ترومان بإلقاءِ أولِ قنبلةٍ ذريةٍ على هيروشيما ١٦ آب ١٩٤٥م فذهبَ ضحيتها ١٦٠ ألفَ قتيلٍ ومفقودٍ وجريحٍ، وبعد ثلاثةِ أيامٍ ألقيتْ
Third - In the Era of the Rightly Guided [Caliphs]: *The Rightly Guided Caliphs emphasized in their political relations the principles laid down by the Messenger PBUH for the Arab-Islamic state. Since there was no explicit text for what newly arose in the state, they exercised independent reasoning (*ijtahadū*) to create legislation (*waḍʿ tašrīʿāt*) that protected people's rights, and affirmed the principle of democracy in the selection of rulers.* *After reading the adjacent text, identify the democratic aspects that you infer from this system.* *What limits did the Caliph impose on his rule?*	*Third - In the Era of the Rightly Guided [Caliphs]:* *The Rightly Guided Caliphs emphasized in their political relations the principles laid down by the Messenger PBUH for the Arab-Islamic state. Since there was no explicit text for what newly arose in the state, they exercised independent reasoning (*ijtahadū*) to create legislation (*waḍʿ tašrīʿāt*) that protected people's rights, and affirmed the principle of council (šūrā) in selection of rulers.* *And after fourteen centuries, it is assumed that the great powers have advanced in their civilization and human values, but reality indicates the opposite.* *Read the adjacent text, and compare the ethics of war ordered by the caliph Abu Bakr al-Siddiq, and those ordered by American president Truman.*

*Highlighted text shows altered content. *Red text shows removed content. *Green text shows added content.

This section therefore shows that the revised curriculum does not simply reject order, rights, responsibility, or political organization. Rather, it relocates these concepts within an Islamic legal and historical framework. In Islamic Education, the family's role in raising children to respect "the law" is reformulated as raising them to respect Islamic *shariah*, while the language of rights, duties, social regulation, and protection of property is retained under a religious-legal heading. In History, Arab-Islamic civilization continues to be presented as a source of human rights, justice, legislation, and citizen-state relations, but explicit references to democracy are removed or replaced with Islamic concepts of council, such as *shura*. The result is a model of civic and political life in which legitimacy is grounded less in secular state law or modern democratic terminology than in *shariah*, Islamic civilization, and the example of early Islamic governance.

Doctrinal Alignment: Removing Content Incompatible with Islamic Religious Doctrine

The revised curriculum also narrows the boundaries of acceptable cultural, literary, and religious expression by removing or reframing content that may conflict with Islamic doctrine. This is visible in the deletion of pre-Islamic archaeological material, human-like artifacts, and symbolic or literary expressions that could be interpreted as implying idolatry, reverence toward created beings, or improper veneration of land, celestial bodies, saints, or the dead. It is also reflected in the treatment of practices such as saint-veneration, seeking help from the righteous dead, magic, and sorcery, which are not presented as cultural or folkloric practices but as religiously condemnable behaviors requiring Islamic judgment or correction. For example, a Grade 12 Islamic Education textbook promotes an antagonistic view of people who are defined as "sorcerers and conjurors" and those who use their services.[142]

This is also the case when teaching literature, as one striking example from a Grade 7 Arabic Language lesson shows. The title of a lesson based on the Syrian poet Shafiq Jabri's poem was changed from "An Intimate Conversation with the Sun" (*munājāt al-shams*) simply to "the Sun." The supposed reason is that conversing with the sun may be perceived as a pagan idea.[143] In another poem, a verse was removed as it suggested that mortal love is preferred over eternity in Paradise.[144] The result is a more doctrinally bounded curriculum, in which Syrian heritage, literature, and social behavior are filtered through orthodox Islamic categories of monotheism, worship, sin, and prohibited practice.[145]

***Arabic Language*, Grade 7, Vol. 2, 2025-26, p. 30 (previously: *Arabic Language*, Grade 7, Vol. 2, 2023-24, p. 46)**

2023-24	2025-26
الدّرس الأوّل نصّ أدبيّ مناجاة الشّمس شفيق جبري (٠)	الدّرس الأوّل نصّ أدبيّ الشّمس شفيق جبري (٠)
Lesson 1: An Intimate Conversation with the Sun (a literary text) – [by] Shafiq Jabri	*Lesson 1: The Sun (a literary text) – [by] Shafiq Jabri*

*Highlighted text shows altered content.

The following Social Studies example shows how the revised curriculum narrows the visual presentation of ancient Syrian heritage by removing pre-Islamic artifacts with human-like or potentially cultic associations. This example illustrates doctrinal disciplining through visual removal rather than through an explicit theological statement. In the 2023-2024 version, the Social Studies page included several examples of ancient Syrian material culture, including a human-like figurine associated with pre-Islamic religious or ritual practices. In the 2025-2026 version, this figurative artifact is removed, while less doctrinally sensitive items, such as pottery and manuscript material, remain. The change therefore does not eliminate ancient Syrian heritage altogether. Instead, it filters which forms of heritage can be safely displayed within the textbook.

The significance of the revision lies in this selective preservation; ancient material culture is still presented as part of Syrian history, but artifacts that may suggest idolatry, cultic practice, or anthropomorphic religious representation are overwhelmingly excluded. As demonstrated in the two examples below, images of sculptures of figures from two ancient pre-Islamic civilizations–one from the Syrian Mari kingdom and the other from the ancient city of Ugarit–were

142 *Islamic Education*, Grade 12, 2025-26, pp. 75, 77 (previously: *Islamic Education*, Grade 12, 2017-18, pp. 71, 73). See also *Islamic Education*, Grade 11, 2025-26, pp. 86-88 (previously: *Islamic Education*, Grade 11, 2017-18, pp. 88-90).

143 For the removal of a poetry verse which invokes the idea of prostrating to the idea of defending the land, instead of God, pursuant to the directives matrix, see *Arabic Language and Its Literature*, Grade 12 (Humanities Track), 2025-26, pp. 90-91; *Arabic Language and Its Literature*, Grade 12 (Scientific Track), 2025-26, pp. 60-61 (previously: *Arabic Language and Its Literature*, Grade 12 (Humanities Track), 2023-24, p.138; *Arabic Language and Its Literature*, Grade 12 (Scientific Track), 2023-24, p. 98).

144 *Arabic Language and Its Literature*, Grade 12 (Humanities Track), 2025-26, p. 95; *Arabic Language and Its Literature*, Grade 12 (Scientific Track), 2025-26, pp. 65-66 (previously: *Arabic Language and Its Literature*, 2023-24, p. 144; *Arabic Language and Its Literature*, Grade 12 (Scientific Track), 2023-24, p. 104).

145 *Arabic is My Language*, Grade 6, Vol. 1, 2025-26, p. 20 (previously: *Arabic is My Language*, Grade 6, Vol. 1, 2023-24, p. 27).

removed from a lesson on Syrian archeological heritage. One exception is a lesson on the ancient city of Tadmur (Palmyra) and its archeologic site, which remains in the textbook despite being designated for removal in the directives matrix. The lesson includes images of the city, including a statue of Queen Zenobia and the Temple of Bel.[146] This creates a narrower and more doctrinally bounded image of the pre-Islamic past. Syrian heritage is not rejected in full, but it is reshaped so that it appears less connected to religious plurality, ritual practice, or visual forms that could conflict with Islamic monotheistic norms. In this sense, the example shows how Islamization operates not only through added religious language, but also through the silent removal of images that make older, pre-Islamic layers of Syrian identity too visible.

***Social Studies*, Grade 3, 2025-26, p. 105 (previously: *Social Studies*, Grade 3, 2023-24, p. 119)**

2023-24	2025-26
[...] *[top right image:] Ceramic jar* *[bottom right image:] Medical illustration* *[left image:] Statue of the female singer Urnina from the [ancient] city of Mari [in Syria]*	*[...]* *[top right image:] Ceramic jar* *[bottom right image:] Medical illustration*

*Red text shows removed content.

***Social Studies*, Grade 3, 2025-26, p. 106 (previously: *Social Studies*, Grade 3, 2023-24, p. 120)**

2023-24	2025-26
[...] *[left image:] Statue of a [figure] playing the drum from [the ancient city of] Ugarit.*	

*Red text shows removed content.

Curricular changes to ensure doctrinal alignment include exposure to some extra-Islamic religious frameworks, particularly those not associated with monotheism. The 2025–26 edition significantly narrows the discussion of Chinese philosophical thought by removing the textbook's explanation of the Yin and Yang Theory (alongside the image of the

146 *Arabic is My Language*, Grade 3, Vol. 1, 2025-26, pp. 88-89 (previously: *Arabic is My Language*, Grade 3, Vol. 1, 2023-24, pp. 98-99).

Yin and Yang sign) as an account of the origins of the universe. In the 2023–24 edition, students were taught not only that Chinese philosophy seeks harmony with humanity and nature, but also a cosmological explanation of existence: "the universe came to being as a result of the interactions between two opposite forces Yin and Yang" and that "the universe is regarded as something that exists between tensions caused by the universal force of nothingness—or Yin, and the universal force of being—or Yang." This introduced students to a traditional Chinese understanding of creation and the nature of reality. In contrast, the 2025–26 edition retains only the ethical dimension of Chinese philosophy, presenting "The highest good" as "the state of peace and internal harmony between human body and spirit" while omitting the cosmological discussion entirely. The revision therefore shifts the lesson away from metaphysical concepts and discussions of the universe's origins, toward a more limited focus on personal morality, inner harmony, and ethical self-cultivation.

***Philosophy*, Grade 10 (Humanities Track), 2025-26, p. 22 (previously: *Philosophy*, Grade 10 [Humanities Track], 2023-24, p. 26)**

2023-24	2025-26
 ثانياً- الفكر الفلسفي الصّيني: تؤكّد الفلسفة الصّينية أهمية المحافظة على الحياة الإنسانية العظيمة ورعايتها، وهي مرتبطة أوثق الارتباط بالأخلاق. ينطلق الفكر الصّيني من مبدأي الفكر والممارسة، إذ لا ينفصل أحدهما عن الآخر، إذ تنعكس المشكلات الجوهرية للفلسفة الصّينية في هذين السّؤالين: (كيف يمكنني تحقيق التّناغم مع الإنسانية بأسرها؟) و(كيف يمكنني الإنسجام مع الطّبيعة؟). إنّ حالة السّلام والتّناغم الدّاخلي بين الجسد والرّوح في الإنسان هو الطّريق الأمثل للوصول إلى الخير الأسمى. نظرية الين يا نغ: ظهرت نظرية الين يانغ في جوهرها ردّاً على السؤال الخاص بأصل الكون، ووفقاً لهذه النظرية فإنّ الكون قد جاء كنتيجة للتفاعلات بين قوّتي الين واليانغ الكونيتين المتعارضتين، وينظر إلى وجود الكون باعتباره قائماً في التوترات الناجمة عن قوة العدم الكونية أو الين، وقوة الوجود الكونية أو اليانغ. لو تأملنا في الوجود ككل، هل يمكن أن نستنتج أنه نتج عن تكامل المتناقضات؟ ناقش وبيّن رأيك.	ثانياً- الفكر الفلسفي الصّيني: تؤكّد الفلسفة الصّينية أهمية المحافظة على الحياة الإنسانية العظيمة ورعايتها، وهي مرتبطة أوثق الارتباط بالأخلاق. ينطلق الفكر الصّيني من مبدأي الفكر والممارسة، على أنّه لا ينفصل أحدهما عن الآخر، إذ تنعكس المشكلات الجوهرية للفلسفة الصّينية في هذين السّؤالين: (كيف يمكنني تحقيق التّناغم مع الإنسانية بأسرها؟) و(كيف يمكنني تحقيق التّناغم مع الطّبيعة؟). - الخير الأسمى: إنّ حالة السّلام والتّناغم الدّاخلي بين الجسد والرّوح في الإنسان هو الطّريق الأمثل للوصول إلى الخير الأسمى.
2. Chinese Philosophical Thought *Chinese philosophy emphasizes the importance of protecting and taking care of the great human life, which is strongly linked to living beings. The starting point of Chinese thought is two principles, thought and practice, which cannot be separated from one another. The two major questions in Chinese philosophy are reflected in these two questions: "How can I achieve harmony with all of humanity?" and "How can I harmonize with nature?"* *The state of peace and internal harmony between human body and spirit is the best path to the highest good.* *The Yin and Yang Theory:* *In essence, the Yin and Yang theory surfaced in response to the question on the origins of the universe. According to this theory, the universe came to being as a result of the interactions between two opposite forces Yin and Yang. The universe is regarded as something that exists between tensions caused by the universal force of nothingness - or Yin, and the universal force of being - or Yang.* *[...]*	*2. Chinese Philosophical Thought* *Chinese philosophy emphasizes the importance of protecting and taking care of the great human life, which is strongly linked to living beings. The starting point of Chinese thought is two principles, thought and practice, which cannot be separated from one another. The two major questions in Chinese philosophy are reflected in these two questions: "How can I achieve harmony with all of humanity?" and "How can I harmonize with nature?"* *- The highest good:* *The state of peace and internal harmony between human body and spirit is the best path to the highest good.*

*Red text shows removed content. *Green text shows added content.

The following Grade 7 History example shows how the revised curriculum selectively removes figurative Western cultural imagery while preserving the surrounding historical content. The available earlier version of this page comes from the 2014-2015 Grade 7 History textbook published by the Syrian Interim Government in opposition-held Idlib, which appears to have preserved the corresponding page of the 2013-2014 Assad-era textbook, although the Assad-era original was not directly available for comparison. In this earlier version, a lesson on the European Renaissance included an im-

age of Leonardo da Vinci's *Mona Lisa* (La Gioconda) alongside discussion of the political, economic, linguistic, and scientific consequences of the Renaissance. In the 2025-2026 version, the lesson and its historical explanation remain, but the image of the *Mona Lisa* and its caption are removed. The comparison therefore establishes a clear deletion from the available pre-2025 version and most probably from the Assad-era original as well, although the latter inference is made cautiously. The revision does not reject the Renaissance as a historical subject, nor does it remove discussion of European political and scientific development. Instead, it narrows the visual representation of that history by deleting one of its most recognizable examples of human portraiture.

The change is significant when read alongside the removal of human-like pre-Islamic artifacts elsewhere in the curriculum. In both cases, historical or cultural material is retained while figurative representations of the human form are selectively removed. The *Mona Lisa* example should therefore not be treated as evidence that Western art or Renaissance culture as such is rejected; the surrounding lesson remains intact. Nor, given the absence of a directly available Assad-era version of this particular page, should the deletion by itself be made to carry more evidentiary weight than the comparison permits. Rather, when considered together with comparable removals of figurative imagery elsewhere in the revised curriculum, it strengthens the broader pattern of doctrinal filtering identified in this chapter, in which potentially sensitive visual representations are removed while less problematic historical, cultural, or informational content is preserved. This suggests that Islamization can operate through selective visual omission as well as through textual rewriting or curricular deletion.

***History*, Grade 7, 2025-26, p. 107 (previously: *History*, Grade 7, 2014-15 Syrian Interim Government [Syrian Opposition], p. 118 [Originally: *History*, Grade 7, 2013-2014 Assad Regime, p. 118])**[147]

2014-15	2025-26
ـ روفائيل ومن أشهر لوحاته الجدارية مدرسةُ أثينا. ثانياً: النهضةُ الأوروبيّةُ ونتائجها: تجلّتْ بخصائص ونتائج أهمُّها: تغيُّرُ الأنظمة نتيجةَ زوالِ الإقطاع، وظهورُ الدول الحديثة والملَكيات المركزيّة في غربي أوروبّا وشماليها، حيثُ تحدّدت الحقوقُ والواجباتُ للدولة وللمواطن، وهذا كانَ له الأثرُ البارزُ في نموّ النهضة الأوروبيّة، ونموّ اللغات الوطنيّة، واتسمتْ بمساندة الطبقة المتوسطة للملوك والقضاء على الإقطاع، وتدفّق الثروة وتزايد رؤوس الأموال من خلال الاستفادة من الكشوف الجغرافيّة، والاكتشافات العلميّة. الشكل (٦) لوحة الموناليزا (الجوكندا)	ثانياً: النهضةُ الأوروبيّةُ ونتائجها: تجلّتْ بخصائص ونتائج أهمُّها: تغيُّرُ الأنظمة نتيجةَ زوالِ الإقطاع، وظهورُ الدول الحديثة والملَكيات المركزيّة في غربي أوروبّا وشماليها، حيثُ تحدّدت الحقوقُ والواجباتُ للدولة وللمواطن، وهذا كانَ له الأثرُ البارزُ في نموّ النهضة الأوروبيّة، ونموّ اللغات الوطنيّة، واتسمتْ بمساندة الطبقة المتوسطة للملوك والقضاء على الإقطاع، وتدفّق الثروة وتزايد رؤوس الأموال من خلال الاستفادة من الكشوف الجغرافيّة، والاكتشافات العلميّة.
Second: The European Renaissance and its consequences: *It manifested itself in a number of characteristics and consequences, the most important of which were:* *The political systems changed as a result of the disappearance of feudalism and the emergence of modern states and centralized monarchies in Western and Northern Europe. The rights and duties of the state and of the citizen were defined. This had a prominent effect on the growth of the European Renaissance and on the development of national languages. It was also characterized by the support of the middle class for monarchs and the elimination of feudalism, as well as by the influx of wealth and the increase of capital through benefiting from geographical discoveries and scientific discoveries.* *[Image of the Mona Lisa]* *Figure (6): The Mona Lisa (La Gioconda)*	*Second: The European Renaissance and its consequences:* *It manifested itself in a number of characteristics and consequences, the most important of which were:* *The political systems changed as a result of the disappearance of feudalism and the emergence of modern states and centralized monarchies in Western and Northern Europe. The rights and duties of the state and of the citizen were defined. This had a prominent effect on the growth of the European Renaissance and on the development of national languages. It was also characterized by the support of the middle class for monarchs and the elimination of feudalism, as well as by the influx of wealth and the increase of capital through benefiting from geographical discoveries and scientific discoveries.*

*Red text shows removed content.

147 The older reference used here is the *History*, Grade 7, 2014-15 textbook published by the Syrian Interim Government (Syrian Opposition in Idlib), because the corresponding Assad-era original textbook was not directly available for this comparison. Based on comparison with other Assad-era textbooks available to us, as well as the visible pattern of revisions elsewhere in the same textbook, the Syrian Interim Government page appears to have preserved the older Assad-era page, originally *History*, Grade 7, 2013-14 Assad Regime, p. 118. The comparison establishes a clear shift from the available pre-2025 version, and most probably from the Assad-era original as well, but this inference is made cautiously. For further comparable reference, see *Social Studies*, Grade 6, 2012-13 Assad-regime; *History*, Grade 8, 2017-18 Assad-regime; *History*, Grade 9, 2017-18 Assad-regime; *History*, Grade 10, 2014-15 Assad-regime; and *History* (Literary Branch), Grade 12, 2017-2018 Assad-regime.

Beliefs and practices within Islamic traditions have also been subject to doctrinal alignment. Although retained from the previous curriculum, the next example shows the same doctrinal boundary-setting at the level of religious practice, where visiting the graves (*ziyārat al-qubūr*) of saints and righteous figures for healing or provision is framed as a condemnable behavior requiring Islamic judgment and correction. Unlike the previous Social Studies example, where doctrinal sensitivity operates through the silent removal of visual material, this retained Islamic Education exercise explicitly asks students to judge this religious-social practice through Islamic criteria. The exercise describes people who habitually visit the graves of saints and righteous figures in order to ask them for healing and provision, then requires students to state Islam's ruling on this behavior and propose ways to combat the phenomenon of seeking help from anyone other than Allah.

The significance of the example lies in the way the practice is categorized. Grave visitation and appeal to saints could be presented as part of local religious custom, popular piety, or inherited social practice. Instead, the textbook frames them through a doctrinal and religious-legal lens: the problem is not merely superstition or social ignorance, but a violation of proper monotheistic worship. The request to "combat" the phenomenon further presents the practice as something to be corrected or eliminated, not as a cultural behavior to be understood historically or sociologically. This therefore complements the previous example; together, they show that the revised curriculum disciplines both heritage and practice: pre-Islamic visual culture is filtered out, while heterodox religious behaviors are placed under the authority of orthodox Islamic judgment.

***Islamic Education*, Grade 12, 2025-26, p. 77**

٧- اعتادَ بعضُ النّاسِ زيارةَ قبورِ الأولياءِ والصّالحينَ ليسألَ أصحابَها الشّفاءَ والرّزقَ.
والمطلوب:
- ما حُكمُ الإسلامِ في ذلكَ؟
- اقترحْ حلولاً لمكافحةِ ظاهرةِ الاستعانةِ بغيرِ اللهِ تَعالى.

Some people make a habit of visiting the graves of the Saints and Righteous to ask them for health and provision. Required:
- *What is Islam's ruling on this?*
- *Suggest solutions to combat the phenomenon of seeking help from those who are not Allah the Almighty.*

The examples in this section show how Islamization operates not only through the addition of Islamic themes, but also through the narrowing of what may be represented, admired, or practiced. Pre-Islamic heritage is not removed entirely, but it is filtered so that artifacts with human-like, ritual, or potentially idolatrous associations become less visible. Similarly, popular religious practices such as seeking help from saints or righteous figures are not treated as inherited customs or objects of social study, but as doctrinal errors requiring Islamic judgment and correction. This pattern suggests a curriculum increasingly organized around the protection of monotheistic boundaries: Syrian history, literature, visual culture, and everyday religiosity are made acceptable as long as they can be aligned with orthodox Islamic categories of worship, sin, and prohibited practice.

Islamic Dogma in Science and Nature: Divine Creation and the Removal of Evolutionary Frameworks

The Islamization of science and nature appears in two related but distinct forms. The first is the removal or neutralization of scientific frameworks associated with long-term natural development, most prominently through examples relating to evolutionary theory. Entire lessons and units that previously introduced students to evolution, adaptation, natural selection, speciation, and theories of biological development have been removed from the curriculum, including a 10-page unit in Grade 8 Biology and Geology textbooks, and a 25-page unit in Grade 11 Biology and Geology textbooks.[148] Where related biological material remains, it is rewritten to avoid explicit evolutionary language; this is demonstrated in a Grade 12 Biology exercise where "the stages of nervous system evolution" are revised into "the nervous systems of some living organisms."[149]

The second form is the theological reframing of natural phenomena, in which processes occurring in nature are presented through divine agency, Allah's power, and the wisdom of creation.[150] This content appears as early as Grade 1 in Natural Sciences textbooks, where a unit heading is changed from "Nature's Giving" to "Allah's Giving," while an exercise about animals on a farm is retained focusing on observation of familiar living creatures. Scientific description is therefore not always removed, but it is increasingly presented within a religious framework, with nature interpreted as evidence of divine design. This shift does not eliminate science from the curriculum, but it narrows the explanatory horizon through which students encounter life, organisms, and biological complexity. Students are less often exposed to widely accepted scientific frameworks for the development of life over time, and are more often directed to understand natural phenomena within a doctrinal framework centered on divine creation.[151]

The most extensive examples of the first mode are the removal of two similar units titled "The Origin and Evolution of Life," from both the Grade 8 and Grade 11 and Biology and Geology textbooks, which had introduced students to the Big Bang Theory, evolution, adaptation, isolation, the emergence of new species, and theories of biological development.[152] This example shows Islamization through curricular deletion. The removed material was not a marginal passage or a passing reference to evolution. Rather, the units presented evolution as an organizing framework for understanding biological diversity and long-term development. Students were to study "Evolution and its Evidence," "Adaptation and its Types," "Isolation and the Emergence of New Species," and "Theories of Evolution." With these units removed, students are no longer exposed to the basic conceptual sequence of modern evolutionary biology: evidence, adaptation, speciation, and explanatory theories.

148 The unit included a lesson on the evolution of life which was removed with the unit title, and a lesson on the basic food groups, which was incorporated into the following unit in the 2025-26 edition. *Biology and Geology*, Grade 8, 2023-2024, pp. 201-209 (removed from 2025-26). *Biology and Geology*, Grade 11, 2023-24, pp. 237-261.

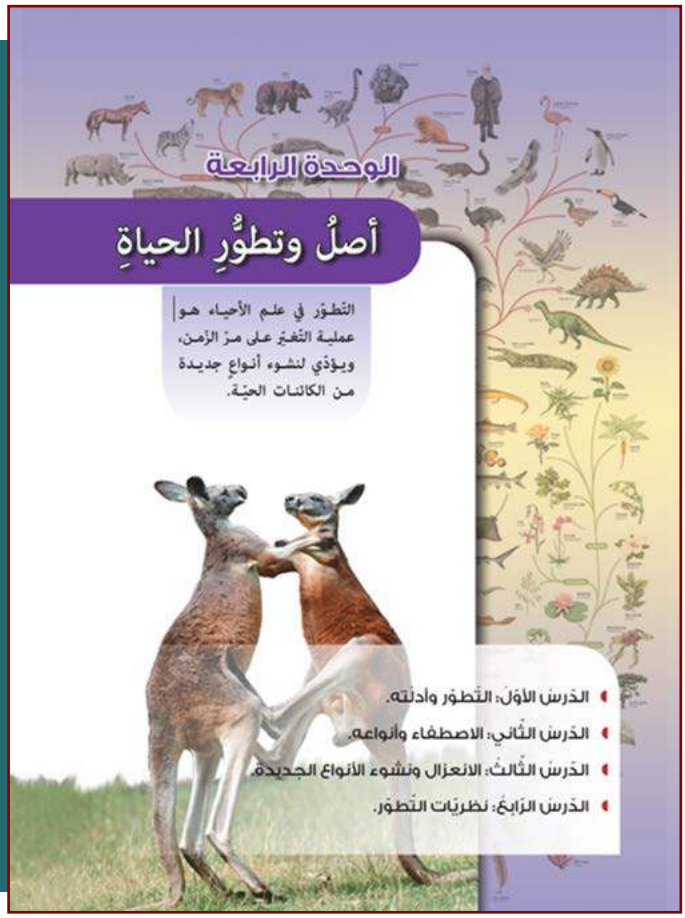
149 *Biology*, Grade 12, Scientific Track, 2025-26, p. 9 (previously: *Biology*, Grade 12, Scientific Track, 2023-24, pp. 9-10).
Biology, Grade 12, Scientific Track, 2025-26, p. 12 (previously: *Biology*, Grade 12, Scientific Track, 2023-24, p. 12).

150 For a newly added chapter titled "God alone is the Creator and the One Who Controls Everything," see *Islamic Education*, Grade 12, 2025-26, pp. 13-16.

151 *Natural Sciences*, Grade 1, vol. 1, 2025-2026, p. 48 (previously: *Natural Sciences*, Grade 1, vol. 1, 2023-2024, p. 52).

152 Specifically in *Biology and Geography*, Grade 8, 2023-24, p. 203.

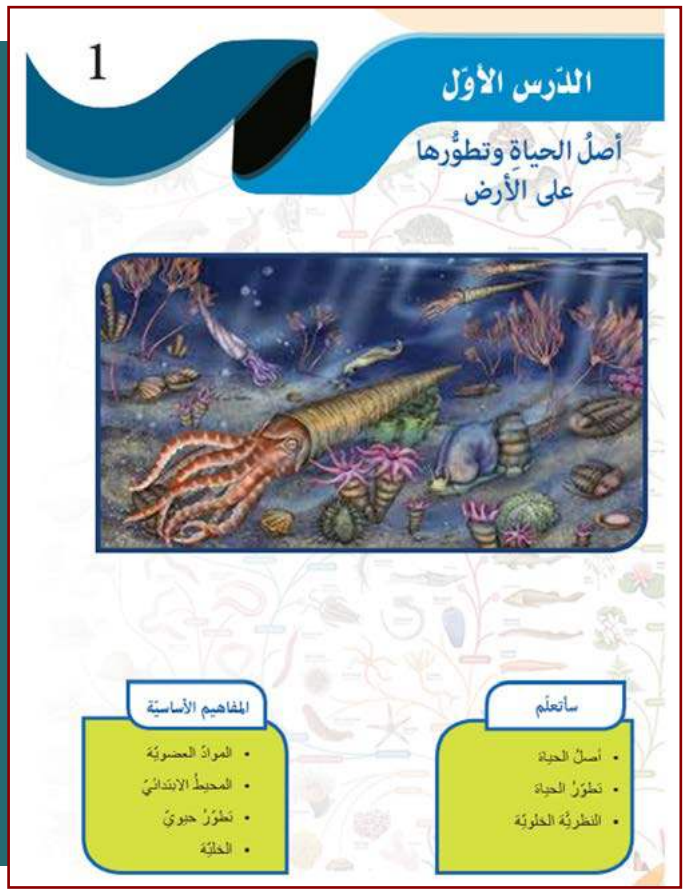
***Biology and Geology*, Grade 11, 2023-24, p. 237 (removed)**



Unit Four
The Origin and Development of Life
Evolution in biology is the process of gradual change over time, leading to the emergence of new types of living organisms.

- *Lesson One: Evolution and its evidence*
- *Lesson Two: Natural selection and its types*
- *Lesson Three: Genetic isolation and the emergence of new species*
- *Lesson Four: Theories of evolution*

***Biology and Geology*, Grade 8, 2023-24, p. 202 (removed)**



Lesson 1
The Origin of Life and Its Evolution on Earth
You Will Learn

- *The origins of life*
- *The evolution of life*
- *Cell theory*

Basic Concepts

- *Organic compounds*
- *Primordial soup*
- *Biological evolution*
- *Cell*

Rather than merely adjusting a phrase or adding a religious perspective, the revised curriculum removes an entire topic for explaining the development of life. This is the first type of Islamization present in the science curriculum, where scientific theories perceived as incompatible with Islamic doctrine, especially evolution, are removed or made less visible. The result is a biology curriculum in which students continue to study living organisms and biological systems, but lose access to a major explanatory framework for understanding the origin and diversification of life.

The same pattern appears in changes to texts within a Grade 12 Biology textbook, where "the stages of nervous system evolution" are revised into "the nervous systems of some living organisms." This example shows that the removal of evolution-related content occurs not only through the deletion of full units, but also through the rewriting of remaining scientific exercises. In the 2023-2024 version, students were asked to study a table representing "the stages of nervous system evolution" in living organisms. The accompanying conclusion stated that the nervous system becomes more complex as one ascends "the ladder of evolution," reaching the highest degrees of complexity and efficiency in humans. The previous version therefore framed comparative anatomy through an explicitly evolutionary lens.

In the 2025-2026 version, the exercise remains, but the evolutionary interpretation is removed. Students are now asked to study a table representing "the nervous systems of some living organisms," without reference to stages of evolution. The conclusion referring to the "ladder of evolution" is also deleted. This leaves the comparison between organisms intact while removing its evolutionary meaning. The example therefore complements the Grade 11 deletion: where the first case removes an entire evolutionary unit, this one preserves some biological content while neutralizing the explanatory vocabulary that connects it to evolution

***Biology*, Grade 12 (Science Track), 2025-26, p. 9 (previously: *Biology*, Grade 12 [Science Track], 2023-24, pp. 9-10)**

2023-24	2025-26
أوظّف الصور وأقارن أدرس الجدول الآتي الذي يمثّل مراحل تطوّر الجملة العصبية للكائنات الحية.	أوظّف الصور وأقارن أدرس الجدول الآتي الذي يُمثّل الجُمل العصبيّة لدى بعض الكائنات الحيّة.
Apply the images and compare. *Study the following table which represents the stages of nervous system evolution for living organisms.*	*Apply the images and compare.* *Study the following table which represents the nervous systems of some living organisms.*
أستنتج يزداد الجهاز العصبي تعقيداً كلّما ارتقينا في سلّم التطور؛ ليصل إلى أقصى درجات التعقيد والكفاءة لدى الإنسان.	
I conclude: *The nervous system becomes complex as we ascend the ladder of evolution: to reach the highest degrees of complexity and efficiency in humans.*	

*Highlighted text shows altered content. *Red text shows removed content.

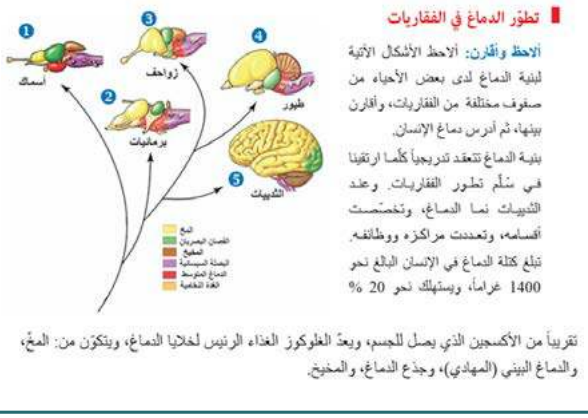
A simple Grade 1 Natural Sciences example illustrates the second mode of change. The activity still asks students to observe animals, but the unit heading shifts the source of natural abundance from "nature" to "Allah." This example shows that the Islamization of science and nature does not always involve deleting scientific content. The previous version's title, "Nature's Giving," frames the lesson around nature itself as a source of life, abundance, and observation. The revised version, pursuant to the directives matrix, changes the title to "Allah's Giving," while leaving the exercise's basic content almost unchanged; students still complete a picture story about a bird listening to familiar animals on a farm. The change is therefore conceptual rather than informational. Students are still directed to observe animals and the natural world, but the lesson now introduces this observation through Allah rather than nature as the source of abundance. The example shows that theological framing enters science education from the earliest grades, not only through explicit lessons on creation but also through headings and introductory language that present nature as a divine gift.

2023-24	2025-26
(2) Nature's (al-ṭabīʿah) Giving *[...]*	*2) Allah's Giving* *[...]*

*Highlighted text shows altered content.

The following passage, which comprised most of the Grade 12 Biology textbook's section on the brain, was deleted. An illustration comparing the brains of different vertebrates was also replaced with an illustration of the human brain alone. The deleted text emphasized the similarities between the human brain and those of other animals and related these similarities to evolutionary theory. The examples in this section show two complementary ways in which scientific and natural knowledge is brought within Islamic doctrinal boundaries. In the first, evolutionary frameworks are removed, shortened, or stripped from biology lessons, reducing students' exposure to naturalistic explanations of biological development. In the second, natural phenomena are interpreted through divine agency, so that processes in the natural world become signs of Allah's power, wisdom, and creation. The result is not the removal of science from the curriculum. Students continue to study organisms, body systems, and natural processes. Rather, the revisions alter the explanatory framework: empirical description is retained, but it is increasingly detached from evolutionary theory or incorporated into a theological interpretation centered on divine creation.

***Biology*, Grade 12 (Science Track), 2025-26, p. 12 (previously: *Biology*, Grade 12 (Science Track), 2023-24, p. 12)**

2023-24	2025-26
	

(See the continuation of the example on the following page)

2023-24	2025-26
The Development of the Brain in Vertebrates *[showing different kinds of brains belonging to various classes of animals]* *[...]* *I shall observe the following forms of brain structure of several animals from various classes of vertebrates, and I shall compare between them, then I shall learn about the human brain.* *The structure of the brain became [more] complex gradually as it ascended the ladder of development of vertebrates. As for mammals, their brain grew, its parts particularized, and its centers and functions diversified. The brain's mass in an adult man is approximately 1400 grams, and it consumes about 20% of the oxygen that gets into the body. Glucose is considered the main nourishment of brain cells. It is composed of the cerebrum, diencephalon (thalamus), brainstem and the cerebellum.*	*The brain's mass in an adult man is approximately 1400 grams, and it consumes about 20% of the oxygen that gets into the body. Glucose is considered the main nourishment of brain cells. It is composed of the cerebrum, diencephalon (thalamus), brainstem and the cerebellum.*

*Red text shows removed content.

The examples examined in this chapter show that Islamization in the 2025-2026 Syrian curriculum extends well beyond the addition of religious content or the removal of Assad-era propaganda. Across subjects and grades, the revisions operate through a consistent set of mechanisms: narrowing, replacement, deletion, reframing, and selective preservation. Universal moral categories such as "human" and "people" are narrowed toward exclusive Muslim communal obligation. The Syrian and Arab homeland is repeatedly subordinated to the Islamic *ummah*, while Arab nationalism and pan-Arab historical memory are weakened in favor of Islamic civilization. Regional conflicts, anti-colonial struggle, military duty, and sacrifice are increasingly recoded from Syrian-national, Arab, or Assad-era resistance frameworks into Islamic and pan-Islamic causes. Civic and political order is redirected from state law and modern democratic vocabulary toward Islamic *shariah*, *shura*, and models of early Islamic governance. Cultural heritage, religious practice, and scientific knowledge are likewise filtered through doctrinal boundaries centered on monotheism, divine creation, and the exclusion or weakening of content perceived as incompatible with Islamic doctrines.

At the same time, the revised curriculum does not simply erase all earlier identity layers, cultural traditions, civic concepts, or forms of knowledge. The homeland remains present in some contexts; Arab language and culture continue to be taught; human rights and justice still appear; ancient and pre-Islamic heritage is not completely removed; European history and culture remain visible; and scientific observation continues to form part of the curriculum. The more consistent pattern is one of changed hierarchy and doctrinal selection. Arab culture remains, but Islamic civilization is increasingly presented as its higher civilizational frame. Patriotism survives, but service and sacrifice are redirected toward Allah, the Faith, and the *ummah*. Rights and political order remain, but their legitimacy is grounded more strongly in *shariah* and Islamic models of governance. Scientific content remains, while evolutionary explanation is removed or weakened and nature is more explicitly interpreted through divine creation. Even visual and cultural material is filtered selectively rather than comprehensively: some figurative or doctrinally sensitive material is removed, while Art Education continues to include Syrian, Arab, and Western artists and lessons on subjects such as Orientalism and Pop Art.[153] The resulting pattern is therefore not one of total cultural or intellectual exclusion, but of selective preservation within an increasingly Islamic hierarchy of legitimacy.

This makes the revised curriculum ideological in a different way from the Assad-era curriculum it replaces. The older textbooks organized much of their political and collective identity around Baʿthist, Syrian-national, and pan-Arab narratives of homeland, Arab unity, resistance, state authority, and national sacrifice. The revised textbooks do not merely dismantle these narratives or replace them with ideologically neutral material. Instead, much of their organizing logic is reconstructed through an Islamist and pan-Islamist framework. The imagined subject of the curriculum is increasingly not only the citizen, the Arab, or the member of the Syrian nation, but the Muslim who belongs to the *ummah*,

153 On the Syrian artist Saad Yagan, see *Visual and Aesthetic Art Education*, Grade 8, 2025-26, p. 15. On Antoni Gaudi, see p. 36. On Frida Kahlo see p. 56. On Orientalism in art, see *Visual and Aesthetic Art Education*, Grade 9, 2025-26, pp. 45-46.

serves Allah and the Faith, accepts Islamic *shariah* as a source of moral and political authority, and interprets collective identity, historical memory, conflict, sacrifice, culture, and knowledge through Islamic categories.

The significance of this shift is heightened by the political background of Syria's new authorities. As discussed in the report introduction, the new ruling networks emerged from Sunni Islamist, jihadist, and Salafi-jihadist militant milieus that included al-Qaeda in Iraq, Jabhat al-Nusra, and HTS. The curriculum does not reproduce the full doctrine of these movements, and some material explicitly rejects fanaticism or rigid religious interpretation. Nevertheless, many of the broader categories through which Islamist and pan-Islamist movements understand society are normalized across the revised textbooks: Islam as the foundation of moral and political order, shariah as a source of authority, the ummah as a superior collective identity, *jihad* and martyrdom as frameworks of sacrifice, and religious doctrine as a boundary of legitimate belief, practice, and knowledge.

The chapter therefore points to a foundational redefinition of "New Syria." National belonging, historical memory, political legitimacy, conflict, culture, and knowledge are increasingly organized through an Islamist framework. The result is not simply a more religious curriculum, but a reordering of the hierarchy of identity and authority. Islam becomes the central source through which belonging, moral obligation, political legitimacy, sacrifice, and legitimate knowledge are increasingly interpreted, while Syrian-national, Arab-national, humanist, pluralist, and secular-scientific frameworks are weakened, subordinated, selectively retained, or removed. Islamization is therefore not a peripheral feature of the 2025-2026 curriculum. It constitutes one of the principal ideological structures through which the new authorities are defining the post-Assad Syrian state and the identity of the society it seeks to educate.

Violence, Armed Struggle, and Self-Sacrifice

Our previous report on the 2017-18 curriculum found that the textbooks employ Islamic concepts and imagery to cultivate a militant ethos centered on jihad, martyrdom, sacrifice, and the glorification of both religious and secular heroes. In doing so, the curriculum promoted a worldview that morally legitimized "resistance" and armed struggle, encouraging the use of "all available means" in confronting and ultimately destroying perceived enemies and occupiers.[154] The 2025-26 curriculum displays little change in that area, as the majority of relevant content appearing in previous editions was not revised. The few cases of revision to previous editions can be attributed to the narrative shift regarding the Assad regime (including the 1973 war), the Ottomans, and Islamization of national and pan-Arab perspectives (explored in other chapters), as prescribed in the directives matrix.

While certain terminological adjustments suggest minor moderation in tone in isolated contexts, the broader narrative remains one of mobilization and resistance. The curriculum does not meaningfully introduce frameworks of conflict resolution, reconciliation, or nonviolent engagement. Instead, as this chapter will present, the new Syrian curriculum, across subjects and grade levels, continues to normalize and valorize violence, armed resistance, and self-sacrifice as central components of collective identity and moral duty. Themes of confrontation, martyrdom, and militant steadfastness are embedded within literary, historical, and religious instruction, presenting armed struggle not as a tragic necessity or last resort, but as an honorable and expected response to perceived injustice.

The first section examines the frequent presentation of historical struggles, revolutionary movements, militant figures, and symbolic sites through a narrative centered on resistance, sacrifice, and martyrdom. Historical instruction constructs a continuous narrative of justified armed resistance in which confrontations and uprisings are framed as defining moments of collective dignity and national awakening, while individuals associated with armed struggle are elevated as moral exemplars embodying courage, steadfastness, and devotion to the homeland. Modern regional conflicts are often presented through a one-sided lens emphasizing external aggression and valorizing armed response as legitimate and heroic, with organized militant activity portrayed as a catalyst for national consciousness and martyrdom treated as a noble culmination of that struggle. Similarly, historic locations connected to military resistance are transformed into symbols of perseverance and steadfastness. Through this portrayal of events, personalities, and places, the curriculum embeds values of armed resistance, self-sacrifice, and militant nationalism into broader narratives of Arab, Islamic, and Syrian identity.

The second section shows how the curriculum frequently romanticizes and aestheticizes violence, martyrdom, self-sacrifice, and armed struggle, particularly through Arabic language and literary instruction that relies heavily on emotionally charged, graphic, and bloody imagery. Poetry, prose, grammar exercises, and reading comprehension activities repeatedly normalize scenes of bloodshed, death, mutilation, and heroic sacrifice, presenting them as moral expressions of dignity, resistance, and belonging rather than as tragic consequences of conflict. The language of suffering is consistently intertwined with calls for perseverance and resistance, producing a moral framework in which endurance and combat are elevated as virtues. Literary analysis exercises often guide students toward affirming this framing, thereby transforming cultural appreciation into reinforcement of militant narratives. A particularly prominent feature of this narrative is the overwhelming focus on the Palestinian perspective, where resistance against Israel is portrayed as the foremost embodiment of Arab identity, sacrifice, and struggle. Notably, following the removal of references to Ottoman occupation in revised editions, the Israeli-Palestinian conflict increasingly becomes the curriculum's primary and sometimes exclusive frame of reference for discussing occupation, resistance, martyrdom, and liberation.

The third section explores how the curriculum presents *jihad* and martyrdom as deeply interconnected religious and moral ideals that together embody faith, sacrifice, resistance, and devotion to the Muslim community. From the earliest grades, martyrdom is introduced as having a spiritually exalted status, while *jihad* is framed as both a moral and military duty tied to defending religion, the homeland, holy places, and the Islamic nation (*ummah*). Although the

154 "Syrian National identity," p. 99.

curriculum discusses ethical limitations on warfare and formally distinguishes *jihad* from terrorism, its dominant emphasis remains on glorifying armed struggle, military preparedness, and self-sacrifice as noble and necessary obligations. *Jihad* and martyrdom are consistently taught through a devotional and exhortative lens that links contemporary conflicts with revered religious-historical struggles, presenting past military-religious episodes as inspirational and normative models for present-day resistance and warfare.

Glorification of Historic Acts of Violence and Martyrdom

The 2025-26 Syrian curriculum places significant emphasis on historic military campaigns, revolts, resistance movements, and the figures associated with them, presenting these struggles as central pillars of Arab, Islamic, and Syrian identity. The concepts of protecting the homeland and self-sacrifice are ideas regularly promulgated in textbooks. In a lesson about civil duties, Grade 4 students learn that they are obliged to "defend the homeland and its holy symbols" with knowledge, wealth, and their lives.[155] In the same textbook, a lesson titled "Martyrs" teaches students that "martyrdom (*šahādah*) is self-sacrifice for the sake of Allah and in protection of religion." Specifically, the lesson defines a *shahid* as a person who performs *jihad* for the sake of Allah, and explains that the *shahid* gains a status like no other after death.[156] The lesson further features an image of a funeral for the "martyrs of the Ḥayy al-Khālidiyya massacre in Homs" in 2012, asking students "who killed those martyrs and destroyed Syria," with the implicit answer being Bashar al-Assad.

***Social Studies*, Grade 4, 2025-26, p. 107.**

الدّرسُ الثَّالث: الشهداءِ

وَلَا تَحْسَبَنَّ ٱلَّذِينَ قُتِلُوا۟ فِى سَبِيلِ ٱللَّهِ أَمْوَٰتًۢا ۚ بَلْ أَحْيَآءٌ عِندَ رَبِّهِمْ يُرْزَقُونَ

آل عمران ١٦٩

سنتعرَّفُ في هذا الدرس إلى أهمِّيَّة الشهادة ومكانةِ الشهداء.

الصورةُ (١٩) تشييع شهداء مجزرة خي الخالدية في حمص

155 *Social Studies*, Grade 4, 2025-26, pp. 104-105 (previously: *Social Studies*, Grade 4, 2013-14, pp. 131-133).

156 *Social Studies*, Grade 4, 2025-26, pp. 107-108.

[...]

- من قتل هؤلاء الشهداء ودمر سورية؟

Third Lesson: Martyrs
"And never think of those who have been killed in the cause of Allah as dead. Rather, they are alive with their Lord, receiving provision" (Al Imran: 169)
In this lesson we will come to understand the importance of martyrdom (šahādah) and the status of the martyrs.
Image 19: funeral of the martyrs of the Ḥayy al-Khālidiyya massacre in Homs
[…]
- Who killed those martyrs and destroyed Syria?

Across a wide range of subjects, armed resistance is portrayed as a defining historical experience through which the nation preserved its dignity, defended its land, and protected its religious and cultural values. Historical uprisings and military confrontations are consistently framed as moments of collective heroism and moral legitimacy, while the individuals who participated in them are elevated as symbols of courage, sacrifice, and national commitment. Through this approach, the curriculum embeds resistance and struggle into the broader narrative of national and religious belonging. In the Grade 6 Islamic Education textbook, the battles of Uhud and Badr fought by the Prophet Muhammad and the early Muslims are taught with various expressions emphasizing the importance of fighting.[157] The Grade 9 Islamic Education textbook valorizes death in the battlefield through the figure of the early Islamic military commander Khalid ibn al-Walid, quoting his statement, "I would have preferred to be martyred," and presenting his battle wounds as badges of honor.[158] In another example, Grade 12 students learn about the female Companion of Muhammad, Umm Sulaym bint Milḥān, whose virtues include knowledge, steadfastness, and participation in *jihad*. The lesson also notes that she supplied water to Muslim combatants and carried a dagger at her waist for self-protection. They are also tasked with suggesting "the greatest possible number of recommendations for women's participation in preserving the safety of their homeland."[159]

***Islamic Education*, Grade 12, 2025-26, p. 158 (previously: *Islamic Education*, Grade 12, 2017-18, p. 162)**

جهادُها:

شاركتْ أمُّ سُلَيْمٍ رضي الله عنها في بعضِ غزواتِ الرسولِ ﷺ؛ ففي غزوةِ أحدٍ كانتْ تساعدُ المقاتلينَ، وتسقي الماءَ، وتداوي الجرحى، وقدْ ذكرَ أنسُ بنُ مالكٍ رضي الله عنه أنَّه رأى عائشةَ زوجَ النَّبيِّ ﷺ وأمَّهُ أمَّ سُلَيمٍ رضي الله عنها في غزوةِ أحدٍ تنقلانِ الماءَ لسقي المقاتلينَ[1].

وفي غزوةِ حنينَ اتخذتْ خنجراً حزمتْهُ على وسطِها، للدّفاعِ عنْ نفسِها، وثَبتتْ مع القلائلِ الذينَ ثبتوا معَ رسولِ اللهِ ﷺ حينَ أدبرَ النّاسُ في بدايةِ المعركةِ.

أوظفُ وأستثمرُ:

اقترحْ أكبرَ عددٍ ممكنٍ منَ التوصياتِ لمشاركةِ المرأةِ في الحفاظِ على سلامةِ وطنِها.

(See the continuation of the example on the following page)

157 *Islamic Education*, Grade 6, 2025-26, pp. 102-103, 106-107 (*Islamic Education*, Grade 6, 2017-18, pp. 103-104, 107-108).

158 *Islamic Education*, Grade 9, 2025-26, p. 139 (previously: *Islamic Education*, Grade 9, 2017-18, p. 140).

159 For praising Muhammad's daughter Fatima as a Jihad warrior, see *Islamic Education*, Grade 8, 2025-26, pp. 106-107.

Her Jihad:

Umm Sulaym participated in some of the campaigns of the Messenger. In one campaign she used to assist the fighters, provide them with water, and treat the wounded. Anas ibn Malik mentioned that he saw ʿA'isha, the wife of the Prophet, and his mother Umm Sulaym during one of the campaigns carrying water skins to give water to the fighters.

In the Battle of Ḥunayn she took a dagger in the middle of her garment to defend herself and fought alongside the warriors who remained steadfast with the Messenger of God after most people had fled at the beginning of the battle.

I will employ and utilize:

Suggest the greatest possible number of recommendations for women's participation in preserving the safety of their homeland.

In various historical contexts, martyrdom, armed revolt, and military mobilization are presented in historical narratives concerning the Palestinian Intifadas and the consolidation of Palestinian resistance movements. For example, the Grade 12 History textbook glorifies the pioneering role of the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO) in kindling the "armed resistance against the Zionist entity" by "turning refugees into resistance fighters."[160] Additionally, in a lesson from the same textbook entitled "The Palestinian People Announce the Revolution" the Palestinian revolts are presented positively as a natural response to "British and Zionist colonialism," legitimizing violent resistance to counter Britain's suppression of the uprisings "by force." Particularly significant is the glorification of Shaykh ʿIzz al-Din al-Qassam–described as "one of the first martyrs of the revolt"–whose armed uprising against the British and Zionists is celebrated as a foundational moment of resistance. The inclusion of al-Qassam is especially notable given his enduring symbolic role in contemporary militancy, including as the namesake of Hamas's military wing, the ʿIzz al-Din al-Qassam Brigades. The lesson further romanticizes transnational armed struggle by praising how "many sons of the Arab countries participated in it," including the nationalist militants Fawzi al-Qawuqji and Saʿid al-ʿAs, framing participation in violent confrontation and sacrifice for Palestine as a noble pan-Arab duty.

***History*, Grade 12 (Humanities Track), 2025-26, pp. 70, 73 (previously: *History*, Grade 12 (Humanities Track), 2017-18, pp. 73, 76)**

[p. 70, 2025-26 (p. 73, 2017-18)]:

الدَّرسُ الثاني

الشعبُ الفلسطينيّ يعلنُ الثورة

تنبَّهَ الشعبُ العربيُّ الفلسطينيّ إلى مخاطر الحركة الصّهيونيّة منذ بداياتها، فشُكِّلَتِ الجمعيَّاتُ الوطنيَّة الفلسطينيّة، وكتبتِ الصحفُ العربيَّة (المقتطف والكرمل) مقالاتِها لكشف أخطارَ الحركة، فتوالتِ الثوراتُ الفلسطينيّة منذ عام١٩٢٠م حتّى عام ١٩٣٦م وشارك فيها المتطوّعون من الأقطار العربيَّة، وكانت بريطانيا تلجأ إلى قمع هذه الثورات بالقوة تارةً، وبإرسال لجانِ التحقيق وإصدارِ الكتب البيض تارةً أخرى.

Lesson 2: The Palestinian People Announce the Revolution

The Palestinian Arab people became aware of the dangers of the Zionist movement from its beginnings, so Palestinian national societies were formed [...]. The Palestinian revolutions ensued successively from 1920 until 1936, when volunteers from Arab countries participated in them. Britain resorted to suppressing these revolutions by force at times, and by dispatching investigation committees and issuing the White Papers at other times.

160 *History*, Grade 12 (Humanities Track), 2025-26, pp. 83-88 (previously: *History*, Grade 12 (Humanities Track), 2017-18, pp. 86-91).

– عزُّ الدين القسَّامُ من أوائل شهداء الثورة:

الشكل(٧) الشيخ عز الدين القسام

اتَّسع نطاق الثورات خلال الأعوام (١٩٣٣–١٩٣٥م) **بسبب:** استمرار بريطانيا في دعمها لليهود الصهاينة، وازديادِ الهجرةِ اليهوديَّةِ، واستمرارِ انتقال الأراضي من العرب إلى اليهود، واكتشافِ شحنةِ أسلحةٍ مهرَّبةٍ من بلجيكا إلى اليهود في ميناء يافا، وكان الشيخُ عزُّ الدين القسَّامُ خطيبُ الجامع الكبير في حيفا، القادم من مدينة جبلة السوريّة، قد أعلن الثورة ضدَّ الاستعمار البريطانيّ والصهيونيّ، وشاركَ فيها الكثيرُ من أبناء الأقطارِ العربيَّة، أمثال فوزي القاوقجي وسعيد العاص، وشملت كلَّ فلسطين، واستمرَّت ستة أشهرٍ، وتجمَّعت الأحزاب في جبهة واحدة "**الجبهة العربيّة العليا**" عام ١٩٣٥م.

'Izz al-Din al-Qassam, one of the first martyrs of the revolt:
The scope of the revolts during the years 1933-1935 had expanded due to Britain's continued support for the Zionists, the increase of Jewish immigration, the continued transfer of lands from the Arabs to the Jews, [...]. Shaykh 'Izz al-Din al-Qassam, the preacher of the Grand Mosque in Haifa, who had come from the Syrian city of Jableh, declared a revolt against British and Zionist colonialism. Many sons of the Arab countries participated in it, such as Fawzi al-Qawuqji and Sa'id al-'As, and it encompassed all of Palestine. It continued for six months, [making] the [Arab] parties united in one front, the Arab Higher Committee, in 1935.

To further solidify the nexus between martyrdom, Syrian nationalism and resistance to colonialism, the example of a poem lamenting the Syrian nationalist and militant Sa'id al-'As is noteworthy. The lesson from a Grade 11 Arabic Language textbook exalts martyrs and their combat and struggle for the Palestinian Cause, through the figure of Al-'As, who fought against the French Mandate in the Great Syrian Revolt of 1925 and later against the British Mandate in the Great Palestinian Revolt of 1936. He led Palestinian militants in the Battle of Al-Khader, in the suburbs of Bethlehem, on October 6, 1936, and was killed in its course. The introduction praises Saʿid for defending Arab lands while "seeking one of the two best things (victory or martyrdom)." The poem repeatedly glorifies death in battle: "If death bared its teeth, they laughed / in mockery and defied it as they were advancing in battle," while those fighting in Palestine "sold the[ir] souls gladly."

Ironically, despite revolving around armed struggle, sacrifice, and death, the lesson explicitly claims that Saʿid believed "the value of life derives from altruism," thereby recasting martyrdom and death in combat—particularly for the liberation of Palestine—as noble expressions of selflessness and human virtue. These themes are further reinforced pedagogically through exercises emphasizing "the path to reach glory," "the call for sacrifice and steadiness," and the portrayal of Saʿid as both a Syrian and broader Arab national hero. Critically, although the historical context of the poem concerns anti-colonial fighting against British forces in Palestine, the textbook omits any mention of the British altogether, reframing the struggle into a broader and timeless narrative of Arab resistance and martyrdom.[161]

161 *Arabic Language and Its Literature*, Grade 11 (Humanities Track), 2025-26, pp. 132-136; *Arabic Language and Its Literature*, Grade 11 (Scientific Track), 2025-26, pp. 91-95 (previously: *Arabic Language and Its Literature*, Grade 11 (Humanities Track), 2023-24, pp. 170-175; *Arabic Language and Its Literature*, Grade 11 (Scientific Track), 2023-24, pp. 116-121).

The commemoration of militant figures extends beyond figures promoting Syrian or pan-Arab visions. Another figure praised in the curriculum for her acts of violence is the Palestinian terrorist Dalal al-Mughrabi, infamous for perpetrating the 1978 Coastal Road Massacre in Israel, which resulted the death of 38 civilians, including 12 children.[162] In a lesson from the Grade 5 Arabic Language textbook, students are instructed to conduct a discussion based on a poem dedicated to al-Mughrabi by the prominent Syrian poet Sulaiman al-Issa, in which he described her through a variety of literary images taken from the semantic worlds of Palestinian nationalism, resistance and violence, such as: The one who "raised the banner of liberation" in the heart of the occupied land, "the voice of a raging earthquake," a sword, and a flame. This example presents al-Mughrabi's actions as a symbol of exemplary heroism and a legitimate method of resistance against Israel.

***Arabic is My Language*, Grade 5, Vol. 2, 2025-26, p. 59 (previously: *Arabic is My Language*, Grade 5, Vol. 2, 2023-24, p. 59)**

أتواصلُ شفويّاً: معلوماتٌ عن شَخْصِيَّةٍ

كَتَبَ سُلَيمان العيسى يَصِفُ الشَّهيدةَ دلالَ المُغربيّ:

فِي قَلْبِ الأَرْضِ المُحْتَلَّة
رَفَعَتْ عَلَمَ التَّحْرِيرِ
كانَتْ سَيْفاً كانَتْ شُعْلَة

*****

دَلالُ فَتاةٌ مِنْ وَطَني
مِنْ حَيفا شَرَّدَها غَاصِبْ
قالَتْ لِلْغَزْوِ سَتَسْمَعُني
أنا صَوتُ الزِّلزالِ الغَاضِبْ

*****

وكَضَوءِ الفَجْرِ مَشَى الرَّكْبُ
ودَلالُ تَقودُ الأَبْطالا

أَتَحَدَّثُ أَمامَ زُمَلائي عَنْ شَخْصِيَّةِ دَلالٍ المُغربيّ، مُستفيداً مِمّا أوردَهُ الشّاعرُ في النَّصِّ.

I will communicate orally: information on a figure
Suliman al-Issa described the martyr Dalal al-Mughrabi:
In the heart of the occupied land
She raised the banner of liberation
She was a sword; she was a flame.
* * *
Dalal is a girl from my homeland,
From Haifa, displaced by a usurper.
She said to the invasion: You shall hear me—
I am the voice of a furious earthquake.
* * *
Like the light of dawn, the caravan advanced,
And Dalal was leading the heroes.
I will speak to my colleagues about the personality of Dalal al-Mughrabi, profiting from what the poet mentioned in the text.

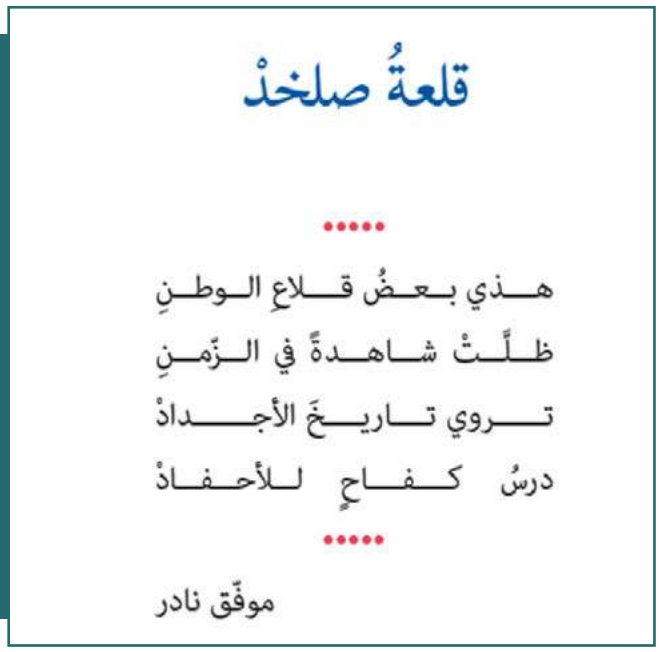
Beyond historic events and figures, famous locations are also identified as symbols of violent struggle. In the Grade 4 Arabic Language textbook, students learn the virtue of struggle based on the poem "Salkhad Citadel," serving "as a lesson of struggle for posterity." Salkhad Citadel is significant in Muslim, as it is history known for its strategic military role in protecting southern Syria and monitoring trade and pilgrimage routes. It became a symbol of Islamic steadfastness and resistance, marking victories over foreign invaders. In the lesson, it functions not simply as a historical landmark but as a symbol of steadfastness and armed resistance, reinforcing the broader theme of valorized struggle. Saladin reportedly overtook the citadel following his victory in the Battle of Hattin in 1187, and the Mamluk sultan Baybars made it his stronghold after fending off the Mongol invasion in 1260.[163]

(See the continuation of the example on the following page)

162 Nan Jacques Zilberdik, "How the Palestinian Authority Teaches Young Girls to Celebrate a Terrorist," the algemeiner, May 2, 2025, https://www.algemeiner.com/2025/05/02/how-the-palestinian-authority-teaches-young-girls-to-celebrate-a-terrorist/.

163 Gharz-Aldin Mohanad, "Salkhad Castle in the Medieval Period," Swaida Intellectual Digital Magazine (January 31, 2026), https://swaidamag.com/en/salkhad-en/?utm.

***Arabic is My Language*, Grade 4, Vol. 2, 2025-26, pp. 77-78 (previously: *Arabic is My Language*, Grade 4, Vol. 2, 2023-24, pp. 77-78).**


قلعةُ صلخدْ

هــذي بــعــضُ قــلاعِ الــوطــنِ
ظــلَّــتْ شــاهــدةً في الــزّمــنِ
تــروي تــاريــخَ الأجــدادْ
درسُ كــفــاحٍ لــلأحــفــادْ

موفّق نادر

Salkhad Citadel
[…]
This is one of the homeland's citadel
Bearing witness through time
Telling the history of the forefathers
As a lesson of struggle for posterity

5. From the following values, I will choose the values that appeared in the text and place them inside the basket.
[Circled:] kifāḥ (fight, struggle)

Romanticizing and Aestheticizing Violence, Death, and Self-Sacrifice

The Syrian curriculum frequently romanticizes violence, death, martyrdom, and self-sacrifice, particularly within Arabic Language and literary instruction, where emotionally charged poetry and imagery are used to aestheticize suffering and armed struggle. Violent death is often portrayed as honorable, beautiful, and morally elevating, while sacrifice for the homeland, religion, or national causes is framed as a supreme virtue. A Grade 8 Arabic Language textbook incites students to take up the fight against Israel for the Golan Heights, encouraging them to view sacrificing their own lives to reclaim this land as a noble and heroic act. This is taught through a poetic verse about the Golan Heights, stating "in every span of this soil [i.e. the Golan Heights], there is a fragrance from martyrdom or a remnant of a body." Significantly, this verse appears within a sub-chapter dedicated to the concepts of *shuhada* (martyrs) and sacrifice for the nation.

***Arabic Language*, Grade 8, 2025-26, p. 38 (previously: *Arabic Language*, Grade 8, 2023-24, p. 59)**

* قال الشّاعر زكي قنصل في الجولان:

في كـلِّ شِـبْرِيـنِ مـنْ هـذا الـثَّرى عَبَقٌ مِـنَ الـشَّـهـادةِ أو شـلـوانِ مـنْ جَـسَـدِ

The poet Zaki Qunsul said about the Golan:
In every span of this soil, there is a fragrance, / from martyrdom or two parts of a body.

In the same textbook, a short text glorifies the homeland, fostering a sense of pride and belonging, aestheticizing self-sacrifice and bloodshed with the phrase "we leave our blood as perfume on your pure soil."[164] Later in the unit, students encounter further praise for those who died for the homeland. One passage presents martyrdom as the heroic fulfillment of the "pledge of the homeland."[165] As the text states, the martyrs "gave their souls, watered its soil with pure blood, and taught generations lessons of sacrifice and giving."

***Arabic Language*, Grade 8, 2025-26, p. 16 (previously: *Arabic Language*, Grade 8, 2023-24, p. 29)**

الوفاءُ بعَهدِ الوَطَنِ

سألَ الأبطالُ اللهَ الشهادةَ وفاءً بعهدِ الوطن، فوهَبَهم الوطنُ وِسامَ العزِّ والفَخَار، ومنحَهم الرّفعةَ والسُّؤْدَدَ، وكساهمُ عَلَمَهُ، وكلّلَهم بالغارِ والياسَمين؛ لأنّهم آثروهُ على كلِّ شيءٍ، فأعطَوْهُ أرواحَهم، وسقَوا ترابَهُ دماً زكيّاً، وعلّموا الأجيالَ دروسَ التضحيةِ والعطاء، فلتنْحنِ الهامُ لهم إجلالاً وتكريماً.

Fulfilling the Pledge to the Homeland
The heroes asked Allah for martyrdom and were loyal to the homeland's pledge. The homeland granted them the medal of pride and glory, bestowed upon them sublimity and honor […]. They gave their souls, watered its soil with pure blood, and taught generations lessons of sacrifice and giving. So the souls will incline to them in glorification and honor.

Through literary analysis, grammar exercises, and reading comprehension activities, students are repeatedly exposed to themes of bloodshed, martyrdom, steadfastness, and heroic struggle in ways that normalize and glorify violence rather than presenting it as tragic or destructive. For instance, the Grade 9 textbook uses the phrase "the martyrs are stars" to teach similes.[166] Additionally, the Grade 10 Arabic Language textbook asks students to identify the predicative forms in a verse by the Palestinian poet Ibrahim Tuqan: the text presents a quote from him claiming "O homeland whose heart was stabbed by the enemies, I was in a safe haven away from their knife."[167]

164 *Arabic Language*, Grade 8, 2025-26, p. 7 (previously: *Arabic Language*, Grade 8, 2023-24, p. 18).

165 *Arabic Language*, Grade 8, 2025-26, pp. 14, 16, 18, 36-37 (previously: *Arabic Language*, Grade 8, 2023-24, pp. 27, 29, 35, 56-57).

166 The full sentence is "The singer is like a nightingale in the beauty of his voice - The martyrs are stars". *Arabic Language*, Grade 9, 2025-26, p. 31 (previously: *Arabic Language*, Grade 9, 2023-24, p. 48). See also *Arabic Language*, Grade 8, 2025-26, p. 113 (previously: *Arabic Language*, Grade 8, 2023-24, p. 155).

167 *Arabic Language and Its Literature*, Grade 10, 2025-26, p. 69 (previously: *Arabic Language and Its Literature*, Grade 10, 2023-24, p. 88).

***Arabic Language and its Literature*, Grade 10, 2025-26, p. 69 (previously: *Arabic Language and its Literature*, Grade 10, 2023-24, p. 88).**

٣. استخرج الأساليب الخبريّة من كلٍّ ممّا يأتي، وبيّن الأغراض التي أفادتها:

– قال أحمد شوقي:

ونحنُ في الشرقِ والفصحى بنو رحِمٍ ونحنُ في الجُرحِ والآلامِ إخوانُ

– وقال إبراهيم طوقان:

يا مَوطِناً طَعَنَ العُداةُ فُؤادَهُ قَد كُنتُ مِن سكّينهم في مَأمَنِ

3. Extract the predicative styles in all the following and explain the purpose they serve:
[…]
[Second instance:]
- Ibrahim Tuqan said:
O homeland whose heart was stabbed by the enemies, I was in a safe haven away from their knife.

Another grammar exercise showcasing relative clauses instructs students to fill the blank in the sentence "we honor the martyrs who … for the sake of their homeland."[168] Elsewhere, the use of allusions (*ʾīḥāʾ*) in literary imagery is taught through a poem that praises martyrs by the Palestinian poet Samih al-Qasim.[169] By embedding such themes within routine educational and linguistic exercises, the curriculum promotes values of armed resistance and self-sacrifice while gradually desensitizing students to the human costs and dangers of violence.

The Syrian curriculum makes extensive use of poetry and prose by prominent Arab and Muslim writers from across the region to promote themes of martyrdom, sacrifice, resistance, and collective struggle. Through literary works originating from countries such as Iraq, Palestine, Lebanon, Algeria, and Syria, the curriculum embeds these values within the study of Arabic Language and its Literature, presenting martyrdom as a source of moral glory, national dignity, and enduring revolutionary inspiration. A lesson in a Grade 11 Arabic Language textbook centers on the poem "The Ember of Martyrs" by the renowned Iraqi poet Muhammad Mahdi al-Jawahiri, written in memory of the assassinated Syrian military officer Adnan al-Maliki in 1955.[170] The lesson portrays martyrdom as a sacred and enduring source of resistance, dignity, and national renewal, reinforced not only through the poem itself but also through the accompanying exercises. The lesson further romanticizes sacrifice through the cited verse of Sulayman al-ʿIsa: "Your blood is the path," presenting blood sacrifice and martyrdom as timeless and morally elevated ideals. Students are instructed to identify how "martyrdom is the path to the dignity of the individual and the homeland," compile "a lexicon for the word 'martyrdom,'" explain the influence of "the martyrs' message," and compose the poem "the Embers of Martyrs" and sing it in a school play.[171]

Notably, Arabic Language textbooks contain several cases where violent imagery and concepts are promoted using a Palestinian perspective. For instance, in a preparatory activity preceding a lesson on the poem "Stone of al-Quds" by the Syrian poet Saeed Qandaqji, students are asked to research the "Intifada of Stones," referring to the First Intifada, which began in December 1987.[172] Another prominent example is an entire unit on "Belonging, Identity and Resistance (*muqāwama*)," taught in Grade 10. The first lesson in the unit gives a general overview of these binding values and

168 *Arabic is My Language*, Grade 6, Vol. 2, 2025-26, p. 30 (previously: *Arabic is My Language*, Grade 6, Vol. 2, 2023-24, p. 30).

169 *Arabic Language and Its Literature,* Grade 10, 2025-26, p. 15 (previously: *Arabic Language and Its Literature,* Grade 10, 2023-24, p. 23).

170 Notably, al-Maliki was known for advocating and promoting ideas similar to those of the Ba'ath Party.

171 *Arabic Language and Its Literature*, Grade 11 (Humanities Track), 2025-26, pp. 126-129, 210; *Arabic Language and Its Literature*, Grade 11 (Scientific Track), 2025-26, pp. 85-88 (previously: *Arabic Language and Its Literature*, Grade 11 (Humanities Track), 2023-24, pp. 162-165, 267; *Arabic Language and Its Literature*, Grade 11 (Scientific Track), 2023-24, pp. 108-112).

172 *Arabic Language and Its Literature,* Grade 10, 2025-26, pp. 142-144 (previously: *Arabic Language and Its Literature,* Grade 10, 2023-24, pp. 177-179).

their appearance in prose and poetry. When resistance is concerned, it is presented as a central expression of Arab belonging and identity, portraying the defense of the land not merely as a political act, but as a moral and existential obligation. From the outset, the text states that "resistance in effect gives expression to [sentiments of] identity and belonging," while asserting that the Arab has always regarded himself as obligated to defend the land whenever "an enemy lies in wait for it." Resistance is therefore framed as an inherent component of Arab identity itself. The lesson strongly emphasizes the Palestinian struggle against Israeli occupation as the foremost contemporary embodiment of this value, declaring that "joy remained incomplete as long as there remained even one piece of Arab land defiled by the filth of Zionist occupation." Palestine is presented as a pan-Arab cause, and "the Palestinian was not alone in being concerned with the struggle for its liberation," as Arab youth from across the region supposedly rushed to fight and die for Palestine, including the famous nationalist militants Saʿid al-ʿAs, ʿAbd al-Qadir al-Husayni, and ʿIzz al-Din al-Qassam.[173] Notably, whereas the previous edition of the textbook also included resistance against Ottoman occupation, the revised version removes such references entirely (in line with the directives matrix and their more favorable treatment of the Ottoman legacy), reframing focusing the anti-occupation narrative solely on Israel.

The lesson further romanticizes violence, martyrdom, and armed struggle through emotionally charged poetry integrated into the educational material. Abu al-Fadl al-Walid glorifies death in battle through the line "her honorable youth became martyrs, and death is sweet to the striving lover," directly aestheticizing martyrdom as desirable and noble. Likewise, the cited poem of the "martyred poet" ʿAbd al-Rahim Mahmoud intensifies this theme of self-sacrifice and violent struggle: "I shall carry my soul upon my palm / And cast it into the abysses of destruction / Either a life that delights the friend / Or a death that enrages the enemy." Such verses present death in confrontation not as tragedy, but as fulfillment, honor, and moral victory. Importantly, these themes are not confined to literary appreciation but are reinforced pedagogically in the comprehension section, where students are instructed to explain how "resistance is the mirror of belonging and identity for every citizen" and discuss "the deeply rooted nature of the idea of resistance in the consciousness of the Arab person." In this way, the curriculum embeds resistance and sacrifice as normative civic and cultural values, portraying armed struggle as a natural and enduring expression of Arab identity and historical consciousness.

***Arabic Language and its Literature*, Grade 10, 2025-26, pp. 123-126 (previously: *Arabic Language and its Literature*, Grade 10, 2023-24, pp. 152-157).**

الوحدة الخامسة

الانتماء والهُويّة والمقاومة* قراءة تمهيديّة الدّرس الأول

[...]

تعبّر المقاومة فعليّاً عن كلٍّ من الانتماء والهويّة، ولطالما انتسب العربيّ انتماء وهويّة إلى هذه البقعة من الأرض وعدّ من واجبه الدفاعَ عن أيّ قطعةٍ فيها إذا ما تعرّضت إلى خطر يَدْهمُها أو عدوٍّ يتربّص بها.

ولعل في التاريخ العربيّ أمثلةً مشرقةً عن اتحاد العرب ضدّ الأجنبيّ نُقلَت إلينا عبر ما صوّره الشعراء من هذه الوقائع من جهة وما دعوا إليه إخوتهم العرب من جهة أخرى حتى كادوا يتبرّؤون ممّن كان لا يستجيب لدعوتهم، ومن هؤلاء ابن حمديس الذي ينكر على العربيّ نسبَه ما لم يذد عن أرض تعرضت للاعتداء فيقول:

(See the continuation of the example on the following page)

173 Saʿid al-ʿAs was a Syrian Arab nationalist and military commander who fought against French colonial rule and later died while fighting alongside Palestinian forces in the 1936–39 Arab Revolt in Palestine; ʿAbd al-Qadir al-Husayni was a prominent Palestinian nationalist commander and leader in the 1936 revolt and the 1948 war, killed in battle near Jerusalem; and ʿIzz al-Din al-Qassam was a Syrian-born Islamic preacher and anti-colonial militant whose armed struggle against British rule and Zionist settlement in Palestine made him an enduring symbol of Palestinian resistance.

بني الثَّغرِ لسْتُمْ في الوَغى من بني أمِّي إذا لم أصُل بالعُرْبِ منكُم على العُجْمِ

وإنّ ما واجهته الأمة العربيّة من محن بدءاً من القرن السادس عشر فتح الباب أمام الأدباء ليعبّروا عن هذه القيمة مراراً وتكراراً؛ إذ تقسّم الوطن العربيّ إلى دويلات متفرّقة يتحكّم في مقدّراتها وشعوبها الدول الاستعماريّة التي تقاسمت الوصاية على هذه البلاد، ممّا أشعل جذوة الشعور القوميّ من جديد لدى أبناء العرب، يشاركهم في ذلك جمهرة من الأدباء شاطروا الشعب آلامَه وأحزانه وشاركوه في أمانيه وآماله، وعبّروا عن وحدة أبناء الوطن العربيّ في المواجهة والمقاومة، ومن هؤلاء الشعراء أبو الفضل الوليد الذي يقول:

بـيروتُ أُخـتُـكِ يـا دِمَـشـقُ فإنَّـها عـرَبـيَّـةٌ والـلَّـهُ أكـبرُ شـاهِـدِ
فتيانُها الـشُّرفـاءُ فيها استُشهِدُوا والمـوتُ يـعـذُبُ لـلـمُحِبّ الجاهِدِ
مـن غـزَّةَ الـقُـصْـوى إلى يـافـا إلى حـيـفـا إلى عـكَّـاءَ صـدقُ مَـواعِـدِ
الـشّـامُ أخـتٌ لـلـعـراقِ وفيـهـما نـورُ الـعـروبـةِ لـلـضَّـلـيـلِ الـنـاشِـدِ
أهـلُـوْهـما أبـنـاءُ عـمٍّ كـلُّـهُـم عـرَبٌ بـآدابٍ لـهـم وعـوائـدِ

وكان تمجيد تضحيات الأبطال الذين أَبَوا أن يدنّس أرضهم مستعمرٌ أثيمٌ غرضاً قوميّاً بارزاً لدى شعراء تلك المرحلة فها هو ذا الشاعر السوريّ محمد الفراتيّ يمجّد نضال عبد الكريم الريفي المناضل المغربيّ الذي وقع أسيراً في قبضة الغزاة، فيقول:

إنْ يـأسروك فـإنّـهـم لم يـأسروا إلا الـهِـزَبْـرَ الأغـلـبَ المـرهـوبـا
مـا كـنـتَ أوّلَ ثـائـرٍ مـتـظـلِّـمٍ بـالـعَـسـفِ قِـيـدَ مُـكـبَّـلاً مـحـروبـا
لا تـأسَ فـالـتـاريـخُ يـحـلـفُ جـاهـداً بـالـلّـه إنّـك لم تـكُـنْ مـغـلـوبـا

وكذلك أمير الشعراء أحمد شوقي الذي مجّد تضحية بطل ميسلون يوسف العظمة فقال:

Unit 5: Belonging, Identity and Resistance (muqāwama). Introductory Reading. Lesson One.

[...]

Resistance in effect gives expression to [sentiments of] identity and belonging. The Arab has always belonged, in both identity and attachment, to this piece of land, and regarded as obligating him to defend any part of it if it is exposed to danger threatening its destruction or if an enemy lies in wait for it.

Perhaps Arab history contains shining examples of Arab unity against the foreigner, conveyed to us through what poets depicted of these events on the one hand, and through the calls they addressed to their Arab brothers on the other, to the point that they almost disowned those who did not respond to their call. Among them is [the 12th century Sicilian Arab poet] Ibn Hamdis, who reproaches the Arabs whose zeal did not drive them to defend a land subjected to aggression […]

The ordeals that befell the Arab nation beginning in the sixteenth century opened the way for writers to repeatedly express this value, especially after the Arab homeland was divided into fragmented mini-states whose destinies and peoples came under the control of colonial powers that partitioned these lands and imposed guardianship over them. This reignited nationalist feeling among the Arabs. Writers shared in the people's suffering and sorrows, participated in their hopes and aspirations, and expressed the unity of the people of the Arab homeland in confrontation and resistance. Among these poets is [the Lebanese] Abu al-Fadl al-Walid, who says:

Beirut is your sister, O Damascus, for she is Arab, and God is the greatest witness
Her honorable youth became martyrs, and death is sweet to the striving lover
From distant Gaza to Jaffa to Haifa to Acre, promises are fulfilled

[...]

The glorification of the sacrifices of heroes who refused to allow a colonizer to trample their land was also a prominent nationalist theme among the poets of that period. Among them was the Syrian poet Muhammad al-Furati, who glorified the struggle of the Moroccan fighter Abdelkrim al-Khattabi, who was taken prisoner by the invaders […]

سَأَذكُرُ ما حييتُ جِدارَ قَبرٍ ... بِظاهِرِ جِلَّقٍ رَكِبَ الرِّمالا
مُقيمٌ ما أَقامَت مَيسَلونٌ ... يُذكِّرُ مَصرَعَ الأَسَدِ الشِّبالا

وهكذا اصطبغ الشعر العربيّ في أثناء الاحتلال للبلاد العربيّة بهذه الصبغة إلى أن تحرّرت البلاد العربيّة معظمها من سلطة الاحتلال، بيد أنَّ الفرحةَ لم تكتملْ بالنصر ما دامت هناك بقعةٌ من الأرض العربية مدنَّسة برجس الاحتلال الصهيوني. هذه البقعةُ شكّلت قضيةً محوريةً للمقاومةِ العربيةِ فلم يكن ابنُ فلسطينَ وحدَه المعنيَّ بالنضال من أجل تحريرِها بل هبّ الشباب العربي من كلِّ حدَبٍ وصوبٍ لتحريرها من المحتل وبذلوا في ذلك أرواحهم الزكيّةَ أمثال: سعيد العاص وعبد القادر الحسيني وعزّ الدين القسّام وغيرهم.

وما زالت فكرةُ المقاومةِ رابضةً في وعي الإنسان العربيِّ ما دام هناك احتلالٌ لهذه الأرضِ الطاهرةِ فترى لسانَ حالِ العربيِّ قائلاً قول الشاعر الشهيد عبد الرحيم محمود:

سأحملُ روحي على راحَتي ... وأُلقي بها في مهاوي الرَّدى
فإمَّا حياةٌ تَسرُّ الصديق ... وإمَّا مماتٌ يغيظُ العِدا

[…]

Thus, Arab poetry during the occupation of Arab lands came to be stamped with this spirit, until most Arab countries were liberated from the authority of occupation. Yet joy remained incomplete as long as there remained even one piece of Arab land defiled by the filth of Zionist occupation. This land became a central cause for Arab resistance, and the Palestinian was not alone in being concerned with the struggle for its liberation from occupation. Arab youth from every direction rushed to liberate it, sacrificing for it their noble souls, such as Sa'id al-'As, 'Abd al-Qadir al-Husayni, 'Izz al-Din al-Qassam, and others.

The idea of resistance has remained firmly rooted in the consciousness of the Arab person as long as there is occupation of this pure land. Thus, the Arab's state of mind seems to speak the words of the martyred poet 'Abd al-Rahim Mahmoud, who said:

I shall carry my soul upon my palm
And cast it into the abysses of destruction
Either a life that delights the friend
Or a death that enrages the enemy.

الاستيعاب والفهم والتحليل

١. تطوّر مفهوم الانتماء عند الأدباء العرب عبر العصور. ما الأسباب التي دعت إلى تطوّره؟
٢. اذكر العوامل الأساسية التي برزت في مفهوم الانتماء.
٣. ما العلاقة التي تربط مفهوم الهويّة بمفهوم الانتماء؟ وما الأدوات التي اعتمدت عليها؟
٤. تحدّث عن المقوّمات الأساسية التي تحتلّها الهويّة.
٥. ما الأسباب التي دعت الأدباء والمفكرين إلى إحياء النظرة القومية؟

(See the continuation of the example on the following page)

٦. (المقاومة مرآة الانتماء والهويّة لكلّ مواطن).
اشرح هذه العبارة مبيّناً دور كلّ مواطن تجاه أمته ووطنه.
٧. علّل كلّاً مما يأتي:
أ . أهمّيّة القيم في ميادين الحياة كلّها.
ب . تمسّك الشعراء بالرابط القوميّ في شعرهم.
ج . إحياء النظرة القوميّة في أدب الأدباء والمفكّرين.
د . فكرة المقاومة رابضة في وعي الإنسان العربيّ.
٨. اكتب مقالة تتحدّث فيها عن دور الأسرة في ترسيخ قيم المواطنة متبعاً خطوات كتابة المقالة.

Comprehension, Understanding, and Analysis:
[...]
6. "Resistance is the mirror of belonging and identity for every citizen."
Explain this statement, clarifying the role of every citizen toward his nation and homeland.
7. Explain the following:
[…]
d. The idea of resistance is deeply rooted in the consciousness of the Arab person.

The romanticization of violence and graphic imagery is evident in more lessons on Palestinian poetry and prose.[174] In the Grade 10 Arabic Language and its Literature textbook, students learn the story "The Sad Soil" by Syrian writer Badi' Haqqi, which describes in one scene how the protagonist is shot and killed by Jews in an orchard, having his blood mixed with juice from "a dead orange."[175] The Grade 11 Arabic Language textbook teaches the poem "With the Martyrs" by Palestinian poet Samih al-Qassim, in which he glorified the value of becoming martyrs for the resistance. He lamented the martyrs dying on the course of Land Day in 1976, saying "we do not ask for a map, your blood alone is the map," and "your blood is our blood, it flows, but it has not calmed down."[176]

One particularly notable example is found in the Grade 12 Arabic Language textbook, in a lesson on "The Bridge" by the Palestinian poet Mahmoud Darwish, a poem dedicated to the Palestinian Right of Return after the *Nakba*, through imagery saturated with death, destruction, and suffering. In preparation for the lesson, students are tasked with researching national poems written by Syrian and Arab poets, dedicated to the Palestinian Cause or praising the heroism of the martyrs, commemorating them.[177] Beyond its strong anti-Israel framing, the lesson's accompanying grammar exercises reinforce and normalize this violence by repeatedly drawing students' attention to highly graphic imagery.

174 *Arabic Language and Its Literature,* Grade 11 (Humanities Track), 2025-26, pp. 95-103; *Arabic Language and Its Literature,* Grade 11 (Scientific Track), 2025-26, pp. 114-123 (previously: *Arabic Language and Its Literature,* Grade 11 (Humanities Track), 2023-24, pp. 124-133; *Arabic Language and Its Literature,* Grade 11 (Scientific Track), 2023-24, pp. 144-153). See also *Arabic Language and Its Literature,* Grade 11 (Humanities Track), 2025-26, pp. 184-187 (previously: *Arabic Language and Its Literature,* Grade 11 (Humanities Track), 2023-24, pp. 236-239). See also *Arabic Language and Its Literature,* Grade 10, 2025-26, pp. 138 (previously: *Arabic Language and Its Literature,* Grade 10, 2023-24, pp. 172).

175 *Arabic Language and Its Literature*, Grade 10, 2025-26, pp. 149-151 (previously: *Arabic Language and Its Literature*, Grade 10, 2023-24, pp. 186-188).

176 *Arabic Language and Its Literature*, Grade 11 (Humanities Track), 2025-26, pp. 137-140; *Arabic Language and Its Literature*, Grade 11 (Scientific Track), 2025-26, pp. 96-99 (previously: *Arabic Language and Its Literature*, Grade 11 (Humanities Track), 2023-24, pp. 176-179; *Arabic Language and Its Literature*, Grade 11 (Scientific Track), 2023-24, pp. 122-125).

177 *Arabic Language and Its Literature*, Grade 12 (Humanities Track), 2025-26, p. 12; *Arabic Language and Its Literature*, Grade 12 (Scientific Track), 2025-26, p. 11. In the previous editions, the instruction applied to poems dedicated to post-Nakba events (previously: *Arabic Language and Its Literature*, 2023-24, p. 30; *Arabic Language and Its Literature*, Grade 12 (Scientific Track), 2023-24, p. 30).

Students are asked to analyze lines describing a river spitting "pieces of shredded meat" at its banks, a path marked by "blood, trap, and desolation," and "the migration of blood in the river's waters" carving statues from valley stones. The incorporation of such imagery into routine linguistic exercises transforms scenes of bloodshed and death into ordinary pedagogical material, effectively aestheticizing violence and embedding themes of sacrifice, catastrophe, and collective trauma within the study of Arabic grammar itself.

***Arabic Language and Its Literature,* Grade 12 (Humanities Track), 2025-26, p. 17; *Arabic Language and Its Literature,* Grade 12 (Scientific Track), 2025-26, p. 17 (previously: *Arabic Language and Its Literature,* 2023-24, p. 37; *Arabic Language and Its Literature,* Grade 12 (Scientific Track), 2023-24, p. 37).**

التطبيقات اللّغوية

١. ادرس مبحث علامات الإعراب الأصليّة والفرعيّة[١] في الأسماء والأفعال مستفيداً ممّا في الأسطر الآتية:

وكان النهرُ يبصق ضفّتيه
قطعاً من اللحم المفتّت
كانوا ثلاثة عائدينْ
شيخٌ، وإبنتُهُ، وجنديٌّ قديمْ
يقفونَ عندَ الجسرِ

٢. اقرأ الأسطر الآتية، ثمّ نفّذ النشاط الذي يليها:

لم يعرفوا أنَّ الطريقَ إلى الطريق
دمٌ، ومصيدةٌ، وبيدُ
كلُّ القوافلِ قبلَهم غاصَت
وكان النهر يبصق ضفّتيه
حرسُ الحدود مُرابِطٌ
وهجرةُ الدمِ في مياه النهر تَنْحِتُ
من حصى الوادي تماثيلاً لها لونُ النجوم

– استخرج الجمل الاسميّة الواردة في الأسطر السابقة، واذكر نوع ركني كلّ منها.

٣. اشرح قاعدة الإبدال[٢] في الكلمات التي تحتها خطّ فيما يأتي:

كانُوا ثلاثةَ عائِدين
وبعد دقائِق يَصلُون: هل في البيتِ ماء؟

٤. اشرح قاعدة كتابة التّاء المربوطة والمبسوطة في الكلمات الآتية:
غاصت ـ قبّعة ـ الصّمْت.

(See the continuation of the example on the following page)

Grammatical Applications
1. Study the markers of original and secondary grammatical inflection for nouns and verbs, using the following lines:
And the river was spitting at its banks
Pieces of shredded meat
There were three people returning
An old man, his daughter, and a veteran soldier
Standing at the bridge
2. Read the following lines, then carry out the activity that follows them:
They did not know that the way to the path is
Blood, trap, and desolation
All the caravans before them had sunk
And the river was spitting at its banks
The border guards stood watch
As the migration of blood in the river's waters carves
From the pebbles of the valley statues the color of stars.
[…]

Martyrdom (*šahādah*) is also taught as a crucial element in national and pan-Arab literature. In a lesson on national and pan-Arab issues from the Grade 11 Arabic Language textbook, martyrdom is presented as one of the highest moral, national, and religious virtues, portraying the martyr as the ultimate embodiment of "sacrifice, selflessness, and giving." The lesson repeatedly romanticizes death in battle and political struggle through emotionally charged poetry and imagery, citing various poems which praise the sacrifices and martyrdoms of nationalist and pan-Arab militant "heroes." From the outset, martyrdom is elevated above all other values: "Martyrdom is an exemplary value surpassing all values," while the martyr is described as one who "offers his blood cheaply for his homeland." The text frames martyrdom not only as spiritually rewarded in the Hereafter, through the citation of verses 169-170 from Surah Al Imran ("Do not think of those who were killed in the path of God as dead. Rather, they are alive with their Lord, receiving provision…"), but also as a source of honor, sanctity, and glorification in worldly life.

From a national perspective, the concept of martyrdom is illustrated through the martyrs of 6 May 1916, with the describing how "martyrdom became a national holiday and the slogan raised before people's eyes." Through emotionally charged poetry, the lesson romanticizes execution and violent death, as the poet al-Qarawi is quoted–"the gallows and the nooses were sanctified" through the blood of the martyrs. The narrative culminates in a discussion of the modern conflict with Israel, which is described as "the fiercest aggression," where "martyrdom became a culture and death became a song echoed by its voice," explicitly transforming sacrifice and death into celebrated national ideals. Notably, the new edition of the textbook retained most of the previous content but removed several lines and a poem which referenced the 1973 "Liberation War," pursuant of the directives matrix (on this topic see chapter 5).

The lesson then broadens this narrative into a pan-Arab perspective, portraying martyrdom and resistance as collective Arab responsibilities transcending national borders. Arab fighters and poets are celebrated for participating in struggles across the region, including Palestine, such as the Algerian ʿAbd al-Qadir al-Jazaʾiri, the Syrian Joul Jamal, and the Palestinian poet ʿAbd al-Rahim Mahmoud, who embodied "the values of martyrdom in word and deed." The Palestinian cause occupies a central position within this framework. The poet Bishara al-Khuri glorifies "*jihad*" itself, proclaiming that "the laurel wore purple upon it," while Palestine "takes pride" in this struggle. Palestinian poetry is further described as "igniting enthusiasm in souls" and "urging resistance to recover the land," with Mahmoud Darwish transforming martyrs into almost sacred symbols of renewal: "all the martyrs spring today into apples, banner and water." Importantly, these ideas are reinforced pedagogically in the comprehension section, where students are instructed to discuss "the importance of martyrdom," the role of poets in accompanying martyrdom ceremonies, and the contribution of Palestinian literature to the struggle.

Arabic Language and Its Literature, **Grade 11 (Humanities Track), 2025-26, pp. 122-125;** ***Arabic Language and Its Literature,*** **Grade 11 (Scientific Track), 2025-26, pp. 82-84 (previously:** ***Arabic Language and Its Literature,*** **Grade 11 (Humanities Track), 2023-24, pp. 158-161;** ***Arabic Language and Its Literature,*** **Grade 11 (Scientific Track), 2023-24, pp. 104-107).**

[p. 122]

الوحدة الخامسة **قضايا وطنيّة وقوميّة**

الدّرس الأول

قضايا وطنيّة وقوميّة (الشهادة والشهداء)

قراءة تمهيديّة

...١...

الشهادةُ قيمةٌ مُثلى تفوقُ القيمَ جميعها، وهي بمعناها العامّ الوفاءُ بالمعروف، والشهيدُ هو مَنْ تمثّل أسمى قيم التضحية والفداء والعطاء، وهو مَنْ بذل دمَهُ رخيصاً افتداء لوطنه، وآثرَ كرامة الوطن وحريته على حياته.

للشهيد مكانةٌ عظيمةٌ في الدنيا والآخرة. أمّا المكانةُ التي يتبوّؤها في الآخرة فقد تمثّلت في قوله تعالى: ﴿ ولا تحسبنّ الذين قتلوا في سبيل الله أمواتاً بل أحياءٌ عند ربهم يرزقون ﴿١٦٩﴾ فَرِحِينَ بِمَا آتَاهُمُ اللهُ مِن فَضْلِهِ وَيَسْتَبْشِرُونَ بِالَّذِينَ لَمْ يَلْحَقُواْ بِهِم مِّنْ خَلْفِهِمْ أَلَّا خَوْفٌ عَلَيْهِمْ وَلا هُمْ يَحْزَنُونَ ﴿١٧٠﴾ ﴾ (آل عمران)، وأمّا جزاؤه في الدنيا فيتمثّل بالقداسة التي نالها الشهيد، فاكتسب المنزلة الرفيعة والمكانة السامية ببذله الروح رخيصة، وقد رسم الشاعر رشيد سليم الخوري تلك المكانةَ الساميةَ؛ إذ يقول:

الشهادة من منظور وطنيّ:

كان يومُ السادس من أيّار من عام (١٩١٦م) بدايةَ نهج أخذ طريقَه الواسعَ إلى أعماق كلّ سوريّ عَبْرَ كوكبةٍ من الثوّار الذين رفضوا الذلّ وأبَوا إلّا أن يكونوا حمَلةَ بيرق الشهادة في سبيل عزّة الوطن وكرامته، فأمسى ذاك التاريخُ عيداً وطنيّاً وأضحتِ الشهادةُ شعاراً ينتصب أمام العيون سواء أكان في مقاومة المستعمرين أو في خوض حروب الدفاع عن الأرض والكرامة. وقد حَرِصَ الأدباءُ على التعبير عن موقفهم من شهداء ذلك اليوم الأغرّ، فوصفوا عطاءهم المنقطعَ النظير، وفي ذلك يقول القرويّ:

قَدْ علّقتكُمْ يدُ الجاني ملطّخةً ... فقدّستْ بكمُ الأعوادَ والمسدا

بلْ علّقوكم بصدرِ الأُفقِ أوسمةً ... منها الثريّا تلظّى صدرُها حسدا

ولم يكن شهداءُ السادس من أيّار إلّا بدايةً لقوافل الحريّة التي سارتْ بعدها قوافلُ كثيرة تكمل مسيرة العزّة وتنال اللقب المقدّس.

Unit Five: National and Pan-Arab Issues

Lesson One: National and Pan-Arab Issues (Martyrdom and the Martyrs)

Introductory Reading

Martyrdom is an exemplary value surpassing all values. In its general meaning, it is loyalty fulfilled in full, and the martyr is one who embodies the highest values of sacrifice, selflessness, and giving – one who offers his blood cheaply for his homeland, preferring the dignity and freedom of the homeland over his own life.

The martyr holds a great status in this world and the Hereafter. As for the position he will attain in the next life, it is represented in the Almighty's saying:

(See the continuation of the example on the following page)

"Do not think of those who were killed in the path of God as dead. Rather, they are alive with their Lord, receiving provision, rejoicing in what God has bestowed upon them of His bounty, and receiving glad tidings concerning those who have not yet joined them from behind them—that there will be no fear upon them, nor will they grieve." (Al Imran: 169-170)

As for his reward in this world, it is represented in the sanctity attained by the martyr, who gains lofty rank and elevated status through the offering of his precious soul.

[...]

Martyrdom from a National Perspective:

The sixth day of May in the year 1916 marked the start of a wide path penetrating deep into the soul of every Syrian free person who rejected humiliation and refused anything less than bearing the banner of martyrdom for the sake of the homeland's glory, its dignity, and its honor. Since that history, martyrdom became a national holiday and the slogan raised before people's eyes, whether in resisting colonialists or in fighting wars in defense of land and dignity. Writers were keen to express their stance toward the martyrs of that glorious day, describing their their unparalleled giving. In the words of al-Qarawi:

The hand of the criminal hung you stained [with blood],

So through you the gallows and the nooses were sanctified.

Rather, they hung you upon the breast of the horizon as medals,

Before which even the Pleiades burned in their breast with envy.

The martyrs of the sixth of May were only the beginning of caravans of freedom that continued afterward, carrying forward the march of glory and attaining the sacred title.

[p. 123]

فما إن بدأت الحملةُ الفرنسيّةُ على سوريّة حتّى سطّر أبناؤها – بقيادة بطلِها يوسف العظمة – صفحاتٍ من نور إلى أن تحقّق الاستقلال، فهبّ الشعراء يعبّرون عن فرحتهم بهذا العرس، وفي ذلك يقول بدر الدين الحامد:

لو تنطقُ الأرضُ قالَتْ: إنَّني جدَثٌ ... فيَّ الميامينُ آسادُ الحمى ناموا

يومُ الجلاءِ هو الدّنيا وزهوتُها ... لنا ابتهاجٌ وللباغينَ إرغامُ

يا راقداً في روابي ميسلونَ أفِقْ ... جلَتْ فرنسا وما في الدَّارِ هضّامُ

أمّا الاعتداء الأشدّ وطأة في العصر الحديث فقد تمثّل بالعدوان الصهيونيّ على الأرض السوريّة، فما فتئ أبناؤها يضربون أروع أمثلة الفداء والتضحية؛ لتصبح الشهادة ثقافة، ويصبح الموتُ أغنيّةً يردّد صداها، ولم يقتصر أدبُ الشهادة على الشعر فحسبُ؛ بل كان للنثر دورٌ رئيسٌ في إبراز قيمِ الشهادة، فقد راح الأدباءُ يبثّون هذه القيمَ من خلال القصص والمقالات المتعلّقة بموضوع الشهادة، ومن هؤلاء الأدباء فارس زرزور وبديع حقي ووليد إخلاصي وغيرُهم. وما تزالُ سوريّة إلى يومنا الحاضر تقدّم العديد من أبنائها فداء لأرضها وكرامتها.

[...]

As for the fiercest aggression that befell our homeland in the modern age, it was represented by the Zionist aggression against Syrian land. Its sons then struck the finest examples of self-sacrifice, until martyrdom became a culture and death became a song echoed by its voice. Nor was the literature of martyrdom limited to poetry alone. Rather, prose had a principal role in highlighting the values of martyrdom. Writers spread these values through stories and essays connected to martyrdom, among them Fares Zarzur, Badiʿ Haqqi, Walid Ikhlasi, and others. Syria continues to this day to offer many of its sons in sacrifice for its land and dignity.

الشهادة من منظور قوميّ:

انطلق الأدباء السوريون كغيرهم من الأدباء العرب، يدافعون عن قضاياهم الكبرى ويمجّدون شهداءها، في أيّ بقعة من بقاع الوطن العربيّ، فلم تكن أيّة قضية عربية إلاّ قضيّة العرب كلّهم، فكم من مناضل سجّل التاريخُ صفحاتٍ من نضاله في أكثر من قطر عربيّ، فها هو ذا بطلُ الجزائر الشيخ عبد القادر الجزائري يناضل في فلسطين وسوريّة ويلبّي نداء ربّه على الأرض السوريّة، والبطلُ السوريّ جول جمّال الذي نال شرف الشهادة في مصر، والشاعرُ الفلسطيني عبد الرحيم محمود يسطّر صفحات من النضال على الأرض العراقيّة، ويعود ليستشهد على أرض وطنه فلسطين، فيمثّل قيم الشهادة قولاً وفعلاً، وهو القائل:

سأحملُ روحي على راحَتي ... وأُلقي بها في مَهاوي الرَّدى

فإمّا حياةٌ تسرُّ الصديقَ ... وإمّا مماتٌ يَغيظُ العدا

Martyrdom from a Pan-Arab Perspective:

Syrian writers joined many Arab writers in defending major Arab causes and glorifying their martyrs in every part of the Arab homeland. No Arab issue remained merely the concern of one Arab country alone. How many fighters does history record whose struggle extended across more than one Arab state? Among them was the Algerian hero Shaykh ʿAbd al-Qadir al-Jazaʾiri, who fought in Palestine, Syria, fulfilling the Lord's will upon Syrian soil; and the Syrian hero Joul Jamal, who attained the honor of martyrdom in Egypt; and the Palestinian poet ʿAbd al-Rahim Mahmoud, who inscribed pages of struggle upon Iraqi soil before returning to be martyred on the soil of his homeland Palestine, embodying the values of martyrdom in word and deed [...]

[p. 124]

أمّا الشاعر اللبنانيّ بشارة الخوري فقد برز شعورُه القوميُّ جليّاً فكان من أهمّ مَنْ كتب في القضية الفلسطينية وها هو ذا يمجّد ثورة الفلسطينيّين ويعاهد أرضها الطاهرة على الكفاح حتّى إدراك النصر، إذ يقول:

يا جهاداً صفَّقَ المجدُ لَهُ ... لبسَ الغارُ عليهِ الأُرجوانَا

شرفٌ باهَتْ فلسطينُ بهِ ... وبناءٌ للمعالي لا يُدانى

نحنُ يا أختُ على العهدِ الذي ... قد رَضِعْناهُ منَ المهدِ كلانا

وقد أدّى الشعراء الفلسطينيّون دوراً مهمّاً في رفد الشعر العربيّ بقصائدَ خلّدت الشهداء، وأذكت نار الحماسة في النفوس، وحرّضت على المقاومة لاسترداد الأرض. وفي مقدّمة أولئك سميح القاسم وكمال ناصر ومحمود درويش الذي قال:

شمسُنا أقوى من اللّيل

وكلُّ الشهداء

ينبتونَ اليوم تفّاحاً، وأعلاماً، وماء

(See the continuation of the example on the following page)

ويجيئون..

يجيئون..

يجيئون..

وآه..

وهكذا نجد أنّ الأدب العربيّ واكب تضحياتِ الأبطال وخلّد بطولاتهم ومجّد دماءهم الزكيّة فأنتج لنا أدباً ثورياً متميّزاً بمضمونه وشكله الفنّي.

As for the Lebanese poet Bishara al-Khuri, he strongly expressed his nationalist sentiment. He was among the most important writers on the Palestinian cause, glorifying the Palestinian revolution and pledging his pure land to struggle until victory was achieved. He says:
O jihad, the glory applauds it, the laurel wore purple upon it.
A glory in which Palestine takes pride, and an edifice of lofty greatness beyond compare.
We are, O sister, faithful to the covenant that both of us suckled from the cradle.
Palestinian poets also played an important role in enriching Arabic poetry with the poems of immortalizing the martyrs and igniting enthusiasm in souls, urging resistance to recover the land. Foremost among them are Samih al-Qasim, Kamal Nasir, and Mahmoud Darwish, who said:
Our sun is stronger than night
and all the martyrs
spring today into apples, banner and water
And they come..
They come..
They come..
And oh..

[pp. 124-125]

الاستيعاب والفهم والتحليل

١. عرّف المعنى العام للشهادة.
٢. ما أهمّية الشهادة وما جزاؤها في الدنيا والآخرة؟
٣. لِمَ اتخذَ السوريون يومَ السادس من أيّار عيداً للشهداء؟
٤. تحدّث عن أهمّية مواكبة الشعراء لأعراس الشهادة في سورية.
٥. ما موقف الشعراء السوريين تجاه القضايا الكبرى؟
٦. هات مثالين لمناضلين عربيين تخطّيا حدود قطريهما للدفاع عن قضايا الوطن.
٧. تحدّث عن دور الأديب الفلسطيني في معالجة قضايا وطنه.

(See the continuation of the example on the following page)

Comprehension, Understanding, and Analysis:

1. *Define the general meaning of martyrdom.*
2. *What is the importance of martyrdom and what is its reward in this world and the Hereafter?*
3. *Why did Syrians adopt the sixth of May as Martyrs' Day?*
4. *Discuss the importance of poets accompanying the ceremonies of martyrdom in Syria.*
5. *What was the position of Syrian poets toward major causes?*
6. *Give two examples of Arab fighters who crossed the borders of their own countries in defense of homeland causes.*
7. *Discuss the role of Palestinian literature in addressing the issues of its homeland.*

Religious Violence: *Jihad* and Martyrdom (*šahādah*)

In religious education, violence, armed struggle, and self-sacrifice are framed through explicitly theological concepts such as jihad, martyrdom, the defense of Muslim lands, and support for fighters, and integrated into lessons. As one textbook frames it, faith can inspire its adherents to remain steadfast and resist (*muqāwama*) evil and barbaric forces.[178] References to *jihad* and martyrdom appear from the earliest grades. In the new edition of the Grade 1 Islamic Education textbook, a reference to martyrs was added to the interpretation of verse 7 of Surah al-Fatiha "the path of those upon whom You have bestowed favor." This introduces the concept of martyrdom at the very beginning of students' religious education.

***Islamic Education*, Grade 1, 2025-26, p. 11 (previously: *Islamic Education*, Grade 1, 2023-24, p. 15).**

2023-24	2025-26
أمرّرُ قلمي على النّقاطِ لأتعرّفَ المعنى ثمّ أقرأ: ٱلَّذِينَ أَنْعَمْتَ عَلَيْهِمْ .....الأنبياءِ والصّالحينَ	أمرّرُ قلمي على النّقاطِ لأتعرّفَ المعنى ثمّ أقرأ: ٱلَّذِينَ أَنْعَمْتَ عَلَيْهِمْ .....الأنبياءِ والصّالحينَ والشهداء والصديقين.
[...] *[The path of] those upon whom You have bestowed favor..... [i.e.,] the prophets and the righteous*	*[...]* *[The path of] those upon whom You have bestowed favor..... [i.e.,] the prophets, the righteous, the martyrs and the sincere believers*

*Green text shows added content.

Likewise, in the Grade 4 Islamic Education textbook, *jihad* and the defense of the homeland are presented not merely as civic or military duties, but as the direct religious means of attaining salvation and drawing closer to God. Under the heading "Guarding for the Sake of God," students are taught that the believer approaches God through "*jihad* and resistance, in guarding the borders of the lands, protecting the homeland, repelling aggression, liberating the land, and defending holy sites," while the concluding section explicitly states that "defending the homeland and holy places is a means of salvation from Hellfire." The lesson is reinforced visually through the image of an armed fighter carrying a rifle while guarding the border under the new Syrian flag, sacralizing military struggle and presenting armed defense of the homeland as a spiritually rewarded religious obligation.

178 *Islamic Education*, Grade 10, 2025-26, p. 77

***Islamic Education*, Grade 4, 2025-26, pp. 92-95.**

[p. 92:]

الوحدةُ الخامسةُ

الدَّرسُ الثّاني

سُبُلُ التَّقرُّبِ إلى اللّهِ تَعالى

يُحبُّ النَّبيُّ ﷺ أُمَّتَهُ ويخشَى عَليها مِنْ دخُولِ النَّارِ فيُرشدُهُا إلى بعضِ سُبُلِ النَّجاةِ منها.

[...]

يُبيِّنُ النَّبيّ ﷺ سبيلَينِ من سُبلِ النَّجاةِ من النَّارِ

الحياءُ والخَشيَةُ من اللّهِ تَعالى

المؤمنُ يُحبُّ اللّهَ تَعالى ويَستَحي من جلالهِ ويُسارعُ إلى طَلَبِ رضاهُ ومغفرتِهِ

الحِراسَةُ في سبيلِ اللّهِ

المؤمنُ يتقرَّبُ إلى اللّهِ تعالى بأَحبِّ الأعمالِ إليهِ وفي مقدِّمتِها الجهادُ والمقاومةُ لحِراسَةِ حدودِ البلادِ وحِمايةِ الوطنِ، وردِّ العُدوانِ وتحريرِ الأرضِ والدِّفاعِ عن المقدَّساتِ.

Lesson Two – Means of Drawing Closer to God Almighty
The Prophet loved his nation and feared for it from entering Hellfire, so he guided it to some means of salvation from it.
The Prophet explained two means of salvation from Hellfire:
[right] Modesty and Reverence toward God Almighty
[...]
[left] Guarding for the Sake of God
The believer draws closer to God Almighty through righteous deeds, foremost among them jihad and resistance, in guarding the borders of the lands, protecting the homeland, repelling aggression, liberating the land, and defending holy sites.

[p. 93:]

أَستنتجُ

- خشيةُ اللّهِ تعالى والتزامُ طاعتِهِ سبيلُ النَّجاةِ من النَّارِ .
- الدّفاعُ عن الوطنِ والمقدَّساتِ سبيلُ النَّجاةِ من النَّارِ .
- المسلمُ يُسارعُ إلى التَّمسّكِ بسُبُلِ النَّجاةِ .

الأنشطة

١- أُعبِّرُ عن مضمونِ الصّورةِ الآتيةِ بحسبِ ما وردَ في الحَديثِ الشَّريفِ .

I Conclude:
[...]
- *Defending the homeland and holy places is a means of salvation from Hellfire.*
- *A Muslim hastens to hold fast to the means of salvation.*

Activities:
Express the content of the picture according to what was mentioned in the noble hadith.
[Depicted image: an armed soldier carrying a rifle and the new Syrian flag while guarding the border.]

The theological and legal framing of *jihad* is most evident in high school Islamic Education textbooks which feature a myriad of traditions and virtues ascribed to it in Islamic literature. For example, Grade 11 students learn that one of the "Seven Destructive Things" (*al-muhlikāt al-sab'*) is fleeing from battle and forgoing the duty of *jihad*. As such, battles must be fought "until achieving victory or martyrdom."[179] These values are also inculcated pedagogically in exercises, for example tasking students to consider what measures they might take to "defend the homeland and liberate occupied territories.[180]"

179 In the previous edition of the textbook, this duty was associated in an activity with "love for the homeland". In the new edition, this was revised, aligning the with "the responsibility to protect Muslims and liberate the usurped territories". *Islamic Education*, Grade 11, 2025-26, pp. 65-66 (previously: *Islamic Education*, Grade 11, 2017-18, pp. 67-68).

180 *Islamic Education*, Grade 10, 2025-26, p. 86.

The Grade 12 Islamic Education textbook provides a clear example of how *jihad* is taught as both a broad moral principle and a concrete military obligation central to Islamic life and communal identity. It opens by defining jihad as "the pinnacle of Islam, the fence protecting its principles, and the means of preserving the security of the homeland and the [Islamic] Nation (*ummah*)," further describing it as "the path to dignity and honor and to defending rights." The lesson does correspond in part to classical Islamic teachings by distinguishing between a "general" *jihad*–including moral striving, knowledge, and defending Islam intellectually–and a "specific" *jihad* involving armed combat under particular conditions.

Although the lesson briefly references non-violent forms such as "struggling against the self" and "upholding truth and removing misconceptions about Islam," its primary emphasis is on militarized *jihad*. It defines *jihad* in the "specific sense" as "fighting the enemy with one's self and wealth," and in the legal framing that treats military mobilization as a religious duty whenever "aggressor states attack Muslim lands, their honor, wealth, or holy places." It also reflects traditional Islamic jurisprudence in distinguishing between two legal categories of armed *jihad*: an "individual obligation" (*farḍ ʿayn*), activated when "aggressor states attack Muslim lands, their honor, wealth, or holy places," and a "collective obligation" (*farḍ kifāya*), requiring the Muslim community to maintain military preparedness through "a trained and prepared army capable of confronting any possible danger." In doing so, the lesson presents armed readiness and collective military struggle as normative and necessary components of Muslim communal life.[181]

***Islamic Education*, Grade 12, 2025-26, p. 142 (previously: *Islamic Education*, Grade 12, 2017-18, p. 146).**

الجهادُ في الإسلامِ

الجهادُ ذُروةُ سنامِ الإسلامِ، وسياجُ مبادئِهِ، وطريقُ الحفاظِ على أمنِ الوطنِ والأمّةِ، وهو سبيلُ العزّةِ والكرامةِ والدفاعِ عنِ الحقوقِ، لهذا كانَ فريضةً محكمةً وماضيةً يُثابُ عليها الإنسانُ.

- فما مفهومُ الجهادِ في الإسلامِ؟
- وما الفرقُ بينَ الجهادِ والإرهابِ؟

تعريف الجهاد:

للجهادِ في الشرعِ معنيانِ؛ معنىً عامٌّ ومعنىً خاصٌّ.

- **الجهادُ بالمعنى العامّ:** بذلُ الجهدِ في سبيلِ الله وإعلاءِ كلمتِه سواءٌ أكانَ ذلكَ الجهدُ علماً أم كتابةً أم قوةً أم مالاً.
- **الجهادُ بالمعنى الخاصّ:** بذلُ الوسعِ والطاقةِ في قتالِ العدوِّ بالنَّفسِ والمالِ.

من صُورِ الجهادِ بالمعنى العامّ:

- مجاهدةُ النَّفسِ وإبعادُها عنِ المحرماتِ.
- بيانُ الحقِّ وإزالةُ الشُّبهاتِ عنِ الإسلامِ.
- .....

- **حكمُ الجهادِ بالمعنى الخاصّ:** للجهادِ في سبيلِ اللهِ تَعالى حُكمانِ هما:

فرض عين

يكونُ الجهادُ فرضَ عينٍ إذا اعتُدِيَ على أرضِ المسلمينَ أو عرضِهم أو مالِهم أو مقدساتِهم، فيجبُ حينئذٍ أنْ يَهُبَّ أهلُ البلدِ جميعُهم، ويأثمُ مَنْ يقعدُ تهاوناً عن الجهادِ.

فرض كفاية

يكونُ الجهادُ فرضَ كفايةٍ إذا لم يتهددْ بلادَ الإسلامِ أيُّ عدوٍّ من أيِّ جهةٍ، ويجبُ عندَها إعدادُ جيشٍ مدرَّبٍ ومُهيَّأٍ لردِّ أيِّ خطرٍ مُحتَمَلٍ.

(See the continuation of the example on the following page)

181 See also *Islamic Education*, Grade 12, 2025-26, p. 147 (previously: *Islamic Education*, Grade 12, 2017-18, p. 152).

Jihad in Islam
Jihad is the pinnacle of Islam, the fence protecting its principles, and the means of preserving the security of the homeland and the [Islamic] Nation (ummah). It is the path to dignity and honor and to defending rights. Therefore, it was established as a firm and binding obligation upon every capable person.
- *What is the concept of jihad in Islam?*
- *What is the difference between jihad and terrorism?*

Definition of Jihad:
Jihad in Islamic law has two meanings: a general meaning and a specific meaning.
Jihad in the General Sense:
Exerting effort in the path of God and upholding His word, whether that effort is through knowledge, writing, strength, or wealth.
Jihad in the Specific Sense:
Exerting one's utmost energy in fighting the enemy with one's self and wealth.
Among the Forms of Jihad in the General Sense:
- *Struggling against the self and disciplining it against desires.*
- *Upholding truth and removing misconceptions about Islam.*
- *……*

The Ruling on Jihad in the Path of God Almighty in the Specific Sense:
Jihad in the path of God Almighty has two rulings:
An Individual Obligation (farḍ ʿayn):
Jihad becomes an individual obligation if aggressor states attack Muslim lands, their honor, wealth, or holy places. In such a case, the people of the country must mobilize collectively, and anyone who refrains from jihad is considered negligent.
A Collective Obligation (farḍ kifāya):
Jihad is a collective obligation if there is a threat to any Muslim land from any side, and it is obligatory at that time to prepare a trained and prepared army capable of confronting any possible danger.

Furthermore, Islamic Education textbooks present a variety of applications for jihad, such as its use as a means of achieving peace, maintaining deterrence, resisting enemies, and protecting freedom of belief in Islam. For instance, one of the goals of *jihad*, according to a new section appearing in the revised Grade 12 Islamic Education textbook, is fighting to remove obstacles that prevent people from following Islam, restrict its preaching, and coerce its adherents to convert to another religion.[182] A second objective of *jihad* is to resist aggressors who attack Muslims, their property, or their lands, undermine their independence, threaten their security, or seek to lead them away from their religion. The textbook explicitly states that oppressed or occupied peoples have the right to strive for their freedom "by all means available." It distinguishes between two forms of aggression. The first is "existing" aggression, illustrated by the Quraysh's attacks on the Prophet Muhammad during the Battles of Badr and the Trench, as well as the "Zionist occupation of Palestine and the Golan [Heights]" in the contemporary period. The second is "expected" aggression, exemplified by the Prophet's campaigns at Tabuk and against Banū al-Muṣṭaliq. The third objective of *jihad* is to respond to breaches of treaties and agreements. The textbook illustrates this through the Prophet Muhammad's conquest of Mecca following the Quraysh's violation of the Treaty of Ḥudaybiyyah.[183]

Jihad and armed resistance also feature in the textbook's presentation of Islamic international relations. When dealing with an "aggressor" non-Muslim state, they are presented as religiously legitimate courses of action. The textbook supports this idea in quoting verse 190 from Surah al-Baqarah–"fight in the way of Allah those who fight you but do not transgress."[184] Conversely, the curriculum also teaches that while Islam promotes peace and coexistence and encourages avoiding war whenever possible, peace must not come at the expense of Muslim dignity, security, or justice. Within this framework, *jihad* is presented as a necessary and legitimate duty aimed at resisting aggression and protecting the Muslim community, its homeland, and its holy places.[185]

182 *Islamic Education*, Grade 12, 2025-26, p. 143.

183 *Islamic Education*, Grade 12, 2025-26, pp. 143-144 (previously: *Islamic Education*, Grade 12, 2017-18, p. 147).

184 *Islamic Education*, Grade 12, 2025-26, p. 138 (previously: *Islamic Education*, Grade 12, 2017-18, p. 142)

185 *Islamic Education,* Grade 12, 2025-26, pp. 138-140 (previously: *Islamic Education,* Grade 12, 2017-18, pp. 142-144).

The curriculum also teaches the etiquette of *jihad*. In a lesson from the Grade 12 textbook, Students learn that Islam prohibits the killing of innocents and non-combatants, torture, and the mutilation of the dead, while requiring humane treatment of the wounded and prisoners and prohibiting unnecessary damage to the environment. Furthermore, the lesson teaches that reconciliation (*ṣulḥ*) between Muslims and their enemies is permissible only in the form of temporary agreements (*hudna*) provided they serve the interests of Muslims and do not contradict the principles of Islam.[186]

Grade 12 students also learn how Islam distinguishes between *jihad* and terrorism. This is evident in a lesson featuring a table juxtaposing the two, portraying them as complete moral opposites, presenting *jihad* as a legitimate and divinely sanctioned form of armed struggle while condemning terrorism as unlawful violence and destruction. *Jihad* is defined as "exerting utmost effort and energy in fighting the enemy with one's self and wealth" and is described as something "God Almighty has obligated upon Muslims," aimed at "protecting Islamic creed," "defending homelands," and "spreading justice among people." Terrorism, by contrast, is defined as "every act of aggression, intimidation, destruction, or harming people's interests without right," with the goal of spreading corruption and destruction. It is described as divinely prohibited, and its results include ruin, destruction, civilizational conflict, oppression, injustice, cruelty, and ignorance.

***Islamic Education*, Grade 12, 2025-26, p. 144 (previously: *Islamic Education*, Grade 12, 2017-18, p. 148).**

الفرق بين الجهاد والإرهاب:

	الجهادُ في سبيلِ اللهِ تَعالى	الإرهابُ
التعريف	بذلُ الوسعِ والطاقةِ في قتالِ العدوِ بالنَّفسِ والمالِ.	كلُّ اعتداءٍ أو تخويفٍ أو تدميرٍ، أو مساسٍ بمصالحِ النّاسِ، بغيرِ حقٍّ.
الدليل المناسب	﴿أُذِنَ لِلَّذِينَ يُقَٰتَلُونَ بِأَنَّهُمۡ ظُلِمُواْۚ وَإِنَّ ٱللَّهَ عَلَىٰ نَصۡرِهِمۡ لَقَدِيرٌ ٣٩﴾[الحج].	﴿مَن قَتَلَ نَفۡسَۢا بِغَيۡرِ نَفۡسٍ أَوۡ فَسَادٖ فِي ٱلۡأَرۡضِ فَكَأَنَّمَا قَتَلَ ٱلنَّاسَ جَمِيعٗا وَمَنۡ أَحۡيَاهَا فَكَأَنَّمَآ أَحۡيَا ٱلنَّاسَ جَمِيعٗا﴾ [المائدة:٣٢]
الحكم	فرضَهُ اللهُ تَعالى على المسلمينَ.	نهى اللهُ تَعالى عنْهُ.
الغاية	⇦ حمايةُ العقيدةِ الإسلاميّةِ والدفاعُ عنها وعن حرمةِ الأوطانِ والأنفس والأعراضِ والأموالِ. ⇦ إعمارُ الأرضِ ونشرُ العدلِ بينَ النّاسِ.	⇦ إفسادٌ في الأرضِ، وتدميرٌ للحياةِ الإنسانيةِ. ⇦ السيطرةُ على خيراتِ الشعوبِ، وزعزعةُ الأمنِ والاستقرارِ.
النتيجة	التعميرُ و الازدهارُ والتفاعلُ الحضاريُّ والعدلُ والرحمةُ والعلمُ والمعرفةُ.	الخرابُ والدّمارُ والصّراعُ الحضاريُّ والظلمُ والقسوةُ والجهلُ.

(See the continuation of the example on the following page)

186 *Islamic Education*, Grade 12, 2025-26, pp. 146-148 (previously: *Islamic Education*, Grade 12, 2017-18, pp. 151-153).

The Difference Between Jihad and Terrorism:

	Jihad in the Path of God Almighty	*Terrorism*
Definition	*Exerting utmost effort and energy in fighting the enemy with one's self and wealth.*	*Every act of aggression, intimidation, destruction, or harming people's interests without right.*
Proof (rele-vant text)	*"Permission [to fight] has been given to those who are being fought because they have been wronged…" [Al-Hajj: 39]*	*"Whoever kills a soul–unless for a soul or for cor-ruption in the land–it is as if he has killed all man-kind; and whoever saves one, it is as if he has saved all mankind." [Al-Ma'idah: 32]*
Ruling	*God Almighty has obligated it upon Mus-lims.*	*God Almighty has forbidden it.*
Purpose	*• Protecting Islamic creed and defend-ing it, the sanctity of homelands, lives, honor, and property.* *• Developing the earth and spreading justice among people.*	*• Corruption and destruction of life on earth.* *• Seizing the resources of peoples and stripping them of security and stability.*
Result	*Construction, prosperity, civilizational interaction, justice, mercy, knowledge, and understanding.*	*Ruin, destruction, civilizational conflict, oppression, injustice, cruelty, and ignorance.*

A comprehensive lesson that aptly combines *jihad* and martyrdom is found in the Grade 12 Islamic Education textbook, where these concepts are taught not only as important Islamic concepts rooted in scripture and prophetic tradition, but also as broad moral and national ideals tied to sacrifice, armed struggle, and contemporary political conflict. Within a traditional religious framework, the text presents *jihad* as among the highest forms of faith, directly linking it to belief itself through the Hadith: "Faith in God and jihad in His path." Martyrdom is repeatedly glorified through highly emotional and absolutist language. Students are taught that "sacrificing oneself is among the highest degrees of sincerity," that martyrdom leads to "eternal life in Paradise," and that "every life ends with martyrdom in the path of God." The lesson further aestheticizes violent death through vivid imagery, explaining that the martyr's wound on Judgment Day will retain "the color of blood-red" while its fragrance will be "like the scent of musk." Particularly striking is the presentation of the Prophet as desiring repeated violent death in battle: "I would wish to fight in the cause of God and be killed, then fight and be killed, then fight and be killed." While some of these themes emerge from classical Islamic literature, the curriculum presents jihad and martyrdom as enduring virtues and normative ideals for Muslim life and society.

The lesson simultaneously distinguishes between different categories of martyrdom: the "martyr of battle" who dies "during a battle against the enemy" receives elevated ritual status–he is "not washed, not shrouded, and the funeral prayer is not performed over him"–while another Hadith expands martyrdom to include victims of plague, drowning, stomach illness, or collapsing buildings. Nevertheless, the curriculum consistently elevates battlefield martyrdom above other forms through its emphasis on armed *jihad*, blood sacrifice, Paradise, and defending holy lands, embedding these ideas within both religious instruction and contemporary political identity.

The lesson politicizes *jihad* by explicitly connecting it to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict and the occupied Golan Heights, moving beyond abstract legal or theological discussion into contemporary nationalistic realities. Under "Forms of *Jihad*," students are taught that modern jihad includes "the *jihad* of our people in the occupied Golan, and the *jihad* of the people of occupied Palestine in order to recover their usurped land and future rights." Palestinian fighters killed in this struggle are explicitly classified as martyrs, and students are ultimately asked to "express your opinion regarding Palestinian fighters who defend the land of Palestine and *Bayt al-Maqdis* (Jerusalem)."

***Islamic Education*, Grade 12, 2025-26, pp. 65-68 (previously: *Islamic Education*, Grade 12, 2017-18, pp. 60-63).**

[p. 65]

الدَّرسُ الرَّابعُ — وحدةُ الحديثِ الشَّريفِ

مكانةُ الشَّهيدِ وعظيمُ أجرِهِ

أقرأُ وأناقشُ:

- لماذا شُرِعَ الجهادُ في الإسلامِ؟
- لماذا استحقَّ الشَّهيدُ أجراً عظيماً عندَ اللهِ تَعالى وخُلُوداً في الجنَّةِ؟
- عدِّدْ بعضَ صورِ الدِّفاعِ عن وطنِكَ الحبيبِ؟

Lesson Four – Unit of the Noble Hadith
The Status of the Martyr and the Greatness of His Reward
Read and Discuss:

- *Why was jihad legislated in Islam?*
- *Why does the martyr deserve a great reward from God Almighty and eternal bliss in Paradise?*
- *Mention some forms of defending your beloved homeland.*

[...]

[p. 66]

من هدي الحديثِ الشَّريفِ

- يبيِّنُ الحديثُ الشَّريفُ فضلَ المجاهدِ في سبيلِ اللهِ تَعالى، وعظيمَ أجرِهِ في الدُّنيا والآخرةِ فيُخبرُ النَّبيُّ ﷺ أنَّ اللهَ تباركَ وتعالى بفضلِهِ وكرمِهِ قد تكفَّلَ لِمَنْ خرجَ مُجاهداً في سبيلِهِ، مؤمناً بوعدِهِ، مُصدِّقاً بما جاءَ بهِ الرُّسلُ عليهم السَّلامُ أنْ يُدخلَهُ الجنَّةَ إن استُشْهِدَ أو يكتبَ لهُ العودةَ إلى أهلِهِ سالماً مُحصِّلاً الثَّوابَ والغنيمةَ.
- ثمَّ ينتقلُ الكلامُ إلى النَّبيِّ ﷺ ليُقسمَ عليهِ الصَّلاةُ والسَّلامُ باللهِ تَعالى تأكيداً على قيمةِ الجهادِ في سبيلِ اللهِ تَعالى على أنَّهُ جلَّتْ قدرتُهُ سيبعثُ الشَّهيدَ يومَ القيامةِ بهيئةٍ شاهدةٍ على صدقِ نيَّتِهِ في بذلِ نفسِهِ وإخلاصِهِ في جهادِهِ حيثُ تنزفُ جراحُهُ دماً أحمرَ وتكونُ رائحتُهُ رائحةَ مسكٍ عطرةً عبقةً، تنتشرُ في أهلِ المحشرِ إظهاراً لفضلِهِ.
- ثمَّ يُبيِّنُ النَّبيُّ ﷺ فضلَ الجهادِ ببيانِ حرصِهِ عليهِ، وإظهارِ عظيمِ همَّتِهِ إليهِ مُقسِماً باللهِ تَعالى، موضِّحاً عذرَهُ في عدمِ خروجِهِ للجهادِ أحياناً إشفاقاً ورحمةً بالمسلمين، لأنَّ خروجَهُ باستمرارٍ فيهِ حرجٌ ومشقَّةٌ عليهم، إذ لا يجدونَ ما يتجهَّزونَ بهِ للخروجِ معَ رسولِ اللهِ ﷺ للجهادِ ولا يجدُ النَّبيُّ ﷺ ما يُجهِّزُهم بهِ فيشتدُّ حزنُهم إذا لم يُرافقوه.

(See the continuation of the example on the following page)

ويختمُ النَّبيُّ ﷺ حديثَهُ مُعظِّماً فضلَ الشَّهادةِ في سبيلِ اللهِ مُقسِماً باللهِ تَعَالى مُتمنِّياً أنْ يُقتلَ في سبيلِ اللهِ تَعَالى ثمّ يحيا مِراراً وتكراراً، فلا يتوقَّفُ عن الجهادِ في سبيلِ اللهِ أبداً؛ بل يتمنَّى أعماراً في نهايةِ كلِّ عمرٍ استشهادٌ في سبيلِ اللهِ ثمَّ عمرٌ جديدٌ ثمَّ استشهادٌ ... وهكذا لتكونَ الشَّهادةُ خاتمةَ الأعمارِ.

From the Guidance of the Noble Hadith

The noble Hadith explains the virtue of the jihad fighter in the path of God Almighty and the greatness of his reward in this world and the Hereafter. The Prophet informed that God, Blessed and Exalted, by His grace and generosity, guarantees for whoever goes out striving in His path—believing in His promise and affirming what the Messenger, peace be upon him, brought—that He will either admit him into Paradise or return him safely to his family with reward and spoils.

The Prophet swore by God Almighty to emphasize the greatness of jihad in the path of God and to affirm the value of martyrdom in His cause. He informed that every martyr's wound on the Day of Resurrection will remain as testimony to the sincerity of his intention and devotion in his jihad: its color the color of blood-red, while its fragrance will be like the scent of musk spreading among the people of the gathering as a manifestation of his virtue.

The Prophet explained the virtue of jihad, his concern for it, and the greatness of his aspiration toward it. He swore by God that he would not refrain from going out for jihad except out of compassion and mercy for the Muslims, because his continual departure for jihad would burden them, since they would not find what would enable them to go out alongside the Messenger of God for jihad, nor would they find anyone to carry them with him if he departed.

The Prophet concludes his Hadith by magnifying the virtue of martyrdom in the path of God Almighty, wishing that he could be killed in the path of God, then brought back to life repeatedly, over and over. Thus jihad in the path of God never ceases; rather, every life ends with martyrdom in the path of God, followed by a new life, then martyrdom again … and thus martyrdom becomes the seal of lives.

[p. 67]

فضلُ الجهادِ وجزاءُ الشَّهادةِ في سبيلِ اللهِ تَعَالى:

عن أبي ذرّ ﷺ قالَ: قلتُ يا رسولَ اللهِ أيُّ العملِ أفضلُ؟ قالَ:

«الإيمانُ باللهِ، والجهادُ في سبيلِه»[1].

- علِّلِ اقترانَ الجهادِ في سبيلِ اللهِ بالإيمانِ باللهِ تَعَالى في الحديثِ الشَّريفِ.
- استنتجْ أهمِّيَّةَ الجهادِ في حياةِ الأمَّةِ.

إنَّ التَّضحيةَ بالنَّفسِ أسمى درجاتِ الإخلاصِ، وأصدقُ برهانٍ على صحَّةِ الإيمانِ، وطريقُ الخلودِ في الجِنانِ، والفوزِ برضوانِ اللهِ تَعَالى، والأمَّةُ بأمَسِّ الحاجةِ إلى تضحياتِ أبنائِها دفاعاً عن الدينِ والبلادِ وحِفاظاً على المقدَّساتِ والحُرُماتِ وتحقيقاً للعزَّةِ والكرامةِ. لهذا جعلَ اللهُ تَعَالى الشَّهيدَ حيّاً يُرْزَقُ عندَه، وغفرَ لهُ ذنوبَهُ، وبوَّأهُ المنزلةَ العاليةَ في الجنَّةِ مع الأنبياءِ والمرسلينَ.

صورٌ من الجهادِ

إنَّ من صورِ الجهادِ في سبيلِ اللهِ في عصرِنا الحاضرِ جهادَ أهلنا في الجولانِ المحتلِّ، وجهادَ أبناءِ فلسطينَ المحتلَّةِ من أجلِ استعادةِ أرضِهم المغتصَبةِ وحقوقِهم المُستلَبةِ والدِّفاعِ عن أنفسِهم وأعراضِهم وأموالِهم فإنْ قُتِلوا فهم شهداءُ تصديقاً لقولِ النَّبيِّ ﷺ:

«مَنْ قُتِلَ دونَ مالِهِ فهو شهيدٌ، ومَنْ قُتِلَ دونَ دينِهِ فهو شهيدٌ، ومَنْ قُتِلَ دونَ دمِهِ فهو شهيدٌ، ومَنْ قُتِلَ دونَ أهلِهِ فهو شهيدٌ»[2].

(See the continuation of the example on the following page)

The Virtue of Jihad and the Reward of Martyrdom in the Path of God Almighty:
On the authority of Abu Dharr, who said: I said, "O Messenger of God, which deed is best?" He said: "Faith in God and jihad in His path."

- *Explain why jihad in the path of God Almighty is linked with faith in God Almighty in the noble hadith.*
- *Deduce the importance of jihad in the life of the [Islamic] Nation (ummah).*

Sacrificing oneself is among the highest degrees of sincerity and the truest proof of the soundness of faith. It is the path to eternal life in Paradise and attaining the pleasure of God Almighty. The nation remains in need of the sacrifices of its sons in defense of religion, homeland, holy places, and sanctities, and in achieving dignity and honor. Therefore, God Almighty granted the martyr a provision with Him, forgave his sins, and bestowed upon him the lofty rank in Paradise alongside the prophets and messengers.
Forms of Jihad
Among the forms of jihad in the path of God in our present age are the jihad of our people in the occupied Golan, and the jihad of the people of occupied Palestine in order to recover their usurped land and future rights, and to defend themselves, their honor, and their wealth. If they are killed, then they are martyrs, in accordance with the saying of the Prophet: "Whoever is killed defending his wealth is a martyr; whoever is killed defending his religion is a martyr; whoever is killed defending his blood is a martyr; and whoever is killed defending his family is a martyr."

[p. 68]

أحكامُ شهيدِ المعركةِ:

- الشَّهيدُ مَنْ قُتِلَ في سبيلِ اللهِ في معركةٍ عندَ لقاءِ العدوِّ.
- ولشهيدِ المعركةِ أحكامٌ حدَّدَها الإسلامُ حيثُ لا يُغسَّلُ الشَّهيدُ، ولا يُكفَّنُ، ولا يُصلَّى عليهِ، إبقاءً لأثرِ الشَّهادةِ، وتعظيماً له باستغنائِهِ عن دعاءِ النَّاسِ لهُ.

وقد جاءَ في الحديثِ الصَّحيحِ أنَّ النَّبيَّ ﷺ: أمرَ بدفنِ شهداءِ أُحدٍ في دمائِهِم، ولم يُغسِّلْهُم ولم يصلِّ عليهم[1].

سُمِّيَ الشَّهيدُ شهيداً؛ لأنَّ اللهَ ورسولَهُ شهِدوا لهُ بالجنَّةِ.

الأنشطةُ التَّعلُّميَّةُ والتَّقويميَّةُ:

١- ما موقفُ الإسلامِ من الجهادِ؟ ولماذا؟

٢- ما الجزاءُ الذي ميَّزَ اللهُ تعالى بهِ الشَّهيدَ عن غيرِهِ من أهلِ الجنَّةِ؟

٣- قالَ تعالى: ﴿ يَٰٓأَيُّهَا ٱلَّذِينَ ءَامَنُواْ هَلۡ أَدُلُّكُمۡ عَلَىٰ تِجَٰرَةٖ تُنجِيكُم مِّنۡ عَذَابٍ أَلِيمٖ ١٠ تُؤۡمِنُونَ بِٱللَّهِ وَرَسُولِهِۦ وَتُجَٰهِدُونَ فِي سَبِيلِ ٱللَّهِ بِأَمۡوَٰلِكُمۡ وَأَنفُسِكُمۡۚ ذَٰلِكُمۡ خَيۡرٞ لَّكُمۡ إِن كُنتُمۡ تَعۡلَمُونَ ١١ ﴾ [الصف].

- ما التِّجارةُ التي دعتْ اليها الآيةُ الكريمةُ؟
- عدِّدْ صورَ الجهادِ الواردةَ في الآيةِ السَّابقةِ.
- اذكرْ صوراً أُخرى للجهادِ لم ترِدْ في الآيةِ.

٤- علِّلْ ما يأتي:

- شهيدُ المعركةِ لا يُغسَّلُ ولا يُكفَّنُ.
- شهيدُ المعركةِ لا يُصلَّى عليهِ.

٥- استنتجْ من الحديثِ الشَّريفِ مظهراً من مظاهرِ رفقِ النَّبيِّ ﷺ بأمَّتِهِ.

٦- ماذا تستنتجُ من تكرارِ قَسَمِ النَّبيِّ ﷺ بقولِهِ: «والَّذي نفسُ محمَّدٍ بيدِهِ»؟ علِّلْ إجابتَكَ.

٧- قالَ ﷺ: «الشُّهداءُ خمسةٌ:

المطعونُ، والمبطونُ، والغريقُ، وصاحبُ الهدمِ، والشَّهيدُ في سبيلِ اللهِ»[2].

- لماذا عدَّ النَّبيُّ ﷺ الأصنافَ الأربعةَ الأولى شهداءَ؟
- هل لتلكَ الأصنافِ أحكامُ شهيدِ المعركةِ؟ ولماذا؟

٨- عبِّرْ بسطرينِ عن إعجابِكَ بأهلِ فلسطينَ الصَّامدينَ دفاعاً عن أرضِ فلسطينَ وبيتِ المقدسِ.

(See the continuation of the example on the following page)

Rulings Concerning the Martyr of Battle:
- *A martyr is one who is killed in the path of God during a battle against the enemy.*
- *The martyr of battle has rulings specific to him in Islam: he is not washed, not shrouded, and the funeral prayer is not performed over him, keeping the traces of martyrdom upon him so that he may intercede for those who killed him.*

[...]
Educational and Evaluative Activities:
1. *What is Islam's position on jihad? And why?*
2. *What is the reward by which God Almighty distinguished the martyr over the rest of the people of Paradise?*

[...]
7. *Express your opinion regarding Palestinian fighters who defend the land of Palestine and Bayt al-Maqdis (Jerusalem).*

Students are encouraged to view solidarity with ongoing conflicts as a measure of religious commitment; the defense of Muslim territories is framed as a transnational obligation. Grade 9 students are encouraged to link the early Islamic conquests with contemporary "heroic martyrs who offered their precious souls in defense of our sanctities and holy places," drawing inspiration from the early Islamic exemplars to legitimize modern martyrdom, from the anti-colonial struggle and the fight for independence to, most recently, the martyrs of Syria's Revolution of Dignity. Students are asked to give their opinion on "what is the best action you can undertake in loyalty to their sacrifices and heroism."[187] In another example, a chapter on Muhammad's campaign against the Banu al-Muṣṭaliq references verse 80 from Surah al-Anfal: "And prepare against them whatever you are able of power and of steeds of war by which you may terrify the enemy of Allah and your enemy and others besides them whom you do not know [but] whom Allah knows [...]", and instructs students to list "as many new weapons as possible to fight the Zionist enemy."[188] In yet another case, Grade 3 students are told that "righteous deeds are a means of attaining the bliss of Paradise" and are then asked to choose the proper behavior when "an enemy attacked our beloved homeland," with the expected correct answer being "fight him," while alternatives such as "forgive him" or "do not care" are implicitly framed as wrong or morally inferior.

***Islamic Education*, Grade 3, 2025-26, p. 83 (previously: *Islamic Education*, Grade 3, 2017-18, p. 85).**

٤- في ضوءِ معرفَتِكَ بأنَّ العملَ الصَّالحَ هو سبيلُ الفوزِ بنعيمِ الجنَّةِ، اختر ممَّا يأتي السُّلوكَ الصَّحيحَ لتكونَ من الفائزينَ .

- أخطأَ زميلُكَ في حقِّكَ :

○ تلتمسُ لهُ العذرَ ○ تُخاصمُهُ ○ تشكوهُ لمعلِّمِكَ

- اعتدَى عدوٌّ على وطنِنا الحبيبِ :

○ تُحاربُهُ ○ لا تُبالي ○ تُسامحُهُ

4 – In light of your knowledge that righteous deeds are a means of attaining the bliss of Paradise, choose from the following the correct behavior so that you may be among the successful:
[…]
• An enemy attacked our beloved homeland:
– Fight him
– Do not care
– Forgive him

187 The new edition removed from the contemporary cases of martyrdom "Palestine and the steadfast Golan", referencing instead the Syrian revolution. *Islamic Education*, Grade 9, 2025-26, pp. 36-40 (previously: *Islamic Education*, Grade 9, 2017-18, pp. 37-41).

188 *Islamic Education*, Grade 8, 2025-26, p. 94 (previously: *Islamic Education*, Grade 8, 217-18, p. 96).

The curriculum's expansion from specific national disputes to the broader "lands of the Muslims" situates conflict within a pan-Islamic framework, extending the geography of struggle beyond the Syrian state.[189] An Islamic history lesson on the 630 AD Battle of Tabuk concludes with students being encouraged to financially support and value the "heroic" acts carried out by "*jihad* fighters" in Islamic countries against "enemies of the [Islamic] Nation" (*ummah*) in "support (*nuṣrah*) of their faith." This represents a significant revision of the earlier version of the lesson, which framed violence and sacrifice in military and patriotic terms rather than religious and *jihad*-related ones, and focused specifically on the Palestinian and Syrian conflicts with Israel.

***Islamic Education*, Grade 8, 2025-2026, p. 101 (previously: *Islamic Education*, Grade 8, 2017-2018, p. 103).**

2017-18	2025-26
٤ – بيّنْ رأيكَ في المواقفِ الآتيةِ مُسترشداً بما مرَّ معكَ منْ أحداثِ غزْوةِ تبوكَ: أ- يَبْخَلُ بعضُ النّاسِ عندما يُطْلَبُ منهُ التّبرعُ لدعْمِ المقاومةِ الفلسطينيةِ. ب-يتدرّبُ على إلقاءِ قصيدةٍ وطنيّةٍ في ذكرى الاستقلالِ. ت-يُثمّنُ المَهمّةَ التي يقومُ بها الجُنودُ في حمايةِ الوطنِ. ث- يُتابعُ ما يَحصُلُ في فلسطينَ والجولانِ.	بيّنْ رأيكَ في المواقفِ الآتيةِ مُسترشداً بما مرَّ معكَ منْ أحداثِ غزْوةِ تبوكَ: أ- يَبْخَلُ بعضُ النّاسِ عندما يُطْلَبُ منهُ التّبرعُ لدعْمِ المجاهدينَ الثائرينَ في بلادِ الإسلامِ المحتلّةِ. ب- يثمّنُ الأعمالَ الجهاديّةَ التي يسطرها المجاهدون بتصديهم لأعداءِ الأمّةِ. ت- يُتابعُ ما يَحصُلُ في البلادِ الإسلاميّةِ من أعمالٍ بطوليّةٍ يقدمها المسلمون نصرةً لدينهم وتحريرِ أراضيهم.
Express your opinion about the following situations, taking what you have seen about the events of the Battle of Tabuk as guidance: *A. Some people are ungenerous when asked to donate in support of the Palestinian Resistance.* *B. One practices reciting a patriotic poem on Independence Day.* *C. One values the duty performed by soldiers in defense of the Motherland.* *D. One follows what is unfolding in Palestine and the Golan Heights.*	*Express your opinion about the following situations, taking what you have seen about the events of the Battle of Tabuk as guidance:* *A. Some people are ungenerous when asked to donate in support of the jihad fighters revolting in occupied Islamic countries.* *B. One values the works of jihad immortalized by jihad fighters as they stand up to the enemies of the [Islamic] Nation.* *C. One follows what is unfolding in Islamic countries in terms of heroic acts performed by Muslims in support of their Faith and the liberation of their lands.*

*Highlighted text shows altered content. *Red text shows removed content.

Taken as a whole, the curriculum constructs an educational environment in which self-sacrifice and militant struggle are not peripheral themes, but recurring motifs that shape historical consciousness, literary interpretation, and religious understanding. Historic events, poetic imagery, and Islamic concepts are repeatedly woven together to present armed resistance, martyrdom, and death in struggle as morally elevated and identity-forming ideals. Such lessons present past religious-military episodes as normative models for contemporary conflicts, encouraging pupils to perceive fighting and martyrdom as faithful continuations of revered historical struggles while simultaneously legitimizing and glorifying violence, killing, and sacrifice in the context of wars and revolutions. This does not merely preserve a memory of past conflicts; it creates a pedagogical framework in which pupils are encouraged to read history, literature, and religion through the lens of confrontation, sacrifice, and heroic violence.

Looking ahead, this integration of armed resistance into multiple domains of study raises concerns regarding the promotion of peace-oriented values and the cultivation of critical, pluralistic perspectives. The curriculum does not uniformly eliminate all references to peace or restraint, but such references are structurally secondary to mobilizing narratives that valorize struggle, normalize blood sacrifice, and frame violent confrontation as a natural response to injustice or occupation. If sustained across subjects and grade levels, this approach risks shaping students' moral imagination around conflict rather than reconciliation, and around martyrdom rather than civic life, compromise, or nonviolent agency.

189 See for example *Islamic Education*, Grade 8, 2025-26, p. 97 (previously: *Islamic Education*, Grade 8, 2017-18, p. 99). For the reframing of rebels against France as "*jihad* fighters" (*mujāhidūn*), see *History*, Grade 9, 2025-26, pp. 22-25 (previously: *History*, Grade 9, 2017-18, pp. 23-26).

Non-Muslims and Local Syrian Minorities: Creating New Arab-Sunni-Muslim Identity in Syria

Syria is a multiethnic and multireligious country, home to Arab Sunni Muslims, Kurds, Alawites, Christians, Druze, Ismāʿīlī Shiʿis, Assyrians, Armenians, Turkmens, Jews, Circassians, and other minority communities. This diversity is central to Syria's history, society, geography, language, and cultural memory. Additionally, Christianity and Judaism have deep roots in the Syrian landscape: Syria contains some of the world's oldest Christian communities and religious sites, while Jewish communities were present in Syria for more than two millennia, especially in cities such as Damascus and Aleppo. The way Syrian textbooks depict minorities and other religions therefore shapes how students are taught to understand Syria: as a shared civic space of diverse communities, or as a country whose diversity is recognized only when subordinated to dominant Sunni-Islamic, Arab, and nationalist frameworks.

The previous chapter showed that the 2025-2026 curriculum underwent a broad process of Islamization, in which religious language, Islamic authority, and Arab-Islamic political models became more prominent. This chapter examines the consequences of that process for minorities, non-Islamic religions, non-Sunni traditions, and non-Arab peoples. Earlier Syrian curricula combined authoritarian Baʿthist and Arab-nationalist narratives with material that also promoted civic equality, religious tolerance, shared citizenship, non-discrimination, and coexistence across religion, language, origin, and belief. The revised curriculum reduces or removes much of that pluralistic material. Lessons that previously grounded protection of non-Muslims in Islamic sources, citizenship in constitutional equality, and diversity in shared civic belonging are deleted or replaced. At the same time, Christianity is retained primarily as protected heritage; Judaism is portrayed through theological inferiority and collective stigma; the history of Shiʿi groups is rewritten through a Sunni lens; Alawite and Druze identities are erased or displaced from the regions and historical narratives most closely associated with them; and non-Arab peoples are overwritten by an Arabized account of Syria's and the region's past.

This chapter therefore traces a hierarchy of recognition. Christian heritage, including churches, holy sites and monuments, remains visible only insofar as it can be accommodated within an Islamic social order. Jews appear as a religious category, but Syrian Jewish history is erased, while Islamic Education textbooks repeatedly portray Jews through themes of misguidance, betrayal, hostility, financial wrongdoing, and divine punishment. Shiʿi-associated dynasties and figures are either violently delegitimized, as illustrated by the treatment of the Fatimid ("ʿUbaydid") dynasty, or absorbed into Sunni genealogical and doctrinal frameworks. Alawite and Druze spaces may remain on maps and in history lessons, but their communal identity is ignored, renamed, or replaced by Sunni or Arab-national alternatives. Kurds, Assyrians, Armenians, Turkmens, Circassians, Jews, and other non-Arab communities are largely absent from the historical imagination offered by the curriculum. The result is a revised national narrative that presents Syria as geographically diverse while denying equal historical legitimacy, cultural visibility, and civic belonging to many of the communities that make up Syrian society.

From Religious Pluralism and Citizenship to Islamic Hierarchy

Earlier Syrian textbooks included content presenting religious and civic arguments for pluralism. Some lessons grounded tolerance in authoritative Islamic sources, including Qur'anic language and Prophet Muhammad's Hadith, while others presented citizenship as equality in rights and duties regardless of religion, belief, language, origin, or gender. The 2025-2026 curriculum reduces both kinds of material while preserving broader praise for Islamic governance, justice, consultation (šūrā), and orderly rule. This creates a clear shift in the textbook's model of coexistence. The previous curriculum taught that Islam protected non-Muslims and that Syrian citizenship rested on equality, participation, and non-discrimination. The revised curriculum weakens both frameworks simultaneously. It removes Islamic Education passages presenting non-Muslims as protected members of a shared social order grounded in Islamic sources, while also removing Social Studies material defining citizenship through constitutional equality and non-discrimination regardless of religion or belief. Meanwhile, the curriculum preserves examples of Christians being guaranteed safety

and protection from harm when they demonstrate Islamic justice under Muslim rule, as in ʿUmar's Covenant, while removing treaty material that portrays Muslim authority as constrained by negotiated obligations, as in the Treaty of Alexandria (on both examples see next subchapter). The resulting model narrows pluralism into conditional tolerance under Islamic hegemony: religious diversity can remain visible when subordinated to Islam, but equal civic belonging and reciprocal coexistence are reduced.[190]

The following excerpts are taken from Grade 11 Islamic Education lessons on human rights, citizenship, and Islamic history which have been removed in the new 2025-2026 curriculum. This removed example is significant because it demonstrates that, contrary to suggestions that the Assad Islamic Education textbooks contained "inaccuracies,"[191] the earlier curriculum drew on authoritative Islamic sources, including Qur'anic verses and hadiths of the Prophet Muhammad, to promote pluralism and the protection of non-Muslims, while affirming shared citizenship and common humanity. The lesson states that safeguarding human life "is not limited to Muslims," but extends to those who live with Muslims "in loyalty and peace." It reinforces this principle with a Prophetic Hadith warning that whoever kills a person under covenant will not smell the fragrance of Heaven. The same removed lesson then shifts from the protection of life to citizenship within a shared political community. It presents the Covenant of Medina (*kitab al-madīnah*) as a political arrangement encompassing the Emigrants (*muhājirūn*), the Supporters (*anṣār*), the Jews, and even the Idolators (*mušrikīn*) of Medina, granting them rights and assigning them duties equally. The examples that follow make the point even more explicit: Prophet Muhammad stands for a Jewish funeral procession, and, when asked why, replies: "Is it not a human soul?" The Prophet's Companions similarly attend the funeral of a Christian woman, underscoring respect for the dignity of non-Muslims. These passages taught that Islamic tradition could justify the protection of non-Muslims, respect across religious boundaries, and shared communal life. Their removal therefore weakens a specifically Islamic foundation for interreligious tolerance. Rather than merely eliminating general human rights language, it removes Qur'anic and Prophetic Hadith-based teachings that presented religious minorities as protected members of a shared social order grounded in Islam.

***Islamic Education*, Grade 11, 2017-18, pp. 95-96 (removed)**

أولاً– حقُّ الحياةِ والسَّلامةِ من الأذى.

– لمَّا كانَ الإنسانُ في نظرِ الإسلامِ أكرمَ الكائناتِ، فإنَّ أوَّلَ مقتضياتِ تكريمِهِ صيانةُ حياتِهِ والحفاظُ عليها ممَّا قد يهدِّدُ أمنَهَا ووجودَهَا، يقولُ النَّبي ﷺ: " لَزَوَالُ الدُّنْيَا أَهْوَنُ عَلَى اللَّهِ مِنْ قَتْلِ مُؤْمِنٍ بِغَيْرِ حَقٍّ "(٢).

– وهذا التَّعظيمُ لحياةِ الإنسانِ لا يختَصُّ بالمسلمِ؛ بل يتمتَّعُ به كُلُّ مَنْ عاشَ مع المسلمينَ وبادلَهُم الوفاءَ والسَّلامَ، يقولُ النَّبي ﷺ: " مَنْ قَتَلَ مُعَاهَداً لَمْ يَرَحْ رَائِحَةَ الْجَنَّةِ، وَإِنَّ رِيحَهَا تُوجَدُ مِنْ مَسِيرَةِ أَرْبَعِينَ عَاماً "(١).

(See the continuation of the example on the following page)

190 *History*, Grade 10 (Humanities Track), 2025-26, p. 105 (previously: *History of Civilization*, Grade 10, 2014-15, p. 109);
History, Grade 10 (Humanities Track), 2025-26, pp. 131-132 (previously: *History of Civilization*, Grade 10, 2014-15, pp. 160-161);
Islamic Education, Grade 8, 2025-26, p. 53 (previously: *Islamic Education*, Grade 8, 2017-18, p. 55);
Islamic Education, Grade 11, 2017-18, pp. 95-102. (removed content);
Social Studies, Grade 6, 2012-13, pp. 122-141. (removed content).

191 Sebastian Usher, "New Syrian government's school curriculum changes spark concern," BBC News, January 2, 2025. https://www.bbc.com/news/articles/c1ln12056ppo.

– ولأهمِّيَّةِ حياةِ الإنسانِ وقدسيتِها غلَّظَ اللهُ عقوبةَ مَن سوَّلتْ لهُ نفسُهُ فاعتدى على إنسانٍ بالقتلِ أو الإيذاءِ، وفرضَ القِصاصَ عقوبةً مُكافِئَةً لما أقدمَ عليهِ واجترحَهُ في حقِّ أخيهِ وفي حقِّ المجتمعِ.

– وحتَّى عندما أمرَ اللهُ تَعالى بالجهادِ وبالإعدادِ لهُ، إنَّما كانَ ذلكَ للحِفاظِ على حقِّ الحياةِ، حياةِ المجتمعِ، والنَّاسِ الآمنينَ، ولذلك حرَّمَ الإسلامُ الاعتداءَ على النِّساءِ والأطفالِ والشُّيوخِ الأبرياءِ .

First: The right to life and safety from harm

- Since, in the view of Islam, the human being (al-insān) is the most honorable of all beings, one of the foremost implications of this honor is the protection of life and the preservation of its safety from anything that may threaten its existence. The Prophet – peace be upon him – said: "The destruction of the world is less significant in the sight of Allah than the killing of a believer unjustly".

- This safeguarding of human life is not limited to Muslims; rather, it extends to everyone who lives with Muslims in loyalty and peace. The Prophet – peace be upon him – said: "Whoever kills a person under covenant will not smell the fragrance of Heavens, though its fragrance can be perceived from a walking distance of forty years."

- And due to the significance and sanctity of human life, Allah made the punishment severe to whoever felt tempted and assaulted a person to kill or cause harm. Allah imposed the reprisal (qiṣāṣ) as an adequate punishment to whatever one inflicts or to how one causes injury upon his brother or society.

- And even when Allah the Almighty commanded us to perform jihad and prepare for it, it was for protecting one's right to live, the life of the society, and the peaceful people. Therefore, Islam has forbidden assaulting innocent women, children, and elderly.

***Islamic Education*, Grade 11, 2017-18, p. 99 (removed)**

● المواطنةُ والتَّاريخ الإسلاميّ.

– كتبَ رسولُ اللهِ ﷺ كتاباً بينَ المهاجرينَ والأنصارِ عاهدَ فيهِ اليهودَ ومَنْ كانَ في المدينةِ من المشركينَ فأقرَّ لهم حقوقاً، وفرضَ عليهم واجباتٍ.

فالإسلامُ يُكرِّمُ الإنسانيَّةَ في أبناءِ آدمَ قاطبةً فقد رُوي أنَّ النَّبيَّ ﷺ قامَ لجنازةِ يهوديٍّ مرَّتْ، فلمَّا كُلِّمَ في ذلكَ قالَ: " أليستْ نفساً "[1].

كما شيَّعَ صحابةُ رسولِ اللهِ ﷺ جنازةَ امرأةٍ نصرانيَّةٍ.

• Citizenship and Islamic History:

- The Messenger of Allah wrote a covenant between the Emigrants (muhājirūn) and the Supporters (anṣār), and bound the Jews and the Idolators (mušrikīn) who were in Medina in it as well. He sanctioned them rights and imposed duties upon them.

Islam honors humanity in all the sons of Adam, without exception. It is reported that the Prophet – peace be upon him – once stood for a Jewish funeral procession passing by. When he was asked about it, he said: "Is it not a human soul?"

The Companions of the Messenger of Allah also attended the funeral of a Christian woman.

The following excerpts are taken from a removed Grade 6 Social Studies lesson that discusses citizenship as the basis for society-building. This removed example marks a similar shift as the previous Islamic Education example from a civic perspective. The previous version of this lesson taught pluralism through citizenship, constitutional equality, and non-discrimination. It defined citizenship through equality in rights and duties, participation of all citizens, democratic institutions, dialogue, communication, and cooperation among all members of the homeland. Additionally, it included a quotation from Article 33 of the 2012 Syrian constitution: citizens are equal in rights and duties, and there shall be no discrimination among them on the basis of "gender, origin, language, religion, or belief." The lesson then translated

this legal principle into classroom language, telling students that they, their classmates, their neighbors, their friends, and every citizen belonging to Syria are equal partners in building the state, "so that it may be a model of diversity and shared living." This lesson presented diversity in explicitly civic language, presenting national life and citizenship as a shared status across religious, linguistic, ethnic, and social boundaries. Its removal from the 2025-2026 curriculum is therefore significant. Together with the removed Grade 11 Islamic Education material, it shows that the revised curriculum reduces both Islamic and civic-constitutional arguments for protection, equal citizenship and non-discrimination against non-Muslims.

***Social Studies*, Grade 6, 2012-13, pp. 130-131 (removed)**

الحياة السياسيَّة

تسهمُ وسائلُ الإعلام في تشكيل الهويَّة الوطنيَّة وغرس القِيَم الاجتماعيَّة والوطنيَّة، وربطُ الإنسانُ بأبنـاء وطنه، على قاعدة المساواة في الحقوق والواجبات. وكذلك تعمل المؤسَّسات الديمقراطيّة، والمنظّمات الشعبيّة على تضافرُ جهودِ أبناءِ المجتمع لتحقيقِ ما يطمحون إليه، وتعزيز الحوار والتواصُل بين أبناء الوطن كافَّة.

Political Life
Media outlets contribute to shaping national identity, instilling social and national values, and connecting the human being to the people of his homeland, on the basis of equality in rights and duties. Democratic institutions and popular organizations also work to combine the efforts of the members of society in order to achieve what they aspire to, and to strengthen dialogue and communication among all the people of the homeland.

الدرسُ الأول

المواطنة أساسُ بناء المجتمع

يرتبطُ الإنسانُ بأبناء وطنه بمجموعة من الصفات التي تحدِّد الهويّةَ العامّة لكلّ المواطنين، وإنّ النهوض بالوطن يتطلَّب شراكةً حقيقيّةً بين كلِّ مواطنيه على قاعدة المساواة في الحقوق والواجبات.

Lesson One: Citizenship as the Basis for Building Society
The human being is connected to the people of his homeland by a set of characteristics that define the general identity of all citizens. The advancement of the homeland requires real partnership of all its citizens, on the basis of equality in rights and duties.

لنتعرَّفْ مفهومَ المواطنة، ونتبيّن أسسها ودورَها في تحقيق الوحدة الوطنيّة

– اقرأ المستند المجاور، ثمَّ حاول أن تستنتج تعريف المواطنة؟

المادّة الثالثة والثلاثون من دستور الجمهوريّة العربيّة السوريّة عام ٢٠١٢م:

٢– المواطنةُ مبدأٌ أساسيٌّ ينطوي على حقوق وواجبات يتمتَّع بها كلُّ مواطن، ويمارسها وفق القانون.

٣– المواطنون متساوون في الحقوق والواجبات،لا تمييزَ بينهم في ذلك بسبب الجنس أو الأصل أو اللُّغة أو الدين أو العقيدة .

أنت وزميلك في الصفّ، وجارُك وصديقُك في الحيّ، وكلّ مواطن ينتمي إلى هذا الوطن العظيمِ سوريةَ، جميعكُم شركاءُ متساوون مساهمون في بناء الدولة العربيةَ السوريّة، لتكونَ نموذجاً للتنوُّع والعيش المشترك.

Let us learn the concept of citizenship, and clarify its foundations and its role in achieving national unity.

Read the adjacent document, then try to infer the definition of citizenship:

"Article 33 of the Constitution of the Syrian Arab Republic, 2012:

2. Citizenship is a fundamental principle that entails rights and duties enjoyed by every citizen and exercised according to the law.

3. Citizens are equal in rights and duties. There shall be no discrimination among them on the basis of gender, origin, language, religion, or belief."

You, your classmate, your neighbor, your friend in the neighborhood, and every citizen who belongs to this great homeland, Syria, are all equal partners contributing to the building of the Syrian Arab state, so that it may be a model of diversity and shared living.

The examples in this subchapter show a movement from multireligious pluralism and equal citizenship toward conditional tolerance under Islamic authority. The removed Grade 11 Islamic Education material had taught students that Islamic tradition could justify protection of non-Muslims, respect for Jewish and Christian funerary dignity, and shared communal life with Jews and polytheists in Medina. The removed Grade 6 Social Studies lesson had translated constitutional equality into explicit civic language, presenting Syrians of different religions, languages, origins, and beliefs as equal partners in building the state. The subchapter therefore shows a clear curricular shift: coexistence remains acceptable when placed under Islamic governance, while stronger models of equal citizenship, reciprocal civic belonging, and binding negotiated arrangements with non-Muslims are weakened or removed.

Depicting Christianity and Judaism through Islamic Supersessionism

Islamic Education textbooks discuss Christianity and Judaism through Islamic theological categories, but the revised curriculum applies this framework in a persistent hierarchy that places Islam above earlier religions, while portraying Jews through especially harsh collective stigma. Christians and Jews appear as People of the Book (*ahl al-kitāb*) and as followers of earlier prophetic revelations, yet their religious significance is defined through Islam's final revelation and authority. Earlier revelations are presented as originally part of the same divine message later completed by Muhammad, while Christian and Jewish religious leadership is portrayed as having distorted or misused earlier divine messages.[192] This theme is demonstrated in the Grade 8 Islamic Education textbook, where the text describes how Muhammad told the Jews after arriving in Medina that Muslims are more entitled to Moses than they are.[193] Similarly, in the Grade 10 Islamic Education textbooks, students learn that "the Noble Qur'an is the final and the best among the divine revelations."[194] The curriculum also teaches that marriage with Jewish or Christian women is permissible, while marriage with women from non-monotheistic religions is prohibited.[195] The cumulative effect is to teach students that Judaism and Christianity are acknowledged as valid religious traditions only when they derive their legitimacy from, and remain subordinate to, the final revelation, i.e. Islam.

Revisions to Islamic Education textbooks introduce this hierarchy from the earliest stage of schooling. The previous Grade 1 textbook described "those who have evoked anger" and "those who are astray" in Sūrat al-Fatihah as people who moved away from "the path of good." The revised version defines them as those who knew the truth and deliberately abandoned it, and those who left the truth out of ignorance and misguidance. Although the revised textbook does not explicitly identify these categories with Jews and Christians, it leaves the traditional interpretation associating them with both groups available to teachers and students (this example is analyzed in further detail below).[196] Other examples present Jews as recurring negative actors within the context of Islamic sacred history and religious instruction. These examples construct a persistent pattern in which Jews are presented less as a contemporary religious community than as a collective theological and moral category defined by transgression and divine judgment.

The following Grade 6 Social Studies example includes a passage on the Muslim conquest of Egypt (639-642 CE), showing the removal of content related to the Treaty of Alexandria (*ṣulḥ al-Iskandariyyah*). The earlier 2012–2013 textbook presents the Treaty of Alexandria, dated to 20 AH (Hijri year, corresponding to 641 CE), as an agreement between the Byzantine authorities in Egypt, represented by al-Muqawqis, and the Muslim army under ʿAmr ibn al-ʿĀṣ. It described how the Muslim army conquered El-Arish, besieged Babylon Fortress for seven months, and then moved toward Alexandria, where al-Muqawqis negotiated with the Muslims and concluded the Treaty of Alexandria. An accompanying explanatory box summarized its reciprocal terms, ending the siege while guaranteeing Muslims protection and worship rights in exchange for commercial and material obligations. More specifically, it stipulated that Muslims not be prevented from praying in the Danaqilah Mosque, today associated with the Prophet Daniel Mosque in Alexandria, and not be attacked. In return, the Muslims would provide Nubia with some fabrics, wheat, and barley, and open the routes of trade and passage between the two sides.

The 2025–2026 textbook retains the account of the Muslim conquest and the conclusion of the Treaty of Alexandria but removes the explanatory box outlining the treaty's terms. Whereas the earlier textbook combined the narrative of Arab-Islamic conquest with a negotiated settlement imposing reciprocal obligations, including protection of Muslim worship and the regulation of trade, the revised version omits that dimension altogether. The treaty offered a more concrete model of coexistence than the general protection framework preserved in ʿUmar's Covenant. Whereas ʿUmar's Covenant presents Christians as protected under Muslim rule, the Treaty of Alexandria depicts Muslim authority as operating through negotiated, reciprocal obligations with a non-Muslim authority. By removing this material, the revised curriculum retains the narrative of Arab-Islamic liberation while omitting the treaty framework that portrayed conquest as accompanied by binding agreements, which showcased a model from the Islamic legal tradition for binding pacts with non-Muslim communities under Muslim rule. The result is a more unilateral account of Muslim

192 See for instance Islamic Education, Grade 10, 2025-26, p. 73.

193 *Islamic Education*, Grade 8, 2025-26, p. 60 (previously: *Islamic Education*, Grade 8, 2017-18, p. 62).

194 *Islamic Education*, Grade 10, 2025-26, p. 85.

195 *Islamic Education*, Grade 12, 2025-26, p. 102 (previously: *Islamic Education*, Grade 12, 2017-18, p. 100).

196 *Islamic Education*, Grade 1, 2025-26, p. 11 (previously: *Islamic Education*, Grade 1, 2023-24, p. 15).

rule, with less emphasis on negotiated coexistence after conquest. Its removal narrows the curriculum's portrayal of Muslim–non-Muslim relations by eliminating a model of coexistence based on negotiated reciprocal obligations.

***Social Studies*, Grade 6, 2025-26, p. 50 (previously: *Social Studies*, Grade 6, 2012-13, p. 52)**

2012-13	2025-26
 وجّه الخليفةُ عمرُ بن الخطّاب بعد أن تسلّم مدينة القدس سنة ١٧هـ/٦٣٨م جيشاً بقيادة عمرو بن العاص إلى مصر لتحريرها من الروم البيزنطيّين، فحرّر مدينة العريش، ثمّ حاصر حصن بابليون مدّة سبعة أشهر إلى أن فتحه. بعد ذلك اتّجه إلى الإسكندريّة وحاصرها، فأرسل الإمبراطورُ البيزنطيُّ إلى عامله في مصر المقوقس؛ ليفاوض المسلمين، فعقد معهم صلح الإسكندريّة عام ٢٠هـ/٦٤١م. الشكل (٢٣) صورةٌ لحصن بابليون في مصر في الوقت الحاضر مضمون صلح الإسكندرية: إنهاء الحصار، ووقفُ القتال، وألاّ يمنعوا المسلمين من الصلاة في مسجد دنقلة، وعدمَ الاعتداء عليهم، مقابل ذلك تعهّد المسلمون بتقديم بعض الأقمشة للنوبة والقمح والشعير وفتح أبواب التجارة والعبور بينهما. – بعد قراءتك المربّع الإثرائيّ حاول أن تستنتج أهميّة صلح الإسكندريّة بالنسبة إلى المصريّين. تعاون سكّانُ مصرَ مع الجيش العربيّ الإسلاميّ، ففتحوا لهم المنازل، وأقاموا الجسورَ والأسواقَ، وأمدّوهم بالمؤن وعلف الخيل. للتخلّص من حكم الرومان، فساهموا بذلك في إتمام تحرير مصرَ.	 وجّه الخليفةُ الراشديُّ عمر بن الخطاب رضي الله عنه بعد تسلّم مدينة القدس سنة ١٧هـ/٦٣٨م جيشاً بقيادة عمرو بن العاص رضي الله عنه إلى مصر لتحريرها من الرُّوم البيزنطيين، فحرّر مدينة العريش، ثم حاصر حصنَ بابليون مدّة سبعة أشهر إلى أن فتحه. بعد ذلك اتجه إلى الإسكندرية وحاصرها، فأرسل الإمبراطورُ البيزنطيُّ إلى عامله في مصر المقوقس، ليفاوض المسلمين، فعقد معهم صلح الإسكندرية عام ٢٠هـ/٦٤١م. الشكل (٢٣) صورةٌ لحصن بابليون في مصر في الوقت الحاضر تعاون سكّانُ مصرَ مع الجيش العربيّ الإسلاميّ، ففتحوا لهم المنازل، وأقاموا الجسورَ والأسواقَ، وأمدّوهم بالمؤن وعلف الخيل. للتخلّص من حكم الرومان، فساهموا بذلك في إتمام فتح مصرَ.
*The Muslims Liberate Egypt (*al-muslimūn yuḥarrirūna miṣr*):* *After taking Jerusalem in 17 AH / 638 CE, the Rightly-Guided Caliph ʿUmar ibn al-Khaṭṭāb, may Allah be pleased with him, sent an army to Egypt under the command of ʿAmr ibn al-ʿĀṣ, may Allah be pleased with him, in order to liberate it from the Byzantine Romans. He liberated the city of al-ʿArīsh, then besieged Babylon Fortress for seven months until he conquered it. After that, he headed to Alexandria and besieged it. Then the Byzantine wrote to his governor in Egypt, al-Muqawqis, to negotiate with the Muslims, and he concluded the Treaty of Alexandria with them in 20 AH / 641 CE.* *[Image caption:] Figure 23: A present-day photo of Babylon Fortress in Egypt.* *[Green text box:]* *Content of the Treaty of Alexandria:* *Ending the siege, stopping the fighting, not preventing the Muslims from praying in the Danaqilah Mosque [today associated with the Prophet Daniel Mosque in Alexandria], and not attacking them [the Muslims]. In return, the Muslims pledged to provide Nubia with some fabrics, wheat, and barley, and to open the routes of trade and passage between the two sides.* *After reading the supplementary box, try to infer the importance of the Treaty of Alexandria for the Egyptians.* *The people of Egypt cooperated with the Arab-Islamic army. They opened their homes for them, built bridges and markets, and supplied them with provisions and fodder for the horses, in order to get rid of Byzantine Roman rule. By doing so, they contributed to completing the liberation of Egypt (*taḥrīr miṣr*).*	*The Muslims Liberate Egypt (*al-muslimūn yuḥarrirūna miṣr*):* *After taking Jerusalem in 17 AH / 638 CE, the Rightly Guided Caliph ʿUmar ibn al-Khaṭṭāb, may Allah be pleased with him, sent an army to Egypt under the command of ʿAmr ibn al-ʿĀṣ, may Allah be pleased with him, in order to liberate it from the Byzantine Romans. He liberated the city of al-ʿArīsh, then besieged Babylon Fortress for seven months until he conquered it. After that, he headed to Alexandria and besieged it. Then the Byzantine emperor wrote to his governor in Egypt, al-Muqawqis, to negotiate with the Muslims, and he concluded the Treaty of Alexandria with them in 20 AH / 641 CE.* *[Image caption:] Figure 23: A present-day photo of Babylon Fortress in Egypt.* *The people of Egypt cooperated with the Arab-Islamic army. They opened their homes for them, built bridges and markets, and supplied them with provisions and fodder for the horses, in order to get rid of Byzantine Roman rule. By doing so, they contributed to completing the liberation of Egypt (*taḥrīr miṣr*).*

*Red text shows removed content.

The following Grade 12 Islamic Education textbook is a clear example of how Christian safety and freedom of worship are presented as conditional privileges under Muslim rule. The excerpt is taken from a lesson on the principles of international relations in Islam and cites ʿUmar's Covenant (*al-ʿuhdah al-ʿumariyyah*), attributed to the second caliph ʿUmar ibn al-Khattab after the Muslim conquest of Jerusalem in 637 CE. The covenant is presented as an example of peaceful relations; students are instructed to analyze it and "clarify the importance of these provisions in the lives of [different] nations." The passage states that ʿUmar granted the Christians of Jerusalem (*Iliyāʾ*) protection for themselves, their property, their churches, and their crosses; that their churches would neither be occupied, destroyed, nor diminished; that they would not be compelled to abandon their religion; and that none of them would be harmed.

The lesson teaches protection of Christians through a political-religious hierarchy in which Muslim authority grants, regulates, and limits the Christian existence. Christians appear as a protected community whose security and religious life depend on accepting Muslim rule, maintaining loyalty, and remaining within the Islamic political-legal order. The textbook's required activity reinforces this model by asking students to analyze the provisions of ʿUmar's Covenant and explain their importance for the lives of nations, referring to non-Muslims. The example therefore preserves Christian protection strictly within a framework of Islamic governance and Muslim patronage. Its significance becomes clearer when presented alongside the removed examples in this chapter: the revised curriculum retains material that demonstrates Islamic justice under Muslim rule, while removing material that presented interreligious coexistence through equal citizenship, reciprocal civic belonging, or negotiated arrangements. Together, the examples teach students to view Christians as subordinate to Muslims but entitled to protection, in contrast to Jews, who are portrayed as dangerous, treacherous, and involved in financial misconduct.

***Islamic Education*, Grade 12, 2025-26, p. 141 (previously: *Islamic Education*, Grade 12, 2017-18, p. 145)**

٣- جاءَ في العُهدةِ العمريّةِ التي كتبَها عمرُ بنُ الخطابِ ﷺ لأهلِ إيلياءَ:

« أعطاهُمْ أماناً لأنفسِهِمْ وأموالِهِم ولكنائِسِهِمْ وصُلبانِهِمْ، أنَّهُ لا تُسْكَنُ كنائِسُهُم، ولا تُهْدَمُ، ولا يُنتقَصُ منها، ولا يُكرهونَ على دينِهِمْ، ولا يُضَارَّ أحدٌ مِنْهُم ». والمطلوبُ:

أ. حلِّلْ مضمونَ هذا النَّصِّ منِ العهدةِ العمريّةِ مستنتجاً أهمَّ البنودِ التي وردتْ بها.

ب. وضِّحْ أهميَّةَ هذه البُنودِ في حياةِ الأممِ.

*In 'Umar's Covenant, written by 'Umar ibn al-Khaṭṭāb, may Allah be pleased with him, for the people of Jerusalem (*Iliyāʾ*), it states:*

"He granted them safety for souls, their property, their churches, and their crosses: that their churches shall not be inhabited [by others], nor destroyed, nor diminished, nor shall they be compelled regarding their religion, nor shall any one of them be harmed."

Required:

a. Analyze the content of this passage from 'Umar's Covenant, identifying the most important provisions contained within it.

b. Clarify the importance of these provisions in the lives of [different] nations.

Notably, the previous example does not include the words often included in the accounts of 'Umar's Covenant that prohibit the Jews from living in Jerusalem. The reason for its omission is unclear. While the statement could have originally reinforced the notion that the early Muslim caliphates restricted if not forbade Jewish life in Jerusalem, it nonetheless acknowledged Jewish existence in the city of Jerusalem, even if it is framed in a negatively.[197]

197 *Muḥammad ibn Jarīr al-Ṭabarī, Ta'rīkh al-Rusul wal-Mulūk*, Vol. 3, Egypt: Dār al-Maʿārif, 2nd edition, 1967, p. 609.

Notwithstanding, the negative framing of Jewish presence in Jerusalem is further demonstrated in the following, more contemporary example. In a lesson dedicated to analyzing historical documents, the Grade 10 History textbook discusses a document from the Ottoman era which mentions how the governor Muhammad Ali Basha (or Mehmet Ali Pasha) forbade the Jews from "paving the ground of the Buraq [wall]" (i.e., the Western Wall Plaza), but allowed them to "visit it [the wall] according to the established practice." While acknowledging Jewish presence in Ottoman Jerusalem and the practice of visiting the Western Wall, the example nonetheless emphasizes the refutation of the Jewish claims that the "Egyptian administration had allowed them to build up Jerusalem and pave the [ground] of the Buraq [wall]." As such, the lesson selects a politically sensitive and contentious case to teach critical reading of history, framing the Jews as people making unreasonable demands and false historical claims, juxtaposing them with the reasonable conduct of the Muslim authorities who successfully upheld Islamic tradition and superiority in Jerusalem.

***History*, Grade 10 (Humanities Track), 2025-26, pp. 23-24 (previously: *History of Civilizations*, Grade 10, 2014-15, p. 26)**

مثال: قام الدكتورُ أسد رستم بنقد لوثيقة من وثائق بلاد الشام في عهد محمد علي: وهي رسالةٌ صادرةٌ من محمد شريف باشا حكمدار برّ الشام (في عهد الإدارة المصرية) إلى السيد أحمد آغا دزدار، متسلم القدس(المشرف على الأمن وملتزم الأموال) بتاريخ:

٢٤ربيع الأول ١٢٥٦هـ/٢٧ أيار ١٨٤٠م، يعلمه فيها أنّ محمّد علي باشا قد أصدرَ أمراً يمنع اليهود من تبليطِ أرض البراق، مع إعطائهم حق الزيارة على الوجه القديم.

وهذه الوثيقةُ حاولَ بعضُ المعارضين في اللجنة الدولية التي شُكِّلت لفصم الخصامِ بين المسلمين واليهودِ، في الفترة المعاصرةِ، أن يطعنَ بها.

Example: Dr. Asad Rustum critiqued a document from the documents of Bilad al-Sham from the era of Muhammad Ali: It is a letter issued from Muhammad Sharif Pasha, the governor of the Levant (during the era of the Egyptian administration) to Mr. Ahmad Agha Dizdar, the governor of Jerusalem... dated:

[…] 27 May 1840 CE, informing him that Muhammad Ali Pasha had issued an order forbidding the Jews from paving the ground of the Buraq [wall], while giving them the right to visit according to the established practice.

Some opponents in the international committee that was formed to resolve the dispute between Muslims and Jews in the modern period attempted to challenge this document.

[…]

ب- تأكّدَ من الحقائق التاريخيّة الواردة في الوثيقة:

- مثلِ رغبة اليهودِ في عهدِ محمد علي بتبليطِ أرض البراق.
- تأكّد من وجودِ "محمد شريف باشا" حاكماً عاماً على الشام و"أحمد آغا دزدار" متسلّماً في القدس.

وبذلك أثبت الدكتور رستم صحةَ الوثيقةِ، ودحضَ ادعاء اليهودِ بأن الإدارةَ المصريةَ قد سمحتْ لهم بتعميرِ القدسِ، وتبليط البراق.

"B- Verifying the historical facts contained in the document:

- *Such as the desire of the Jews in the era of Muhammad Ali to pave the ground of the Buraq [wall].*
- *The existence of "Muhammad Sharif Pasha" as a general governor of the Levant and "Ahmad Agha Dizdar" as a governor in Jerusalem was confirmed.*

Thus, Dr. Rustum proved the authenticity of the document and refuted the claim of the Jews that the Egyptian administration had allowed them to build up Jerusalem and pave the [ground of the] Buraq [wall]."

The revised curriculum also retains narratives that challenge Jewish collective identity and historical ties to the Land of Israel. In a section on the Neo-Babylonian Empire (seventh–sixth centuries BCE), the 2025–26 Grade 10 History textbook includes a passage that seeks to undermine Jewish peoplehood and the Jewish historical connection to the land. It characterizes Jews as "a mixture of peoples, not a single nation" and claims that they "imposed their religion on other peoples and practiced religious proselytizing on a wide scale." On this basis, it asserts that "it is absolutely not possible to consider the current Jews as descendants of those few Hebrews who inhabited Palestine thousands of years ago," concluding that the Jewish relationship to the land—referred to exclusively as Palestine—is "religious," rather than "national." By treating mixed ancestry and conversion as grounds for denying collective continuity, the passage conflates biological descent with national identity and dismisses Jews as a historically continuous people. Although it acknowledges a Jewish religious attachment to the land, it denies a corresponding historical and national connection, thereby rejecting Jewish indigeneity and implicitly delegitimizing Jewish claims to national self-determination there. Notably, the passage cites a Syrian Ministry of Education publication from 1995–96, indicating the continued use of an Assad-era narrative in the revised curriculum.

***History*, Grade 10 (Humanities Track), 2025-26, p. 45**

منذُ القديمِ كان اليهودُ أخلاطاً من الناسِ لا شعباً واحداً، كما أنَّهم فرضوا ديانتَهم على الشعوب الأخرى، ومارسوا التبشيرَ الدينيَّ على نطاقٍ واسعٍ، وبالتالي لا يمكنُ اطلاقاً اعتبارُ اليهودِ الحاليّينَ أحفادَ اولئك العبرانيّين القلائلَ الذين سكنوا فلسطينَ قبلَ آلافِ السنين، ممّا يؤكّد أنّ علاقتَهم بفلسطينَ هي علاقةٌ دينيّةٌ لا قوميةٌ.

مجموعة من المؤلفين، التاريخ (موجز تاريخ العرب القديم وصدر الإسلام)، وزارة التربية، ١٩٩٥-١٩٩٦.

Since ancient times, the Jews were a mixture of peoples, not a single nation. They also imposed their religion on other peoples and practiced religious proselytizing on a wide scale. Therefore, it is absolutely not possible to consider the current Jews as descendants of those few Hebrews who inhabited Palestine thousands of years ago, which confirms that their relationship with Palestine is a religious relationship, not a national one.

- A group of authors, History (A Brief History of the Ancient Arabs and Early Islam), Ministry of Education, 1995-1996

Jews, who traditionally share the status of People of the Book with Christians (ahl al-kitāb) and may also fall under the protected pact category (*ahl al-dhimmah*), are not granted protected status in the examples reviewed here. Instead, Jews as a people are collectively and repeatedly associated with betrayal, danger to the Prophet, violation of agreements, misguidance, and hostility to the Muslim community. The curriculum therefore presents both Christianity and Judaism as religiously subordinate to Islam, while treating Jews more harshly, often through negative collective portrayals.

The following Grade 2 Islamic Education example presents Jews as a collective danger to Prophet Muhammad already in his childhood. The lesson recounts the well-known Islamic tradition of the monk Baḥīrā, who meets young Muhammad during a Quraysh trade journey to Bilād al-Shām and recognizes signs of his future prophethood. The textbook does not present the tradition in full; instead, it retells the story in the authors' own abridged language and preserves the warning in which Baḥīrā tells Abū Ṭālib to return Muhammad to Mecca and "keep him safe from the Jews." This editorial choice makes the warning about the Jews one of the central messages of the lesson. Rather than being presented as a specific historical group or individual opponents, the Jews appear as a generalized collective associated with danger to the future Prophet and hostility toward his mission before it has even begun.

***Islamic Education*, Grade 2, 2025-26, p. 52 (previously: *Islamic Education*, Grade 2, 2023-24, p. 58)**

الدّرس الرّابع

رحلتُه ﷺ إلى بلادِ الشّامِ

تهيئة

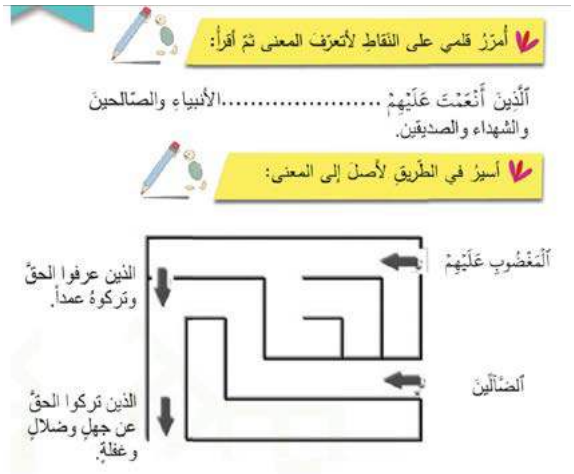
- أقرأُ وأتعلّم:

اعتادتْ قريشٌ أنْ ترسلَ القوافلَ التّجاريّةَ في رحلتين: إلى بلادِ الشّامِ صيفاً، وإلى اليمنِ شتاءً، وكانَ أبو طالبٍ يعملُ بالتّجارةِ، وقد ذهبَ النّبيُّ محمّدٌ صلّى اللّهُ عليه وسلّم مع إحدى هذه القوافل برفقةِ عمّه أبي طالبٍ، ولمّا وصلتِ القافلةُ مدينةَ بصرى الشّام توقّفت للاستراحة. ولفتَ النّبيُّ صلّى اللّهُ عليه وسلّم انتباهَ الرّاهبِ بَحيرى، الّذي أخذَ يسأله عن حالِه، والنّبيُّ صلّى اللّهُ عليه وسلّم يخبرُه، ثمّ سألَ الرّاهبُ بَحيرى أبا طالبٍ عن والدِ محمّدٍ صلّى اللّهُ عليه وسلّم، فأجابَه: إنّه تُوفّي قبلَ ولادته، فقالَ له الرّاهبُ: ارجعْ بابنِ أخيك إلى بلدِه، واحذَرْ عليه يهودَ، فإنَّهُ كائنٌ لابنِ أخيك هذا شأنٌ عظيمٌ، فعادَ أبو طالبٍ إلى مكّةَ المكرّمةِ عملاً بنصيحتِه.

Lesson Four: The Prophet Muhammad's Journey to Bilād al-Shām [Greater Syria]
Preparation
I will read and learn:
Quraysh were used to send trade convoys on two journeys: to Bilād al-Shām in the summer, and to Yemen in the winter. Abu Talib worked in trade, and the Prophet Muhammad went with one of these convoys along with his uncle Abu Talib. When the convoy reached the city of Buṣra in Bilād al-Shām, it stopped for a rest. The Prophet Muhammad attracted the attention of the monk Baḥīrā, who began asking him about himself, and the Prophet spoke to him. The monk Baḥīrā then asked Abu Talib about Muhammad's father, and he answered him saying that he had died before Muhammad was born. The monk told him, 'Take your brother's son back to his town and keep him safe from the Jews, as something great is happening to your brother's son'. Abu Talib then returned to Mecca, in accordance with his advice.

The following Grade 1 Islamic Education example introduces young pupils to a sharper religious hierarchy through the explanation of verses from Surah al-Fatihah. The previous 2023-2024 textbook explained "those who have evoked anger" (al-maġḍūb ʿalayhim) and "those who are astray" (al-ḍāllīn) through a broad moral category as "those who steered away from the path of good." The 2025-2026 textbook replaces this with two more theological definitions. "Those who have evoked anger" are defined as "those who knew the truth and deliberately abandoned it," while "those who are astray" are defined as "those who left the truth out of ignorance and misguidance." The final textbook does not explicitly identify these categories with Jews and Christians, although the directives matrix reportedly proposed doing so. Nevertheless, the revised wording points students toward the same traditional interpretation, in which "those who have evoked anger" and "those who are astray" are commonly understood in Islamic exegetical tradition to refer to Jews and Christians, respectively. The revised Grade 1 lesson therefore teaches children to understand religious error through a theological distinction between knowingly rejecting the truth and deviating from it through ignorance and misguidance. In doing so, it replaces a general moral explanation with a theological hierarchy of correct guidance, deliberate rejection, and religious misguidance, while leaving the traditional identification of these categories with Jews and Christians available to teachers and students.

***Islamic Education*, Grade 1, 2025-26, p. 11 (previously: *Islamic Education*, Grade 1, 2023-24, p. 15)**

2023-24	2025-26
	
• *I shall pass my pen across the dots to become familiar with the meaning, and then I shall read:* *"The path of those upon whom You have bestowed favor" ... the prophets and the virtuous* • *I shall walk on the path to connect with the meaning:* *"Those who have evoked anger" →* *"Those who are astray" → "Those who steered away from the path of good"*	• *I shall pass my pen across the dots to become familiar with the meaning, and then I shall read:* *"The path of those upon whom You have bestowed favor" ... the prophets, the virtuous, the martyrs, and the righteous.* • *I shall walk on the path to connect with the meaning:* *"Those who have evoked anger" → "Those who know the truth and deliberately abandoned it"* *"Those who are astray" → "Those who left the truth out of ignorance and misguidance"*

*Highlighted text shows altered content. *Green text shows added content.

The following Grade 6 Islamic Education example teaches anti-Jewish collective stereotyping as tested religious knowledge by transforming the Battle of the Trench (*ġazwat al-khandaq*) in 627 CE into a general claim about Jews as a whole. In the "Lessons and Takeaways" section, students are taught that "treason and backstabbing are among the traits of the Jews." The assessment section then asks students to mark as correct the statement that "violating agreements and breaking promises are among the traits of the Jews." The stereotype thus appears both as a lesson takeaway and as tested knowledge, teaching students to treat betrayal as an enduring characteristic of Jews rather than as the conduct of specific historical actors in a particular conflict. In terms of the curriculum's portrayal of Jews, this is one of the most severe examples identified in the revised materials, as it presents treachery, disloyalty, and hostility as enduring collective Jewish traits that transcend the specific historical context in which they are introduced.

***Islamic Education*, Grade 6, 2025-2026, pp. 125-126 (previously: *Islamic Education*, Grade 6, 2017-2018, pp. 126-127)**

(p. 125)

الدُّرُوسُ وَالْعِبَرُ المُستَفادةُ مِنْ غَزْوةِ الخَنْدَقِ :

١ – المُشَاوَرَةُ وَتَبَادُلُ الآرَاءِ طَرِيقٌ لِلوُصُوْلِ إِلَى الصَّوَابِ.

٢– الاسْتِعْدَادُ المَادِّيُّ وَالمَعْنَوِيُّ مِنْ أَسْبَابِ النَّصْرِ.

٣– الغَدْرُ وَالخِيَانَةُ مِنْ صِفَاتِ اليَهُودِ.

٤ – نَصَرَ اللهُ ﷻ لِنَبِيِّهِ ﷺ وَلِلْمُؤْمِنِينَ الصَّادِقِينَ.

Lessons and Takeaways from the Battle of the Trench:

1. Consultation and exchange of opinions is the way to reach the right answer.

2. Material and moral preparation is one of the reasons for victory.

3. Treason and backstabbing are among the traits of the Jews.

4. God Almighty aided His Prophet, peace be upon him, and the Righteous Believers.

(p. 126)

التَّقْوِيمُ

١ – مَا سَبَبُ غَزْوَةِ الخَنْدَقِ؟

٢ – ضَعْ إِشَارَةَ (√)إِلَى جَانِبِ العِبَارَةِ الصَّحِيْحَةِ وَإِشَارَةَ (×)إِلَى جَانِبِ العِبَارَةِ غَيرِ الصَّحِيْحَةِ.

– الاسْتِعْدَادُ المَادِّيُّ وَحْدَهُ كَافٍ لِمُلاقَاةِ العَدُوِّ. ◇

– الصَّبْرُ وَالثَّبَاتُ مِنْ أَسْبَابِ النَّصْرِ. ◇

– نَقْضُ العَهْدِ وَإِخْلافُ الوَعْدِ مِنْ صِفَاتِ اليَهُوْدِ ◇

Assessment
1. What was the reason for the Battle of the Trench?
2. Place a checkmark next to a correct statement and an X next to a false statement.
- Material preparation alone is sufficient to face the Enemy.
- Persistence and holding strong are among the reasons for victory.
- Violating agreements and breaking promises are among the traits of the Jews.

The following Grade 11 Islamic Education example turns Qur'anic verses on divine punishment into a classroom exercise focused on Jewish wrongdoing. The lesson teaches Qur'an 4:160-162 from Surah al-Nisāʾ, which refers to wrongdoing by Jews, taking interest (*ribā*) despite its prohibition, the unjust consumption of others' wealth, and a painful punishment for "the disbelievers among them." The verses also distinguish those Jews from "those firm in knowledge among them" who are promised a great reward. The textbook, however, narrows this more nuanced passage into a collective exercise, asking students to "list the Jews' deeds that are mentioned in the verses that made them earn painful torment." In doing so, it downplays the Qur'anic distinction between condemned and praised Jews and instead directs students' attention to "the Jews" as the collective subject of divine punishment. The exercise also highlights accusations connected to usury and unjust consumption of others' wealth, echoing longstanding anti-Jewish stereotypes concerning money and financial misconduct. The result is a pedagogical framing that presents Jews to Grade 11 students through collective wrongdoing, financial immorality, and earned torment, while downplaying the distinctions contained in the Qur'anic passage itself.

***Islamic Education*, Grade 11, 2025-26, pp. 16-19 (previously: *Islamic Education*, Grade 11, 2017-18, pp. 18-21)**

[p. 16]

الدَّرسُ الرَّابع

الأنبياءُ الكرامُ ووحدةُ الرِّسالاتِ

أَقرأُ وأُناقشُ

- هلِ الرِّسالاتُ السَّماويَّةُ تعودُ لأصلٍ واحدٍ؟ وعلامَ يدلُّ ذلكَ؟
- ما الطَّريقُ الذي اتَّبعَهُ الأنبياءُ في تبليغِ رسالاتِهم السَّماويَّةِ جميعِها؟
- اذكرْ بعضَ مزايا رسالةِ النَّبيِّ محمَّدٍ ﷺ.

أَتلُو وأَتعلَّمُ:

(See the continuation of the example on the following page)

بِسْمِ ٱللَّهِ ٱلرَّحْمَٰنِ ٱلرَّحِيمِ

فَبِظُلْمٍ مِّنَ ٱلَّذِينَ هَادُوا۟
حَرَّمْنَا عَلَيْهِمْ طَيِّبَٰتٍ أُحِلَّتْ لَهُمْ وَبِصَدِّهِمْ عَن سَبِيلِ ٱللَّهِ
كَثِيرًا ﴿١٦٠﴾ وَأَخْذِهِمُ ٱلرِّبَوٰا۟ وَقَدْ نُهُوا۟ عَنْهُ وَأَكْلِهِمْ أَمْوَٰلَ ٱلنَّاسِ
بِٱلْبَٰطِلِ ۚ وَأَعْتَدْنَا لِلْكَٰفِرِينَ مِنْهُمْ عَذَابًا أَلِيمًا ﴿١٦١﴾ لَّٰكِنِ
ٱلرَّٰسِخُونَ فِى ٱلْعِلْمِ مِنْهُمْ وَٱلْمُؤْمِنُونَ يُؤْمِنُونَ بِمَآ أُنزِلَ إِلَيْكَ وَمَآ
أُنزِلَ مِن قَبْلِكَ ۚ وَٱلْمُقِيمِينَ ٱلصَّلَوٰةَ ۚ وَٱلْمُؤْتُونَ ٱلزَّكَوٰةَ
وَٱلْمُؤْمِنُونَ بِٱللَّهِ وَٱلْيَوْمِ ٱلْءَاخِرِ ۚ أُو۟لَٰٓئِكَ سَنُؤْتِيهِمْ أَجْرًا عَظِيمًا ﴿١٦٢﴾

Lesson 4: The Noble Prophets and the Unity of [Divine] Messages
[...]
I will recite and learn:
In the name of Allah, the Most Gracious, the Most Merciful
"We forbade the Jews certain foods that had been lawful to them for their wrongdoing, and for hindering many from the Way of Allah, taking interest despite its prohibition, and consuming people's wealth unjustly. We have prepared for the disbelievers among them a painful torment. But those with solid knowledge among them and those with true faith believe in what has been revealed to you [O Prophet] and what was revealed before you – especially those who establish prayer and those who pay alms-tax and believe in Allah and the Last Day. To these, We will grant a great reward." [Surat al-Nisaa': verses 160-162]

[p. 19]

الأنشطةُ التَّعلّميّةُ والتّقويميّةُ

١- عدِّدْ أعمالَ اليهودِ الواردةَ في الآياتِ والتي استحقُّوا بها العذابَ الأليمَ.
٢- استخرجْ من النَّصِّ القرآنيِّ آيةً تدلُّ على وحدةِ الرِّسالاتِ السَّماويَّةِ.
٣- استنتجْ من الآيةِ (١٦٥) الحكمةَ من إرسالِ اللهِ تَعالى الرُّسلَ للنَّاسِ.

Educational and Evaluative Activities:
1- List the Jews' deeds that are mentioned in the verses that made them earn painful torment.
2- Select a verse from the Quranic text indicating the oneness of the Divine Revelations.
3- Extract from verse 165 Allah's wisdom in sending His Messengers to the people.

The following Grade 11 Islamic Education example uses a Jew as the negative counterpart through whom students learn the Islamic ethics of conduct toward non-Muslims. The lesson praises Prophet Muhammad's forbearance, forgiveness, and refusal to seek personal revenge. The narrative chosen to illustrate these virtues centers on a Jew who comes to collect a debt from the Prophet, seizes his robe, raises his voice, and speaks harshly to him. Although the story ultimately highlights the Prophet's patience and justice—he instructs ʿUmar to treat the Jew respectfully and repays

the debt with additional compensation for frightening him, after which the Jew converts to Islam—it nevertheless casts the Jewish character as the negative figure through whom these virtues are demonstrated. The lesson therefore teaches tolerance and justice toward non-Muslims through a narrative in which the Jewish figure first appears as rude, physically disrespectful, and morally corrected by the Prophet's superior conduct.

The textbook's abridgment strengthens this effect. The passage appears to be based on the tradition of Zayd ibn Saʿnah, a Jewish scholar who tested the Prophet's forbearance before accepting Islam, but the textbook omits his name, his scholarly status, his motive of testing prophethood, and his later place among the Prophet's Companions.[198] Students are instead left with a simplified narrative in which a Jew mistreats the Prophet over a debt, and the Prophet responds with patience and justice, ending with the Jew converting to Islam. Unlike the Grade 6 Battle of the Trench lesson, this example does not explicitly attribute a collective trait to Jews. Instead, it contributes to the same broader pattern by repeatedly casting Jews in negative narrative roles: as a threat to Muhammad, breakers of agreements, associated with wrongdoing and divine punishment, and here as disrespectful toward the Prophet before ultimately embracing Islam.

***Islamic Education*, Grade 11, 2025-2026, p. 141 (previously: *Islamic Education*, Grade 11, 2017-2018, p. 151)**

معاملةُ غيرِ المسلمينَ .

كانَ ﷺ عظيمَ الحلمِ والعفو في معاملتِهِ، وما انتقمَ لنفسِهِ قطّ، من ذلكَ أنَّهُ جاءَهُ يهوديّ يتقاضاهُ دَيناً لهُ عليهِ، فأخذَ اليهوديّ بمجامعِ ثيابِ النَّبيّ ﷺ وأغلظَ لهُ القولَ، فانتهرَهُ عمرُ رضي الله عنه فقالَ رسولُ اللهِ ﷺ لعمرَ رضي الله عنه : " أنا وهو، كنَّا إلى غيرِ هذا منكَ أحوجَ يا عمرُ تأمرُني بحُسنِ القضاءِ، وتأمرُهُ بحُسنِ التَّقاضي " .

ثمَّ قالَ ﷺ : " لقدْ بقيَ من أجلِهِ ثلاثٌ " ، وأمرَ عمرَ رضي الله عنه أنْ يقضيَهُ مالَهُ ويزيدَهُ عشرينَ صاعاً لما روَّعَهُ (١). وكانَ هذا سببَ إسلامِ اليهوديّ .

Conduct toward non-Muslims:
Prophet Muhammad, peace be upon him, was of great self-control (ḥilm) and forgiveness (ʿafw) in his conduct, and he never sought vengeance for himself alone. For instance, once a Jew came to him to collect a debt the Prophet owed him. The Jew grabbed onto the hem of the Prophet's robe, and raised his voice at the Prophet. Then Umar, may Allah be pleased with him, scolded the Jew in harsh words, but the Messenger of Allah said to Umar, may Allah be please with him: "I and he, we were at utmost need from you for something else, O Umar. You should have instructed me to settle the debt properly, and instruct him [the Jew] to demand repayment properly." Then [Prophet Muhammad]: "There are still three more [days] left [before the debt payment]," and Umar, Allah be pleased with him, ordered to repay the debt to the Jew, and even to add twenty ṣāʿ [a traditional dry measure] for frightening the Jew, and that became the reason for the Jew's conversion to Islam.

The examples in this subchapter show a religious hierarchy in which Islam defines the meaning, status, and moral standing of Judaism and Christianity. Christianity appears mainly as an earlier revelation and a community that can be tolerated or protected under Islamic authority. Judaism receives a much harsher treatment. In the early grades, Jews are associated with danger to the Prophet Muhammad and with categories of rejected or misguided truth. By Grade 6,

198 The textbook passage appears to be an abridged version of the ḥadīth of Zayd ibn Saʿnah's conversion to Islam. In the fuller version, Zayd ibn Saʿnah is described as a Jewish scholar (*ḥabr*) who tested Prophet Muhammad's forbearance by demanding repayment before the debt was due and behaving harshly toward him. After the Prophet instructed ʿUmar to repay him and add twenty ṣāʿ because ʿUmar had frightened him, Zayd explained that he had been testing signs of prophethood and then accepted Islam. The ḥadīth is cited in Ibn Ḥibbān, al-Ṭabarānī, and al-Ḥākim; al-Haythamī judged its transmitters trustworthy. See al-Durar al-Saniyyah, "Ḥadīth of Zayd ibn Saʿnah," citing Ibn Ḥibbān, no. 288; al-Ṭabarānī, *al-Muʿjam al-Kabīr*, no. 5147; al-Ḥākim, no. 6547; and al-Haythamī, *Majmaʿ al-Zawāʾid*, 8/242, https://dorar.net/h/xqzZ3vwo.

the curriculum teaches explicit collective anti-Jewish stereotyping by presenting betrayal and broken promises as Jewish traits. In Grade 11, Qur'anic verses are turned into an exercise on Jewish deeds that earned painful torment, and a lesson on tolerance toward non-Muslims uses a Jew as the figure whose misconduct demonstrates the Prophet's superior patience and justice. The curricular pattern is therefore clear: Christians and Jews are subordinated to Islam, but Jews are repeatedly marked as dangerous, treacherous, financially immoral, punished, and in need of correction through Islamic moral authority. This subchapter shows that Islamic supersessionism in the revised curriculum is applied most consistently and negatively to Jews as a collective.

The Sunni-Shi'i Divide and the Marginalization of Shi'i-Associated Traditions

The revised curriculum presents Islamic history and religious memory through an emboldened Sunni-centered framework. The clearest example appears in a Grade 10 History textbook, where the Fatimid Caliphate (*al-ḫilāfah al-fāṭimiyyah*) or Fatimid State (*al-dawlah al-fāṭimiyyah*) is renamed the ʿUbaydid State (*al-dawlah al-ʿubaydiyyah*) and recast from a major Islamic dynasty in Arab-Islamic history with achievements and internal diversity as a deceptive, violent, oppressive regime, originating in infidel-branded Shi'i sects, hostile to Sunnis and aligned with Islam's external enemies. Other examples reinforce Sunni authority through symbolic, genealogical, and title revisions. In Grade 6 Islamic Education textbooks, the revised example adds that Abū Bakr al-Ṣiddīq (d. 634 CE) was "the most knowledgeable and bravest of the noble Companions by far," placing him above all other Companions of Prophet Muhammad in knowledge and bravery, including ʿAlī ibn Abī Ṭālib (d. 661 CE), the central figure of Shiʿi claims to leadership after the Prophet. In a Grade 8 Islamic Education textbook, the revised edition leaves Fatimah's biography largely unchanged but removes the honorific title "the Radiant" (*al-Zahrāʾ*) wherever it appears alongside her name. Fatimah remains highly valued as the Prophet's daughter, wife of ʿAlī, mother of Hassan (*al-ḥasan*) and Hussein (*al-ḥusayn*), and a model Muslim woman, but the honorific title particularly associated with Shiʿi devotional tradition is removed (these examples are expounded below).

A similar Sunni-centered reframing appears in Grade 12 Islamic Education, where Jaʿfar al-Ṣādiq, a central figure in Shiʿi tradition, remains highly respected but is presented through his descent from Abū Bakr and through the statement "Abū Bakr bore me twice" (*waladanī abū bakr marratayn*). In a Grade 5 Islamic Education textbook, the title "Mother of the Believers" (*umm al-muʾminīn*) is removed from Khadījah's lesson title, while the lesson itself remains respectful toward her. Together, these examples show a broader Sunni-centered reshaping of Islamic memory: Shiʿi-associated dynasties are delegitimized, Shiʿi-associated figures are absorbed into Sunni genealogical and doctrinal frameworks, contested Sunni figures are elevated, and symbolic titles with stronger Shiʿi resonance are removed or replaced.[199]

The following example compares the presentation of the Fatimid State in the 2014-2015 Grade 10 History textbook with its revised presentation in the 2025-2026 version.[200] The revised example shows a complete reversal in the curriculum's treatment of the Fatimids. The 2014-2015 textbook presented the Fatimid State as part of Arab-Islamic civilization. It accepted the conventional name "Fatimid," explained the dynasty's claimed connection to Fatimah al-Zahrāʾ, and emphasized its political, administrative, social, cultural, and scientific achievements. It also described the Fatimid caliphate as intellectually and religiously tolerant, stating that Muslims, Copts, and Jews were treated according to one law.

The 2025-2026 textbook does not merely revise this positive framing. It delegitimizes the dynasty at its foundations. The name "Fatimid" is rejected as a false claim intended to deceive Muslims, while "ʿUbaydid" is presented as the correct name. The dynasty's attribution to the Prophet's family is described as "false and fabricated," and its founder is said to be of Magian origin. The new version also adds explicitly sectarian accusations: the ʿUbaydid state is said to have been marked by "fanaticism and extremism (*al-taʿaṣṣub wa-l-ǧuluww*) for the Shi'i madhhab" against the People of the

199 *Islamic Education*, Grade 5, 2025-26, p. 53 (previously: *Islamic Education*, Grade 6, 2017-2018, p. 54).
For a lesson about the sixth Shi'i Imam Ja'far al-Ṣādiq which ignores his widely renowned status as one of the formative figures for the Shi'a, see *Islamic Education*, Grade 12, 2025-26, pp. 160-161 (previously: Islamic Education, Grade 12, 2017-18, pp. 164-165).

200 Similar changes have been noted in the Grade 7 History textbook (previously: *History*, Grade 7, 2013-14 Idlib Temporary Government (Syrian Opposition)). These include changes from "Fatimid" to "'Ubaydid" (pp. 81, 91), removing a paragraph on "The Fatimid State's Trade Ties with Byzantium, East Asia, and Europe" (p. 83), removing an exercise tasking students to weigh the civilizational achievements of the Fatimid and Mamluk states (p. 91), and removing a lesson on "The Civilizational Development of the Fatimid State" (pp. 92-94). The older reference used here is the textbook published by the Syrian Interim Government (Syrian Opposition in Idlib), because the corresponding Assad-era original textbook was not directly available for this comparison.

Sunnah (*ahl al-sunnah*), including the persecution of Sunni scholars such as Abū Bakr al-Nābulsī, whom the textbook says the ʿUbaydids skinned and stuffed. The lesson further accuses the ʿUbaydids of conspiring and cooperating with the Crusaders against Muslims. This changes the historical message sharply. The Fatimids are no longer presented as a major Islamic dynasty with achievements and internal diversity; they are recast as a deceptive Shiʻi-associated regime, hostile to Sunni scholars and even aligned with Islam's external enemies. The result is a sectarian reclassification of the Fatimids from part of Arab-Islamic civilization into an illegitimate and dangerous anti-Sunni force within Islamic history, recasting medieval Ismāʿīlī-Shiʿi political authority as a narrative of false genealogy, doctrinal extremism, anti-Sunni persecution, and treason.

***History*, Grade 10 (Humanities Track), 2025-26, pp. 149-152 (previously: *History of Civilization*, Grade 10, 2014-15, pp. 143-147)**

2014-15	2025-26
(p. 143) سنتعرّفُ في هذا الدرس قيامَ الدولةِ الفاطميّةِ وأهمَّ منجزاتِها الحضاريّةِ. أولاً: تأسيسُ الدولةِ الفاطميّةِ: سُمِّيَتِ الدولةُ الفاطميّةُ نسبةً إلى السيدةِ فاطمةَ الزهراءِ بنتِ الرسولِ (ص) وزوجِ ابنِ عمِّه عليِّ بنِ أبي طالبٍ (كرّمَ اللهُ وجهَهُ)، التي ينتسبُ لها مؤسّسو الدولةِ، ويعودُ الفضلُ الأكبرُ في قيامِ الدولةِ الفاطميّةِ في المغربِ للداعيةِ أبي عبدِ اللهِ، الذي كلّفَه الإمامُ عبيدُ اللهِ المهديُّ بالذهابِ إلى المغربِ ونشرِ الدعوةِ فيها.	(p. 149) يدعي مؤسسو الدولة العبيديّة نسبة إلى فاطمة الزهراء، ولكن حقيقة التسمية هي الدولة العبيديّة نسبة لعبد الله المهدي مؤسس هذه الدولة، ولقّب نفسه المهدي أمير المؤمنين ليظهر نفسه تقيّاً وخادماً للمسلمين، والحقيقة أنّ تسمية الدولة الفاطميّة تسمية كاذبة أراد بها أصحابها خداع المسلمين بالتسمي باسم بنت رسول الله صلى الله عليه وسلم، وقد بين العلماء والمؤرّخون في ذلك الزّمان كذب تلك الدعوة، وأن مؤسسها أصله مجوسي واسمه عبيد الله ولقّب نفسه بالمهدي لذلك فالنسبة الصّحيحة لدولته أن يقال الدولة العبيدية كما ذكر ذلك جملة من المحقّقين، ويظهر أن انتسابهم إلى آل البيت كذب وزور، وإنّما أظهروا ذلك الانتساب لاستمالة قلوب النّاس.
In this lesson, we shall learn about the establishment of the Fatimid state and its most important civilizational achievements. *First, The Establishment of the Fatimid State:* *The Fatimid state was named after Lady Fāṭimah the Radiant (al-Zahrāʾ), daughter of the Messenger, peace be upon him, and wife of his cousin ʿAlī ibn Abī Ṭālib, may Allah honor his face, to whom the founders of the state attributed themselves. The greatest credit for the establishment of the Fatimid state in the Maghreb belongs to the preacher Abū ʿAbd Allāh, whom Imam ʿUbayd Allāh al-Mahdī assigned to go to the Maghreb and spread the call there.*	*The founders of the ʿUbaydid state claim descent from Fāṭimah the Radiant (al-Zahrāʾ). But the truth about the naming is that the ʿUbaydid state originates in ʿUbayd Allāh al-Mahdī, the founder of this state. He gave himself the title al-Mahdī, Commander of the Believers (amīr al-muʾminīn), in order to present himself as pious and as a servant of the Muslims. The truth is that the naming of the state as Fatimid is a false name by which its owners intended to deceive Muslims by naming themselves after the daughter of the Messenger of Allah, peace be upon him. Scholars and historians at that time clarified the falsehood of that claim, and that its founder was of Magian (majūsī) origin, and his name was ʿUbayd Allāh, who gave himself the title al-Mahdī. Therefore, the correct lineage for his state is to call it the ʿUbaydid state, as a number of scholars have stated. It appears that their descendance from the House of the Prophet (āl al-bayt) was false and fabricated, and that they only displayed this lineage in order to win over people's hearts.*
(p. 144) • الفاطميّون في مصر: بدأت الحملاتُ الفاطميّةُ على مصرَ منذُ عهدِ الخليفةِ الأوّلِ عبيدِ اللهِ المهديِّ حيثُ أرسلوا ثلاثَ حملاتٍ في الأعوامِ ٣٠١ـ٣٠٧ـ٣٢٢هـ وقد أخفقتْ في تحقيقِ أهدافِها بسببِ تصدّي الدولةِ العباسيّةِ وقادتِها في مصرَ. أما الحملةُ الرابعةُ فقد كانتْ بقيادةِ جوهرٍ الصقليِّ، وانطلقتْ من القيروانِ، عامَ ٣٥٨ هـ/٩٦٨م، واستولتْ على الإسكندريّةِ ثم مدينةِ الفسطاطِ، وقضتْ على الإخشيديّينَ في مصرَ، وكتبَ جوهرٌ الصقليُّ أماناً لأهلِ مصرَ على أنفسِهم وأموالِهم وعقائدِهم، وتعهّدَ لهم برفعِ الظلمِ وإلغاءِ الضرائبِ الجائرةِ. • تأسيسُ القاهرةِ: عسكرَ جوهرٌ الصقليُّ بجيشِه في الموقعِ الذي أنشأ فيه مدينةَ القاهرةِ، ويقعُ شماليَّ شرقِ الفسطاطِ، ويبعدُ عن النيلِ حوالي الميلِ، وبنى فيها قصراً ضخماً ليستقبلَ فيه الخليفةَ المعزَّ، وأسمى المدينةَ كلَّها "المنصوريّةَ"، وبعدَ أربعِ سنواتٍ قدمَ المعزُّ إليها وأسماها القاهرةَ تفاؤلاً بها، كما بنى فيها الجامعَ الأزهرَ الذي تحوّلَ إلى جامعةٍ علميّةٍ منذ عامِ ٣٧٨هـ/٩٨٨م، وأُلحقتْ به مكتبةٌ كبيرةٌ، وأغدقَ عليه الخلفاءُ الإنفاقَ، وعلى علمائِه الرعايةَ، وأصبحَ الأزهرُ منذ ذلك الوقتِ من أكبرِ الجامعاتِ وأعظمِ مراكزِ التعليمِ في العالمِ وموئلاً للعلماءِ ومقصداً للطلابِ. ٣٠٥ هـ، وأن المهديّ انتقل إليها سنة ٣٠٨ هـ وأعطاها اسم المهدية نسبة إلى نفسه. ابن الأثير، الكامل في التاريخ، ج٨، ص٢٠ الشكل (١٠) الجامع الأزهر	(p. 149) العبيديون في مصر: بدأت الحملاتُ العبيديةُ على مصرَ منذُ عهدِ الحاكمِ الأوّلِ عبيدِ اللهِ المهديِّ حيثُ أرسلوا ثلاثَ حملاتٍ أعوامَ ٣٠١-٣٠٧-٣٢٢ هـ وقد أخفقتْ في تحقيقِ أهدافِها بسببِ تصدّي الدولةِ العباسيّةِ وقادتِها في مصرَ. أما الحملةُ الرابعةُ فقد كانتْ بقيادةِ جوهرٍ الصقليِّ، وانطلقتْ من القيروانِ، عامَ ٣٥٨ هـ/٩٦٨م، واستولتْ على الإسكندريّةِ ثم مدينةِ الفسطاطِ، وقضتْ على المقاومةِ الإخشيديّةِ في مصرَ، وكتبَ جوهرٌ الصقليُّ أماناً لأهلِ مصرَ على أنفسِهم وأموالِهم وعقائدِهم، وتعهدَ لهم برفعِ الظلمِ وإلغاءِ الضرائبِ الجائرةِ ولكنه غدرَ بهم وعاملهم ببطشٍ ووحشيةٍ. تأسيسُ القاهرةِ: عسكرَ جوهرٌ الصقليُّ بجيشِه في الموقعِ الذي أنشأ فيه مدينةَ القاهرةِ، ويقعُ شمالَ شرقيَّ الفسطاطِ، ويبعدُ عن النيلِ حوالي الميلِ، وبنى فيها قصراً ضخماً ليستقبلَ فيه الحاكمَ المعزَّ، وأسمى المدينةَ كلَّها "المنصوريّةَ"، وبعدَ أربعِ سنواتٍ قدمَ المعزُّ إليها وأسماها القاهرةَ تفاؤلاً بها، كما بنى فيها الجامعَ الأزهرَ الذي تحوّلَ إلى جامعةٍ علميّةٍ منذ عامِ ٣٧٨هـ/٩٨٨م، وأُلحقتْ به مكتبةٌ كبيرةٌ، ولكن عبيدَ اللهِ المهديَّ قامَ بإعدامِ العلماءِ والفقهاءِ ليتمكنَ من إغواءِ الخلقِ وإفسادِهم وفيما بعدُ أصبحَ الأزهرُ منذ ذلك الوقتِ من أكبرِ الجامعاتِ وأعظمِ مراكزِ التعليمِ موئلاً للعلماءِ ومقصداً للطلابِ. الشكل (١١) الجامع الأزهر

(See the continuation of the example on the following page)

2014-15	2025-26
The Fatimids in Egypt: *The Fatimid campaigns in Egypt began during the rule of the first caliph, ʿUbayd Allāh al-Mahdī, who sent three campaigns between the years 301-307 AH / 913-922 CE. They failed to achieve their goals because of the Abbasid state's resistance and its commanders in Egypt. The fourth campaign was led by Jawhar al-Ṣiqillī. It set out from al-Qayrawān in 358 AH / 968 CE, took Alexandria, then the city of al-Fusṭāṭ, and eliminated Ikhshidid resistance in Egypt. Jawhar al-Ṣiqillī wrote a guarantee of safety for the people of Egypt regarding their lives, property, and beliefs, and pledged to remove injustice and cancel the oppressive taxes.* *The Founding of Cairo* *Jawhar al-Ṣiqillī camped with his army at the site where he founded the city of Cairo. It is located northeast of al-Fusṭāṭ and is about one mile away from the Nile. He built in it a large palace to receive the Caliph al-Muʿizz, and called the entire city "al-Manṣūriyyah". Four years after al-Muʿizz arrived there, he named it Cairo, as an omen of success. He also built in it al-Azhar Mosque, which has become an academic university since 378 AH / 988 CE, and placed a large library next to it. The caliphs financed it abundantly and granted its scholars (ʿulamāʾ) generous sponsorship. Since that time, al-Azhar became one of the largest universities and greatest centers of education, a home for scholars and a destination for students.*	*The ʿUbaydids in Egypt* *The ʿUbaydid campaigns in Egypt began during the rule of the first ruler, ʿUbayd Allāh al-Mahdī, who sent three campaigns between the years 301-307 AH / 913-922 CE. They failed to achieve their goals because of the Abbasid state's resistance and its commanders in Egypt. The fourth campaign was led by Jawhar al-Ṣiqillī. It set out from al-Qayrawān in 358 AH / 968 CE, took Alexandria, then the city of al-Fusṭāṭ, and eliminated Ikhshidid resistance in Egypt. Jawhar al-Ṣiqillī wrote a guarantee of safety for the people of Egypt regarding their lives, property, and beliefs, and pledged to remove injustice and cancel the oppressive taxes. But he betrayed them and treated them with oppression and brutality.* *The Founding of Cairo* *Jawhar al-Ṣiqillī camped with his army at the site where he founded the city of Cairo. It is located northeast of al-Fusṭāṭ and is about one mile away from the Nile. He built in it a large palace to receive the ruler al-Muʿizz, and called the entire city "al-Manṣūriyyah". Four years after al-Muʿizz arrived there, he named it "al-Qāhirah" [i.e. Cairo], as an omen of success. He also built in it al-Azhar Mosque, which has become an academic university since 378 AH / 988 CE and next to it, a large library was placed. Yet ʿUbayd Allāh al-Mahdī executed religious scholars (ʿulamāʾ) and jurists (fuqahāʾ) so he would be able to undermine morality and corrupt them [i.e. the Muslim clergy]. Since that time, al-Azhar became one of the largest universities and greatest centers of education, a home for scholars and a destination for students.*
(p. 145) • **الفاطميّون في الشّام:** حاول الفاطميّون ضمّ بلاد الشام إلى نفوذهم، فأرسلَ جوهرٌ الصقّلي جيشاً بقيادة جعفر بن فلاح استولى على دمشق عام ٣٥٩هـ/ ٩٦٩م، إلا أنّه لم يتقدّمْ شمالاً لوجود الدولة الحمدانيّة القويّة في حلب، حيث كان الخليفةُ الفاطميّ المعزّ حريصاً على مهادنتها، فأرسلَ إلى قائده كتاباً يحذّرُهُ من عواقب الاصطدام بالحمدانيّين ويأمرُه باعتماد سياسة اللين معهم، وهكذا نلاحظ أنّ الدولةَ الفاطميّةَ قامتْ أولاً في المغرب في أواخر القرن الثالث الهجري٣٥٧هـ/٩٦٧م، ثم انتقلتْ إلى مصرَ بعد منتصف القرن الرابع الهجري٣٥٨هـ، ومنتْ نفوذُها من القاهرة إلى مُعظم بلاد المشرق العربيّ، وبسبب الصراعات الداخلية في الخلافة الفاطمية، ورغبة في توحيد بلاد الشام ومصر لملاقاة الصليبيين، قام صلاح الدين الأيوبيّ بالقضاء على الدويلات المستقلة في بلاد الشام ومصر بما فيها الخلافة الفاطمية عام ٥٦٧هـ / ١١٧١م. **ثانياً: المنجزاتُ الحضاريّةُ:** • **المجالُ السياسيُّ والإداريّ:** اتّخذَ الحكامُ الفاطميّون لقبَ الخليفة، وكانُوا يتمتعون بسلْطتَين زمنيّةٍ (سياسية) ودينيّةٍ، فالخليفة هو "الإمامُ" وهو صاحبُ السلطة المطلقة، يليه الوزيرُ ثمّ العمّالُ(حكّامُ الولايات) وهؤلاء يمارسون سلطاتهم على الرعايا في الدولة. كما اهتمّ الخلفاءُ الفاطميّون بالدواوين، وجعلُوا لكلّ ولايةٍ في دولتهم ديواناً خاصّاً بها، واتّخذُوا من قلعةِ الجبلِ مركزاً للبريد الذي ارتقى في عهدهم، وأفردُوا له ديواناً خاصّاً به، واهتمُّوا بالحمام الزاجل لنقل الرسائل، كما طوّروا نظامَ الشرطة والحسبة والقضاء، ووضعوا نظاماً إداريّاً علميّاً دقيقاً. أمّا الجيش فقد نجحَ الفاطميّون في تكوين جيشٍ ضخمٍ اعتمدُوا فيه على عناصرَ مختلفةٍ، وكانوا بعيدي النظر حين أدركوا أنّ الجيوشَ البريّةَ وحدَها لا تكفي لحمايةِ العالم الإسلاميّ، فوجّه الفاطميّون عنايةً خاصّةً للبحريةِ فأنشؤوا أسطولاً ضخماً حمى البلادَ من هجماتِ البيزنطيّين وغزواتِ الصليبيين. كما حفظَ الثغورَ البحريّةَ للدولة، وعلى الأخصّ بعد أن وسّعَ الفاطميّون نفوذَهم على جزءٍ كبيرٍ من سواحلِ المتوسّط، وكانَ المعزُّ لدين الله أولَ من وضعَ نظامَ البحريّةِ في مصرَ، ونسجَ على منوالِهِ منْ جاءَ بعدَه من الخلفاءِ الفاطميّين.	(p. 150) **العبيديون في الشّام:** حاول العبيديون ضمّ بلاد الشام لنفوذهم، فأرسلَ جوهرٌ الصقّلي جيشاً بقيادة جعفر بن فلاح استولّى على دمشق عام ٣٥٩هـ/ ٩٦٩م، إلا أنّه لم يتقدّمْ شمالاً لوجود الدولة الحمدانيّة القويّة في حلب، حيث كان الحاكم العبيديّ المعزّ حريصاً على مهادنتها، فأرسلَ إلى قائده كتاباً يحذّرُهُ من عواقب الاصطدام بالحمدانيّين ويأمرُه باعتماد سياسة اللين معهم. وهكذا نلاحظ أنّ الدولة العبيدية قامتْ أولاً في المغرب في أواخر القرن الثالث الهجري٢٥٧هـ/٩٦٧م، ثم انتقلتْ إلى مصرَ بعد منتصف القرن الرابع الهجري٣٥٨هـ، ومنتْ نفوذُها من القاهرة إلى مُعظم بلاد المشرق العربيّ، قضى عليها القائد الإسلامي صلاح الدين الأيوبي سنة ٥٦٧هـ / ١١٧١م . • **المجالُ السياسيُّ والإداريّ:** اتّخذَ الحكامُ العبيديون لقبَ الخليفة، وكانُوا يتمتعون بسلْطتَين زمنيّةٍ (سياسية) ودينيّةٍ، فالخليفة هو "الإمامُ" وهو صاحبُ السلطة المطلق، يليه الوزيرُ ثمّ العمّالُ(حكّامُ الولايات) وهؤلاء يمارسون سلطاتهم على الرعايا في الدولة. كما اهتمّ العبيديون بالدواوين، وجعلُوا لكلّ ولايةٍ في دولتهم ديواناً خاصّاً بها، واتّخذُوا من قلعةِ الجبلِ مركزاً للبريد الذي ارتقى في عهدهم، وأفردُوا له ديواناً خاصّاً به، واهتمُّوا بالحمام الزاجل لنقل الرسائل، كما طوّروا نظامَ الشرطة والحسبة والقضاء، ووضعوا نظاماً إداريّاً علميّاً دقيقاً. أمّا الجيش فقد نجح العبيديون في تكوين جيشٍ ضخمٍ اعتمدُوا فيه على عناصرَ مختلفةٍ، ادعى العبيديون حماية العالم الإسلامي لكنهم تآمروا مع الصليبيين وتعاونوا معهم ضد المسلمين وتبادلوا السفارات. كما مد العبيديون نفوذهم إلى سواحل المتوسط ووضع المعز لدين الله العبيدي

(See the continuation of the example on the following page)

2014-15	2025-26
The Fatimids in Bilad al-Sham *The Fatimids tried to incorporate Bilad al-Sham into their sphere of influence. Jawhar al-Ṣiqillī sent an army led by Jaʿfar ibn Falāḥ, who seized Damascus in 359 AH / 969 CE. However, he did not advance northward because of the presence of the powerful Hamdanid state in Aleppo. Since the Fatimid Caliph al-Muʿizz was keen to maintain friendly relations with it, he sent a letter to his commander warning him of the consequences of clashing with the Hamdanids and ordering him to adopt a soft policy toward them. Thus, we observe that the Fatimid state first arose in the Maghreb in the late third century AH (357 AH [sic; i.e. 257 AH] / 967 CE), then moved to Egypt after the middle of the fourth century AH (358 AH), and extended its influence from Cairo to most of the Arab East. Because of internal conflicts within the Fatimid caliphate, and because of its desire to unite Bilad al-Sham and Egypt in order to meet the Crusaders, the commander Ṣalāḥ al-Dīn al-Ayyūbī eliminated the independent small states in Bilad al-Sham and Egypt, including the Fatimid caliphate, in 567 AH / 1171 CE.* *Second, Civilizational Achievements:* *The Political and Administrative Field* *The Fatimid rulers adopted the title of Caliph and enjoyed two sorts of authority: temporal, meaning political, and religious. The caliph was the "imam", holder of absolute authority. Under him came the vizier, and then the province governors, who exercised their authority over subjects in the state. The Fatimid caliphs also cared for administrative bureaus, and assigned each province in their state its own bureau. They made mountain fortresses into centers of postal service, which advanced during their era, and assigned it its own bureau. They also cared for carrier pigeons to transport messages, developed the police, market inspection, and judicial systems, and established an accurate administrative-scientific system.* *As for the army, the Fatimids succeeded in forming a large army that relied on various elements. They were farsighted when they realized that land armies alone were not sufficient to protect the Islamic world, so the Fatimids gave special attention to the navy. They established a huge fleet that protected the country from Byzantine attacks and Crusader invasions. It also protected the maritime frontiers of the state, especially after the Fatimids expanded their influence over a large part of the Mediterranean coast. Al-Muʿizz li-Dīn Allāh was the first to establish a naval system in Egypt, and those who came after him among the Fatimid caliphs followed his path.*	*The ʿUbaydids in Bilad al-Sham* *The ʿUbaydids tried to incorporate Bilad al-Sham into their sphere of influence. Jawhar al-Ṣiqillī sent an army led by Jaʿfar ibn Falāḥ, who seized Damascus in 359 AH / 969 CE. However, he did not advance northward because of the presence of the powerful Hamdanid state in Aleppo. Since the ʿUbaydid ruler al-Muʿizz was keen to maintain friendly relations with it, he sent a letter to his commander warning him of the consequences of clashing with the Hamdanids and ordering him to adopt a soft policy toward them. Thus, we observe that the ʿUbaydid state first arose in the Maghreb in the late third century AH (257 AH / 967 CE), then moved to Egypt after the middle of the fourth century AH (358 AH), and extended its influence from Cairo to most of the Arab East. The Islamic commander Ṣalāḥ al-Dīn al-Ayyūbī eliminated it in 567 AH / 1171 CE.* *The Political and Administrative Field* *The ʿUbaydid rulers adopted the title of Caliph and enjoyed two sorts of authority: temporal, meaning political, and religious. The caliph was the "imam", holder of absolute authority. Under him came the vizier, and then the province governors, who exercised their authority over subjects in the state. The ʿUbaydids also cared for administrative bureaus, and assigned each province in their state its own bureau. They made mountain fortresses into centers of postal service, which advanced during their era, and assigned it its own bureau. They also cared for carrier pigeons to transport messages, developed the police, market inspection, and judicial systems, and established an accurate administrative-scientific system.* *As for the army, the ʿUbaydids succeeded in forming a large army that relied on various elements. They were farsighted when they realized that land armies alone were not sufficient to protect the Islamic world, but they conspired with the Crusaders and cooperated with them against the Muslims and exchanged embassies. The ʿUbaydids also extended their influence over the Mediterranean coasts, and ʿUbaydid al-Muʿizz li-Dīn Allāh established the first naval system in Egypt, and those who came after him among the ʿUbaydid caliphs followed his path.*

(See the continuation of the example on the following page)

2014-15	2025-26
(p. 146) • المجالُ الاجتماعيُّ: تألّفَ المجتمعُ من طبقاتٍ متعدّدةٍ، وقد تمتّعتِ المرأةُ عندَهم بمكانةٍ رفيعةٍ، وأثّر بعضُهنّ في الحياةِ السياسيّةِ مثلُ ستِ المُلْكِ شقيقةِ الحاكمِ بأمرِ الله، واحتفلُوا بالأعيادِ الدينيّةِ مثلِ عيدِ رأسِ السنةِ الهجريّةِ وعيدِ المولدِ النبويِّ..الخ. • المجالُ الثقافيُّ: شجّعَ الفاطميّون العلمَ والأدبَ ولاسيّما الحاكمُ بأمرِ الله الفاطميُّ الذي أقيم في عهدِه مرصدٌ على جبلِ المقطّمِ لرصدِ النجومِ، وكان من أهمِّ مَراكزِ الثقافةِ في عهدِهم المساجدُ مثلُ الأزهرِ، والقصورُ والمكتباتُ كدارِ الحكمةِ ومكتبةِ العزيز. اتسمَتِ الخلافةُ الفاطميّةُ بالتسامحِ الفكريِّ والدينيِّ مع المذاهبِ الأخرى في الدولةِ. "كانتِ الدولةُ الفاطميةُ متسامحةً إلى حدودٍ بعيدةٍ، فالمسلم والقبطي واليهودي كانوا يلقون معاملة واحدة، وهذا ساعد على مزج العناصر المصرية بعضها ببعض، كما ساعد على ازدهار الحياة الاقتصادية والفنية في البلاد". أحمد مختار العبادي، في التاريخ العباسي والفاطمي منشورات دار النهضة العربية، بيروت، ١٩٧١، ص ٢٦١ . *The Social Field* *Society consisted of multiple classes. Women enjoyed a high status among them, and some women had influence in political life, such as Sitt al-Mulk, sister of Al-Ḥākim bi-Amr Allāh. They celebrated religious holidays such as the Islamic New Year and the Prophet's birthday, and so on.* *The Cultural Field* *The Fatimids encouraged science and literature, especially the Fatimid Al-Ḥākim bi-Amr Allāh, who established an observatory on Mount al-Muqaṭṭam to observe the stars. Among the most important centers of culture in their era were mosques such as al-Azhar, palaces, and libraries such as Dār al-Ḥikmah and the al-ʿAzīz Library.* *The Fatimid caliphate was characterized by intellectual and religious tolerance toward the other sects (maḏāhib) in the state.* *[Yellow source box:]* *"The Fatimid state was tolerant to a great extent. The Muslim, the Copt, and the Jew were treated the same, and this helped the Egyptian elements merge with one another. It also helped economic and artistic life flourish in the country."* *Aḥmad Mukhtār al-ʿAbbādī, "In the Abbassid and Fatimid History" (Fī al-Tārīkh al-ʿAbbāsī wa-l-Fāṭimī), Publications of Dār al-Nahḍah al-ʿArabiyyah, Beirut, 1971, p. 261.*	(p. 151) • المجالُ الاجتماعيُّ: تألّفَ المجتمعُ من طبقاتٍ متعدّدةٍ، وقد تمتّعتِ المرأةُ عندَهم بمكانةٍ رفيعةٍ، وأثّر بعضُهنّ في الحياةِ السياسيّةِ مثلُ ستِ المُلْكِ شقيقةِ الحاكمِ بأمرِ الله، واحتفلُوا بالأعيادِ الدينيّةِ مثلِ عيدِ رأسِ السنةِ الهجريّةِ وعيدِ المولدِ النبويِّ..الخ. • المجالُ الثقافيُّ: اتسمت الدولة العبيدية بالتعصب والغلو للمذهب الشيعي ضد أهل السنة من العلماء الذين وقفوا في وجه ضلالهم كأمثال أبي بكر النابلسي حيث قام العبيديون بجلده ثم قاموا بسلخ جلده، و من الجدير *The Social Field* *Society consisted of multiple classes. Women enjoyed a high status among them, and some women had influence in political life, such as Sitt al-Mulk, sister of Al-Ḥākim bi-Amr Allāh. They celebrated religious holidays such as the Islamic New Year and the Prophet's birthday, and so on.* *The Cultural Field* *The ʿUbaydid State was marked by fanaticism and extremism for the Shiʿi sect (maḏhab) against the People of the Sunnah (ahl al-sunnah) among the scholars who stood against their injustices, such as Abū Bakr al-Nābulsī, whom the ʿUbaydids skinned and then stuffed his skin. [...]*

*Highlighted text shows altered content. *Red text shows removed content. *Green text shows added content.

The following example comes from a Grade 6 Islamic Education lesson on the first caliph, Abū Bakr al-Ṣiddīq (d. 634 CE). Although the revision consists of only a short addition, it is symbolically significant. The earlier edition praised Abū Bakr through a list of historical "firsts," including the first adult man to embrace Islam, the first caliph, the first compiler of the Qur'an, and other foundational achievements. The 2025-2026 version keeps this list and adds a stronger statement of superiority: Abū Bakr is "the most knowledgeable and bravest of the noble Companions by far." This addition elevates him above all other Companions in two qualities closely associated with religious authority and legitimate leadership. In Sunni tradition, Abū Bakr's primacy, personal qualities, and legitimacy as the first caliph are foundational. On the other hand, Shiʿi tradition rejects Abū Bakr's status as the most legitimate caliph and gives overwhelming pri

macy among the Companions to ʿAlī ibn Abī Ṭālib (d. 661 CE), whose status is second only to Prophet Muhammad himself.[201] The addition therefore reinforces a distinctly Sunni hierarchy of religious authority. Although it does not explicitly criticize Shiʿism, it elevates Abū Bakr above all other Companions in a way that aligns with Sunni understandings of leadership and contrasts with Shiʿi traditions that accord primacy to ʿAlī after the Prophet Muhammad.

Islamic Education, Grade 6, 2025-2026, p. 67 (previously: Islamic Education, Grade 6, 2017-2018, p. 68)

2017-18	2025-26
هلْ تَعْلَمُ : أنَّ أبَا بَكْرٍ ﷺ هُوَ: • أوَّلُ رَجُلٍ دَخَلَ فِي الإسْلَامِ. • أوَّلُ أَمِيْرٍ أُرْسِلَ عَلَى الحَجِّ . • أوَّلُ خَلِيْفَةٍ فِي الإسْلَامِ . • أوَّلُ مَنْ جَمَعَ القرآنَ الكريمَ . • أوَّلُ مَنْ سَمَّى القُرآنَ مُصْحَفاً.	هلْ تَعْلَمُ : أنَّ أبَا بَكْرٍ ﷺ هُوَ: • أوَّلُ رَجُلٍ دَخَلَ فِي الإسْلَامِ. • أوَّلُ أَمِيْرٍ أُرْسِلَ عَلَى الحَجِّ . • أوَّلُ خَلِيْفَةٍ فِي الإسْلَامِ . • أوَّلُ مَنْ جَمَعَ القرآنَ الكريمَ . • أوَّلُ مَنْ سَمَّى القُرآنَ مُصْحَفاً. • أعلمُ وأشجعُ الصحابةِ الكرام على الإطلاق.
Did you know that Abū Bakr, may Allah be pleased with him, was: • *the first man to enter Islam;* • *the first amīr sent for ḥajj;* • *the first caliph in Islam;* • *the first to compile the Noble Qur'an;* • *the first to call the Qur'an a muṣḥaf.*	*Did you know that Abū Bakr, may Allah be pleased with him, was:* • *the first man to enter Islam;* • *the first amīr sent for ḥajj;* • *the first caliph in Islam;* • *the first to compile the Noble Qur'an;* • *the first to call the Qur'an a muṣḥaf;* • *the most knowledgeable and bravest of the noble Companions by far.*

*Green text shows added content.

The following Grade 8 Islamic Education example illustrates a subtle but meaningful revision to an honorific closely associated with Shiʿi devotional tradition. The previous 2017-2018 lesson on Fatimah, daughter of Prophet Muhammad, was titled "Fatimah the Radiant" (*fāṭimah al-zahrāʾ*), "may Allah be pleased with her." The 2025-2026 lesson leaves almost the entire biography unchanged, including Fatimah's role as the Prophet's daughter, wife of ʿAlī ibn Abī Ṭālib, mother of Hassan (*al-Ḥasan*) and Hussein (*al-Ḥusayn*), patroness of the women believers, participant in building the Muslim ummah, and active participant in jihad at the Battle of Uḥud (625 CE). Yet the revised textbook removes the honorific title "the Radiant" (*al-zahrāʾ*) wherever it appeared next to Fatimah's name in the lesson. The new version instead presents the lesson as "Fatimah, daughter of the Messenger of Allah, peace be upon him." The revised lesson continues to affirm Fatimah's central place in Islamic tradition. It retains the portrayal of her as pious, modest, learned, devoted to the Prophet, active in the Muslim community, committed to her household, and a model for Muslim women as a daughter, wife, mother, and mujāhidah (female participant in jihad).

201 Ali's superior knowledge is noted in a famous Hadith commonly recorded in Shiʿi Hadith collections and various works, where the Prophet Muhammad said: "I am the city of knowledge and 'Ali is its gate". The Hadith appears approximately 19 times in the famous Hadith collection *Biḥār al-Anwār* by al-'Allāma al-Majlisī (for example see Beirut: al-Wafā, 1403/1983, Vol. 10, p. 120). His unparalleled bravery is attested in the famous hadith recording Muhammad's saying about 'Ali: "Tomorrow I shall give the banner to a man who loves Allah and His Messenger, and Allah and His Messenger love him. He attacks repeatedly and never flees. Allah will grant victory at his hands." This is cited 40 times in *Biḥār al-Anwār* (See for example Vol. 21, p. 3).

Therefore, the significance of this change lies in the selective removal of "the Radiant" (*al-zahrāʾ*), a highly recognizable title central in Shiʿi devotional memory and symbolism of Fatimah. In the context of other revisions in this subchapter, this small textual change fits a broader Sunni-centered reshaping of Islamic memory. Shared figures celebrated by both Sunnis and Shiʿis remain in the curriculum, but titles and symbolic associations that carry stronger Shiʿi resonance are removed or replaced, while Fatimah herself remains highly valued within a broadly Sunni-approved moral and familial framework.

***Islamic Education*, Grade 8, 2025-2026, p. 105 (previously: *Islamic Education*, Grade 8, 2017-2018, p. 107)**

2017-18	2025-26
 وحدةُ الأعلام — الدَّرسُ الثّاني فاطمةُ الزَّهراءُ رضيَ اللهُ عنها والمجدُ يُشرقُ منْ ثلاثِ مطالعٍ — في مهدِ فاطمةَ فما أعلاها هي بنتُ منْ؟ هي زوجُ منْ؟ هي أمُّ منْ؟ — منْ ذا يُداني في الفخارِ أباها هي ومضةٌ منْ نورِ عينِ المصطفى — هادي الشُّعوبِ إذا تَرومُ هُداها[1] ❖ مولدُها ونشأتُها: هي أصغرُ بناتِ رسولِ اللهِ ﷺ، أمُّها خديجةُ رضيَ اللهُ عنها، ولدتْ بمكّةَ عامَ (١٨) قبلَ الهجرةِ، زوجَها عليُّ بنُ أبي طالبٍ ﷺ، أولادُها الحسنُ والحسينُ (سيّدا شبابِ أهلِ الجنّةِ) وأمُّ كلثومَ وزينبُ ﷺ، لُقِّبتْ بالزّهراءِ والصّدّيقةِ والمُباركةِ والطّاهرةِ والرّاضيةِ والمَرْضيّةِ، وكُنيتُها أمُّ الحسنِ وأمُّ الحسينِ، وكانَ يُطلَقُ عليها أمُّ النّبيِّ ﷺ أو أمُّ أبيها لشبهِها به، ولأنّها عاشتْ معَ والدِها ﷺ بعدَ موتِ والدتِها ترعى شؤونَهُ وتقومُ على حاجتِه، وتنشأُ من أزرِه.	 وحدةُ الأعلام — الدَّرسُ الثّاني فاطمةُ بنتُ رسولِ اللهِ ﷺ والمجدُ يُشرقُ منْ ثلاثِ مطالعٍ — في مهدِ فاطمةَ فما أعلاها هي بنتُ منْ؟ هي زوجُ منْ؟ هي أمُّ منْ؟ — منْ ذا يُداني في الفخارِ أباها هي ومضةٌ منْ نورِ عينِ المصطفى — هادي الشُّعوبِ إذا تَرومُ هُداها[1] ❖ مولدُها ونشأتُها: هي أصغرُ بناتِ رسولِ اللهِ ﷺ، أمُّها خديجةُ رضيَ اللهُ عنها، ولدتْ بمكّةَ عامَ (١٨) قبلَ الهجرةِ، زوجَها عليُّ بنُ أبي طالبٍ ﷺ، أولادُها الحسنُ والحسينُ (سيّدا شبابِ أهلِ الجنّةِ) وأمُّ كلثومَ وزينبُ ﷺ، لُقِّبتْ بالصّدّيقةِ والمُباركةِ والطّاهرةِ والرّاضيةِ والمَرْضيّةِ، وكُنيتُها أمُّ الحسنِ وأمُّ الحسينِ، وكانَ يُطلَقُ عليها أمُّ النّبيِّ ﷺ أو أمُّ أبيها لشبهِها به، ولأنّها عاشتْ معَ والدِها ﷺ بعدَ موتِ والدتِها ترعى شؤونَهُ وتقومُ على حاجتِه، وتنشأُ من أزرِه.
Unit of Notable Figures – Lesson Two *Fāṭimah the Radiant, may Allah be pleased with her* *[...]* *Her birth and upbringing:* *She is the youngest daughter of the Messenger of Allah. Her mother is Khadījah, may Allah be pleased with her. She was born in Mecca eighteen years before the Hijrah. Her father married her to ʿAlī ibn Abī Ṭālib, and her children were al-Ḥasan and al-Ḥusayn, patrons of the youth of Heavens, and Umm Kulthūm and Zaynab. She was given the titles "the Radiant" (al-zahrāʾ), "the trustworthy" (al-ṣiddīqah), "the blessed" (al-mubārakah), "the pure" (al-ṭāhirah), "the pleased" (al-rāḍiyah), and "the pleasing" (al-marḍiyyah). Her kunya was "mother of Hassan" (umm al-Ḥasan) and "mother of Hussein" (umm al-Ḥusayn). She was also called "the mother of the Prophet" (umm al-nabī) or "the mother of her father" (umm abīhā) because she resembles him and because she lived with her father after the death of her mother, Khadījah, cared for his affairs, served his needs, and stood beside him.*	*Unit of Notable Figures – Lesson Two* *Fāṭimah, daughter of the Messenger of Allah* *[...]* *Her birth and upbringing:* *She is the youngest daughter of the Messenger of Allah. Her mother is Khadījah, may Allah be pleased with her. She was born in Mecca eighteen years before the Hijrah. Her father married her to ʿAlī ibn Abī Ṭālib, and her children were al-Ḥasan and al-Ḥusayn, patrons of the youth of Heavens, and Umm Kulthūm and Zaynab. She was given the titles "the trustworthy" (al-ṣiddīqah), "the blessed" (al-mubārakah), "the pure" (al-ṭāhirah), "the pleased" (al-rāḍiyah), and "the pleasing" (al-marḍiyyah). Her kunya was "mother of Hassan" (umm al-Ḥasan) and "mother of Hussein" (umm al-Ḥusayn). She was also called "the mother of the Prophet" (umm al-nabī) or "the mother of her father" (umm abīhā) because she resembles him and because she lived with her father after the death of her mother, Khadījah, cared for his affairs, served his needs, and stood beside him.*

*Highlighted text shows altered content. *Red text shows removed content.

The examples in this subchapter show a Sunni-centered reinterpretation of Islamic history and memory. The treatment of the Fatimid/ʿUbaydid state provides the clearest example, portraying an Ismāʿīlī-Shiʿi caliphate as illegitimate, extremist, hostile to Sunnis, violent, and aligned with Islam's external enemies. The Abū Bakr example reinforces a Sunni hierarchy of religious authority by elevating the first caliph above all other Companions in qualities associated with legitimate leadership. The Fatimah example gives the pattern a symbolic form, preserving a shared revered figure while removing an honorific title with strong Shiʿi devotional resonance. The Jaʿfar al-Ṣādiq example absorbs a central Shiʿi authority into a Sunni genealogical frame through Abū Bakr, while the Khadījah example may point to a wider restructuring of Islamic titles and symbolic memory. The curricular pattern is therefore clear: Sunni authority

is elevated, Shiʿi-associated political authority is delegitimized, and shared or contested figures are reinterpreted in ways that reduce their Shiʿi significance. This matters especially in the Syrian context, where Shiʿi and Ismāʿīlī communities remain part of the country's social and religious fabric, even as the curriculum increasingly teaches Islamic history through a Sunni-centered hierarchy of legitimacy.

Druze, Alawites, and Non-Sunni Minorities in Syria

The revised curriculum grants selective recognition to minorities in Syria while denying full communal visibility to groups that do not fit easily into its Sunni-Islamic national framework. Christian heritage remains the clearest accepted form of minority visibility. Christian sites remain visible as part of Syria's heritage and historical landscape, while Christian safety and worship continue to be recognized within Islamic historical frameworks. Social Studies Grade 4 explicitly lists mosques and churches, naming the Umayyad Mosque in Damascus alongside the Church of Saint Simeon Stylites in Aleppo Governorate and the Church of Saydnaya in Rural Damascus.[202] Geography Grade 9 similarly presents Syria's religious and touristic sites, including Christian places such as Maʿlūlā, Saydnaya, the Church of the Holy Belt, and the Church of the Forty Martyrs.[203] This visibility fits established Islamic categories, with Christians presented as People of the Book (*ahl al-kitāb*) and as a protected community within an Islamic social order.

Other communities receive far less recognition. Groups central to modern and historical Syria, including Alawites, Druze, Ismāʿīlīs, and Jews, are far less visible as religious communities with distinct identities and historical roles. Their regions, towns, mountains, and cultural landscapes may remain, but the communities themselves are often ignored, renamed, or displaced. The Syrian coast, the Anṣāriyyah Mountains, al-Suwaydāʾ, and the mountain region historically known as the Mountain of the Druze (*jabal al-durūz*) appear as geographical, historical, or touristic landscapes, while Alawite and Druze communal identity is erased or muted. The result is a selective narrowing of Syrian diversity shaped by what the curriculum's Sunni-Islamic framework can accommodate. Christian sites remain acceptable as heritage, while non-Sunni and other non-Muslim communities that fit less easily into this framework are absorbed into geography, diluted into general Syrian or Arab nationalism, or left unnamed.

This pattern appears most clearly in the three examples in this subchapter. In the Grade 12 History lesson on Syrian uprisings against French rule, the earlier centrality of Shaykh Ṣāliḥ al-ʿAlī, an Alawite leader of the coastal revolt, is reduced, and the lesson's emphasis is transferred to Shaykh ʿUmar al-Bīṭār, a Sunni figure from the same anti-French context. In the Grade 3 Social Studies map activity, the Druze region remains visible, but its Druze communal name is removed: the map labels the Mountain of the Druze (*jabal al-durūz*) as the Mountain of the Arabs (*jabal al-ʿarab*), while the Druze themselves are not named anywhere in the lesson as an ethnic group, sect, or religious community. A Grade 12 Arabic Language and its Literature textbook also removes a literary text by ʿAlī Aḥmad Saʿīd Asbar, Adonis, a major Syrian Alawite writer from Latakia, whose text "The Displaced" deals with poverty, hunger, displacement, and social suffering. Together, these examples (analyzed in detail below) demonstrate how the new curriculum narrows representation of Syria's diverse minorities, not only through religious doctrine, but also through the rewriting of geography, historical memory, visual representation, and cultural authorship.[204]

The following Grade 12 History example shows how the revised curriculum sidelines a non-Sunni historical figure while preserving enough of his presence to avoid openly erasing his significance. The previous 2017-2018 version of the textbook presents the Syrian Coast Revolt (ṯawrat al-sāḥil) (1919-1921) against French rule through the leadership of Shaykh Ṣāliḥ al-ʿAlī (1883-1950), an Alawite leader closely associated with anti-French resistance in the Syrian Coast Revolt. The opening summary names "the Revolt of Shaykh Ṣāliḥ al-ʿAlī" as one of the main Syrian uprisings against the French, alongside the revolt of Ibrāhīm Hanānū (1919-1921) and the Great Syrian Revolt of 1925. The body of the lesson then presents Ṣāliḥ al-ʿAlī as the leader of the Coast Revolt, describes the heavy losses he inflicted on French forces, highlights his victories, especially the Battle of Wādī Warūr (1919), and includes an image of him.

202 *Social Studies*, Grade 4, 2025-2026, p. 41.

203 *Geography*, Grade 9, 2025-2026, p. 172 (previously: *Geography*, Grade 9, 2017-2018, p. 175).

204 *Arabic Language and Its Literature*, Grade 12 (Humanities Track), 2023-24, pp. 186-191; *Arabic Language and Its Literature*, Grade 12 (Scientific Track), 2023-24, pp. 135-140;
History, Grade 9, 2025-26, pp. 22-25 (previously: *History*, Grade 9, 2017-18, pp. 23-26);
History, Grade 12 (Humanities Track), 2025-2026, pp. 36-37 (previously: *History*, Grade 12 (Humanities Track), 2017-2018, pp. 37-38);
Social Studies, Grade 3, 2025-26, p. 76 (previously: *Social Studies*, Grade 3, 2023-24, p. 85);
Social Studies, Grade 4, 2025-26, p. 41.

The 2025-2026 version transfers this symbolic primacy to Shaykh ʿUmar al-Bīṭār (1886-1946), a Sunni figure from the same regional anti-French context. In the opening summary, "the Revolt of Shaykh Ṣāliḥ al-ʿAlī" becomes "the Revolt of Shaykh ʿUmar al-Bīṭār." In the body of the lesson, Ṣāliḥ al-ʿAlī is presented as the secondary leader, and the detailed account of his successes on the battlefield is shortened into a general collective statement about the achievement of the Syrian revolting forces against the French. Similarly, his image is replaced by an uncaptioned image of ʿUmar al-Bīṭār.

The revision therefore goes beyond a factual correction, changing historical memory. A major Alawite-associated national figure remains in the lesson, but his former primacy is reduced in the summary, redistributed in the narrative, and removed visually. This is significant, as this was one of the main areas in which textbooks presented Alawite participation in Syrian anti-colonial history as a positive nationalistic contribution. By shifting the example away from Alawite Ṣāliḥ al-ʿAlī to Sunni ʿUmar al-Bīṭār, the revised curriculum weakens the visibility of Alawite historical agency and replaces it with a Sunni-associated figure who carries the same anti-French nationalist function within a more Sunni-centered historical narrative.

***History*, Grade 12 (Humanities Track), 2025-2026, pp. 36-37 (previously: *History*, Grade 12 (Humanities Track), 2017-2018, pp. 37-38)**

2017-18	2025-26
الثوراتُ السوريّةُ ضدّ الاحتلالِ الفرنسيّ بدأتِ المقاومةُ الوطنيّةُ للاحتلال الفرنسيّ منذ نزولِ القوّات الفرنسيّة على الساحل السوريّ، فكانت ثورةُ الشيخ صالح العلي، وثورة إبراهيم هنانو، وبسبب السياسة التي اتّبعتها فرنسا في سورية قامت الثوراتُ في أنحاء سورية كلّها التي اتّحد شعبُها في الثورة السوريّة الكبرى عام ١٩٢٥م بقيادة سلطان باشا الأطرش، شكلت حدّاً فاصلاً في النضال الوطنيّ من أجل الاستقلال.	الثوراتُ السوريّةُ ضدّ الاحتلالِ الفرنسيّ بدأ الكفاح الوطني ضد الاحتلال الفرنسيّ منذ نزولِ القوّات الفرنسيّة على الساحل السوريّ، فكانت ثورةُ الشيخ عمر البيطار ، وثورة إبراهيم هنانو، وبسبب السياسة التي اتّبعتها فرنسا في سورية قامت الثوراتُ في أنحاء سورية كلّها التي اتّحد شعبُها في الثورة السوريّة الكبرى عام ١٩٢٥م بقيادة سلطان باشا الأطرش، شكلت حدّاً فاصلاً في النضال الوطنيّ من أجل الاستقلال.
Syrian Uprisings against the French Occupation *The national resistance to the French Occupation started when French forces landed on the Syrian coast. There was Shaykh Salih Al-Ali's uprising and Ibrahim Hananu's uprising, and because of the policies undertaken by France in Syria, uprisings flared across all of Syria, uniting its people in the Great Syrian Revolt of 1925 under Sultan Basha Al-Atrash. This was a watershed moment in the national struggle for independence.* *[...]*	*Syrian Uprisings against the French Occupation* *The national struggle against the French Occupation started when French forces landed on the Syrian coast. There was Shaykh Umar Al-Bitar's uprising and Ibrahim Hananu's uprising, and because of the policies undertaken by France in Syria, uprisings flared across all of Syria, uniting its people in the Great Syrian Revolt of 1925 under Sultan Basha Al-Atrash. This was a watershed moment in the national struggle for independence.* *[...]*
أوّلاً: ثورةُ الساحلِ السوريّ (١٩١٩-١٩٢١م): قامت ثورة الساحل بقيادة الشيخ صالح العلي بين عامي(١٩١٩-١٩٢١م)، وقد كبّدتِ الفرنسيّين خسائرَ فادحةً، وحقّقت انتصارات كبيرة، ولاسيما في معركة وادي ورور، حيث تمكّنَ الثوار من نصب كمين ألحقَ الهزيمةَ بالقوات الفرنسيّة التي كانت تتقدّم باتّجاه منطقةِ **الشيخ بدر**، وقد تعاون الشيخ صالح العلي مع ثورة الشمال بقيادة إبراهيم هنانو، واتّصل مع الحكومة العربيّة بدمشق لتلقّي الدعم، لهذا كان لوقوع دمشق بيد الفرنسيّين، ونقص الأسلحة والمعدات، واستشهاد عدد كبير من الثوار، وإرسال فرنسا قواتٍ كبيرةً حاصرت جبالَ اللاذقيّةِ من ثلاث جهات: اللاذقية في الشمال وبانياس في الغرب وحماة من الشرق، أثرٌ في تطور أحداث الثورة ومن ثم توقفها. تشكل (٢) الشيخ صالح العلي	أوّلاً: ثورةُ الساحلِ السوريّ (١٩١٩-١٩٢١م): قامت ثورة الساحل بقيادة الشيخ عمر البيطار والشيخ صالح العلي بين عامي(١٩١٩-١٩٢١م)، وقد كبّدتِ الفرنسيّين خسائرَ فادحةً، وحقّقت انتصارات كبيرة، حيث تمكن الثوار من إلحاق الهزيمة بالقوات الفرنسيّة وإيقاف تقدمها ، وقد تعاون الشيخ عمر البيطار مع الزعيم ابراهيم هنانو. واتصلا مع الحكومة العربية في دمشق لتلقي الدعم .

(See the continuation of the example on the following page)

2017-18	2025-26
First: The Syrian Coastal Revolt (1919-1921): *The coastal revolt was led by Shaykh Saleh al-Ali between 1919-1921, who inflicted heavy losses on the French and achieved great victories, especially in the battle of Wadi Warour, where the rebels managed to set an ambush that resulted in the defeat of the French forces [...]. Shaykh Saleh al-Ali collaborated with the northern insurrection led by Ibrahim Hananu, who contacted the Arab government in Damascus to receive support. Therefore, the fall of Damascus to the hands of the French, the lack of weapons and ammunition, and the martyrdom of a large number of the rebels [...] had [altogether] influence on the unfolding of events of the revolt and then its cessation.* *Image 2: Shaykh Saleh al-Ali [wearing traditional Alawite attire]*	*First: The Syrian Coastal Revolt (1919-1921):* *The coastal revolt was led by Shaykh Umar al-Bitar and Shaykh Saleh al-Ali between 1919-1921. They achieved victories, where they were able to inflict defeat on the French forces and stop their advance. Shaykh Umar al-Bitar collaborated with the leader Ibrahim Hananu. [Al-Bitar and Hananu] contacted the Arab government in Damascus to receive support.* *[Image on the left of Shaykh Umar al-Bitar, without a caption:]*

*Highlighted text shows altered content. *Red text shows removed content. *Green text shows added content.

The following example comes from a Grade 3 Social Studies activity on a journey through southern Syria. Its significance lies in the map's naming choices, which cover areas historically associated with Druze communities, including al-Suwaydāʾ and its surrounding province, and especially the mountain region historically and conventionally known as Jabal al-Durūz (the Mountain of the Druze). Yet the map labels this same area the Mountain of the Arabs (*jabal al-ʿarab*), replacing the region's well-known Druze communal association with a broader Arab-national geographic label. The Druze do not appear anywhere in the lesson as a religious or communal group, despite the activity focusing on a region where they were historically and demographically prominent. The result is that Druze communal presence is omitted from the representation of the Syrian region most closely identified with their history and identity.

The same map also labels Israel as "Palestine" and depicts the Golan Heights as part of Syria, reinforcing a nationalist territorial narrative. The example therefore shows how Syrian minorities are denied recognition in Syrian geography and landscape even when the lesson explicitly refers to the region most associated with that minority. This is especially significant for the Druze, a native Syrian community whose religious tradition is heterodox from a Sunni Islamic perspective and whose public recognition is absent across the curriculum. Even in a lesson on the region most closely associated with Druze history and demographic presence, the community is not named.

***Social Studies*, Grade 3, 2025-2026, p. 73 (previously: *Social Studies*, Grade 3, 2023-2024, p. 82)**

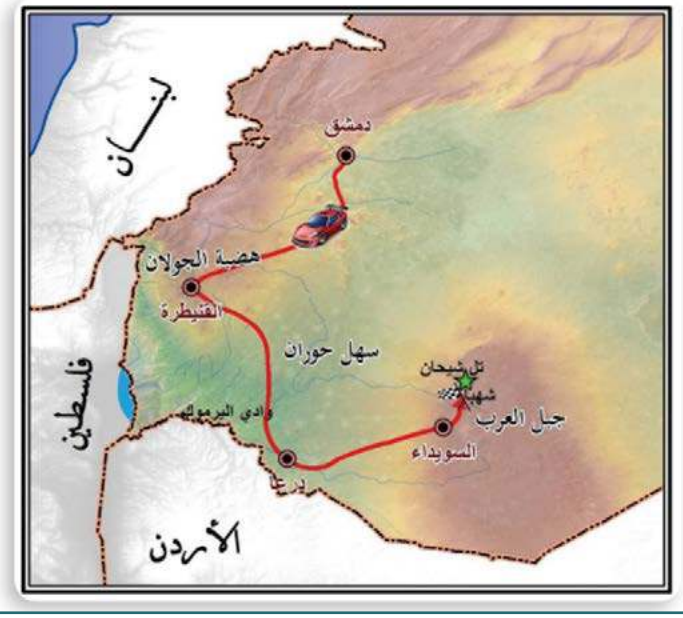
3

أكتشفُ وطني سوريةَ

أقرأُ الآتي:

في يوم الطفل العالميّ زار وطني الجمهوريّةَ العربيّةَ السوريّةَ وفدٌ من أطفال الدولِ العربيّةِ، فنظمنا برنامجاً سياحيّاً لتعريفهم بعض المناطق الواقعة في الجنوب والجنوب الغربيّ من وطني سوريةَ.

(See the continuation of the example on the following page)



3. I Discover My Homeland Syria
I will read the following:
On World Children's Day, a delegation of children from Arab countries visited my homeland, Syria. We put together a trip itinerary to get them to know the various regions of the southern and southwestern parts of my homeland, Syria.
[Map; Israel is labeled *"Palestine"*, Jabal al-Druze labeled *"Jabal al-Arab"*]

The examples in this subchapter reveal a hierarchy of minority recognition. Christian heritage remains visible through churches, holy sites, and historical monuments that fit within a Sunni-Islamic framework of protected presence. By contrast, Alawites, Druze, Ismāʿīlīs, and Jews receive little or no recognition as living Syrian communities. Although their regions, landscapes, or historical figures may still appear, their distinct communal identities are omitted, renamed, or reframed within Sunni-centered narratives. The curriculum thus presents Syria's diversity while limiting minority visibility primarily to forms compatible with Sunni-Islamic orthodoxy. The Grade 12 History example illustrates this pattern through historical substitution. Shaykh Ṣāliḥ al-ʿAlī is displaced from the leading role in the coastal revolt by Shaykh ʿUmar al-Bīṭār, while his visual prominence is removed. The Grade 3 Social Studies example applies the same logic through cartography, replacing Jabal al-Durūz (the Mountain of the Druze) with Jabal al-ʿArab (the Mountain of the Arabs) without mentioning the Druze community. The removal of Adonis extends this pattern into cultural representation by omitting a major Syrian literary figure associated with the Alawite community and secular-modernist intellectual life.

Altogether, these examples show that minority visibility in the revised curriculum is selective rather than pluralistic. Communities that fit established Sunni-Islamic historical frameworks remain visible, whereas others are omitted, renamed, or reframed in ways that diminish their distinct communal identities. The result is a representation of Syria as a country of diverse regions, but not as one of diverse significant religious communities with equal historical legitimacy, cultural visibility, and civic belonging.

Arabs, Non-Arabs, and the Arabization of Syrian Ethnic Diversity

The revised curriculum retains the former curriculum's presentation of Syria and the broader region through a strongly Arab-centered historical narrative. This is not limited to modern Arab nationalism or to the Islamic period. Several examples retroactively apply Arab identity to ancient civilizations, the early Islamic conquests, and medieval Islamic states, creating a continuous narrative of Arab presence and ownership of the land. Ancient civilizations in Bilad al-Sham and Mesopotamia are described as "ancient Arab civilization," while the Muslim conquests of Iraq, Syria, Palestine, and Egypt are framed as the liberation of already-Arab lands from Persian and Byzantine rule. A Grade 7 History textbook extends the same pattern into medieval Islamic history: the Umayyad state is praised for giving the caliphate an "Arab character," the Abbasid state is said to have weakened after losing Arab dominance in administration and

the army, and later Islamic armies under Saladin and Qutuz are repeatedly described as "Arab armies."[205] This framing is especially significant in a Syrian context because Syria has always included substantial non-Arab communities, including Kurds, Assyrians, Armenians, Turkmens, Greeks, Jews, Circassians, and others.

The absence of Kurds as a significant minority in the curriculum is particularly striking: despite forming a significant Sunni but non-Arab minority in Syria, they are largely absent as a people from the curriculum. Even major historical figures widely known to have Kurdish or non-Arab origins, such as Saladin al-Ayyubi and Nur al-Din Zengi, are often absorbed into a general Arab-Islamic narrative. The result is not merely the promotion of Arab culture. Rather, the curriculum anachronistically extends Arab identity across Syria's ancient, Islamic, and modern past in ways that reduce the visibility of non-Arab peoples and recast their historical and contemporary identities within an Arab framework.[206]

The following example demonstrates how a Grade 5 Social Studies textbook presents ancient civilizations in Bilad al-Sham and Mesopotamia as "ancient Arab civilization." This example shows how Arab identity is projected backward onto ancient Near Eastern civilizations. Some of the civilizations listed here, such as the Nabataeans, can reasonably be connected to Arab history and language. However, the textbook applies the same Arab label much more broadly, extending it to the ancient civilizations of Bilād al-Shām and Mesopotamia. This constructs a continuous Arab civilizational narrative from antiquity through the Islamic period to modern Syria. The effect is to narrow the representation of Syria's cultural past by reducing the visibility of its non-Arab historical communities. Ancient Syria and Mesopotamia were multilingual and multiethnic spaces, connected to Arameans, Assyrians, Akkadians, Amorites, Greeks, Armenians, and many other populations and traditions. Some of their descendants or related communities still exist in Syria and the region today. By presenting these ancient civilizations as an "ancient Arab civilization," the curriculum retrospectively attributes Arab identity to the region's pre-Islamic past, reducing the visibility of the non-Arab peoples and cultures that inhabited the region before the Arab conquests of the seventh century CE.[207]

***Social Studies*, Grade 5, 2025-2026, pp. 52, 57, 61 (previously: *Social Studies*, Grade 5, 2019-2020, pp. 54, 59, 63)**

(p. 52)

الدرسُ الثَّاني

حضارةُ العربِ القدماءِ في بلادِ الشامِ

(إبلا - ماري - أوغاريت)

وُجِدَتْ في بلادِ الشامِ آثارُ إنسانِ العصرِ الحجريِّ القديمِ، وعَرَفَتْ أرضُها بواكيرَ الزراعةِ، فاستقرَّ فيها الإنسانُ وبنى بيوتَهُ، وظهرَتْ على أرضِها أوَّلُ أبجديّةٍ عَرَفَها العالمُ.

لنتعرَّفْ أهمَّ العواملِ التي ساعدَتْ على قيامِ الحضاراتِ في بلادِ الشامِ، وأهمَّ المنجزاتِ الحضاريَّةِ للممالكِ القديمةِ في هذه المنطَقةِ.

(See the continuation of the example on the following page)

205 *History*, Grade 7, 2025-26, pp. 9, 53-54. For the presentation of the Arabization of North Africa as a positive process, see *History*, Grade 7, 2025-26, p. 88.

206 *History*, Grade 7, 2025-2026, pp. 58, 64-65, 75-76, 94.

207 See also pp. 94, 116 (2019-20, pp. 96, 118).

الخريطة (٦) بلادُ الشامِ قديماً

ادرس الخريطةَ (٦) وحاولْ:

- تتبُّعَ مجرى الأنهارِ على الخريطةِ و تحديدَ ساحلِ البحرِ المتوسط.

Lesson Two
The Civilization of the Ancient Arabs in Bilad al-Sham
Ebla - Mari - Ugarit
Traces of ancient Stone Age humans were found in Bilad al-Sham. Its land was known for early agriculture, so humans settled there and built their homes. The first alphabet known to the world appeared on its land.
We shall learn about the most important factors that helped civilizations arise in Bilad al-Sham, and about the most important civilizational achievements of the ancient kingdoms in this region.

(p. 57)

الدرسُ الثَّالث

الحضارةُ العربيَّةُ القديمةُ في بلادِ الشام

(مملكةُ الأنباط ـ مملكةُ تدمر)

قدَّمَتْ بلادُ الشامِ حضاراتٍ رائعةً مازالت آثارُها ماثلةً أمامنا حتّى اليوم، فازدهرَتِ التجارةُ، وتنوَّعتِ البضائعُ، وتألّقتِ العمارةُ وفنونُ النحتِ والزخرفةُ، وارتقت مكانةُ المرأة فأصبحَتْ ملكةً وإمبراطورة.

لنتعرَّفْ في هذا الدرسِ حضاراتٍ أخرى، ازدهرَتْ في بلاد الشام، مثلَ مملكتي الأنباط وتدمر.

(See the continuation of the example on the following page)

مملكةُ الأنباطِ (١٥٠ق.م - ١٠٦م):

تبيَّنْ موقعَ مدينةِ البتراءِ على الخريطةِ (٦).

الأنباطُ من العربِ القدماءِ الذين أسَّسوا مملكةً عربيَّةً جنوبَ بلادِ الشامِ، واتَّخذوا مِنْ مدينةِ الرَّقيمِ (البتراءِ) عاصمةً لهم.

ازدهَرَتْ مدينةُ البتراءِ نتيجةَ عملِهم في الزراعةِ والتجارةِ، فقدْ مارسَ الأنباطُ تبادُلَ السِّلَعِ التجاريَّةِ، حيثُ امتدَّ نشاطُهم التجاريُّ إلى مناطقَ واسعةٍ، ويُعَدُّ الطريقُ التجاريُّ الذي يمرُّ بمدينةِ البتراءِ من أهمِّ الطُّرقِ التجاريَّةِ التي كانَ لها دورٌ كبيرٌ في بلادِ الشامِ؛ فقد ربَطَتِ الطُّرقُ التجاريَّةُ بلادَ الشامِ بمصرَ وشبهِ الجزيرةِ العربيَّةِ.

الصورة (٦) هيكل الخزنة في البتراء

نحتَ الأنباطُ مدينتَهمُ في الصخرِ، وأشهرُ مبانيهم المنحوتةِ هو هيكلُ الخزنةِ .

حاولْ أنْ تفسِّرَ قيامَ الأنباطِ بنحْتِ مدينتِهم بالصخرِ.

٥٩

Lesson Three
The Ancient Arab Civilization in Bilad al-Sham
The Nabataean Kingdom - The Kingdom of Palmyra
Ancient civilizations arose in Bilad al-Sham [i.e. the Levant] whose traces still stand before us today. Trade flourished, goods diversified, architecture and the arts of sculpture and decoration advanced, and the status of women rose, as they became queens and empresses.
The Nabataeans were among the ancient Arabs who established an Arab kingdom in southern Bilad al-Sham and took the city of al-Raqīm, Petra, as their capital.

(p. 61)

الدرسُ الرابع

الحضارةُ العربيَّةُ القديمةُ في العراق (بلاد الرافدين) من أغنى الحضارات الإنسانيّة

نشأَتِ الحضارةُ في العراقِ (بلاد الرافدَيْنِ)، بسببِ توافرِ التربةِ الخِصْبةِ، والمياهِ الوفيرةِ، والمُناخِ الملائمِ، فعرفوا الزراعةَ واخترعوا الكتابةَ وصنعوا الفخَّارَ ووضعوا القوانينَ؛ فكانَتْ من أرقى الحضاراتِ الإنسانيَّةِ.

(See the continuation of the example on the following page)

لنتعرَّفْ أهمَّ الممالكِ والدُّولِ العربيَّةِ القديمةِ التي سكنَتِ العراقَ، ونستخلصْ أبرزَ مُنجزاتِهم الحضاريَّةِ التي تمثَّلتْ بالزراعةِ والصناعةِ والعمارةِ، ووضعِ القوانينِ وتأثيرِها الحضاريِّ في البُلدانِ المُجاورةِ.

الخريطة (٧) الحضارات القديمة في العراق

ادرس الخريطةَ (٧) وحاولْ:

- تتبُّعَ مجرى النهرَينِ اللذينِ يمرَّانِ فيها.
- تحديدَ أهمِّ الدولِ والممالكِ الموجودةِ على الخريطةِ.

- ما تأثيرُ وجودِ نهرَي دجلَةَ والفراتِ في قيامِ هذه المُدنِ والممالكِ في رأيِكَ؟

Lesson Four
The Ancient Arab Civilization in Iraq (Mesopotamia) One of the Richest Human Civilizations
Civilization arose in Iraq, Bilad al-Rafidayn, because of the availability of fertile soil, abundant water, suitable climate, knowledge of agriculture, invention of writing, pottery-making, and the establishment of laws. It was among the most advanced human civilizations.
We shall learn about the most important ancient Arab kingdoms and states that inhabited Iraq, and extract their most prominent civilizational achievements in agriculture, industry, architecture, and lawmaking, and their civilizational influence on neighboring countries.

The following example shows how the same Arab-centered framework is applied to the early Islamic conquests. This example turns early Islamic military expansion into a story of Arab territorial liberation. The textbook does not simply state that Muslim armies conquered Iraq or that Islam spread there. Instead, it describes the Arab Muslims as having "liberated the Arab lands in Iraq" and states that "the Arab lands were unified" following the defeat of the Persian and Byzantine empires. This wording assumes that Iraq, and by implication other conquered areas in the region, were already Arab lands awaiting liberation. The same logic appears elsewhere in the curriculum, where Arab-Muslim expansion into Bilad al-Sham and Palestine is described as liberating Arab lands from foreign rule. This framing is anachronistic and politically meaningful, as it presents the conquest as liberation and political unification, while retro-

spectively portraying the region's diverse pre-Islamic populations as part of an already Arab homeland. It also sidelines pre-Islamic and non-Arab communities that were and still are present in the region, including Aramaic-speaking, Syriac, Assyrian, Greek, Armenian, Jewish, and other populations. In the Syrian context, this framing teaches students to imagine the region as naturally and historically Arab, even where the historical record was far more diverse.

***Social Studies*, Grade 5, 2025-2026, pp. 141, 143 (previously: *Social Studies*, Grade 5, 2019-2020, pp. 143, 145)**

(p. 141)

الدَّرسُ الثَّالثُ

المنجزاتُ الحضاريَّةُ لعصر الخلافة الراشديَّة والأمويَّة
في العراق أغنَتِ الحضارةَ الإنسانيَّة

تابعَ العربُ المُسلمونَ ما بدأَهُ الرَّسولُ (ﷺ)، في نشرِ الإسلامِ، وتحريرِ الأراضي العربيَّةِ في العراق، وتشجيعِ التِّجارةِ والمحافظةِ على طُرقها، والاهتمامِ بالأنشطةِ العلميَّةِ والثَّقافيَّة.

لنتعرَّفْ أحداثَ التَّحريرِ العربيِّ الإسلاميِّ في بلادِ الرَّافدينِ، إضافةً إلى الحياةِ السِّياسيَّةِ والاقتصاديَّةِ والعلميَّةِ والثَّقافيَّة في العصرِ الرَّاشديِّ والأُمويِّ .

Lesson Three
The Civilizational Achievements of the Rashidun and Umayyad Caliphates in Iraq Enriched Human Civilization
The Arab Muslims followed the initiative of the Messenger, peace be upon him, in spreading Islam, liberating the Arab lands in Iraq, encouraging trade and preserving its roads, and caring for scientific and cultural activities.
We shall learn about the events of Arab-Islamic liberation in Bilad al-Rafidayn, in addition to political, economic, scientific, and cultural life in the Rashidun and Umayyad periods.

(p. 143)

اتَّسعتِ الدَّولةُ العربيَّةُ الإسلاميَّةُ، وتوافرتِ الخاماتُ الضَّروريَّةُ، وخبرةُ أهلِ البلادِ

فازدهرتِ الصِّناعاتُ النَّسيجيَّةُ على اختلافِ أنواعِها، واشتهرتِ الكوفيَّةُ (نسبة إلى الكوفة) وهي (عمائمُ وأغطيةٌ للرَّأسِ والرَّقبةِ)، كما قامَتْ بعضُ الصِّناعاتِ الغذائيَّةِ الَّتي تعتمدُ على تجفيفِ الفواكهِ واللحومِ، إضافةً إلى صناعةِ السُّكَّرِ والعُطورِ.

حاولْ أن تعدِّدَ بعضَ الصِّناعاتِ الأُخرى؟

تمَّ توحيدُ الأراضي العربيَّةِ بعد القضاءِ على الدَّولةِ الفارسيَّةِ وإبعادِ الدَّولةِ البيزنطيَّةِ وتوافرِ الأمنِ:

أدَّى ذلك إلى سيطرةِ الدَّولةِ العربيَّةِ الإسلاميَّةِ في العصرِ الرَّاشديِّ والأُمويِّ على الطُّرقِ التِّجاريَّةِ العالميَّةِ، ومراكزِها ومنها العراق.

(See the continuation of the example on the following page)

> *The Arab Islamic state expanded, necessary services became available, and the experience of the people of the lands was used.*
> *[...]*
> *The Arab lands were unified after the Persian state was eliminated and the Byzantine state was removed, and security became available.*
> *This led to the control of the Arab Islamic state in the Rashidun and Umayyad periods over the global trade routes and their centers, including Iraq.*

This pattern is also visible in a Grade 7 History textbook. The Umayyad state is praised for reaching its peak while "Arab character" dominated it, and eighth-century Caliph ʿAbd al-Malik is credited with giving the Umayyad state an Arab character by Arabizing administration and replacing Greek, Persian, and Coptic bureaucratic languages with Arabic. By contrast, the Abbasid state's decline is partly linked to "the loss of balance among its peoples" and reliance on non-Arab elements in administration and the army. Later, Saladin's forces at the Battle of Hattin and Qutuz's forces at ʿAyn Jālūt are described as Arab armies, even though these military and political formations were multiethnic and included prominent non-Arab leadership and soldiers. North Africa's Arabization is also presented positively, through the migration of Arab tribes, the spread of Islam, and the role of Arab Muslim traders.[208] These examples reinforce the same message found in the Grade 5 Social Studies textbook: Arab identity is treated not only as one component of regional history, but as the main civilizational subject that owns land, liberation, governance, and historical achievement.

The examples in this subchapter indicate that the curriculum retains the Assad-era framing of Syrian and regional history as a continuous Arab-Islamic narrative, including when addressing non-Arab identities. Ancient civilizations are presented as Arab civilizations, the Islamic conquests as Arab-Islamic liberation, and multiethnic Islamic polities and armies as Arab. The cumulative effect is to reduce the visibility of the region's non-Arab peoples and their historical contributions. This is especially significant as Syria remains a society of many peoples and languages. Kurds, Assyrians, Armenians, Turkmens, Greeks, Jews, Circassians, and others are a part of Syria's history. Yet the curriculum repeatedly presents the land and its past as primarily Arab, leaving little room for students to understand Syria as a historically multiethnic society. The result is a national narrative in which non-Arab communities may exist in reality, but are largely absent from the historical imagination offered by the textbooks.

Overall, the examples in this chapter show that the revised curriculum presents Syria's religious and ethnic diversity through a clear hierarchy of recognition within a predominantly Sunni-Arab-Islamic framework. Earlier civic and Islamic arguments for pluralism, equal citizenship, and coexistence are reduced, while minority communities are represented according to their place within this hierarchy. Christianity remains visible primarily as protected heritage within Islamic historical frameworks, but it does not enjoy equal civic belonging and is instead subjected to Islamic authority. By contrast, Jews are not recognized as a minority group with a local Syrian heritage and are increasingly presented through theological inferiority and recurring negative portrayals, many of which originate in Islamic sources. Shiʿi history and religious memory are reinterpreted through Sunni perspectives. Figures recognized as Sunni exemplars are elevated above figures identified with Shiʿism, Shiʿi-associated political authority (namely the Fatimid/ʿUbaydid dynasty) is delegitimized, and shared figures are reinterpreted in ways that reduce their Shiʿi significance. Although Islamic identity remains the curriculum's main framework, when non-Arab ethnic groups are discussed, they are often subsumed within a broad Arab identity, with their distinct identities rarely acknowledged. Alawite, Druze, and non-Arab identities are diminished through omission, renaming, substitution, or incorporation into broader Sunni-Arab narratives. The cumulative picture is a curriculum that privileges Sunni-Arab-Islamic identity and historical memory while reducing the visibility of Syria's religious and ethnic diversity and narrowing the space for alternative historical and communal identities.

208 *History*, Grade 7, 2025-26, pp. 9, 53-54. For the presentation of the Arabization of North Africa as a positive process, see *History*, Grade 7, 2025-26, p. 88.

Gender Roles and Women's Rights: Restricting Women within Traditionalist Islamism

The 2025-2026 curriculum revisions concerning the presentation of gender and women's rights mark a clear shift away from the civic and egalitarian language that appeared in many previous Syrian textbooks. The revised curriculum increasingly presents women through traditional Islamic gender norms, emphasizing modest appearance, family roles, limited public visibility, conditional participation, and male family leadership. This change is especially significant since the Assad-era curriculum had often presented women through a more civic and egalitarian framework. Despite the Assad regime's extensive human rights abuses, its official curriculum and state ideology promoted women's education, employment, public participation, and political representation more openly than many other national curricula of Arab and Muslim-majority countries in the region. Some of this earlier material was ideological and only partly reflected political reality under an authoritarian system with limited political freedoms. Nevertheless, it explicitly taught that women and men were equal citizens, that women participated in political institutions, and that women could be active in public, professional, and national life.[209]

The 2025-2026 revisions retreat from this framework. Explicit discussion of women's equal rights is removed; images of women in public or historical roles are deleted or replaced; girls are removed from ordinary school and social scenes; images are edited to cover women's hair, and women's rights in work, family, and marriage are increasingly framed as conditional on Islamic modesty, family responsibilities, and male authority. The chapter therefore follows three connected developments: the removal of women's civic and public visibility, the visual Islamization of women's appearance, and the increasing framing of women's rights and agency within a Islamist traditionalist gender hierarchy.

Removing Civic Equality and Reducing Women's Public Visibility

The 2025-2026 curriculum actively reduces explicit civic and visual representations of women in public life. The strongest example is the removal of a Grade 7 Arabic lesson that taught, in plain civic language, that the Syrian constitution guaranteed equality between men and women "in rights and duties," that Syrian women had the right to vote since 1949, and that women participated in the People's Assembly (*majlis al-šaʿb*) and local councils. Although democratic practice under the Assad regime was highly limited, this example was one of the clearest textbook passages presenting women as equal citizens and participants in official decision-making, political institutions, education, the judiciary, industry, and public life. Its removal during the hurried emergency revision of the 2025-2026 curriculum shows a direct retreat from teaching women's equal civic status.[210]

A second Grade 7 Arabic example reinforces this pattern visually and linguistically. An image of young female volunteers is replaced with a more distant, gender-neutral image titled "Voluntary Work" (*al-ʿamal al-taṭawwuʿī*). While changing the institution's name which was associated with Assad reflects the broader political revision of the curriculum, the visual and linguistic changes also reduce the visibility of women's civic participation.[211] A Grade 6 Social Studies textbook shows a similar visual change. An image in the previous textbook depicting a Carthaginian princess riding into battle with uncovered hair and exposed cleavage was replaced by a static portrait showing her with a head covering.[212] This theme is reflected in the Grade 12 History textbook which shows a similar visual erasure. The revised textbook kept written material praising women's role in the Algerian national struggle but removed the images of Lalla Fatma N'Soumer (1830-1863) and Djamila Bouhired (born 1935), two female figures connected to Algerian anti-colonial resistance.

However, some positive references to women remain.[213] For example, a Grade 9 History textbook retains a passage praising Iraqi women's active and distinguished role in political, social, and cultural life. However, under the rapid

209 "Syrian National Identity," pp. 90-93.

210 *Arabic Language,* Grade 7, Vol. 1, 2025-26 (previously: *Arabic Language,* Grade 7, Vol. 1, 2023-24, pp. 107-108) (removed content).

211 *Arabic Language*, Grade 7, Vol. 1, 2025-26, p. 12 (previously: *Arabic Language*, Grade 7, Vol. 1, 2023-24, pp. 19-20).

212 *Social Studies*, Grade 6, 2025-26, p. 26 (previously: *Social Studies*, Grade 6, 2012-13, p. 28).

213 *History*, Grade 12 (Humanities Track), 2025-26, pp. 170, 175 (previously: *History*, Grade 12 (Humanities Track), 2017-18, pp. 174, 179).

2025–2026 curriculum revision, unchanged material from the previous curriculum carries less analytical weight than deliberate additions, removals, and revisions. Those active changes point in a consistent direction: explicit teaching on women's equality is removed, women's civic participation is reduced, and visual representations of women as public and historical actors are replaced or omitted.[214]

The following removed Grade 7 Arabic Language lesson shows a deliberate deletion of content on women's equality and public participation from a text on the Syrian constitution. The 2023-2024 lesson on reading data tables stated that the Syrian constitution guaranteed equality between men and women "in rights and duties," that many women participate freely in Syrian public and political life, and that Syrian women had the right to vote since 1949. It also presented women's participation in the People's Assembly (*majlis al-šaʿb*) and local councils through statistical tables, teaching students to read data through figures on women's representation in elected institutions. Although democratic practice under the Assad regime was highly limited, this example was one of the clearest textbook passages presenting women as equal citizens and participants in official decision-making, political institutions, education, the judiciary, industry, and public life. The removal of this lesson from the 2025–2026 curriculum marks a clear retreat from the explicit teaching of gender equality and women's civic participation, suggesting that such civic messages were not retained in the revised curriculum despite the rapid nature of the revision process.

***Arabic Language*, Grade 7, Vol. 1, 2023-2024, pp. 107-108 (removed)**

قراءة جدول معلومات تعبير وظيفيّ الدرس الخامس

حَرَصَ الدَّستورُ السُّوريُّ على مساواةِ الرَّجلِ بالمرأةِ، في الحقوقِ والواجباتِ، وأتاحَ لها الدُّخولَ في الحياةِ السِّياسيَّة والصِّناعيَّة والمشاركةِ الفعَّالةِ في قِطاعَيِ التَّعليمِ والقضاءِ.

وقد حَظِيَتِ المرأةُ السُّوريَّةُ بحقِّ التَّصويتِ في الانتخاباتِ منذ عام ١٩٤٩م، وأوجدتِ المؤسّساتُ الرّسميَّةُ بيئةً خِصبةً لسيّداتِ الأعمالِ، ونَعرِضُ فيما يأتي جَدولاً يبيِّن مشاركةَ المرأةِ في مجلسِ الشَّعبِ:

Reading a Data Table – Functional Expression – Fifth Lesson

The Syrian constitution was keen to ensure equality between men and women in rights and duties, and allowed women to enter political and industrial life and actively participate in the fields of education and the judiciary.

Syrian women have enjoyed the right to vote in elections since 1949, and official institutions have provided a fertile ground for businesswomen. Below, we present a table showing women's participation in the People's Assembly.

The following Grade 7 Arabic Language example illustrates the removal of an image depicting female volunteers and its accompanying caption. In the 2023–2024 textbook, a poem on cooperation was introduced with a photograph of three young women, one of them wearing a hijab, followed by the caption "Female volunteers" (*mutaṭawwiʿāt*) "in the Syrian Trust for Development" (*al-amānah al-sūriyyah lil-tanmiyah*). The Syrian Trust for Development was closely associated with the Assad family, so removing its name from the 2025-2026 textbook can be understood as part of the broader removal of Assad-era institutions from the curriculum. Nevertheless, the revision went beyond merely deleting the institution's name. The new curriculum also replaced the previous photograph and changed the caption from "female volunteers" (*mutaṭawwiʿāt*) to the more gender-neutral term "voluntary work" (*al-ʿamal al-taṭawwuʿī*).

214 *History*, Grade 9, 2025-26, p. 64 (previously: *History*, Grade 9, 2017-18, p. 66).

If the Assad-linked institution had been the only concern, the simplest revision would have been to retain the photograph and title while removing only the institutional reference, as occurred in many other instances throughout the revised curriculum.[215] Instead, the 2025–2026 textbook replaces the close-up image of three young female volunteers with a more distant photograph showing a mixed group of men and head-covered women without clearly identifiable faces. This revision goes beyond the removal of an Assad-linked institution by reducing the explicit visual representation of women as civic participants.

***Arabic Language*, Grade 7, Vol. 1, 2025-2026, p. 12 (previously: *Arabic Language*, Grade 7, Vol. 1, 2023-2024, p. 19)**

2023-2024	2025-2026
Female volunteers in the Syrian Trust for Development	*Voluntary work*

The following Grade 6 Social Studies example illustrates the visual replacement of a female historical figure depicted as an active warrior with a more modest, static portrait. The previous 2012-2013 textbook discussed Princess Elissar, founder of Carthage, and presented her riding a horse into battle, holding a bow, with uncovered hair and exposed cleavage. The 2025–2026 textbook retained the surrounding text but replaced the original illustration with a cropped segment of another painting that depicts only her head, fully covered except for her face. This change alters the meaning of the figure's representation; it removes the image of a woman as an active military figure and replaces it with a passive, modest presentation that fits Islamic standards of female public appearance. The example supports the same pattern seen in the Grade 7 Arabic and History Grade 12 examples: the revised curriculum removes or weakens images of women as visible public actors, especially when their bodies, hair, faces, or public roles are presented.

(See the continuation of the example on the following page)

215 *Arabic is My Language*, Grade 6, Vol. 1, 2025-26, pp. 103-104 (previously: *Arabic is My Language*, Grade 6, Vol. 1, 2023-24, pp. 112-113); *Biology*, Grade 12 (Scientific Track), 2025-26, p. 143 (previously: *Biology*, Grade 12 (Scientific Track), 2023-24, p. 143). *Geography*, Grade 9, 2025-26, p. 72.

***Social Studies*, Grade 6, 2025-2026, p. 64 (previously: *Social Studies*, Grade 6, 2012-2013, p. 66)**

2012-2013	2025-2026
 الشكلُ (١٨) الأميرةُ أليسار بريشة الفنّان "برنارسيس غورين" أليسار ونشأةُ قرطاجةَ: غادرت الأميرةُ أليسار مدينةَ صور مع مجموعةٍ من أصحابها، واستقرَّت على الساحلِ في شماليّ أفريقيا في موقع تونسَ العاصمة حالياً، حيثُ عملت على شراء أرض لإنشاء المدينة التي لا تتجاوزُ مساحتها مساحةَ جلدِ ثورٍ، وقصّت الجلدَ إلى خيوط صغيرة مكّنتها من إحاطة موقع المدينة بهذه الخيوط، وأطلقت على المدينة اسم قرت حداشت، التي تعني باللغة الكنعانيّة القرية أو المدينة.	 الشكلُ (١٨) الأميرةُ أليسار ونشأةُ قرطاجةَ: غادرت الأميرةُ أليسار مدينةَ صور مع مجموعةٍ من أصحابها، واستقرَّت على الساحلِ في شماليّ أفريقيا في موقع تونسَ العاصمة حالياً، حيثُ عملت على شراء أرض لإنشاء المدينة التي لا تتجاوزُ مساحتها مساحةَ جلدِ ثورٍ، وقصّت الجلدَ إلى خيوط صغيرة مكّنتها من إحاطة موقع المدينة بهذه الخيوط، وأطلقت على المدينة اسم قرت حداشت، التي تعني باللغة الكنعانيّة القرية أو المدينة.
Figure 18: Princess Elissar, by the brush of the artist Francis Ghorin. *Elissar and the Emergence of Carthage: Princess Elissar left the city of Tyre with a group of her companions and settled on the coast of North Africa, at the site of present-day Tunis. There, she worked to buy land to establish the city, whose area did not exceed the size of a bull's hide. She cut the hide into small strips, enabling her to surround the site of the city with these strips. She gave the city the name Qart Hadasht, which means, in the Canaanite language, the village or the city.*	*Figure 18: The Princess.* *Elissar and the Emergence of Carthage: Princess Elissar left the city of Tyre with a group of her companions and settled on the coast of North Africa, at the site of present-day Tunis. There, she worked to buy land to establish the city, whose area did not exceed the size of a bull's hide. She cut the hide into small strips, enabling her to surround the site of the city with these strips. She gave the city the name Qart Hadasht, which means, in the Canaanite language, the village or the city.*

*Red text shows removed content.

The following Grade 12 History example illustrates the removal of images depicting women's participation in anti-colonial resistance from a lesson on the role of women in the independence movement. The 2017-2018 textbook discussed two Algerian women who fought or supported the struggle against French colonial rule: Lalla Fatma N'Soumer (1830-1863), a Kabyle female anti-colonial leader who led the resistance to the French conquest of Algeria in the 1850s, and Djamila Bouhired (born 1935), a well-known fighter in the Algerian War of Independence (1954-1962). In the previous version of the textbook, both women appeared in images beside the texts discussing them: a painted illustration of Lalla Fatma N'Soumer and a photograph of Djamila Bouhired.

Although the 2025-2026 textbook preserved the written passages discussing these two female historical figures and praising women's active role in the Algerian Revolution, both their images were removed. While Djamila Bouhired maintained personal ties with former Syrian President Bashar al-Assad and received honors from his government, this alone does not explain the broader pattern observed in the textbooks.[216] The intentional removal of women's images, including not only Bouhired's photograph but also the image of Lalla Fatma N'Soumer, without revising or removing the accompanying text celebrating either figure, indicates a broader pattern of female visual erasure. The fact that these women continue to be praised textually as prominent figures in the anti-colonial national struggle while their visual representations have been removed suggests a deliberate reduction of women's visibility rather than a figure-specific editorial decision.

***History*, Grade 12 (Humanities Track), 2025-2026, pp. 170, 175 (previously: *History*, Grade 12 (Humanities Track), 2017-2018, pp. 174, 179)**

2017-2018	2025-2026
[p. 174] بعد قراءتك مربّع النصّ بيّن نتائج ثورة المقراني. ثالثاً: ثورةُ لالا فاطمة: قامت ثورة **لالا فاطمة** في منطقة **جرجرة** في منطقة القبائل، هزمتِ الفرنسيين في معركة عام١٨٥٤م، حيث أرغمتِ الجنودَ الفرنسيين على الانسحاب من أراضيها بعد أنْ خلّفوا وراءهم أكثرَ من ٨٠٠ قتيل. وفي عام ١٨٥٧م حاصر الفرنسيون بيتَها، ووُضعتْ في "معسكر اعتقال" بوسط الجزائر تحت حراسة مشدّدة، فماتت حسرةً وحزناً على وطنها ودينها عام ١٨٦٣م، وهي لم تتجاوزِ الثالثة والثلاثين من عمرها. الشكل (٨) لالا فاطمة.	[p. 170] أدّى إلى نقص العتاد والماء، فوقع في يد الفرنسيين، لتنتهيَ بذلك ثورةُ المقراني. بعد قراءتك مربّع النصّ بيّن نتائج ثورة المقراني. ثالثاً: ثورةُ لالا فاطمة: قامت ثورة **لالا فاطمة** في منطقة **جرجرة** في منطقة القبائل، هزمتِ الفرنسيين في معركة عام١٨٥٤م، حيث أرغمتِ الجنودَ الفرنسيين على الانسحاب من أراضيها بعد أنْ خلّفوا وراءهم أكثرَ من ٨٠٠ قتيل. وفي عام ١٨٥٧م حاصر الفرنسيون بيتَها، ووُضعتْ في "معسكر اعتقال" بوسط الجزائر تحت حراسة مشدّدة، فماتت حسرةً وحزناً على وطنها ودينها عام ١٨٦٣م، وهي لم تتجاوزِ الثالثة والثلاثين من عمرها.
[...] Third: The Revolt of Lalla Fatma *The revolt of Lalla Fatma took place in the Jarjara region in the Kabylia region. She defeated the French in a battle in 1854, forcing the French soldiers to withdraw from her lands after leaving behind more than 800 dead. In 1857, the French besieged her home, and she was placed in a "detention camp" in central Algeria under strict guard. She died in 1863 out of grief and sorrow for her homeland and religion, before she had passed the age of thirty-three.* *[A painting illustrating Lalla Fatma]* *Figure 8: Lalla Fatma.*	*[...] Third: The Revolt of Lalla Fatma* *The revolt of Lalla Fatma took place in the Jarjara region in the Kabylia region. She defeated the French in a battle in 1854, forcing the French soldiers to withdraw from her lands after leaving behind more than 800 dead. In 1857, the French besieged her home, and she was placed in a "detention camp" in central Algeria under strict guard. She died in 1863 out of grief and sorrow for her homeland and religion, before she had passed the age of thirty-three.*
[p. 179] أدّت المرأةُ دوراً فاعلاً في الثورة الجزائريّة كأصال التمريض، وتأمين الاتصالات، والقيام بأعمال بطوليّة وراء خطوط العدوّ، وتنظيم هيئة للمخابرات العسكريّة خاصّة بالنساء، ومن أشهرهن: **زهرة بو ظريف وجميلة بو عزّة، وجميلة بوحيرد** التي أثارتها عبارةٌ قرأتها في كتب التاريخ تقول: "أسلافُنا هم الغالُ أي شعب الغال الذي ينتمي إليه الفرنسيون"؟ سجّلت الثورةُ الانتصارَ تلوَ الانتصار؛ لأنّها استندت إلى مرتكزات عديدة كتوحيد الأحزاب في جبهة واحدة، والدعم المادّي والمعنوي من البلاد العربيّة وبخاصّة سوريةُ ومصرُ، والتنسيق مع حركات التحرّر العالميّة (كوبا) وقد بلغَ عددُ الثوّار حوالي (١٠٠ألف) مجاهد، وتابعت نجاحَها، ففتحت جبهةٌ جديدةٌ عام ١٩٥٥م في منطقة وهران. في هذه الظروف عقدتِ الجبهةُ عام ١٩٥٦م **مؤتمر الصومام** (واد في هضبة النجود) الذي قرّر: إنشاءَ المجلس الوطنيّ لقيادة الثورة، وإنشاءَ جيش التحرير الجزائريّ، وتشكيلَ قوّاتٍ من الفدائيين للعمل وراء خطوط العدوّ بما فيها الأراضي الفرنسيّة. • **فرنسا تعجز عن قمع الثورة:** وجدتْ فرنسا نفسَها أمام ثورةٍ شعبيّةٍ خطرةٍ في الجزائر، فأعلنت التعبئةَ، وطبّقتْ سياسةَ البساط الشكل (٩) جميلة بوحيرد إحدى المناضلات الجزائريات في الثورة الجزائرية الكبرى.	[p. 175] بعد قراءتك مربّع النصّ ناقش ما جاء في بيان الثورة من أهداف لخلالها. أدّت المرأةُ دوراً فاعلاً في الثورة الجزائريّة كأصال التمريض، وتأمين الاتصالات، والقيام بأعمال بطوليّة وراء خطوط العدوّ، وتنظيم هيئة للمخابرات العسكريّة خاصّة بالنساء، ومن أشهرهن: **زهرة بو ظريف وجميلة بو عزّة، وجميلة بوحيرد** التي أثارتها عبارةٌ قرأتها في كتب التاريخ تقول: "أسلافُنا هم الغالُ أي شعب الغال الذي ينتمي إليه الفرنسيون"؟ سجّلت الثورةُ الانتصارَ تلوَ الانتصار؛ لأنّها استندت إلى مرتكزات عديدة كتوحيد الأحزاب في جبهة واحدة، والدعم المادّي والمعنوي من البلاد العربيّة وبخاصّة سوريةُ ومصرُ، والتنسيق مع حركات التحرّر العالميّة (كوبا) وقد بلغَ عددُ الثوّار حوالي (١٠٠ألف) مجاهد، وتابعت نجاحَها، ففتحت جبهةٌ جديدةٌ عام ١٩٥٥م في منطقة وهران. في هذه الظروف عقدتِ الجبهةُ عام ١٩٥٦م **مؤتمر الصومام** (واد في هضبة النجود) الذي قرّر: إنشاءَ المجلس الوطنيّ لقيادة الثورة، وإنشاءَ جيش التحرير الجزائريّ، وتشكيلَ قوّاتٍ من الفدائيين للعمل وراء خطوط العدوّ بما فيها الأراضي الفرنسيّة. • **فرنسا تعجز عن قمع الثورة:** وجدتْ فرنسا نفسَها أمام ثورةٍ شعبيّةٍ خطرةٍ في الجزائر، فأعلنت التعبئةَ، وطبّقتْ سياسةَ البساط

*Red text shows removed content.

(See the continuation of the example on the following page)

216 See *Social Studies*, Grade 6, 2012-2013, p. 102.

2017-2018	2025-2026
[...] *[Text in the green box:]* *Algerian women played an active role in the revolution, including nursing work, securing communications, carrying out heroic actions behind enemy lines, and organizing a military intelligence body for women. Among the most famous of them were Zohra Bouzrif, Djamila Bouazza, and Djamila Bouhired, who was influenced by a phrase she read in history books: "Our ancestors are the Gauls, meaning the Gaulish people to whom the French belong!"* *[Photograph of Djamila Bouhired]* *Figure 9: Djamila Bouhired, one of the Algerian women fighters in the Great Algerian Revolution.*	*[...]* *[Text in the green box:]* *Algerian women played an active role in the revolution, including nursing work, securing communications, carrying out heroic actions behind enemy lines, and organizing a military intelligence body for women. Among the most famous of them were Zohra Bouzrif, Djamila Bouazza, and Djamila Bouhired, who was influenced by a phrase she read in history books: "Our ancestors are the Gauls, meaning the Gaulish people to whom the French belong!"*

*Red text shows removed content.

The evidence in this sub-chapter shows how the curriculum has distanced itself from presenting women as equal civic actors and visible public figures. The revised curriculum removes a lesson that explicitly taught women's equal rights and duties, removes an image and caption of young female volunteers, and removes images of women celebrated for their anti-colonial resistance. It also replaces the image of a female warrior-founder with a modest static portrait. Preserved positive material on women's public role still exists, as seen in the unchanged History Grade 9 passage on Iraqi women, but the active revisions point elsewhere. During an emergency curriculum revision, the editors chose to delete explicit teaching on women's equality, erase direct reference to female civic participation, and remove or replace women's images from lessons that had previously shown them as participants in politics, social action, military action, and national struggle. These changes align with Islamic dogmatic norms that restrict women's exposure and public presence: women are pushed out of clear view, removed as named civic actors, and made less visible in political and national life. This pattern marks a clear narrowing of women's public image in the 2025-2026 Syrian curriculum. It also fits the wider direction of the revised curriculum, where active changes repeatedly move textbook content closer to Islamic dogma, Sunni-centered narratives, and stricter religious norms.

Veiling Women and Removing Girls from Textbook Images

The 2025-2026 curriculum repeatedly edits images of girls and women to conform to stricter Islamic norms of appearance, modesty, and gender separation. This pattern appears across multiple subjects. For example, in the Grade 10 English textbook, images depicting fully visible girls and boys running were replaced with cropped images showing only their faces.[217]

The clearest pattern, however, appears in the early-grade Islamic Education textbooks. In the Grade 2 and Grade 3 editions, inherited illustrations are retained, but female figures with uncovered hair are systematically redrawn wearing a hijab or other Islamic head covering. These edits appear in everyday scenes of care, family life, and mutual assistance, including illustrations of a boy helping an elderly woman cross the street, a mother with her family, and a woman combing a young girl's hair. The revised images teach young children that female presence is acceptable only when it visually complies with Islamic standards of decency.

A more extensive pattern appears in Grade 3, where girls are removed from everyday scenes of learning, cooperation, and environmental care, and in some cases replaced with boys. When girls remain, they are redrawn wearing hijab and

217 The directives matrix designated this example for removal, but it was partially met. For images of girls in ballerina costumes remaining in the textbooks despite removal directives see *English Series* (Pupil's Book), Grade 1, 2025-26, p. 75 (previously: Emar – *English Series* [Pupil's Book], Grade 1, 2024-25, p. 75). For a woman's illustration from a calculation exercise remaining despite removal directives see *Mathematics*, Grade 2, Vol. 1, 2025-26, p. 22 (previously: *Mathematics*, Grade 2, Vol. 1, 2023-24, p. 26).

modest Islamic clothing.[218] Grade 4 Islamic Education advances this visual shift by replacing ordinary modest clothing with the black *niqab* for women and strict Sunni Salafi-style attire for men. The accompanying text likewise shifts its emphasis from beautification and emulating the Prophet Muhammad to covering and obedience to Allah. Similar changes extend beyond Islamic Education into the broader Syrian curriculum.[219] Beyond Islamic Education, a Grade 1 Social Studies textbook redraws a female doctor wearing a hijab, while the Grade 6 textbook removes or alters images so that women and schoolgirls with uncovered hair are either covered or disappear altogether. These repeated revisions point to a deliberate effort to Islamize women's visual representation across the curriculum.[220]

The following Islamic Education examples illustrate direct graphic edits that impose Islamic head coverings and stricter standards of female modesty on female figures. In a Grade 2 lesson on proper conduct toward others, an illustration of an elderly woman being helped by a boy to cross the street was retained in the revised textbook, but a hijab was added, leaving only the woman's face visible. In another Grade 2 lesson focused on appreciating the deeds of one's parents, two family illustrations were retained, but the mother's hair was covered by a hijab in the 2025-2026 version, leaving only her face visible. In a Grade 3 lesson on helping others, an illustration of a woman combing a young girl's hair was retained, but her uncovered hair was replaced with an Islamic head covering in the revised edition. These examples retain women in ordinary family, caregiving, and everyday settings while redrawing them to conform to Islamic norms of female modesty. The repeated editing of inherited illustrations indicates that uncovered female hair was deemed unacceptable even in simple images intended for young elementary-school students. Given the rapid nature of the 2025–2026 curriculum revision, these detailed graphic edits reflect a deliberate editorial choice to align women's appearance more closely with Islamic standards in early-grade Islamic Education textbooks.

***Islamic Education*, Grade 2, 2025-2026, p. 36 (previously: *Islamic Education*, Grade 2, 2023-24, p. 42)**

2023-2024	2025-2026
5. Connect the phrase to the suitable picture: • *I apologize for the mistake.* • *If I find something, I give it to its owner.* • *I help the elderly and respect them.*	*5. Connect the phrase to the suitable picture:* • *I apologize for the mistake.* • *If I find something, I give it to its owner.* • *I help the elderly and respect them.*

218 *Islamic Education*, Grade 2, 2025-26, pp. 36, 49 (previously: *Islamic Education*, Grade 2, 2023-24, pp. 42, 55).
Islamic Education, Grade 3, 2025-26, p. 17. (previously: *Islamic Education*, Grade 3, 2017-18, p. 19).
Islamic Education, Grade 3, 2025-26, p. 56. (previously: *Islamic Education*, Grade 3, 2017-18, p. 58).
Islamic Education, Grade 3, 2025-26, p. 84. (previously: *Islamic Education*, Grade 3, 2017-18, p. 86).
Islamic Education, Grade 3, 2025-26, p. 96. (previously: *Islamic Education*, Grade 3, 2017-18, p. 98).

219 *Islamic Education*, Grade 4, 2025-26, pp. 80-82 (previously: *Islamic Education*, Grade 4, 2013-14 Idlib Temporary Government (Syrian Opposition), pp. 81-83; originally taken from: *Islamic Education*, Grade 4, 2012-13 Assad Regime, pp. 81-83). Although we were not able to track and directly access the original *Islamic Education*, Grade 4, 2012-13 textbook published by the Assad regime, we have been able to find the *Islamic Education*, Grade 4, 2013-14 textbook published by the Syrian Opposition's Idlib Temporary Government to be distributed and used at schools across the territories under its control. After examining both the content and graphics of the 2013-2014 Idlib Temporary Government textbook, and comparing them with other Syrian textbooks from similar dates published by the Assad regime (e.g. Social Studies, Grade 6, 2012-13; *Islamic Studies*, Grade 7, 2011-12), we could determine with sufficient certainty that the aforementioned example had been reproduced unchanged from the original Assad-regime 2012-2013 textbook.

220 *Social Studies*, Grade 1, 2025-26, p. 34 (previously: *Social Studies*, Grade 1, 2023-24, p. 41). See also *Social Studies*, Grade 6, 2025-26, p. 26 (previously: *Social Studies*, Grade 6, 2012-13, p. 28). See also *Social Studies*, Grade 6, 2025-26, pp. 66-69 (previously: *Social Studies*, Grade 6, 2012-13, pp. 68-71).

***Islamic Education*, Grade 2, 2025-2026, p. 49 (previously: *Islamic Education*, Grade 2, 2023-24, p. 55)**

2023-2024	2025-2026
3. Connect the phrase to the suitable picture, to learn the virtue of my mother and father: • *My parents work to provide my needs.* • *My parents stay up for my comfort.*	*3. Connect the phrase to the suitable picture, to learn the virtue of my mother and father:* • *My parents work to provide my needs.* • *My parents stay up for my comfort.*

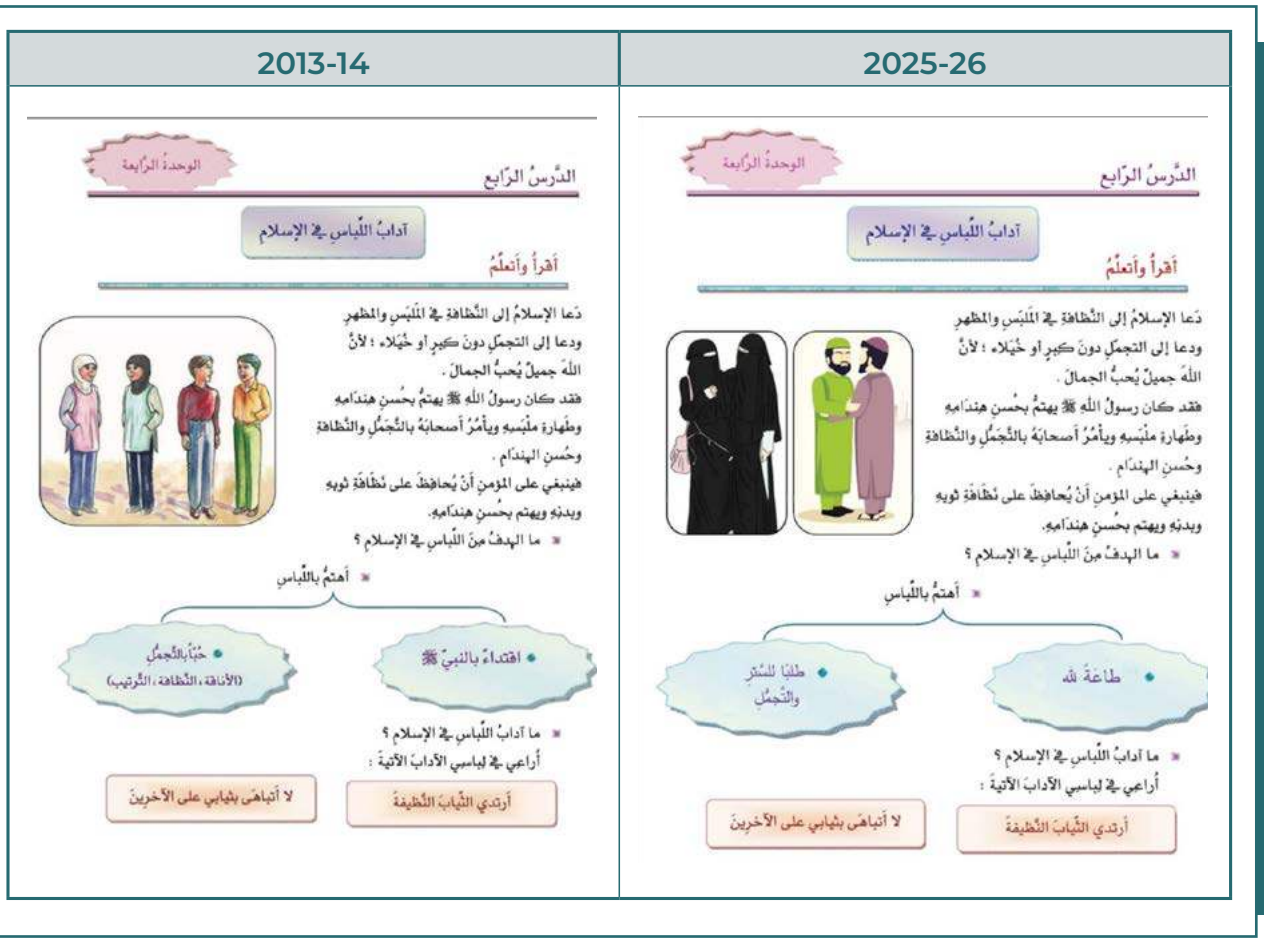
***Islamic Education*, Grade 3, 2025-2026, p. 56 (previously: *Islamic Education*, Grade 3, 2017-2018, p. 58)**

2017-2018	2025-2026
Read and Learn: • *Islam encouraged good morals. It commanded co-operation, honoring the guest, and kindness to the neighbor. It stressed the need to treat people well so that goodness and peace spread throughout the homeland, calling for kindness toward the young and respect for the elderly.* *[under the right-side image:]* *I love young children and am kind to them.* *[under the left-side image:]* *I respect the elderly and help them.*	*Read and Learn:* • *Islam encouraged good morals. It commanded co-operation, honoring the guest, and kindness to the neighbor. It stressed the need to treat people well so that goodness and peace spread throughout the homeland, calling for kindness toward the young and respect for the elderly.* *[under the right-side image:]* *I love young children and am kind to them.* *[under the left-side image:]* *I respect the elderly and help them.*

The following Grade 4 Islamic Education example in a lesson on "Etiquette of Dress in Islam" (*ādāb al-libās fil-islām*) shows a major escalation in the textbook's visual standard of Islamic dress. The older page, taken from a 2013–2014 textbook of the Syrian Opposition's Interim Government, which most likely reproduced the 2012–2013 Assad-era version of this lesson, depicted girls and women wearing ordinary Islamic modest dress (hijab) alongside boys. The 2025-2026 textbook replaced that image with two different images: The right image shows two men wearing attire commonly associated with conservative Sunni dress—*a ṭāqiyyah* as headgear, a white *thawb* reaching below the knees, and sirwāl trousers ending above the ankles. The left image shows two women dressed according to the same strict standard: full black *niqab*, covering their entire bodies and faces and leaving only the eyes and fingertips exposed.

The wording of the lesson also changed. The older version described dress in terms of "beautification" and "to follow the Prophet [Muhammad] as a role model" (*iqtidā ʾan li-l-nabī*), while the revised version replaced those respectively with "for seeking covering and beautification" (*ṭalaban lil-satr wa-l-tajammul*) and "to obey Allah" (*ṭāʿatan lillāh*). This represents a marked change, particularly in the Syrian context, where full black niqāb and the style of male dress shown have not traditionally been the predominant form of Sunni Muslim dress. The revised lesson presents a far stricter standard of public decency to young students. It moves from general Islamic modest dress to a fundamentalist visual model in which proper Islamic appearance means visibly Salafi-style dress for men and full-body black Salafi-style covering for women, including a covered face.

***Islamic Education*, Grade 4, 2025-2026, p. 80 (previously: *Islamic Education*, Grade 4, 2013-2014 Syrian Interim Government (Syrian Opposition), p. 81 [Originally: *Islamic Education*, Grade 4, 2012-2013 Assad Regime, p. 81])**



2013-14

الوحدةُ الرّابعة

الدّرسُ الرّابع

آدابُ اللّباسِ في الإسلام

أقرأُ وأتعلّمُ

دَعا الإسلامُ إلى النّظافةِ في المَلبَسِ والمظهرِ ودعا إلى التجمّلِ دونَ كِبرٍ أو خُيَلاء ؛ لأنَّ اللهَ جميلٌ يُحبُّ الجمالَ .

فقد كان رسولُ اللهِ ﷺ يهتمُّ بحُسنِ هِندامِهِ وطَهارةِ ملْبَسِهِ ويأمُرُ أصحابَهُ بالتَّجمُّلِ والنّظافةِ وحُسنِ الهِندام .

فينبغي على المؤمنِ أنْ يُحافِظَ على نَظافةِ ثوبِهِ وبدنِهِ ويهتم بحُسنِ هِندامِهِ.

- ما الهدفُ مِنَ اللّباسِ في الإسلام ؟
- أهتمُّ باللّباسِ
  - اقتداءً بالنبيِّ ﷺ
  - حُبّاً بالتجمُّلِ (الأناقة ، النّظافة ، التّرتيب)
- ما آدابُ اللّباسِ في الإسلام ؟

أُراعي في لباسي الآدابَ الآتيةَ :

أرتدي الثّيابَ النّظيفةَ

لا أتباهى بثيابي على الآخرينَ

2025-26

الوحدةُ الرّابعة

الدّرسُ الرّابع

آدابُ اللّباسِ في الإسلام

أقرأُ وأتعلّمُ

دَعا الإسلامُ إلى النّظافةِ في المَلبَسِ والمظهرِ ودعا إلى التجمّلِ دونَ كِبرٍ أو خُيَلاء ؛ لأنَّ اللهَ جميلٌ يُحبُّ الجمالَ .

فقد كان رسولُ اللهِ ﷺ يهتمُّ بحُسنِ هِندامِهِ وطَهارةِ ملْبَسِهِ ويأمُرُ أصحابَهُ بالتَّجمُّلِ والنّظافةِ وحُسنِ الهِندام .

فينبغي على المؤمنِ أنْ يُحافِظَ على نَظافةِ ثوبِهِ وبدنِهِ ويهتم بحُسنِ هِندامِهِ.

- ما الهدفُ مِنَ اللّباسِ في الإسلام ؟
- أهتمُّ باللّباسِ
  - طاعةً لله
  - طلبًا للسّترِ والتّجمُّلِ
- ما آدابُ اللّباسِ في الإسلام ؟

أُراعي في لباسي الآدابَ الآتيةَ :

أرتدي الثّيابَ النّظيفةَ

لا أتباهى بثيابي على الآخرينَ

(See the continuation of the example on the following page)

2013-14	2025-26
Unit Four - Lesson Four *Etiquette of Dress in Islam* *Read and learn:* *Islam has called for cleanliness in dress and appearance, and called for beautification without arrogance or conceit, because Allah is beautiful and loves beauty. The Messenger of Allah cared for good appearance and for the cleanliness of his clothing, and commanded his Companions to beautify themselves, be clean, and have good appearance.* *Therefore, the believer should preserve the cleanliness of his clothing and body and care for good appearance.* •*What is the purpose of dress in Islam?* *I care about dress:* •*Out of love of beautification: elegance, cleanliness, arrangement.* •*To follow the Prophet [Muhammad] as a role model.* •*What are the etiquettes of dress in Islam?* *I observe the following etiquettes in my dress:* •*I wear clean clothes.* •*I do not boast about my clothes over others.*	*Read and learn:* *Islam has called for cleanliness in dress and appearance, and called for beautification without arrogance or conceit, because Allah is beautiful and loves beauty. The Messenger of Allah cared for good appearance and for the cleanliness of his clothing, and commanded his Companions to beautify themselves, be clean, and have good appearance.* *Therefore, the believer should preserve the cleanliness of his clothing and body and care for good appearance.* •*What is the purpose of dress in Islam?* *I care about dress:* •*To seek covering and beautification.* •*To obey Allah.* •*What are the etiquettes of dress in Islam?* •*I observe the following etiquettes in my dress:* •*I wear clean clothes.* •*I do not boast about my clothes over others.*

*Highlighted text shows altered content.

The following Grade 3 Islamic Education examples show the removal of girls from ordinary scenes of learning, cooperation, environmental care, and social conduct. For example, in a lesson on the virtue of cooperation, an earlier image of a boy and a girl studying together in a classroom is replaced with a close-up image of young children whose gender is no longer identifiable. A second illustration on the same page was edited to remove the girl from a mixed group of children planting trees. The boys remain in the edited illustration, and even the hole the girl had been digging is left unchanged, but the girl herself is removed. In a lesson on protecting the environment, an illustration of a girl with uncovered hair watering a tree is replaced by a different image of a boy performing the same activity. Elsewhere in the lesson, an illustration of a girl with uncovered hair filling a cup from a water tap is replaced by a new image of a hijab-wearing girl in modest Islamic dress drinking from a cup.

In an exercise on hospitality, an illustration of two girls greeting each other at a doorway was replaced by two boys. These changes show a repeated effort to remove images of girls from early Islamic Education lessons. The revisions remove girls both from mixed-gender scenes and from activities in which they appeared alone. Where girls remain, they are redrawn in accordance with Islamic modesty norms. The cumulative effect is a textbook environment in which boys continue to study, plant, greet, and participate in public activities, while girls are removed, replaced, or represented in more religiously conservative forms.

(See the continuation of the example on the following page)

***Islamic Education*, Grade 3, 2025-2026, p. 17 (previously: *Islamic Education*, Grade 3, 2017-2018, p. 19)**

2017-2018	2025-2026
[below the top-right image:] *"I help my neighbors with what they need"* *[below the top-left image:]* *"I help my classmates with their studies"* *Through cooperation, I please Allah the Almighty, the satisfaction of my parents, and people's love and respect.* *[to the right of the bottom-left image:]* *"I cooperate with my classmates in caring for the school"* *Cooperation helps speed in completing tasks, accuracy, and mastery.*	*[below the top-right image:]* *"I help my neighbors with what they need"* *[below the top-left image:]* *"I help my classmates with their studies"* *Through cooperation, I please Allah the Almighty, the satisfaction of my parents, and people's love and respect.* *[to the right of the bottom-left image:]* *"I cooperate with my classmates in caring for the school"* *Cooperation helps speed in completing tasks, accuracy, and mastery.*

***Islamic Education*, Grade 3, 2025-2026, p. 84 (previously: *Islamic Education*, Grade 3, 2017-2018, p. 86)**

2017-2018	2025-2026
Read and learn: *• Allah created beauty in the universe, gave us a clean and beautiful environment, and commanded us to preserve it.* *[four images]* *I protect the environment and do not pollute it.*	*Read and learn:* *• Allah created beauty in the universe, gave us a clean and beautiful environment, and commanded us to preserve it.* *[four images]* *I protect the environment and do not pollute it.*

***Islamic Education*, Grade 3, 2025-2026, p. 96 (previously: *Islamic Education*, Grade 3, 2017-2018, p. 98)**

2017-2018	2025-2026
2. Compare the following two pictures, then identify the picture that expresses honoring the guest.	*2. Compare the following two pictures, then identify the picture that expresses honoring the guest.*

The following examples are derived from non-Islamic Education textbooks and show that the Islamization of women's appearance is not limited to Islamic Education textbooks. In Social Studies Grade 1, an illustration of a female doctor was kept in the revised textbook, but a hijab was added to her figure. This change should be interpreted cautiously, since the same textbook still includes many uncovered female figures, including the same professional woman on the preceding page. Even so, the edit remains noteworthy. Despite the rapid and uneven nature of the 2025–2026 revision, this particular figure was altered to wear a head covering, making her appearance conform more clearly to Islamic modesty norms.

In a Social Studies Grade 6 textbook, the same pattern appears. A classroom photograph of schoolgirls, including girls with and without head coverings, was removed from the revised unit's opening page. Other photographs were kept but visually altered: in photographs of girls using computers and of women and children at a school event, head coverings appear to have been digitally added to female figures. Together with the earlier Grade 7 Arabic Language female-volunteers example and the Social Studies Grade 6 Carthage princess example, these revisions point to a broader curricular pattern: Women's public visibility is reduced not only in Islamic Education textbooks but also across civic, language, and social studies materials.

***Social Studies*, Grade 6, 2025-2026, pp. 66-69 (previously: *Social Studies*, Grade 6, 2012-2013, pp. 68-71)**

2023-2024	2025-2026
[p. 40]	[p. 33]

(See the continuation of the example on the following page)

2023-2024	2025-2026
[p. 41] 	[p. 34]
• *I shall observe the image while listening to my teacher:* *"Why do we get vaccinated?"* *[...]*	• *I shall observe the image while listening to my teacher:* *"Why do we get vaccinated?"* *[...]*

***Social Studies*, Grade 6, 2025-2026, pp. 66-69 (previously: *Social Studies*, Grade 6, 2012-2013, pp. 68-71)**

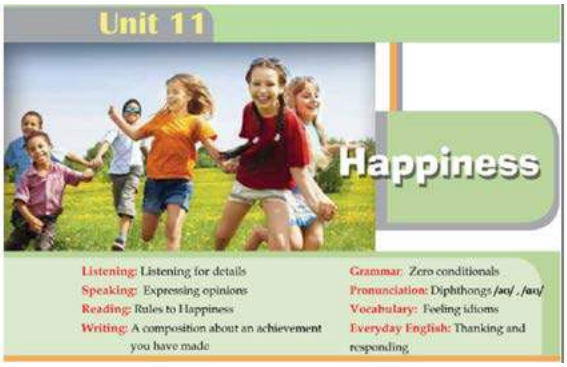
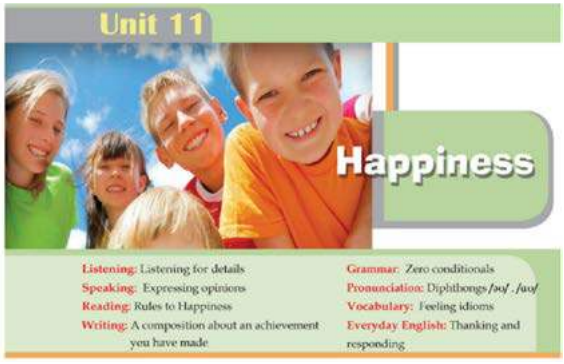
2012-13	2025-2026
[p. 68] الوحـدةُ الثالثة الأسرة والمؤسّسات يلبّي المجتمعُ احتياجات أفراده من خلال تكامُل الأدوار بين الأفراد والأسر والمؤسّسات (الصناعيّة والخدميّة والثقافيّة...) التي أوجدها لخدمة أبنائه. الأهدافُ العامّةُ للوحدة: يتوقّع من التلميذ بعد دراسة هذه الوحدة والأنشطة المرافقة أن يكون قادراً على أن: – يتبيّن دور الأسرة في تكوين شخصيّة الفرد. – يتعرّف مفهوم المؤسّسات وأهميّتها. – يتبيّن أهميّة الثقافة، والمؤسّسات الثقافيّة. – يقدّر أهميّة الدولة في رعاية المجتمع. – يحافظ على الممتلكات العامّة، ويشارك في حمايتها.	[p. 66] الوحـدةُ الثالثة الأسرة والمؤسّسات يلبّي المجتمعُ احتياجات أفراده من خلال تكامُل الأدوار بين الأفراد والأسر والمؤسّسات (الصناعيّة والخدميّة والثقافيّة...) التي أوجدها لخدمة أبنائه. الأهدافُ العامّةُ للوحدة: يتوقّع من التلميذ بعد دراسة هذه الوحدة والأنشطة المرافقة أن يكون قادراً على أن: – يتبيّن دور الأسرة في تكوين شخصيّة الفرد. – يتعرّف مفهوم المؤسّسات وأهميّتها. – يتبيّن أهميّة الثقافة، والمؤسّسات الثقافيّة. – يقدّر أهميّة الدولة في رعاية المجتمع. – يحافظ على الممتلكات العامّة، ويشارك في حمايتها.
Unit Three *The Family and Institutions* *Society meets the needs of its members through the integration of roles among individuals, families, and industrial, service, and cultural institutions that it created to serve its people.* *[...]*	*Unit Three* *The Family and Institutions* *Society meets the needs of its members through the integration of roles among individuals, families, and institutions, industrial, service, and cultural, that it created to serve its people.* *[...]*

(See the continuation of the example on the following page)

2012-2013	2025-2026
[p. 70] الشكل (٥)	[p. 68] الشكل (٥)
Image 5	*Image 5*
[p. 71] الشكلُ (٦)	[p. 69] الشكلُ (٦)
Image 6	*Image 6*

The same pattern of increasing visual modesty is also evident in English textbooks. In the Grade 10 English textbook, the original illustrations of children shown running, with their full bodies visible, are replaced by images focusing primarily on the children's faces, with the rest of the body no longer shown. Notably, the directives matrix called for these images to be removed, making their retention in modified form an example of only partial implementation.

***English*, Grade 10, Student's Book, 2025-26, pp. 81-82 (previously: *English*, Grade 10, Student's Book, 2023-24, pp. 87-88)**

2023-2024	2025-2026
	

The evidence in this sub-chapter shows that the new curriculum treats female visibility as a problem to be corrected. In some cases, images of women and girls remain, but their hair, clothing, bodies, and public presence are redrawn according to Islamic standards of female modesty. In other cases, girls are removed entirely and are sometimes replaced by boys in learning, cooperation, environmental care, and social interaction. This pattern teaches students that male presence in public and educational activity is ordinary, while female presence requires covering, restriction, or removal. These changes are especially noteworthy because they required detailed visual editing during a rapid curriculum revision. Taken together, they reshape the visual representation of women and girls, increasing conformity with Islamic modesty norms and reducing their visibility in everyday educational settings.

Women's Rights within Islamist Gender Hierarchy

The 2025-2026 curriculum conditions women's rights, protections, and agency on Islamic dogmatic norms, within a male-dominated Islamist traditionalist gender hierarchy, appearing in three main forms. Firstly, the curriculum increasingly frames women's social status through family roles in relation to men. A new addition to the Grade 12 Islamic Education textbook praises Islam for abolishing female infanticide and granting women noble social status but defines that status primarily through the roles of daughter, wife, and mother.[221]

Secondly, the curriculum permits women's economic and public participation but presents it as subject to conditions intended to safeguard men's rights and moral conduct. A Grade 9 lesson affirms women's economic rights but makes their participation in work conditional on modesty, family responsibilities, and protecting men's interests.[222] Thirdly, marriage is presented through a religious-legal hierarchy in which the husband provides the wife's rightful financial support (*nafaqah*) and holds responsibility (*qiwāmah*). The wife, by contrast, is required to obey her husband in all matters that do not conflict with Allah's commands and Islamic law and may forfeit her right to financial maintenance if she is deemed to be in a state of marital disobedience (*nušūz*) in respect of her husband.

Other preserved content adds to this picture without changing its hierarchy. On the one hand, Grade 6 Islamic Education textbooks include content on Islamic law on maintaining justice for wives in marriage and preserving wives' full rights,[223] On the other hand, the Grade 12 Islamic Education textbook insists that equality between the genders is a foreign element to Islam and a harmful notion for women. It claims that justice (*ʿadl*), as interpreted and implemented by Islamic law, rather than equality between men and women, benefits both genders due to the inherent and universal differences between men and women.[224] The curriculum also preserves female role models from Islamic tradition and early Islamic history, such as Nusaybah bint Kaʿb (d. c. 634 CE), Maryam, the Quran's Mary and mother of Jesus, Khadījah (556-619 CE), wife of the Prophet Muhammad, and Fāṭimah (d. 632 CE), the Prophet Muhammad's daughter, wife of ʿAlī, and mother of Ḥasan and Ḥusayn.[225] These women are praised for courage, faith, financial support, moral guidance, family care, sacrifice, and even fighting in jihad. However, their active role is celebrated when it serves Islam, the Prophet, the Muslim community, family virtue, or religious devotion. The resulting model grants women rights and agency while confining them to Islamic norms, family obligations, and male-headed marital order.

The following Grade 12 Islamic Education example presents an addition to the revised textbook's description of women's social status and a revised framing of sexual misconduct (*zinā*). In the previous 2017-2018 version, a passage discussing killing referenced Islam's protection of human life, its prohibition on killing children, and its abolition of the pre-Islamic practice of burying newborn daughters alive, as was practiced in pre-Islamic Arabia. The 2025-2026 textbook retained this content but added that Islam "bestowed upon woman a noble social status" that grows as she advances "from daughter to wife to mother." The addition praises Islam for protecting women and condemning female infanticide, but it defines women's rising social status through family roles in relation to men.

221 *Islamic Education*, Grade 12, 2025-26, pp. 71-72 (previously: *Islamic Education*, Grade 12, 2017-18, pp. 66-68). *Islamic Education*, Grade 12, 2025-26, pp. 95-98 (previously: *Islamic Education*, Grade 12, 2017-18, pp. 93-96).

222 *Islamic Education*, Grade 9, 2025-26, pp. 107-111 (previously: *Islamic Education*, Grade 9, 2017-18, pp. 108-112).

223 *Islamic Education*, Grade 6, 2025-26, p. 87 (previously: *Islamic Education*, Grade 6, 2017-18, p. 88).

224 *Islamic Education*, Grade 12, 2025-26, p. 55 (previously: *Islamic Education*, Grade 12, 2017-18, p. 50). *Islamic Education*, Grade 12, 2025-26, pp. 106-107 (previously: *Islamic Education*, Grade 12, 2017-18, pp. 104-105).

225 *Islamic Education*, Grade 6, 2025-26, p. 103 (previously: *Islamic Education*, Grade 6, 2017-18, p. 104);
Islamic Education, Grade 6, 2025-26, pp. 111-114 (previously: *Islamic Education*, Grade 6, 2017-18, pp. 112-115);
Islamic Education, Grade 8, 2025-26, pp. 105-107 (previously: *Islamic Education*, Grade 8, 2017-18, pp. 107-109).

The revised textbook also changes the question accompanying the passage on *zinā* (sexual misconduct), understood in this context as improper relations between men and women under Islamic moral norms. The previous version asked how society is corrupted by the loss of familial lineage, while the new version asks about the danger of sexual misconduct in corrupting both the individual and society. This shift broadens the moral concern from lineage and family origins to the moral condition of society as a whole, reflecting a stricter view of sexuality, gender relations, and conduct outside religiously approved boundaries. Together, these short revisions show that the new curriculum's language on women and sexuality is built around Islamic protection, family roles, sexual restraint, and religious honor, rather than equal civic status, equal rights, or individual autonomy.

***Islamic Education,* Grade 12, 2025-2026, p. 55 (previously: *Islamic Education*, Grade 12, 2017-2018, p. 50)**

2017-18	2025-26
– الزِّنى: ▪ نهى النَّبيُّ ﷺ أُمَّتَهُ من خلالِ هذهِ البيعةِ عن التَّهالكِ على الشَّهواتِ، وعدَّ الزِّنى جريمةً كبرى تودي بالمجتمعِ إلى مهاوي الفسادِ والانهيارِ لِما فيها من ضياعٍ للأنسابِ، وفرارٍ من التَّكاليفِ، ونكوصٍ عن الجِدِّ، وتضييعٍ لمعالمِ العفَّةِ والشَّرفِ. **انقد وابنِ موقفاً:** كيفَ يكونُ فسادُ المجتمعِ بضياعِ الأنسابِ؟ – القتلُ: ▪ جعلَ الإسلامُ النَّفسَ البشريَّةَ محترمةً مصونةً، فحرَّمَ القتلَ، وخصَّ النَّبيُّ ﷺ في هذا الحديثِ القتلَ بالأولادِ ذكوراً وإناثاً نهياً عمَّا كانَ عليهِ بعضُ العربِ في الجاهليَّةِ من قتلِ البنينَ خشيةَ الفقرِ، أو وأدِ البناتِ خشيةَ العارِ، وتحريمُ القتلِ هنا أشدُّ تأكيداً لأنَّهُ قتلٌ وقطيعةُ رحمٍ، كما أنَّ الأولادَ ضعفاءُ لا يستطيعونَ الدِّفاعَ عن أنفسِهم، فجاءَ الإسلامُ فحرَّمَ هذا العُرفَ الجاهليَّ، وقضى على عادةِ الوأدِ الذَّميمةِ؛ فحفظَ بذلكَ للإنسانِ حقَّ الحياةِ. **ما أثرُ توجيهِ النَّبيِّ ﷺ في الحفاظِ على الحياةِ الإنسانيَّةِ وبناءِ الوطنِ؟**	– الزِّنى: ▪ نهى النَّبيُّ ﷺ أُمَّتَهُ من خلالِ هذهِ البيعةِ عن التَّهالكِ على الشَّهواتِ، وعدَّ الزِّنى جريمةً كبرى تودي بالمجتمعِ إلى مهاوي الفسادِ والانهيارِ لِما فيها من ضياعٍ للأنسابِ، وفرارٍ من التَّكاليفِ، ونكوصٍ عن الجِدِّ، وتضييعٍ لمعالمِ العفَّةِ والشَّرفِ. **انقد وابنِ موقفاً:** ما خطورةُ الزِّنى على الفردِ والمجتمعِ في رأيكَ؟ – القتلُ: ▪ جعلَ الإسلامُ النَّفسَ البشريَّةَ محترمةً مصونةً، فحرَّمَ القتلَ، وخصَّ النَّبيُّ ﷺ في هذا الحديثِ القتلَ بالأولادِ ذكوراً وإناثاً نهياً عمَّا كانَ عليهِ بعضُ العربِ في الجاهليَّةِ من قتلِ البنينَ خشيةَ الفقرِ، أو وأدِ البناتِ خشيةَ العارِ، وتحريمُ القتلِ هنا أشدُّ تأكيداً لأنَّهُ قتلٌ وقطيعةُ رحمٍ، كما أنَّ الأولادَ ضعفاءُ لا يستطيعونَ الدِّفاعَ عن أنفسِهم، فجاءَ الإسلامُ فحرَّمَ هذا العُرفَ الجاهليَّ، وقضى على عادةِ الوأدِ الذَّميمةِ؛ بل أسبغَ على المرأةِ مكانةً اجتماعيَّةً كريمةً تنمو كلَّما تقدَّمتْ في العمرِ من طفلةٍ إلى زوجةٍ إلى أمٍّ إذْ تحتاجُ إلى مزيدٍ من الحبِّ والحنوِّ والإكرامِ، فحفظَ بذلكَ للإنسانِ حقَّ الحياةِ.
Sexualized Misconduct (zinā) *The Prophet, peace be upon him, forbade his community through this pledge from indulging in desires, and counted sexualized misconduct as a major crime that leads society to the abysses of corruption and collapse, because it causes the loss of lineage, escape from obligations, withdrawal from seriousness, and the destruction of the marks of chastity and honor.* *I criticize and state a position: How is society's corruption caused by the loss of lineage?* *Killing* *Islam made the human soul respected and protected, so it forbade killing. In this hadith, the Prophet, peace be upon him, specifically mentioned the killing of children, males and females, forbidding what some Arabs used to do in the pre-Islamic period: killing sons out of fear of poverty, or burying daughters alive out of fear of shame. The prohibition of killing here is especially emphasized because it is murder and severing of kinship, and because children are weak and unable to defend themselves. Islam came and prohibited this pre-Islamic custom of burying daughters alive, thereby preserving the human right to life.* *What is the effect of the Prophet's guidance, peace be upon him, in preserving human life and building the homeland?*	*Sexualized Misconduct (zinā)* *The Prophet, peace be upon him, forbade his community through this pledge from indulging in desires, and counted sexualized misconduct as a major crime that leads society to the abysses of corruption and collapse, because it causes the loss of lineage, escape from obligations, withdrawal from seriousness, and the destruction of the marks of chastity and honor.* *I criticize and state a position: What is the danger of sexualized misconduct (zinā) to the individual and society, in your opinion?* *Killing* *Islam made the human soul respected and protected, so it forbade killing. In this hadith, the Prophet, peace be upon him, specifically mentioned the killing of children, males and females, forbidding what some Arabs used to do in the pre-Islamic period: killing sons out of fear of poverty, or burying daughters alive out of fear of shame. The prohibition of killing here is especially emphasized because it is murder and severing of kinship, and because children are weak and unable to defend themselves. Islam came and prohibited this pre-Islamic custom of burying daughters alive; rather, it bestowed upon woman a noble social status that grows as she advances in age from daughter to wife to mother, as she needs more love, tenderness, and honor. Thereby, it preserved the human right to life.*

*Highlighted text shows altered content. *Red text shows removed content. *Green text shows added content.

The following Grade 9 Islamic Education example, retained from the previous curriculum, shows how women's economic rights and public activity are recognized while simultaneously being restricted under an Islamist gender hierarchy. The passage states that Islam gave women full rights in the economic and professional fields, including rights to ownership, inheritance, disposal of property, and the right to suitable work in many fields. This permission is, however, immediately qualified by a series of conditions. Women's work must preserve morality, modesty, and public morals; it must not contribute to male unemployment by entering occupations traditionally performed by men; and it must not interfere with a woman's "basic work" as the mother of her children and caretaker of the family. The passage thus presents women's work as conditional and secondary to their family responsibilities. Women may own, inherit, work, and participate in society, but only when their work remains compatible with Islamic modesty standards, male economic priorities, and the family duties assigned to them "by religion and reason."

***Islamic Education*, Grade 9, 2025-2026, p. 107 (previously: *Islamic Education*, Grade 9, 2017-2018, p. 108)**

ثالثاً- في المجالِ الاقتصاديِّ:

أولى الإسلامُ المرأةَ كاملَ الحقوقِ في المجالِ الاقتصاديِّ والمهنيِّ، ومن ذلك:

١- منحَ الإسلامُ المرأةَ حقَّ التَّملُّكِ والتَّصرُّفِ في مالِهَا وإرثِها، باعتبارِهَا كاملةَ الأهليَّةِ كالرَّجلِ، قالَ اللهُ عزَّ وجلَّ: ﴿لِّلرِّجَالِ نَصِيبٌ مِّمَّا تَرَكَ ٱلْوَٰلِدَانِ وَٱلْأَقْرَبُونَ وَلِلنِّسَآءِ نَصِيبٌ مِّمَّا تَرَكَ ٱلْوَٰلِدَانِ وَٱلْأَقْرَبُونَ﴾ [النساء:٧].

٢- جعلَ الإسلامُ للمرأةِ المسلمةِ الحقَّ في مزاولةِ العملِ المناسبِ، وأباحَ لها أنْ تشاركَ في كثيرٍ من ميادينِه بشروطٍ تحفظُ كرامتَها من الابتذالِ والامتهانِ، وتحافظُ على تماسكِ الأسرةِ.

شروطُ عملِ المرأةِ:

١) محافظتُها على أدبِها وحِشْمَتِهَا مراعاةً للآدابِ العامَّةِ.

٢) ألَّا تُسبِّبَ في بَطَالَةِ الرِّجالِ إذا عَمِلَتْ في أنواعِ أعمالِهِم.

٣) أن تستطيعَ التَّوفيقَ بينَ عَمَلِها الأساسيِّ – أمّاً لأطفالها وربَّةً لأسرةٍ – وبينَ عملِهَا خارجَ المنزلِ، وإلَّا فتركُهَا بيتَهَا وهجرانُها لأطفالِهَا تفريطٌ بأهمِّ الأعمالِ الموكَلةِ إليها شرعاً وعقلاً.

Third: In the economic field

Islam granted woman full rights in the economic and professional field, including the following:

1. Islam granted woman the right to own property and to dispose of her property and inheritance, considering her fully legally competent like men. As Allah the Almighty said: "For men there is a share of what parents and relatives leave, and for women there is a share of what parents and relatives leave." (Surat al-Nisaa': verse 7)

2. Islam gave Muslim woman the right to practice suitable work, and allowed her to participate in many fields under conditions that preserve her dignity from vulgarity and humiliation, and preserve the cohesion of the family.

Conditions for women's work:

1. Preserving her morality and modesty while observing public morals.

2. She must not cause unemployment among men if she works in their types of work.

3. She must be able to balance her basic work, as mother of her children and caretaker of the family, with her work outside the home, and leaving her home and abandoning her children must not cause neglect of the most important duties entrusted to her by religion and reason.

The following Grade 12 Islamic Education example shows how women's rights inside marriage are made dependent on male authority and wifely obedience. The passage, which remained unchanged from the previous curriculum, lists the wife's rights over her husband, including the dower (*mahr*) and the wife's rightful financial support (nafaqah). Yet that financial support is tied to the wife remaining in the marital home and fulfilling her family duties; it may be lost in cases of marital insubordination (*nušūz*), which the textbook defines as the wife's breach of steady obedience to her husband, leaving the marital home without a legitimate reason, or denying the husband his lawful marital rights. The corresponding section on the husband's rights identifies the wife's obedience in all matters that do not involve sin as his foremost right. It cites Qur'an 4:34—"Men are responsible for women" (*qawwāmūn ʿalā al-nisāʾ*)—and explains *qiwāmah* (guardianship/responsibility) as a duty of responsibility and obligation rather than selfishness or domination. The same explanation nevertheless places the husband in a position of authority within the family on the basis of his physical and moral qualities and his obligation to provide financial support. In return, the wife is expected to obey her husband to preserve family stability. The passage therefore presents marriage as a male-led hierarchy: the husband leads and provides; the wife obeys and performs her marital duties. Her entitlement to financial maintenance is also conditional, as it may be lost if she is deemed to be in a state of marital disobedience.

***Islamic Education*, Grade 12, 2025-2026, pp. 113-114 (previously: *Islamic Education*, Grade 12, 2017-2018, pp. 112-113)**

(p. 113)

حقوقُ الزَّوجةِ على زوجِها:

- **المهرُ:** فالمهرُ حقٌّ من حقوقِ الزَّوجةِ على زوجِها، جعلَهُ الإسلامُ تكريماً لها وكسباً لودِّها وقد وردَ هذا بالتَّفصيلِ في بحثِ عقدِ الزَّواجِ.
- **النَّفقةُ:** فنفقةُ الزَّوجةِ واجبةٌ على زوجِها، ما دامت في بيتِ الزَّوجيةِ، وملتزمةً بواجباتِها الأسريَّةِ، والنَّفقةُ تشملُ كلَّ ما تحتاجُ إليهِ الزَّوجةُ من طعامٍ، ولباسٍ، ومسكنٍ ... وإنْ كانتْ غنيةً لقولِهِ تَعَالى: ﴿وَعَلَى ٱلْمَوْلُودِ لَهُۥ رِزْقُهُنَّ وَكِسْوَتُهُنَّ بِٱلْمَعْرُوفِ﴾ [البقرة: ٢٣٣].

– أمَّا مقدارُ هذهِ النَّفقةِ فتقدَّرُ بحسبِ حالِ الزَّوجِ يساراً وإعساراً، بغضِّ النَّظرِ عن حالِ الزَّوجةِ بشرطِ أنْ لا يقلَّ عن الحدِّ الأدنى للكفايةِ، قالَ تَعَالى: ﴿لِيُنفِقْ ذُو سَعَةٍ مِّن سَعَتِهِۦۖ وَمَن قُدِرَ عَلَيْهِ رِزْقُهُۥ فَلْيُنفِقْ مِمَّآ ءَاتَىٰهُ ٱللَّهُۚ لَا يُكَلِّفُ ٱللَّهُ نَفْسًا إِلَّا مَآ ءَاتَىٰهَاۚ سَيَجْعَلُ ٱللَّهُ بَعْدَ عُسْرٍ يُسْرًا ۝٧﴾ [الطلاق].

وتسقطُ النَّفقةُ في ثلاثِ حالاتٍ:

١– **النُّشوز:** وهو خروجُ الزَّوجةِ عن طاعةِ زوجِها، أو تركُ بيتِ الزَّوجيَّةِ بلا سببٍ شرعيٍّ، أو منعُ الزَّوجِ من حقوقِهِ الزَّوجيَّةِ المشروعةِ.

٢– **الموت:** فإذا ماتَ أحدُ الزَّوجينِ سقطتْ نفقةُ الزَّوجةِ.

٣– **الإسقاط:** وذلكَ بأنْ تبرّئَ الزَّوجةُ زوجَها من نفقتِها فتسقطُ بإرادتِها.

(See the continuation of the example on the following page)

The wife's rights over her husband:

- *The dower (*mahr*): The dower is one of the wife's rights over her husband. Islam made it an honor for her and a gain for her affection. This was discussed in detail in the section on the marriage contract.*
- *Financial support (*nafaqah*): The wife's financial support is obligatory upon her husband as long as she remains in the marital home and is committed to her family duties. Financial support includes everything the wife needs, such as food, clothing, housing, and so on, even if she is wealthy, in accordance with His saying: "And upon the father is their provision and clothing according to what is acceptable". (Surat al-Baqarah: verse 233)*

- The amount of this financial support is determined according to the husband's condition, whether ease or hardship, regardless of the wife's condition, provided that it does not fall below the minimum sufficient level. Allah the Almighty said: "Let a man of wealth spend from his wealth, and he whose provision is restricted, let him spend from what Allah has given him. Allah does not burden a soul except with what He has given it. Allah will bring about ease after hardship". (Surat al-Talaaq: verse 7)

Financial support ceases in three cases:

1. *Marital insubordination (*nušūz*): This is the wife's breach of obedience to her husband, or her leaving the marital home without a legitimate reason, or preventing the husband from his lawful marital rights.*
2. *Death: If one of the spouses dies, the wife's financial support ceases.*
3. *Waiver: This is when the wife absolves her husband of supporting her financially, so it falls by her will.*

(p. 114)

حقوقُ الزَّوجِ على زوجتِهِ:

- وجوبُ الطَّاعةِ في غيرِ معصيةٍ: جعلَ اللهُ الزَّوجَ قوَّاماً في أسرتِهِ، قال تَعَالى:

﴿ٱلرِّجَالُ قَوَّٰمُونَ عَلَى ٱلنِّسَآءِ بِمَا فَضَّلَ ٱللَّهُ بَعۡضَهُمۡ عَلَىٰ بَعۡضٖ وَبِمَآ أَنفَقُواْ مِنۡ أَمۡوَٰلِهِمۡۚ فَٱلصَّٰلِحَٰتُ قَٰنِتَٰتٌ حَٰفِظَٰتٞ لِّلۡغَيۡبِ بِمَا حَفِظَ ٱللَّهُۚ﴾ [النساء: ٣٤].

– والقِوامةُ تَعنِي: المسؤوليّةَ والتّكليفَ، لا الأنانيَّةَ والسَّيطرةَ فالله تَعَالى كلَّفَ الزَّوجَ – بما خصَّهُ بهِ من خصائصَ جسميّةٍ وخَلْقيَّةٍ– بمسؤوليَّةِ رعايةِ الأسرةِ، وتوفيرِ ما تحتاجُ إليهِ من نفقةٍ ونحوها، ومقابلَ ذلكَ جعلَ لهُ الطّاعةَ على زوجتِهِ وذلكَ لتستقرَّ الأسرةُ.

The husband's rights over his wife:

** The obligation to obey anything that is not a disobedience to Allah's word (al-ṭāʿah fi ǧayr maʿṣiyah): Allah made the husband responsible (qawwām) over his family. Allah the Almighty said: "Men are responsible (qawwāmūn) over women by what Allah has favored some of them over others and by what they spend from their wealth. So righteous women are devoutly obedient, guarding in the unseen what Allah would have them guard." (Surat al-Nisaa': verse 34)*

- Responsibility (qiwāmah) means accountability and obligation, not selfishness and domination. Allah the Almighty assigned the husband, because of the physical and moral characteristics He gave him, the responsibility of caring for the family and providing the financial support it needs and so on. In return, He made obedience to the husband obligatory for his wife, so that the family may remain stable.

This subchapter shows a curriculum that grants women honor, rights, and agency while consistently framing them within Islamic gender norms and a male-led family hierarchy. The strongest active revision presents women's noble social status through the family sequence of daughter, wife, and mother, and links sexual misconduct to the moral corruption of the individual and society. The preserved Grade 9 material recognizes women's rights to own property, inherit, work, and participate in economic life, but subjects these rights to conditions linked to modesty, family responsibilities, and male employment—conditions which, in today's social reality, can be met not without difficulty. Similarly, the preserved Grade 12 material recognizes the wife's rights to a dower and financial maintenance, while linking those

rights to steady obedience, fulfillment of household duties, and the husband's qiwāmah (responsibility and authority) within the family. The preserved female role models from Islamic tradition reinforce the same framework. Women are praised for being courageous, generous, influential, and even active in jihad, but their actions are consistently presented in the service of Islam, the Prophet Muhammad, the Muslim community, family, or religious devotion. The resulting model confines women's rights and public value to Islamic law, family obligation, sexual restraint, and male-led marital and societal order.

Overall, the evidence in this chapter shows a consistent shift in the 2025-2026 curriculum's treatment of women. The revised textbooks remove explicit language on civic equality, reduce women's visual presence in public life, edit female figures to impose hijab or stricter covering, replace girls with boys in early-grade illustrations, and frame women's work and marital rights as conditional on Islamic law. The active revisions are particularly noteworthy given the rapid preparation of the new curriculum. Time and editorial effort were devoted to removing a lesson on women's constitutional equality, replacing or deleting images of women, editing illustrations and photographs to cover women's hair, adding a family-centered definition of women's social role, and introducing stricter Salafi-style models of male and female public appearance. Taken together, these changes point to a clear shift toward the Islamization of gender roles and away from earlier civic conceptions of gender equality and women's rights.

The chapter also highlights the limits of the curriculum's positive portrayal of women. Women are still praised as mothers, wives, daughters, believers, celebrated Companions and the Prophet Muhammad, financial supporters, moral guides, and even fighters in jihad. They are afforded rights, honor, and agency, but these remain conditional on compatibility with Islamic law and serving the faith, the family, the Prophet, the Muslim community, or religious virtue. Women's rights and privileges are separated from equal citizenship and individual autonomy, and are instead placed under modesty rules, sexual restraint, family obligation, and male-led marital authority. In the context of this report, the chapter confirms the same broader pattern of the preceding chapters: the revised Syrian curriculum shifts away from secular civic equality toward more explicitly Islamic and stricter Sunni normative frameworks for identity, society, gender, and civic life.

The Old Ba‘thist Regime and the Al-Assad Family’s Legacy

Our previous report on the 2017–2018 Syrian curriculum concluded that the textbooks strongly promoted “respect and total commitment to Bashar Al-Assad and his father Hafez”.[226] The new 2025-2026 curriculum has therefore sought to remove these sentiments through undertaking a systematic reconfiguration of the historiography associated with the Ba‘thist regime and the Al-Assad family. Through renaming, removal, and reinterpretation, the textbooks distance the state’s educational narrative from decades of personality cult and regime-centered patriotism. At the same time, the revised content replaces former glorification with critical portrayals that reflect the priorities of the revised curriculum.

The removal of Assad-era symbols was one of the most prominent priorities of the new curriculum. The 2025 directives matrix opened with three overarching directives, demonstrated in the image below, the first of which instructed editors to replace every occurrence of the former Syrian flag with the new national flag. The third directive was to remove the entire subject of National Education (taught in Grades 7-12), which had contained numerous references praising the Assad regime and its symbols, including within the regime’s official narrative of the Civil War beginning in 2011 (see final subchapter below).The cumulative effect is a curriculum largely stripped of Ba ʿ thist ideological language, substantially reducing the former regime’s visibility within official educational discourse.

الجمهورية العربية السورية

وزارة التربية والتعليم

القرار رقم /٣٤٢٢/ ٩٤٣

وزير التربية والتعليم:

بناءً على مقتضيات المصلحة العامة

يقرّر ما يأتي:

تحذف الدروس والعبارات والصور التي تمجّد النظام البائد وبعض الملاحظات الأخرى وفق الآتي:

١- اعتماد علم الثورة بدلاً من العلم القديم أينما وُجد.
٢- اعتماد عبارة الحكم العثمانيّ بدلاً من عبارة الاحتلال العثمانيّ أينما وُجدت.
٣- حذف مادّة التربية الوطنيّة كاملة.

(See the continuation of the example on the following page)

226 “Syrian National Identity,” p. 4.

> *[…]*
> *1) Use the revolution's flag instead of the old flag wherever it appears.*
> *[…]*
> *3) Remove the subject of nationalistic education altogether.*

This chapter expounds upon the extent to which the new curriculum has shifted textbook narratives regarding the old Ba'thist regime and the al-Assad family. The revised curriculum goes beyond removing positive references to the Assad regime by adding new material that delegitimizes, vilifies and demonizes the former regime and reinterprets its legacy from the perspective of the new authorities. The first section demonstrates how the revised Syrian curriculum systematically dismantles the symbolic and ideological foundations of the Assad regime. The new textbooks remove flags, portraits, institutional names, patriotic references, and educational content associated with Hafez and Bashar al-Assad, while simultaneously introducing new material explicitly designed to delegitimize the former regime. The two are no longer portrayed as a symbol of national unity or resistance, but rather as oppressive and corrupt rulers whose regime betrayed Arab causes, undermined Syrian society, and cultivated a pervasive personality cult. The revisions also target figures associated with the former regime, including officials, writers, and cultural symbols, reflecting a broader attempt to erase Assadist influence from Syrian collective memory and public identity.

The second section examines how the curriculum fundamentally reinterprets the Baʿthist historical narrative. Events previously glorified as revolutionary achievements are reframed as authoritarian military coups, while long-standing regime narratives concerning stability, modernization, Arab nationalism, and resistance are systematically reversed. The "Corrective Movement" is delegitimized as an illegitimate seizure of power, and the Assad era is reframed as being defined by dictatorship, massacres, corruption, sectarianism, and economic decline. Similarly, the 1967 and 1973 wars are no longer presented as patriotic struggles or national accomplishments, but rather as examples of failure, incompetence, and betrayal. Through these revisions, the curriculum transforms the Assad period from a source of national pride into a cautionary historical episode defined by repression and catastrophe.

The final section analyzes the curriculum's comprehensive reframing of the 2011 Civil War, the subsequent conflict, and ultimately the 2024 "Blessed Revolution." Whereas earlier textbooks largely omitted the political causes of the uprising and portrayed the war as an externally imposed crisis, the revised curriculum presents the revolution as a legitimate, peaceful, and ultimately victorious popular movement against tyranny. The Assad regime is accused of severe repression and atrocities, including torture, massacres, chemical attacks, and the suppression of freedoms, while the revolutionaries are depicted as defenders of dignity, justice, and Syria's authentic Islamic-Arab identity. The narrative culminates in the overthrow of Bashar al-Assad in 2024, portrayed not merely as a political transition, but as the moral and historical restoration of the Syrian nation after decades of authoritarian rule.

Defacing Assad Legacy, Symbols, and Regime Collaborators

The Baʿth Party established a highly centralized political system built around Arab nationalism, socialism, and secular state ideology. After taking power in 1963, the party gradually transformed the state into a one-party structure in which political authority, education, media, and public institutions were closely tied to Baʿthist ideology. The regime emphasized themes of Arab unity, anti-imperialism, national resistance, and loyalty to the state, while limiting political pluralism and suppressing independent political organization. Power was increasingly concentrated within the military and security establishment, which played a central role in governance and social control.

Under the Assad family, the Syrian regime evolved into a personalized authoritarian system centered on loyalty to the president and the ruling elite. The state relied extensively on intelligence services, patronage networks, and ideological messaging to maintain stability and political dominance. Public life was shaped by strong state oversight, including the cultivation of personality cults surrounding Hafez and later Bashar al-Assad, who were portrayed as symbols of national unity and resistance. Portraits, statues, slogans, and monuments dedicated to the Assad family were displayed throughout schools, government institutions, streets, and public squares, reinforcing the image of the president as the embodiment of national unity, stability, and resistance. This pervasive symbolism often assumed quasi-sacral dimensions, with the leaders portrayed in idealized and paternalistic terms resembling a cult of personality or "cult of saints," in which loyalty to the Assad family was intertwined with loyalty to the nation itself. Public rituals, official ceremonies,

and educational content further reinforced reverence for the leadership and normalized its central place in Syrian political and social life. Although the regime presented itself as secular and protective of Syria's diverse communities, it maintained strict limits on political freedoms, restricted dissent, and tightly controlled expressions of national, ethnic, and religious identity outside the framework defined by the state.[227]

Symbolic de-Ba'thification is evident in the renaming or removal of places previously associated with the Al-Assad family. Geographic and institutional references bearing the Assad name have been replaced with more neutral designations, signaling an effort to erase the personalization of state institutions that characterized the former regime. For example, "Lake al-Assad" (*buḥayrat al-Asad*, also known as Euphrates Lake) was changed in the new curriculum to "Lake Tabqa."[228] This curricular adjustment reflects a broader attempt to dismantle the symbolic infrastructure of dynastic authority embedded within public memory.

As noted above, replacing the Baʿthist-era flag with the Revolution flag was a top priority of the curriculum revision and was implemented consistently across textbooks and subjects.[229] The former flag, featuring red, white, and black horizontal bands (from the Egyptian revolutionary flag), with two green stars representing Egypt and Syria (referencing the failed United Arab Republic), is replaced with the Revolution flag–a green, white and black triband charged with three red five-pointed stars, identical to the Independence flag which was stipulated in the 1930 constitution after gaining independence from the French mandate. This change extends even to the earliest grades, where Grade 1 students are introduced to the new flag.

***Social Studies,* Grade 1, 2025-26, pp. 11, 73 (previously: *Social Studies,* Grade 1, 2023-24, pp. 16, 87)**

2023-24	2025-26

227 For more on the rise and evolution of the Assad regime see Raymond Hinnebusch, *Syria: Revolution from Above*, London and New York: Routledge, 2001.

228 *Geography*, Grade 9, 2025-26, p. 72.

229 See also *Social Studies*, Grade 1, 2025-26, pp. 64-65 (previously: *Social Studies*, Grade 1, 2023-24, pp. 74-77); *Social Studies*, Grade 3, 2025-26, pp. 20-23 (previously: *Social Studies*, Grade 3, 2023-24, pp. 26-29); *Islamic Education*, Grade 7, 2025-26, p. 88 (previously: *Islamic Education*, Grade 7, 2017-18, p. 91); *Mathematics*, Grade 5, 2025-26, p. 77 (previously: *Mathematics*, Grade 5, 2023-24, p. 85).

A prominent example can be found in the Grade 3 Social Studies textbook, where the lesson titled "Symbols of a Homeland Uniting Us" was entirely removed, following the relevant directive in the matrix. The chapter featured national Syrian symbols such as the flag, the republic banner, Syrian currency, and Bashar al-Assad as the president of the Syrian Republic, who was described as a national symbol "spending his nights" to guarantee "security and stability," and to safeguard "the interests of the people and the homeland." Additionally, a full-page drawing of a Syrian soldier placing his hand on his heart, where a patch in the shape of Syria is stitched, was removed from the introduction to the unit. However, the textbook's editors inadvertently left the lesson title in the unit's table of contents.

***Social Studies,* Grade 3, 2025-26, p. 95 (previously: *Social Studies,* Grade 3, 2023-24, pp. 104-109)**

[p. 105]

[p. 107]

أتابعُ تعرُّفَ الرموزِ الوطنيّةِ

رئيسُ الجمهوريّةِ العربيّةِ السوريّةِ: هو مواطنٌ عربيٌّ سوريٌّ، ينتخبُهُ الشعبُ، يسهرُ على تحقيقِ الأمنِ والاستقرارِ، ويضمنُ مصلحةَ الشعبِ والوطنِ.

رئيسُ الجمهوريّةِ العربيّةِ السوريّةِ من الرموزِ الوطنيّةِ. رئيسنا هو .....

107

[image of Bashar al-Assad]
The President of the Arab Republic of Syria: is a Syrian Arab citizen elected by the people, spending his nights to guarantee security and stability, maintaining the interests of the people and the homeland.
The President [...] constitutes one of the national symbols. Our president is: [blank for filling]

(See the continuation of the example on the following page)

[p. 108]

I will inspect the common symbol [the banner of the republic]
[images right to left: a government building, a military rank, a coin]
I will describe the banner of the Arab Republic of Syria

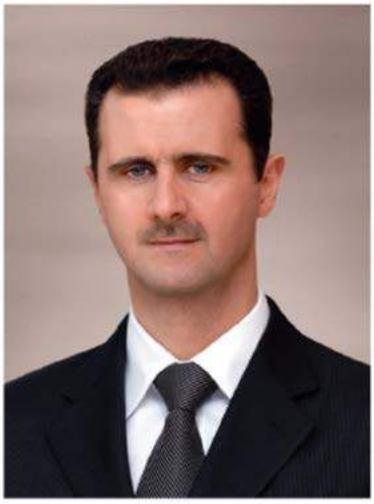
[2025-26, p. 95 – Retained]

Unit 6: My Homeland
Lesson 1: Symbols of a Homeland Uniting Us [...]

The erasure of positive portrayals of Bashar al-Assad from the new textbooks is further evident in a Grade 9 History textbook. Its new edition saw the removal of a section discussing his accession to power by a referendum, his commitment to the "Correction" legacy, "the rule of law, respect for order, and the affirmation of the principles of dialogue, transparency, democracy, and good citizenship, beginning with self-monitoring and honest conduct." The removal also included a section discussing al-Assad's "commitment to the option of resistance and the recovery of its occupied territories," alluding to combatting Israel and retrieving the Golan Heights.

***Modern and Contemporary History of the Arab Motherland,* Grade 9, 2017-18, p. 34 (removed)**

ثامناً: سورية في عهدِ السيد الرئيس بشار الأسد:



الشكل(١٥) الرئيس بشار الأسد

تسلّم الرئيس بشار الأسد رئاسة الجمهوريّة العربيّة السوريّة باستفتاء شعبيّ بعد وفاة الرئيس حافظ الأسد في تاريخ ١٠حزيران عام٢٠٠٠م، واستمرّت سورية في عهد السيّد الرئيس بشار الأسد على نهج التصحيح، حيثُ أكّد أهمّيّة سيادة القانون، واحترام النظام، وتأكيد مبادئ الحوار، والشفافيّة والديمقراطيّة والمواطنة الصالحة التي تبدأُ بالرقابة على الذاتِ والتعامُل بصدقٍ، كما عمل السيّد الرئيس على تعميم استخدامِ التقانة والتكنولوجيا لمواكبة التطوُّر، وأكّد تمسُّك سورية بخيار المقاومةِ واسترجاع الأراضي المحتلّة.

Eighth: Syria under President Bashar al-Assad

President Bashar al-Assad assumed the presidency of the Syrian Arab Republic through a popular referendum following the death of President Hafez al-Assad on 10 June 2000. Syria continued, under President Bashar al-Assad, along the "corrective" path [referencing Hafez's Corrective Movement], as he emphasized the importance of the rule of law, respect for order, and the affirmation of the principles of dialogue, transparency, democracy, and good citizenship, beginning with self-monitoring and honest conduct. The President also worked to expand the use of technology in order to keep pace with development, and affirmed Syria's commitment to the option of resistance and the recovery of its occupied territories.

Another national symbol which the new curriculum sought to mitigate is the national anthem. Accordingly, an illustration of the Syrian national football team chanting the song "Ḥumāt al-Diyār" (Guardians of the Lands), which was adopted in 1938 as Syria's national anthem and served in this capacity for the better part of 9 decades, was among the removed content. This accords with the spirit of the new regime's curriculum overhaul, which removes or replaces content associated with the former Assad regime.[230] Against this background, it is notable that images of Syrian banknotes remained unchanged in the 2025–2026 textbooks.[231]

230 See also the removal of a line from this poem from a grammar exercise, pursuant of the directives matrix. *Arabic is My Language*, Grade 6, Vol. 2, 2025-26, p. 134 (previously: *Arabic is My Language*, Grade 6, Vol. 2, 2023-24, p. 134). See also removal of a section on "Guardians of the Homeland" (*Ḥumāt al-waṭan*), a less known militaristic anthem vaguely resembling "Guardians of the Lands". *Music Education*, Grade 8, 2022-23, pp. 30-31.

231 Notably, on December 29, 2025, the new Syrian regime introduced via the Central Bank of Syria new banknote designs in denominations of 10, 25, 50, 100, 200 and 500, which entered use starting January 1, 2026; see: https://www.facebook.com/reel/4376547662575660; https://x.com/Greg_Galligan/status/2005767656134082775.

***Social Studies,* Grade 1, 2025-26, p. 64 (previously: *Social Studies,* Grade 1, 2023-24, p. 74 - removed)**

Syrian at Heart
I will observe the picture and listen to the Syrian Arab anthem:
"Guardians of the homeland, peace be upon you; noble souls refuse to be humiliated."

The names and images of the al-Assad family members have also been removed from institutions named after them.[232] For example, as prescribed in the directives matrix, the 2025–2026 edition of a Grade 8 Physics and Chemistry textbook retouches an image of the Basel High School for Excellent Students, named after Basel al-Assad, the eldest son of Hafez al-Assad and brother of Bashar al-Assad. Basel had been widely expected to succeed his father as president before his death in a car accident in 1994.[233] This change effectively removed his name from the school sign, his portrait, the Ba'thist flag (alongside the Palestinian flag),[234] the school banner from the building, and replaced the Ba'thist flag with the Revolution flag.

***Physics and Chemistry,* Grade 8, 2025-26, p. 18 (previous: *Physics and Chemistry*, Grade 8, 2023-24, p. 18)**

2023-24	2025-26
Basel High School for Excellent Students	*High School for Excellent Students*

*Red text shows removed content.

232 For the removal of more references to Basel al-Assad from an exhibition named after him, see *Arabic is My Language*, Grade 6, Vol. 1, 2025-26, pp. 103-104 (previously: *Arabic is My Language*, Grade 6, Vol. 1, 2023-24, pp. 112-113).

233 For another implementation of a directive from the matrix, replacing "Al-Assad National University Hospital" with "National University Hospital" see *Biology*, Grade 12 (Scientific Track), 2025-26, p. 143 (previously: *Biology*, Grade 12 (Scientific Track), 2023-24, p. 143).

234 The removal of the Palestinian flag appears to have been driven more by graphic or editorial considerations than by a deliberate political intention.

Additionally, references to prominent political figures and ideological formulations associated with the Assad era have been systematically eliminated. Content directly authored by or closely linked to regime figures has been removed from textbooks. A telling example is the removal of several references to Bouthaina Shaaban – a former Syrian political figure, author, Literature academic, feminism activist and longtime senior adviser to Bashar al-Assad who served as one of the most prominent international spokespeople of the Syrian regime. Her contributions to the fields of literary criticism have been deleted from the new curriculum, and her name was removed from a section on the literary criticism movement in Syria.[235] Likewise, in accordance with the directives matrix, the 2025–2026 edition of the Grade 8 Arabic Language textbook removes a lesson based on one of her texts. The lesson featured her headshot and a footnote describing her academic and literary achievements, including working as a professor in the University of Damascus, and her publications "*Ten Years with Hafez al-Assad and the collection Daughter of the Earth*."

***Arabic Language*, Grade 8, 2023-24, pp. 90-92 (removed)**

الحَداثَةُ الغربيَّةُ والتَّقليدُ العَربيُّ مطالعة

الدرس الرابع

د. بثينة شعبان(*)

...١...

لفتَ نظري – وأنا أجلِسُ في مقعدِي بالطائرةِ وأراقبُ جموعَ المسافرين وهم يهُمُّونَ بالصُّعودِ إليها – منْظرُ طفلٍ ووالدتِهِ يحملُ كلٌّ منهما كتاباً يقْرَؤُه، ويخطِفانِ الطَّرفَ بينَ الفَينةِ والأُخرى ليكشِفَا المسافةَ التي ما زالت تفصِلُهما عن سُلَّمِ الطَّائرةِ، ولكنَّهُما لم يُبعِدَا الكتابَ جانباً إلّا لحظةَ تسلُّقِ أوّلِ دَرجةٍ في السُّلَّمِ، ثمَّ عادت أعينُهما معلَّقةً في الكتابِ، بينما تَتَحسّسُ الأقدامُ درجةً إثرَ أخْرَى. لم يكنِ الطفلُ وأمُّه الوحيدَين اللَّذين التصقَتْ أعينُهما بكتابَيْهما، فقدْ كانَ الرَّجلُ الذي يجلسُ أمامِي غارقاً في كتابٍ ثخينٍ طوالَ الرحلةِ، وكذلكَ الرجلُ الذي على يميني، وكانَ غالبيّةُ الرُّكّابِ يتأبّطُون كُتُبَهم، وهم يصعَدُون ويجلِسُون.

٢

* د. بثينة شعبان، كاتبةٌ عربيّةٌ سوريّةٌ، وُلِدَتْ في حمص عام (١٩٥٣ م)، حازَت درجةَ الماجِستير والدُّكتوراه في الأدبِ الإنكليزيِّ من جامعة وروك ت بريطانيا، أستاذةٌ في جامعَةِ دمشقَ، لها العديدُ من المؤلَّفاتِ العربيّةِ والإنكليزيّةِ، ومن أعمالها: (عشرةُ أعوامٍ مع حافظِ الأسد)، ومجموعةُ (بنتِ الأرض) التي أُخِذَ منها هذا النَّصُّ.

Western Modernism and Arab Tradition – Reading – Lesson 4

*[…] [caption under image] Dr. Bouthaina Shaaban**

[…]

**Dr. Bouthaina Shaaban is a Syrian Arab writer born in Homs in 1953. She earned both her master's and doctoral degrees in English literature from Warwick University in Britain and served as a professor at the University of Damascus. She has authored numerous works in Arabic and English, including Ten Years with Hafez al-Assad and the collection Daughter of the Land, from which this text was taken.*

235 *Arabic is My Language*, Grade 12 (Humanities Track), 2025-26, pp. 70-71; *Arabic is My Language*, Grade 12 (Scientific Track), 2025-26, pp. 40-41 (previously: *Arabic is My Language*, Grade 12 (Scientific Track), 2023-24, pp. 112-113; *Arabic is My Language*, Grade 12 (Scientific Track), 2023-24, p. 73).

The removal of figures associated with the Assad regime is also reflected in the deletion of content that, incidentally, promotes "resistance" (*muqāwama*) and armed confrontation with Israel. One example is the removal of an entire lesson on resistance literature, a subgenre of Palestinian literature, implementing the directive concerning it from the matrix. The lesson was based on an informative text originally written by Dr. Najah al-Attar, a former Minister of Culture and Vice President under Bashar al-Assad's regime.[236] Another example is the removal of female Algerian national militarist Djamila Bouhired, who is depicted as having received the Syrian Order of Merit from Bashar al-Assad. The removed section previously taught students to admire armed resistance and militant struggle through the glorified portrayal of the Algerian revolutionary Djamila Bouhired. The text praised her for "joining the ranks of the *fedayeen*," being "among the first volunteers to resist colonialism," and becoming the French authorities' "number one wanted fugitive," presenting militancy, sacrifice, and confrontation with colonial powers as heroic and desirable virtues. The lesson further reinforced these themes through exercises on "resistance" and by highlighting Bashar al-Assad's honoring of Bouhired. In addition, the passage included politically charged anti-Israel rhetoric, describing Bouhired's visit to Qana and her witnessing of "massacres committed by the Zionist enemy."

The removed section appears to have been deleted primarily because of its explicit association with the Assad regime, including the positive reference to Bashar al-Assad honoring Djamila Bouhired. At the same time, its removal is also consistent with the broader curricular shift away from Baʿthist and nationalist themes centered on patriotic resistance, Islamizing the defense of the homeland from foreign occupation. This is also seen in the activities section on the following page, where references to this text were also removed, but the significance of resisting colonialism is retained. Notably, whereas the previous edition promoted this idea from a national perspective, tasking students to write about a "national figure," the new edition substitutes this framing with an "Islamic figure," grounding it in religious concepts of struggle and identity.

***Social Studies,* Grade 6, 2012-13, p. 101 (removed)**

الشكل (١٦)المناضلة جميلة بوحيرد

جميلة بوحيرد مثال المرأة المناضلة

لنقرأ هذه القصة عن المناضلة الجزائرية **جميلة بوحيرد**

كانت جميلة البنتَ الوحيدةَ بين أفراد أسرتها، فقد أنجبت والدتُها سبعةَ شبّان، واصلت تعليمَها المدرسيّ، ومن ثَمَّ التحقت بمعهدٍ للخياطة والتفصيل، فقد كانت تهوى تصميمَ الأزياء، و الرقص الكلاسيكيّ، وكانت بارعةً في ركوب الخيل إلى أن اندلعت الثورةُ الجزائريّةُ عام ١٩٥٤م ضدَّ الاحتلال الفرنسيّ.

التحقت في العشرين من عمرِها بصفوفِ الفدائيّين، وكانت أوّلَ المتطوّعات لمقاومةِ الاستعمار، ونظراً لبطولاتها أصبحت المُطاردة **(رقم واحد)**

(See the continuation of the example on the following page)

236 *Arabic is My Language*, Grade 12 (Humanities Track), 2023-24, pp. 38-40; *Arabic is My Language*, Grade 12 (Scientific Track), 2023-24, pp. 38-40.

من قبل الاحتلال، قُبِضَ عليها عندما سقطت على الأرض نتيجةَ إصابتها في الكتف، وبدأت رحلتَها القاسية في السجن.

تحمّلت ولم تَبِحْ بأسماء زملائها الفدائيين، ثم تقرّرت محاكمتها صورياً وصدر ضدّها حكمٌ بالإعدام، وقالت جملتها الشهيرة آنذاك: **أعرفُ أنّكم سوف تحكمون عليَّ بالإعدام، لكن لا تنسوا أنّكم بقتلي تغتالون تقاليدَ الحرية، في بلدكم ولكنّكم لن تمنعوا الجزائرَ من أن تصبحَ حرّةً مستقلّةً.**

الشكل (١٧)
الرئيسُ بشّار الأسد يقلّد المناضلةَ الجزائريّة جميلة بوحيرد وسامَ الاستحقاق السوريّ من الدرجة الممتازة

بعد ثلاث سنوات من السجن، رُحِّلَت إلى فرنسا ثم أُطلق سراحها مع بقية زملائها عام ١٩٦٢م.

زارت دمشق عام ٢٠٠٩م كما زارت لبنان وجالت في قانا و شاهدت مجازرَ العدوّ الصهيونيّ هناك، أطال الله في عمر المناضلة **جميلة بوحيرد** وهي تقدم نموذجاً رائعاً للمرأة العربية.

- ماذا تستنتج من تكريم سورية المقاومين العرب؟
- اذكر شخصيّة امرأة عربيّة ناضلت ضدّ الاحتلال.

Djamila Bouhired as an Example of the Militant Woman
Let us read this story about the Algerian militant Djamila Bouhired.
[…] She was also skilled in horseback riding until the Algerian Revolution broke out in 1954 against the French occupation. At the age of twenty, she joined the ranks of the fedayeen and was among the first volunteers to resist colonialism. Owing to her heroism, she became the occupation authorities' "number one" wanted fugitive. She was arrested after falling to the ground as a result of a shoulder wound, and thus began her harsh journey in prison.
She endured imprisonment without revealing the names of her fellow fighters. She was then subjected to a show trial and sentenced to death. At that time, our famous Djamila declared: "I know that you will sentence me to death, but you will never erase the fact that, by killing me, you are assassinating the traditions of freedom in your country; nor will you prevent Algeria from becoming free and independent."
After three years in prison, she was deported to France and was later released along with the other revolutionaries in 1962. She visited Damascus in 2009, and also visited Lebanon, touring Qana and witnessing the massacres committed there by the Zionist enemy. May God grant long life to the militant Djamila Bouhired, who continues to present a wonderful model of the Arab woman.
Figure (16): The militant Djamila Bouhired.
Figure (17): President Bashar al-Assad awards the Algerian militant Djamila Bouhired the Syrian Order of Merit, Exceptional Grade.

- *What do you infer from Syria's honoring of Arab resistance fighters?*
- *Mention an Arab woman who struggled against occupation.*

***Social Studies,* Grade 6, 2025-26, p. 98 (previously: *Social Studies*, Grade 6, 2012-13, p. 102)**

2012-13	2025-26
الأنشطة والتدريبات ١- ضعْ إشارة (✓) أمام العبارة الصحيحة، وإشارة (×) أمام العبارة المغلوط فيها: - ( ) ولد أحمد مريود في قرية جبّاتا الخشب، وتلقّى دراسته الابتدائية في مدينة القنيطرة لمحرّرة. - ( ) قلّد الرئيس بشّار الأسد المناضلة الجزائريّة جميلة بوحيرد وسام الاستحقاق السوريّ من لدرجة الممتازة. - ( ) قاوم عمر المختار الاحتلال الإيطاليّ لليبيا منذ عام ١٩١١م. - ( ) التحقت جميلة بوحيرد بصفوف الفدائيين، وكانت أول المتطوعات لمقاومة الاستعمار وهي في عمر الخامسة والعشرين. ٢- مادور المقاومة في تحرير الشعوب من الاستعمار؟ ٣- اختر شخصيّة وطنية ناضلت ضدّ الاستعمار، واكتب عنها بضعة أسطر.	الأنشطة والتدريبات ١- ضعْ إشارة (✓) أمام العبارة الصحيحة، وإشارة (×) أمام العبارة المغلوطة : - ( ) قاوم عمر المختار الاحتلال الإيطاليّ لليبيا منذ عام ١٩١١م. - ( ) كان نور الدين زنكي زاهداً عابداً بعيداً عن حياة الترف. ٢- مادور المقاومة في تحرير الشعوب من الاستعمار؟ ٣- اختر شخصيّة إسلامية ناضلت ضدّ الاستعمار، واكتب عنها بضعة أسطر.
Activities and Tasks *1 — Place a (✓) next to the correct statement and a (×) next to the incorrect statement in the following:* *[...]* *( ) Omar al-Mukhtar resisted the Italian occupation of Libya beginning in 1911.* *( ) Djamila Bouhired joined the ranks of the fedayeen and was among the first volunteers to resist colonialism at the age of twenty-five.* *2 – What is the role of resistance in liberating the peoples from colonialism?* *3 – Choose a national figure who fought against colonialism and write several lines about her.*	*Activities and Tasks* *1 — Place a (✓) next to the correct statement and a (×) next to the incorrect statement in the following:* *[...]* *( ) Omar al-Mukhtar resisted the Italian occupation of Libya beginning in 1911.* *[...]* *2 – What is the role of resistance in liberating the peoples from colonialism?* *3 – Choose an Islamic figure who fought against colonialism and write several lines about her.*

*Red text shows removed content. *Highlighted text shows altered content.

One key method that the curriculum uses to delegitimize the Assad regime is to strip it of religious legitimacy. For example, an assignment to propose a tour of the "Al-Assad National Library," to become "familiar with its sections and the valuable books it holds," was removed from a Grade 8 Islamic Education textbook.[237] Another removed reference from the same textbook concerns a hypothetical case of the "Al-Assad Institute for Qur'an Memorization" rewarding those who memorize ten sections of the Qur'an with an *Umrah* trip (Islamic pilgrimage to Mecca not during the Ḥajj).[238] The removal of these examples, which appeared in explicitly Islamic contexts and presented the Assad regime as custodians of Islamic education and religious devotion, in effect removes the curriculum's earlier association between the Assad regime and Islamic legitimacy.

A particularly striking example appears in the Grade 7 History textbook, which asks students to compare the methods used by the Mongols in their 1258 conquest of the Middle East—including "killing the inhabitants, destroying homes, [and] burning mosques"—with those of the "criminal Syrian [Assad] regime." From an Islamic historical perspective, the Mongol conquest is generally remembered as one of the most devastating catastrophes in Muslim history, associated with mass destruction, massacres, and the collapse of major centers of Islamic civilization. The sack of Baghdad in 1258, in particular, is often portrayed as a symbol of cultural and political devastation, marking the fall of the Abbasid Caliphate and the destruction of libraries, scholars, and urban life across the Muslim world. The comparison therefore presents the Assad era as a similarly catastrophic chapter in Muslim history.

237 *Islamic Education*, Grade 8, 2025-26, p. 27 (previously: *Islamic Education*, Grade 8, 2017-18, p. 28).

238 *Islamic Education*, Grade 8, 2025-26, p. 30 (previously: *Islamic Education*, Grade 8, 2017-18, p. 32).

***History*, Grade 7, 2025-26, pp. 74-76**

[p. 74]

ثانياً: غزو المغول للدولة العباسية: قام المغول بغَزو الأراضي الإسلاميَّة عام ٦١٦هـ/١٢١٩م فعبَرتِ الجُيوشُ المغوليَّةُ نهرَ سيحونَ فقتلُوا السكّانَ ودمّرُوا البيوتَ، وأحرقُوا المساجدَ، واصلَ المغولُ زحفَهم إلى البلادِ العربيَّةِ بقيادةِ هولاكُو، قاصدينَ بغدادَ عاصمةَ الخلافةِ العباسيَّةِ.

Second: The Mongol Invasion of the Abbasid State: The Mongols invaded the Islamic lands in 616 AH/1219 CE. The Mongol armies crossed the Seyhun River, killing the inhabitants, destroying homes, burning mosques. The Mongols advanced into the Arab lands under the leadership of Hulagu, heading toward Baghdad, the capital of the Abbasid Caliphate.

[p. 76]

ـ قارنْ بينَ الأساليب التي اتبعها المغولُ عامَ ١٢٥٨م، والنّظام السوري المجرم في تدمير المدن الآمنة.

Compare the methods employed by the Mongols in 1258 with those used by the criminal Syrian regime in the destruction of safe cities.

A similar revision appears in the context of Grade 6 Islamic Education textbooks, where a lesson titled "Bravery Is a Great Noble Character," presents the virtue of bravery through Islamic teachings and sources. Examples that previously attributed bravery to Bashar al-Assad, including his confrontation with Israel and other threats, have been replaced with references to the "bravery of the heroes of the Syrian revolution" in opposing Bashar, who is described as a "criminal terrorist ruler," together with references to the "crimes of his miserable henchmen." The example also changes the reference to Israel from the "terrorist Zionist enemy" to the "brutal Zionist enemy." This change appears less indicative of a softened stance toward Israel than of a shift in emphasis, with the revised lesson presenting Bashar al-Assad as the primary embodiment of terrorism.[239]

***Islamic Education*, Grade 6, 2025-26, pp. 83, 86 (previously: *Islamic Education*, Grade 6, 2011-12, pp. 86, 89)**

[p. 83 (2025-26), p. 86 (2011-12)]

2011-12	2025-26
كما نرى اليومَ شجاعةَ أبطالِ المقاومةِ في غزّةَ الصامدةِ وفي الجولانِ وجنوبِ لبنانَ، وهم يواجهونَ العدوَّ الصهيونيَّ الإرهابيَّ بقوّةٍ وعزيمةٍ لا تتزعزعُ.	كما نرى اليوم شجاعة أبطال المقاومة في غزة الصامدة وهم يواجهون العدو الصهيوني الغاشم، وشجاعة أبطال الثورة السورية في وطننا الحبيب وهم يواجهون الحاكم الإرهابي المجرم بشار الأسد بقوة وعزيمة لا تتزعزع.
We also see today the bravery of the heroes of the resistance in the steadfast Gaza, the Golan [Heights] and southern Lebanon, as they oppose the terrorist Zionist enemy with unwavering force and determination.	*We also see today the bravery of the heroes of the resistance in the steadfast Gaza, as they oppose the brutal Zionist enemy, and the bravery of the heroes of the Syrian revolution in our beloved homeland as they oppose the criminal terrorist ruler Bashar al-Assad with unwavering force and determination.*

*Highlighted text shows altered content. *Red text shows removed content. *Green text shows added content.

239 For remaining references to Israel as "terrorist", see *Social Studies*, Grade 5, 2025-26, pp. 41-42 (this example is explored on the following page); *Social Studies*, Grade 6, 2025–2026, p. 34; *History*, Grade 12 (Humanities Track), 2025-26, p. 87.

[p. 86 (2025-26), p. 89 (2011-12)]

2011-12	2025-26
– اُكْتُبْ عَنِ المَواقِفِ الشُّجاعَةِ للسَّيِّدِ الرَّئيسِ بشار الأسد ، في ثَباتِـهِ علـى المَبـادئ وُاجَهَةِ المَخاطِرِ الَّتي تَسْتَهْدِفُ وَطَنَنا .	اكتب عن المواقف الشجاعة للأبطال السوريين في ثورة الكرامة في مواجهتهم لإرهاب الحاكم الظالم ، وفي تحديهم لإجرام أذنابه البائسين .
7 – Write about the courageous positions of President Bashar al-Assad in his steadfast adherence to principles in confronting the dangers targeting our homeland.	*7 – Write about the courageous positions of the Syrian heroes in the Revolution of Dignity in confronting the terrorism of the tyrannical ruler and in their defiance of the crimes of his miserable henchmen.*

*Highlighted text shows altered content.

In Social Studies textbooks, there are similar instances of examples that deliberately present the Assad regime as fundamentally inhumane and criminal. For instance, in a Grade 5 Social Studies textbook, a lesson on the violations of human and children's rights depicts the Assad regime as directly responsible for systematic violence against civilians and children, using highly charged language such as "the criminal fallen regime" and "the terrorism of the criminal fallen regime." The text accuses the regime of indiscriminate bombing, destroying "homes, schools, mosques, and churches," burning agricultural lands, and even "killing civilians with chemical weapons." This delegitimization is reinforced further in the section on children's rights, where the regime and its allied militias are accused – citing Human Rights Watch–of "targeted killings," "torture of detained children," "using children as human shields," and attacks on schools. Significantly, the lesson frames these abuses alongside "the crimes of the terrorist Zionist enemy in Palestine," placing the Assad regime in the same moral category as Israel.

***Social Studies,* Grade 5, 2025-26, pp. 41-42**

الاستعمار الصهيوني والأنظمة المستبدة ينتهكان حقوق الإنسان

الصورة (٧)

الصورة (٦)

الصورة (٩)

الصورة (٨)

من خلال قراءتك الصُور استنتج:

- الجرائم المرتكبة بحق الطفولة البريئة في سوريا
- جرائم العدو الصهيوني الإرهابي في فلسطين

(See the continuation of the example on the following page)

عانى أهلنا في سوريا من إرهاب النظام البـائد المجرم ، الذي قصف المدن و دمّر البيوت و المدارس والمساجد والكنائس، وقتل دون تمييز وأحرق الأراضي الزراعية وقتل المدنيين بالسلاح الكيماوي كما يعاني أهلنا في الجولان وفلسطين المحتلة من العدوان الاسرائيلي الذي هجّر السكان من أرضهم وأحرق بيوتهم ومحاصيلهم الزراعية.

حقوق الطفل

انتهك النظام البائد في سـوريا حقوق الطفل:
أصدرت منظمة هيومن رايتس ووتش تقريراً عن انتهاكات جيش النظام البائـد والميليشيات المسلحة الموالية له المرتكبة بحق الأطفال في سوريا وتشمل الاستهداف بالقتل ، وتعذيب الأطفال رهن الاحتجاز ، واستخدام الأطفال دروعاً بشرية ، وهجمات على المدارس ، واستخدامها في عملياتها العسكرية.

الصورة (١٠) حق التعليم

التدريباتُ والأنشطةُ

١ـ حصلَ خلافٌ بينَ رفاقِكَ في الصَفِّ، حاولْ أن توضّحَ الأسلوبَ الأمثَلَ لحلِّ الخلافِ في رأيِكَ.

٢ـ اكتبْ ثلاثَ جملٍ أو أربعاً تعبّرُ فيها عنْ موقفِكَ من انتهاكاتِ حقوقِ الطفلِ.

٣ـ شاركْ رفاقَكَ في جمعِ بعضِ الصُّوَرِ التي تُعبّرُ عن احترامِ حقوقِ الإنسانِ.

٤ـ هات ثلاثة أمثلة لانتهاكات حقوق الطفل في سوريا زمن النظام البائد.

Zionist Colonialism and Authoritarian Regimes Violate Human Rights:
[images of children. Image 9 shows children holding signs of Arab cities in Israel, such as Baysan (Beit She’an), Acre, Jaffa, and Na‘oura]
From your reading of the pictures, infer:

- *The crimes committed against innocent childhood in Syria.*
- *The crimes of the terrorist Zionist enemy in Palestine.*

Our people in Syria suffer from the terrorism of the criminal fallen regime, which bombarded cities, destroyed homes, schools, mosques, and churches, killed indiscriminately, burned agricultural lands, and killed civilians with chemical weapons. Our people in the occupied Golan and Palestine also suffer from Israeli aggression, which displaced inhabitants from their land and burned their homes and agricultural crops.
Children’s Rights
The fallen regime in Syria violates children’s rights:
Human Rights Watch issued a report on violations committed against children in Syria by the army of the fallen regime and the armed militias loyal to it. These violations include targeted killings, the torture of detained children, the use of children as human shields, attacks on schools, and the use of schools in military operations.
Exercises and Activities
[...]
4. Give three examples of violations of children’s rights in Syria during the era of the fallen regime.

De-Baʿthification: From Revolution to Coup, from National Defenders to Mass Murderers

Beyond the removal of the Assad era symbols, the new regime has undertaken substantive historical revisions to further distance the curriculum from Baʿthist narrative structures and delegitimize various formative episodes in its history, including the Eighth of March Revolution of 1963, the 1967 War, the 1970 "Corrective Movement," and the 1973 October War. Coincidentally, the revision of content related to the wars of 1967 and 1973 with Israel incorporated the removal of some problematic content regarding Israel (this is further explored in the chapter on attitudes towards Israel). However, since the curriculum's overall narrative concerning Israel remains broadly hostile, the removal of specific anti-Israel content can be classified as a byproduct of the broader effort to delegitimize and erase the legacy of Hafez and Bashar al-Assad.

The Ba'th party came to rule Syria following the 1963 "Eighth of March Revolution"– often characterized as a coup led by the party–through which a coalition of Baʿthist officers and allies seized power and overthrew the existing government. The new leadership established a revolutionary regime based on Arab nationalism, socialism, and one-party rule, while expanding the influence of the military and security services in political life. The coup marked the beginning of uninterrupted Baʿth Party rule in Syria, paving the way for the rise of Hafez al-Assad and the authoritarian system associated with the Assad family.[240] The Assad family rose to power primarily due to the "Corrective Movement" (*al-ḥaraka al-taṣḥīḥiyya*)–an internal coup carried out by Defense Minister Hafez al-Assad in November 1970 against rival factions within the Baʿth Party. Presented officially as an effort to restore stability and correct political mismanagement, the movement enabled Assad to consolidate control over the military, the Baʿth Party, and state institutions through arrests, purges, and the sidelining of political opponents, paving the way for his presidency in 1971. The Corrective Movement marked the beginning of a highly centralized authoritarian system dominated by the Assad family and the Baʿth Party for decades thereafter.[241]

Accordingly, Assad-era textbooks presented these events as a foundational national transformation that brought stability and progress. The revised curriculum reverses this narrative: references glorifying the events have been removed, and the 1963 "Revolution" is consistently reframed as a "military coup." Specifically, in a Grade 9 History textbook, one section discusses the collapse of the United Arab Republic. The new 2025-2026 edition of the textbook states that the military coup ended constitutional rule, enacted emergency law, disrupted political life, leading to an economic decline, ultimately leading the Ba'th party to hold power.[242] The Grade 12 History textbook, in a unit on the history of Syria and Lebanon since the French Mandate, removed positive phrases celebrating Hafez al-Assad's legacy. The terms "Corrective Movement" and "Tishrin Liberation War" (the October 1973 war against Israel) are replaced with the more neutral "1970 coup," while Hafez al-Assad is explicitly described as a "despot." The phrase "the course of development and modernization," which in the 2017–2018 edition referred to Syria under Hafez al-Assad after the 1973 war, was also removed, consistent with the broader directives of the curriculum revision to eliminate references associated with the Assad regime.

(See the continuation of the example on the following page)

240 Hinnebusch, *Syria*, pp. 44-60.

241 Ibid., pp. 61-63.

242 *History*, Grade 9, 2025-26, p. 30 (previously: *Modern and Contemporary History of the Arab Motherland*, Grade 9, 2017-18, p. 32).

***History*, Grade 12 (Humanities Track), 2025-26, pp. 30, 48 (previously: *Modern and Contemporary History of the Arab Motherland*, Grade 12 (Humanities Track), 2017-18, pp. 31, 49)**

[p. 30, 2025-26 (p. 31, 2017-18)]:

2017-18	2025-26
فرضَ مؤتمرُ سان ريمو الانتدابَ الفرنسيّ على سوريةَ ولبنان، فخاضَ الشعب نضالاً وطنيّاً تبلورَ بالثورة السوريّة الكبرى التي شملت البلدين، ليبدأ بعدها النضالُ السياسيُّ الذي أجبر فرنسا على توقيع مشروع معاهدة عام ١٩٣٦م، وتُوِّجَ استمرارُ المقاومةِ الوطنيّة باستقلالهما عام ١٩٤٦م، وتبنّت سوريةُ النهجَ القوميّ التحرُّريّ، فكانت الوحدةُ مع مصر، وثورةُ الثامن من آذار، ثمّ الحركةُ التصحيحيّةُ وحربُ تشرين التحريريّةُ، لتتابعَ بعدها مسيرةُ التطوير والتحديث، أمّا لبنانُ فقد تميّز تاريخُه بقيام عدة حروب أهليّة واعتداءات صهيونيّة على أراضيه جُوبهتْ بمقاومة وطنيّة باسلة.	فرض مؤتمر سان ريمو الانتداب الفرنسي على سورية ولبنان ،فخاض الشعب نضالاً وطنياً تبلور الثورة السورية الكبرى التي شملت البلدين، ليبدأ بعدها النضال السياسي الذي أجبر فرنسا على توقيع مشروع معاهدة عام ١٩٣٦م ، وتوج استمرار الكفاح الوطني باستقلالهما عام ١٩٤٦م كانت الوحدة مع مصر ،ثم حدثت هزيمة حزيران عام ١٩٦٧م ،ثم انقلاب عام ١٩٧٠م الذي وصل الاستبدادي حافظ الاسد الى حكم سورية. أما لبنان فقد تميز بقيام عدة حروب أهلية فيه واعتداءات صهيونية على أراضيه "
The San Remo Conference imposed the French Mandate on Syria and Lebanon [...] The continuation of the national struggle was crowned with the independence [of Syria and Lebanon] in 1946. Syria adopted the nationalist liberation approach, and then there was the unity with Egypt, the revolution of the Eighth of March, then the Corrective Movement and the Tishrin Liberation War, to continue afterward the course of development and modernization. [...]	*The San Remo Conference imposed the French Mandate on Syria and Lebanon [...] The continuation of the national struggle was crowned with the independence [of Syria and Lebanon] in 1946. Then there was the unity with Egypt, then the defeat of June 1967 occurred, then the 1970 coup which brought the despot Hafez al-Assad to rule Syria. [...]*

*Highlighted text shows altered content. *Red text shows removed content. *Green text shows added content.

[p. 48, 2025-26 (p. 49, 2017-18):]

2017-18	2025-26
الدَّرسُ الرَّابعُ سوريةُ بينَ الاستقلالِ والتَّصحيحِ أدّت سوريةُ بعد الاستقلال دوراً متميّزاً، رغم المشكلات الداخليّة التي واجهتها، والتي مهدت للانقلابات العسكريّة؛ لكنّ إرادةَ شعبها وتمثُّلَهُ النهجَ القوميّ التحرريّ جعلَها ترفضُ الأحلافَ والمشاريعَ الاستعماريّةَ، ومكّنها من تحقيق الوحدة مع مصر، والقيام بثورة الثامن من آذار والتصدّي للتآمر الاستعماريّ والصهيونيّ.	الدَّرسُ الرَّابعُ سوريةُ منذُ الاستقلالِ حتّى الإنقلابِ ١٩٧٠ أدّت سوريةُ بعد الاستقلال دوراً متميّزاً، رغم المشكلات الداخليّة التي واجهتها، والتي مهدت للانقلابات العسكريّة؛ لكنّ إرادةَ شعبها وتمثُّلَهُ النهجَ التحرريّ جعلَها ترفضُ الأحلافَ والمشاريعَ الاستعماريّةَ، ومكّنها من تحقيق الوحدة مع مصر، التي انتهت بالإنفصال، مما مهّد لحدوث انقلاب آذار ١٩٦٣، ثم تعرّضت سوريةُ لعدوان حزيران ١٩٦٧م.
Lesson 4: *Syria between Independence and the Correction* *Syria played a distinguished role after independence, despite the internal problems it faced, which paved the way for military coups; but the will of its people, represented by the nationalist liberationist approach, made it reject the colonialist alliances and projects, and enabled it to achieve unity with Egypt, and to carry out the March 8 Revolution and confront the colonialist and Zionist conspiracy.*	*Lesson 4:* *Syria from Independence until the 1970 Coup* *Syria played a distinguished role after independence, despite the internal problems it faced, which paved the way for military coups; but the will of its people, represented by the liberationist approach, made it reject the colonialist alliances and projects, and enabled it to achieve unity with Egypt, which ended in secession. This paved the way for the coup of March 1963, then Syria was subjected to the Aggression of June 1967.*

*Highlighted text shows altered content. *Green text shows added content.

The revisions found in the Grade 12 History textbook's treatment of the "Corrective Movement" provide a revealing example of the recalibration of this formative event in Syrian collective memory. The previous edition portrayed the Corrective Movement as the beginning of "progress and prosperity" and "a better future for Syria," emphasizing goals such as liberating occupied territories, promoting Syrian-Lebanese solidarity, strengthening active Arab solidarity, and defending "the Palestinian Cause as a main Arab issue." It further celebrated the Assad era through references to achievements including creating "a new People's Assembly with representatives of all factions of society," building "a modern army armed with the most advanced weapons," declaring a constitution, and ushering in "a new state of political stability and comprehensive development."

The new edition presents a strikingly inverted narrative, systematically reframing each of these themes in negative terms. Rather than depicting Hafez al-Assad's rise as a "Corrective Movement," the lesson describes the 1970 coup as the beginning of an illegitimate, authoritarian, and nationally destructive era, asserting that "the illegitimate regime in Syria distanced itself from the aspirations of the people" and ruled through a "totalitarian authoritarian system" that transformed Syria into "a security state." Symbolically, the new lesson replaces the image of Hafez al-Assad that appeared in the previous edition with a photograph of the ousted president Nureddin al-Atassi, visually reinforcing the delegitimization of Assad's seizure of power. The text further condemns Assad for having "undermined Arab solidarity by siding with Iran in its aggression against Iraq" and describes "the greatest crime" as "the inheritance of power by his son" Bashar, implicitly portraying the succession as illegitimate and unconstitutional. It also accuses the regime of "the perpetration of massacres against the Syrian, Palestinian, and Lebanese peoples" and of transforming the Syrian army from a national institution into a mechanism for protecting the regime itself. Economically, the coup is blamed for "the looting of [Syria's] wealth," the spread of "bribery and corruption," and a deterioration in living standards that pushed "nearly half the population below the poverty line." The scale and precision of these revisions demonstrate the importance of recasting the Assad era in fundamentally negative terms, underscoring how central the reinterpretation of these events is to the ideological project of the new regime.

***History,* Grade 12 (Humanities Track), 2025-26, p. 54 (previously: *Modern and Contemporary History of the Arab Motherland*, Grade 12, 2017–18, p. 55)**

الدَّرسُ الخامسُ

سورية من انقلاب ١٩٧٠ وحتى الوقت الحاضر

دخلت سورية مرحلة جديدة منذ استيلاء حافظ الأسد على السلطة عام **١٩٧٠**، وقد نأى النظام اللاشرعي في سوريا بنفسه عن طموحات الشعب، وتدخل في لبنان، و ضرب التضامن العربي بوقوفه إلى جانب إيران في عدوانها على العراق، و كانت الجريمة الكبرى بتوريث الحكم إلى ولده المدعو بشار الأسد لتدخل بعدها سوريا في ثورة عارمة.

أوّلاً: انقلاب عام ١٩٧٠:

قاد وزير الدّفاع حافظ الأسد انقلاباً داخليّاً في عام ١٩٧٠م، حيث أزاح نور الدين الأتاسي عن رئاسة الجمهوريّة، وكلف أحمد الحسن الخطيب بالوكالة رئيساً للجمهوريّة بين عامي ١٩٧٠ - ١٩٧١م، ثمّ أطاح بغالبيّة زملائه الذين شاركوه الانقلاب وحكم البلاد حكماً شموليّاً استبداديّاً، وسيطرت فئة قليلة على مقدّرات البلاد وتحوّلت سورية خلال حكمه إلى دولة أمنيّة أقصت وأبعدت وهجّرت الكفاءات الوطنية، واعتمدت على الولاءات الشخصيّة.

الشكل(١٦) الرئيس الأسبق نور الدين الأتاسي

نتائج انقلاب عام ١٩٧٠ م

- ترتب على انقلاب عام **١٩٧٠** نتائج عديدة كان منها : التحكم بمقدرات البلاد و نهب ثرواتها ، وانتشار الرشوة والفساد وانخفاض الناتج القومي الإجمالي ، و انخفاض الوضع المعيشي لنحو نصف السكان إلى ما دون خط الفقر ، إثارة الفتن والنعرات الطائفية ، التدخل في شؤون لبنان ، التحالف مع القوى المعادية للعرب ، ارتكاب المجازر بحق الشعب السوري والفلسطيني و اللبناني (تدمر - حماه - تل الزعتر ....) وتحويل مهمة الجيش السوري من الدفاع عن البلاد إلى الدفاع عن النظام الأسدي.

(See the continuation of the example on the following page)

Lesson Five
Syria from the 1970 Coup until the Present Time
Syria entered a new phase following Hafez al-Assad's seizure of power in 1970. The illegitimate regime in Syria distanced itself from the aspirations of the people, intervened in Lebanon, and undermined Arab solidarity by siding with Iran in its aggression against Iraq. The greatest crime was the inheritance of power by his son, the so-called Bashar al-Assad, after which Syria descended into a sweeping revolution.
First: The 1970 Coup
Defense Minister Hafez al-Assad carried out an internal coup in 1970, removing Nureddin al-Atassi from the presidency of the republic and appointing Ahmad al-Hasan al-Khatib as acting president between 1970 and 1971. He then overthrew most of his colleagues who had participated with him in the coup and ruled the country through a totalitarian authoritarian system. A small group came to dominate the country's resources, and Syria, under his rule, was transformed into a security state in which national talents and professionals were marginalized, excluded, and forced into exile, while governance relied on personal loyalties.
Figure (16): Former President Nureddin al-Atassi
Results of the 1970 Coup
The 1970 coup led to numerous consequences, including control over the country's resources and the looting of its wealth, the spread of bribery and corruption, a decline in gross national product, and a deterioration in living standards that pushed nearly half the population below the poverty line. It also fueled sectarian tensions and divisions, intervention in Lebanese affairs, alliances with forces hostile to the Arabs, the perpetration of massacres against the Syrian, Palestinian, and Lebanese peoples (Tadmur, Hama, Tel al-Za'tar, etc.), and the transformation of the Syrian army's mission from defending the country to defending the Assad regime.

Particularly noteworthy is the new emphasis on massacres attributed to the Assad regime. Occurring across many subjects, it marks another prominent method that the new curriculum utilized to delegitimize the Assad regime, achieved by reversing its former portrayal as a defender of Arab resistance and recasting it instead as a violent actor that collaborated against the Syrian people, the Palestinians and the Lebanese.

The following addition to the Grade 12 History textbook introduces the event in a new section on major massacres during his rule, including the 1982 Hama massacre.[243] The lesson explicitly labels Rifaat al-Assad–Hafez's brother–"the criminal Rifaat al-Assad" and describes the Hama Massacre as "among the bloodiest massacres of his tyrannical rule." The text emphasizes extreme brutality, stating that regime forces "stormed [the city] and destroyed entire neighborhoods, including their mosques, churches, and old markets, over the heads of their inhabitants with extreme brutality and savagery," while attributing the deaths of "approximately 35,000 residents" to the regime's actions. By focusing on massacres, destruction of religious and historical sites, mass detention, disappearances, and displacement, the curriculum reframes the Assad era not as a period of nationalist achievement, as in previous Baʿthist textbooks, but as one defined by oppression, indiscriminate violence, and crimes against the Syrian people.

***History*, Grade 12 (Humanities Track), 2025-26, p. 55**

أهم المجازر في عهد حافظ الأسد:

تعرّضت سورية خلال حكم حافظ الأسد لعدة مجازر منها:

مجزرة جسر الشغور ١٠-٣- ١٩٨٠ مجازر حلب المشارقة ١٢-٨-١٩٨٠ مجزرة تدمر ٢٧-٦-١٩٨٠

ومجزرة حماه ٢-٢-١٩٨٢ التي تعتبر من أكثر المجازر دموية في فترة حكمه الاستبدادي.

بدأت أحداث حماه عام ١٩٨٢م نتيجة معارضة بعض القوى السياسية لممارسات النّظام، حيث قامت القوات العسكريّة بقيادة المجرم رفعت الأسد شقيق حافظ بمحاصرة المدينة ثمّ اقتحامها وتدمير أحياء كاملة بمساجدها وكنائسها وأسواقها القديمة على رؤوس ساكنيها بكلّ همجيّة ووحشيّة، وبذلك ضاعت معالم المدينة الأثريّة وأودت هذه المجزرة بحياة ما يقارب ٣٥ ألف مواطن من أهالي المدينة بالإضافة إلى عشرات الآلاف من المعتقلين والمفقودين والمهجّرين.

(See the continuation of the example on the following page)

243 On which see, for example, Quiades Ismael, "The Hamah Massacre – February 1982," SciencesPO (22 December, 2009), https://www.sciencespo.fr/mass-violence-war-massacre-resistance/en/document/hamah-massacre-february-1982.html.

The Most Important Massacres during the Era of Hafez al-Assad:
During the rule of Hafez al-Assad, Syria was subjected to several massacres, including:

- *The Jisr al-Shughur Massacre — 10 March 1980*
- *The Aleppo al-Mashariqa Massacres — 12 August 1980*
- *The Tadmur Massacre — 27 June 1980*
- *And the Hama Massacre — 2 February 1982, which is considered among the bloodiest massacres of his tyrannical rule.*

The events in Hama began in 1982 as a result of the opposition of certain political forces to the regime’s practices. Military forces led by the criminal Rifaat al-Assad, Hafez’s brother, besieged the city, then stormed it and destroyed entire neighborhoods, including their mosques, churches, and old markets, over the heads of their inhabitants with extreme brutality and savagery. As a result, the city’s historical landmarks were lost, and the massacre claimed the lives of approximately 35,000 residents of the city, in addition to tens of thousands of detainees, missing persons, and displaced people.

In another textbook, as part of revisions to a chapter on Syria post-independence, a newly added section fundamentally reverses the earlier Baʿthist portrayal of the Assad era by presenting Hafez al-Assad not as a symbol of stability and resistance, but as the architect of a brutal and repressive dictatorship. The text explicitly accuses him of “eliminating military rivals” and “suppressing political opposition to his rule, committing the most horrific crimes,” while emphasizing atrocities such as the Hama massacre, where “approximately 40,000 civilians were killed in 1982.” The section portrays Assad’s rule as one defined by mass killings, torture, executions, forced displacement of intellectuals and professionals, economic exploitation, and oppressive state control through “tightening the security grip over the Syrian people.” The regime’s regional policies are similarly delegitimized, with the text accusing Syria of committing “massacres against Palestinians” in Lebanon and supporting “the Iranian enemy” against “brotherly Iraq.” By framing the Assad period under the title “Syria under Tyranny,” the curriculum not only removes the former cult of legitimacy surrounding the Assad family but actively recasts the regime as criminal, oppressive, sectarian, and destructive to both Syrian society and Arab causes.

***History*, Grade 9, 2025-26, pp. 31-32**

[p. 31]

سادسا: سورية في ظل الإستبداد

بعد استتباب الأمر لحافظ الأسد في حكم سورية ونجاحه بتصفية العسكريين ، بدأ بتصفية المعارضة السياسية لحكمه مرتكباً بحقهم أبشع الجرائم ، فكانت مجزرة جسر الشغور ومجزرة حلب و تدمر وأفظعها كانت في حماه حيث قتل قرابة ٤٠ ألف من المدنيين عام ١٩٨٢م ، وتم تغييب عشرات الآلاف في السجون حيث أعدم معظمهم ، كما تم تهجير عشرات الآلاف من الكفاءات والخبرات العلمية إلى خارج سورية ، وقام بتشديد القبضة الأمنية على الشعب السوري الذي عانى أزمات اقتصادية خانقة بسبب نهب خيرات سورية وثرواتها من قبل السلطة الحاكمة.

وعلى الصعيد الخارجي تدخل عسكرياً في لبنان حيث ارتكب مجازر بحق الفلسطينيين (مجزرة تل الزعتر) ودعم العدو الإيراني في حربه ضد العراق الشقيق.

Sixth: Syria under Tyranny
After Hafez al-Assad consolidated his rule over Syria and succeeded in eliminating military rivals, he began suppressing political opposition to his rule, committing the most horrific crimes. These included the Jisr al-Shughur massacre and the Aleppo massacre, while the most severe was in Hama, where approximately 40,000 civilians were killed in 1982. Tens of thousands were tortured in prisons, most of whom were executed. Tens of thousands of skilled professionals and scientific experts were also displaced outside Syria. He further tightened the security grip over the Syrian people, who suffered severe economic crises due to the looting of Syria’s resources and wealth by the ruling regime.
On the external front, he intervened militarily in Lebanon, where massacres were committed against Palestinians (the Tel al-Za‘tar massacre), and he supported the Iranian enemy in its war against brotherly Iraq.

[p. 32]

2- رتب الأحداث التاريخية التالية بدءاً من الأقدم:

مجزرة حماه قيام الجمهورية المتحدة مجزرة حماه انقلاب ٨ آذار

3- ماذا تستنتج من المجازر التي ارتكبها حافظ الأسد بحق الشعب السوري؟

2 — Arrange the following historical events from oldest to most recent:
[Right to left:]
The Hama Massacre
The establishment of the United Arab Republic
The Hama Massacre [sic.]
The March 8 Coup
3 — What do you conclude from the massacres committed by Hafez al-Assad against the Syrian people?

In the Grade 9 History textbook, the presentation of Hafez Al-Assad's role as protector of the Palestinians and Lebanese is reversed, accusing him of collaborating with Israel against them. In the section teaching about the Second Lebanese Civil War (1975), the previous edition had taught students to "value Syria's role in standing alongside its Lebanese and Palestinian brothers in liberating their lands," while the text praised Syria for "support[ing] the Lebanese National Resistance," contributing greatly to the establishment of the "Arab Deterrent Forces," ending the civil war, and maintaining "positive positions toward Lebanon" in confronting the "Zionist enemy." The new version eliminates this heroic pan-Arab framing entirely and instead accuses the Syrian regime of intervening in Lebanon "under the so-called 'Arab Deterrent Forces,'" "committing massacres against the Palestinians," and "orchestrating assassinations of national figures." Most significantly, whereas the previous curriculum depicted Syria as resisting Israel, the revised text alleges that the 1982 Sabra and Shatila massacres were committed "in cooperation with the Syrian regime and some Lebanese factions," thereby portraying the Assad regime not as a champion of Palestinian liberation, but as complicit in atrocities alongside Israel. Through this inversion, the new curriculum strips the regime of its long-standing nationalist and resistance-based legitimacy and reframes it as oppressive, treacherous, and hostile to the Arab causes it once claimed to defend.

At the same time, the revised lesson presents Hezbollah, a key ally of the Assad regime, in explicitly negative terms. While not mentioned in the previous edition of the lesson, Hezbollah is now described as "preventing any offensive actions against" Israel. This reference is particularly significant since it reframes Hezbollah not as a "resistance" movement fighting Israel, as traditionally portrayed in Syrian state discourse, but rather as a force effectively maintaining the security and stability of the Israeli border, thereby undermining its long-cultivated image as a champion of armed resistance. In this context, it is worth referencing the deep animosity that developed among many opponents of the Syrian regime toward Hezbollah after Assad allowed Hezbollah forces to enter Syria and assist in suppressing the Syrian uprising.[244] The negative reframing of Hezbollah in the curriculum therefore reflects not only political opposition to Assad and his allies, but also the broader sectarian and ideological divide between the Sunni Islamist orientation of HTS and the Shiʿi identity and Iran-aligned axis associated with Hezbollah.

244 Jeffrey White, "Hezbollah's Declaration of War in Syria: Military Implications," Policy Watch 2080, The Washington Institute for Near East Policy, May 29, 2013.
https://www.washingtoninstitute.org/policy-analysis/hezbollahs-declaration-war-syria-military-implications
Mohanad Hage Ali, "Hezbollah's Intervention in the Syrian Conflict," Carnegie Endowment for International Peace (2019), pp. 8-13.

***History*, Grade 9, 2025-26, pp. 35, 39 (previously: *Modern and Contemporary History of the Arab Motherland*, Grade 9, 2017-18, pp. 37, 41-42)**

2017-18	2025-26
أهدافُ الوحدة: يُتوقَّعُ من الطالب بعدَ دراسته هذه الوحدةَ أنْ: ١- يبيِّن أسباب ثورات الشعب الفلسطينيّ ضدّ الاحتلال الإنكليزيّ والكيان الصهيونيّ. ٢- يستخلصَ أسبابَ ونتائج الحروب الأهليّة في لبنان. ٣- يوضّح عواملَ نشوء إمارة شرقيّ الأردن ثم تحويلها إلى مملكة. ٤- يبيِّن مضمونَ الكتاب الأبيض الأوّل والثاني والثالث. ٥- يوضّحَ نتائجَ نكبة فلسطين عام ١٩٤٨م. ٦- يوضّح أثرَ مشاريع التقسيم في فلسطين. ٧- يقارنَ بين نتائج الثوراتِ في فلسطين. ٨- يستخلصَ معلوماتٍ تاريخيّةً من خرائط لبنانَ والأردنّ وفلسطين. ٩- يقدّر نضالَ الشعب الفلسطينيّ في استعادة أرضه. ١٠- يثمّن دور سورية في وقوفها إلى جانب أشقّائها اللبنانيّين والفلسطينيّين في تحرير أرضهم.	أهداف الوحدة: يُتوقَّعُ من الطالب بعدَ دراسته هذه الوحدةَ أنْ: ١- يبيِّن أسباب ثورات الشعب الفلسطينيّ ضدّ الاحتلال الإنكليزيّ والكيان الصهيونيّ. ٢- يستخلصَ أسبابَ ونتائج الحروب الأهليّة في لبنان. ٣- يوضّح عواملَ نشوء إمارة شرقيّ الأردن ثم تحويلها إلى مملكة. ٤- يبيِّن مضمونَ الكتاب الأبيض الأوّل والثاني والثالث. ٥- يوضّحَ نتائجَ نكبة فلسطين عام ١٩٤٨م. ٦- يوضّح أثرَ مشاريع التقسيم في فلسطين. ٧- يقارنَ بين نتائج الثوراتِ في فلسطين. ٨- يستخلصَ معلوماتٍ تاريخيّةً من خرائط لبنانَ والأردنّ وفلسطين. ٩- يقدّر نضالَ الشعب الفلسطينيّ في استعادة أرضه.
Unit Objectives: *It is expected that after studying this unit, the student will be able to:* *[...]* *10. Value Syria's role in standing alongside its Lebanese and Palestinian brothers in liberating their lands.*	*Unit Objectives:* *It is expected that after studying this unit, the student will be able to:* *[...]*

*Red text shows removed content.

2017-18	2025-26
• الحربُ الأهليّة الثانية في لبنان عام ١٩٧٥م: ساهمت ظروف عدّة في لبنان على بدء حرب أهليّة مجدّداً في عام ١٩٧٥م **بسبب:** إهمال الحكومة اللبنانيّة بعض المناطق دون غيرها، وتباين مواقف فئات الشعب اللبنانيّ من وجود بعض المنظّمات الفلسطينيّة في لبنان، وسعي بعض الدول الأجنبيّة إلى إثارة الأزمات في لبنان بعد حرب تشرين التحريريّة عام ١٩٧٣م، وذلك لتشتيت انتباه العرب عن قضيّة فلسطين وخاصّة سورية. سعت الدولُ العربيّة وفي مقدّمتها سوريةُ لإنهاء الاقتتال في لبنان، وإعادة الاستقرار والأمن والوحدة إليه، فشُكّلت قوّات الردع العربيّة، وكان عمادُها من الجيش العربيّ السوريّ تدخّلت وأنهت الصراع بين أبناء الشعب اللبنانيّ بعد عقد مؤتمر الطائف عام ١٩٨٩م. كان الهدف من عقد مؤتمر في مدينة الطائف عام ١٩٨٩م في المملكة العربيّة السعودية: وقف القتال، وإيجاد حلّ للأزمة اللبنانية بشكل مرض للجميع، وأكّد الاتّفاق وحدة لبنان وعروبته ونظامه القائم على احترام الحرّيّات والمساواة في الحقوق والواجبات بين المواطنين كافّة. بعد قراءتك مربّع النص ما مضمون اتّفاق الطائف عام ١٩٨٩م لإنهاء الحرب الأهليّة اللبنانيّة؟ خامساً: أرض لبنان ساحةٌ من ساحات الصراع العربيّ الصهيونيّ : عمد الصهاينة إلى مهاجمة الأراضي اللبنانية عام ١٩٧٨م متذرعين بحماية مستوطناتهم في منطقة الجليل الأعلى، ثم أعادوا الاجتياح مرة ثانية عام ١٩٨٢م، مستخدمين صنوف الأسلحة كافة ضدّ المدن اللبنانية حتى تمكّنت قوّاتهم من الوصول إلى بيروت، وفرضت على الحكومة اللبنانيّة اتفاق ١٧ أيار عام ١٩٨٣م. وقد قدمت سورية الدعم للمقاومة الوطنية اللبنانية، التي قادت النضال ضدّ القوات الصهيونيّة، وأجبرتها على الانسحاب من بيروت، وإسقاط اتفاق ١٧أيار، لكن القوات الصهيونيّة بقيت تحتل جنوبه فاستمرّت المقاومة، وسجّلت أعمالاً بطوليّة كبّدت العدُو خسائر فادحة، كما سقطَ الكثيرُ من أبناء الشعب اللُّبنانيّ شهداءَ في عمليّة تحرير الوطن، وقد عملت سوريةُ على تعميق مواقفها الإيجابيّة تجاه لبنان، ووقفت مجدّداً إلى جانبه حتّى توجت المقاومةُ الوطنيّةُ نضالها بتحرير الجنوب عام ٢٠٠٠م، وقد حققت نصراً مؤزّراً على العدو الصهيونيّ بتصديها لعدوان تمّوز عام ٢٠٠٦م في عهد الرئيس إميل لحود.	• الحربُ الأهليّة الثانية في لبنان عام ١٩٧٥م: بعد لجوء المنظمات الفلسطينية المقاومة إلى لبنان تباينت مواقف الأطراف اللبنانية من الوجود الفلسطيني الذي بات يهدد أمن الكيان الصهيوني ونتيجة ذلك تطور الأحداث حتى اندلعت الحرب الأهلية الثانية عام ١٩٧٥م وبعد رجحان كفة الأطراف المؤيدة للفلسطينيين تدخل الجيش السوري في لبنان تحت ما يسمى بين قوسين (قوات الردع العربي) حيث ارتكبت المجازر بحق الفلسطينيين من أبرزها (مجزرة تل الزعتر) وتدبير الاغتيالات للشخصيات الوطنية مثل (عمر كرامي - كمال جنبلاط) وفي عام ١٩٧٨م تدخل الكيان الصهيوني ضد الوجود الفلسطيني ، فاجتاح الأراضي اللبنانية وبسبب الفشل في القضاء على المقاومة الفلسطينية حدث الإجتياح الصهيوني الثاني في العام ١٩٨٢م حيث ارتكب مجازر صبرا و شاتيلا بالتعاون مع النظام السوري وبعض الأطراف اللبنانية. ودخلت القوات الصهيونية إلى بيروت وتم ترحيل فصائل المقاومة الفلسطينية وبعدها ظهر ما يسمى بحزب الله في الجنوب اللبناني ليتولى مهمة حماية الحدود الشمالية للكيان الصهيوني ويمنع أي أعمال هجومية ضد الكيان الصهيوني وتم تسوية الأوضاع في لبنان من خلال اتفاق الطائف عام ١٩٨٩م.

(See the continuation of the example on the following page)

2017-18	2025-26
The Second Lebanese Civil War in Lebanon in 1975: *Several factors contributed to renewed violence in Lebanon and the outbreak of civil war in 1975, including [...] the attempts of some foreign countries to create crises in Lebanon after the 1973 October Liberation War. This was done to divert Arab attention away from the Palestinian cause, and especially away from Syria.* *The Arab states and Syria intervened to end the fighting in Lebanon and to restore stability, security, and unity. The Arab Deterrent Forces were formed, consisting largely of the Syrian Arab Army, and intervened, bringing an end to the conflict between the Lebanese people. [...]* *Fifth: Lebanese Territory as an Arena for the Arab-Zionist Conflict:* *The Zionist forces invaded southern Lebanon in 1978 under the pretext of protecting their settlements in the Upper Galilee region. They then renewed the invasion in 1982, using all kinds of weapons against Lebanese cities in order to enable their forces to reach Beirut. The Lebanese government was forced to sign the 17 May Agreement in 1983.* *Syria provided support to the Lebanese National Resistance, which fought against the Zionist forces and compelled them to withdraw from Beirut, leading to the collapse of the 17 May Agreement. However, the Zionist forces still occupied southern Lebanon. The resistance continued, accomplishing heroic acts which inflicted heavy losses on the enemy. Many Lebanese were martyred in the act of liberating the homeland. Syria continued to further its positive positions toward Lebanon, standing by its side again until the National Resistance succeeded in liberating the south in 2000 and achieved a significant victory over the Zionist enemy by confronting its July 2006 aggression during the presidency of Émile Lahoud.*	*The Second Lebanese Civil War in Lebanon in 1975:* *After the Palestinian resistance organizations found refuge in Lebanon, the Lebanese factions became divided over the Palestinian presence, which had come to threaten the security of the Zionist entity. And after the balance tipped in favor of the factions supporting the Palestinians, the Syrian military intervened in Lebanon under the so-called "Arab Deterrent Forces", committing massacres against the Palestinians, primarily "Tel al-Za'tar Massacre", and orchestrating assassinations of national figures such as Omar Karami and Kamal Jumblatt. In 1978 the Zionist intervened against the Palestinian presence, and invaded Lebanese territories. Because it failed to eliminate the Palestinian resistance the second Zionist invasion occurred in 1982, committed the Sabra and Shatila massacres in cooperation with the Syrian regime and some Lebanese factions.* *The Zionist forces entered Beirut, and the factions of the Palestinian resistance were expelled. After that, what became known as Hezbollah emerged in southern Lebanon, assuming the task of protecting the northern borders of the Zionist entity and preventing any offensive actions against it.*

*Red text shows removed content. *Green text shows added content.

Since the 1973 War was frequently presented in Assad-era textbooks as a major achievement of the Corrective Movement, its portrayal has also undergone significant revision. The revised curriculum places less emphasis on the war's success and no longer presents it as a source of legitimacy for the Assad regime. Under previous editions, the war was cast as a patriotic and commendable struggle led by the Assad regime to recover Syrian territories lost in 1967. In the revised curriculum, that celebratory framing has been removed. More strikingly, newly revised content presents Hafez al-Assad, in his capacity as Defense Minister during the 1967 war, in a critical light, suggesting that his actions contributed to Syria's defeat. This reinterpretation disrupts the long-standing narrative of regime heroism and instead casts doubt on the competence and patriotism of the former leadership.

The following example illustrates this shift. A Grade 9 History textbook was revised to accuse Hafez al-Assad of conspiring to facilitate Israel's capture of the Golan Heights during the 1967 war. In a brief account of the conflict within the context of twentieth-century Syrian history, the revised textbook alleges that, as minister of defense, Assad acted "in collusion" (*bi-tawāṭu ʾ*) with Israel by announcing the fall of the Golan Heights before Israeli forces had actually taken

control of the territory. The textbook suggests that this announcement demoralized the Syrian army. It does not, however, address the question of what motive Assad would have had for acting in this manner.[245] Nevertheless, the example illustrates how the Golan Heights issue is used to challenge the legacy of the Assad family. Another noteworthy revision, within a text that otherwise retains a consistently hostile portrayal of Israel, is the removal of the statement that one of Israel's objectives during the war was "to force the Arabs to negotiate." This omission may reflect an effort to avoid a narrative that presents Israel as more receptive to negotiations than the Arab side.

***History*, Grade 9, 2025-26, p. 30 (previously: *Modern and Contemporary History of the Arab Motherland*, Grade 9, 2017-18, p. 32)**

2017-18	2025-26
رابعاً:الكيان الصهيونيّ ينفّذ عدوان ٥ حزيران عام ١٩٦٧م بدعم من الدول الاستعماريّة: هدف العدوان إلى احتلال أراضٍ عربيّة جديدة، وفرض التفاوض على العرب، وإضعاف المقاومة العربيّة، فتمكّن الصهاينة من احتلال الجولان وسيناء وباقي فلسطين(الضفّة الغربيّة لنهر الأردن والقدس الشرقية وغزة). بعد قراءتك الخريطة (٧) تبين مواقع المعارك العسكرية في حرب٥ حزيران عام ١٩٦٧م. 	رابعاً: عدوان ٥ حزيران عام ١٩٦٧م استكمالاً للسياسة التوسعية التي أنتجها الكيان الصهيوني ، شن العدو عدواناً عسكرياً على الأراضي العربية وتمكن من احتلال مناطق واسعة شملت : القدس والضفة الغربية وغزة وسيناء المصرية والجولان السوري الذي احتله العدو بتواطئ من وزير الدفاع السوري آنذاك (حافظ الأسد) الذي أعلن سقوط الجولان قبل وصول قوات العدو إليه بيوم كامل. بعد قراءتك الخريطة (٧) تبين مواقع المعارك العسكرية في حرب٥ حزيران عام ١٩٦٧م.
Four: the Zionist Entity Carries Out the 5 June 1967 Aggression with the Help of Colonialist States: *The aggression aimed to occupied new Arab territories, force the Arabs to negotiate, and weaken Arab Resistance. The Zionist succeeded in occupying the Golan, Sinai and the rest of Palestine (the West Bank of the River Jordan, East Jerusalem and Gaza [Strip]).* *After reading Map 7, lay out where military confrontations took place in the 5 June 1967 War.*	*Four: The 5 June 1967 Aggression* *To carry out the expansionist policy the Zionist Entity had brought about, the Enemy led a military aggression on Arab territories and succeeded in occupying large areas. This included [East] Jerusalem, the West Bank, Gaza [Strip], the Egyptian Sinai and the Syrian Golan, [the last of] which was occupied by the Enemy in collusion with then-Syrian Defense Minister, Hafez Al-Assad, who proclaimed the fall of the Golan a whole day before the Enemy forces reached it.* *After reading Map 7, lay out where military confrontations took place in the 5 June 1967 War.*
	[p. 32] التدريبات والأنشطة 1- علّل كلاً مما يلي: أ- إعلان سقوط الجولان السوري قبل وصول قوات العدو الصهيوني إليه.
	Exercises and Activities *1 — Explain the following:* *a. The declaration of the fall of the Syrian Golan before the arrival of the Zionist enemy's forces there.*

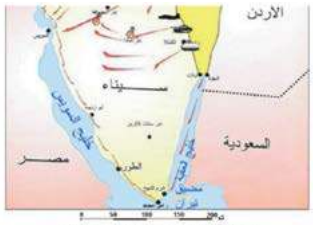
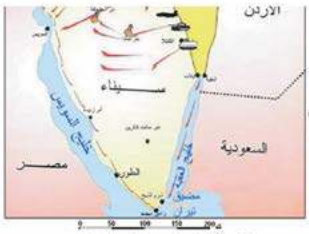
*Highlighted text shows altered content. *Red text shows removed content. *Green text shows added content.

The same lesson also replaces the section on the 1970 Corrective Movement, which in the previous curriculum was presented as culminating in the 1973 "Liberation War," its principal achievement, with a critical account of Hafez al-Assad's 1970 seizure of power. Whereas the previous version celebrated the Corrective Movement led by Hafez Al-Assad as

245 Similar content is found in History, Grade 12 (Humanities Track), 2025-26, pp. 52-53 (previously: *Contemporary and Modern History of the Arab Motherland*, Grade 12 [Humanities Track], 2017-18, pp. 53-54). The new Grade 12 edition has replaced the map with a less informative one without arrows or military illustrations, indicating the perspective of the wars outcome, marking which territories were occupied in 1967 beyond the territories already occupied in 1948.

having promoted "openness to all the people and the reinforcement of democratic life," seeking to "liberate occupied territories," and blamed Israel for provoking war and refusing to withdraw from the territories it occupied in 1967, the new version strongly criticizes Al-Assad for establishing "autocratic and authoritarian rule" over Syria, "betraying" and imprisoning his colleagues, and for initiating the 1973 war "for show."

***History*, Grade 9, 2025-26, p. 30 (previously: *Modern and Contemporary History of the Arab Motherland*, Grade 9, 2017-18, pp. 32-33)**

2017-18	2025-26
 خامساً: حرب تشرين التحريرية أهمّ منجزات الحركة التصحيحية: قامت الحركة التصحيحيّة في السادس عشرَ من تشرين الثاني عام ١٩٧٠م، التي قادها الرئيسُ **حافظُ الأسد**، هدفت إلى بناء الداخل، وزيادة التلاحُم القوميّ، وتحرير الأراضي المحتلّة فكانت **حرب تشرين التحريريّة**، التي قامت بسبب رفض الصهاينة التزام قرار الأمم المتّحدة رقم(٢٤٢) القاضي بوقف القتال، وانسحاب الصهاينة من الأراضي التي احتلّوها عام ١٩٦٧م. بدأت الحرب في السادس من تشرين الأول عام ١٩٧٣م على الجبهتَين السوريّة والمصريّة في آن واحد، أعلنت الحركة التصحيحيّة الانفتاح على جماهير الشعب، وتوطيد الحياة الديمقراطيّة فوُضع دستورٌ دائمٌ، وأُقرّ مجلس الشعب، وتشكيل الجبهة الوطنيّة التقدميّة.	 خامساً: انقلاب عام ١٩٧٠م قاد حافظ الأسد مع مجموعة من رفاقه الضباط انقلاباً عسكرياً في ١٦ تشرين الثاني عام ١٩٧٠ ثم غدر بزملائه فقام باعتقالهم و إيداعهم بالسجون لينفرد بالسلطة ويحكم سورية حكماً استبدادياً شمولياً استمر قرابة ٣٠ عام. ولإضفاء الشرعية على حكمه قام حافظ الأسد بشن حرب استعراضية بالتنسيق مع الرئيس المصري أنور السادات وعرفت بحرب عام ١٩٧٣م والتي تحققت فيها انتصارات وهمية استغلها حافظ الأسد لتكريس سلطته وتقوية قبضته على الحكم.
Five: The October Liberation War, the Greatest Feat of the Corrective Movement *The Corrective Movement was established on 16 November 1970, led by President Hafez Al-Assad. It sought to build the interior, increase [Arab] national cohesion and liberate occupied territories. Then the October Liberation War took place, because the Zionists refused to abide by UN Resolution 242 which called to cease the fighting and the Zionists to withdraw from territories they occupied in 1967.* *[...]* *[In green box:] The Corrective Movement declared openness to all the people and the reinforcement of democratic life. Thus, a permanent constitution was adopted, the People's Assembly was established and the National Progressive Front was created.*	*Five: The 1970 Coup* *Hafez Al-Assad led a military coup d'état along with his officer comrades on 16 November 1970. He then betrayed his colleagues and proceeded to arrest them and throw them in prison, remaining alone in power and establishing an autocratic and authoritarian rule in Syria that lasted approximately 30 years.* *To grant legitimacy to his rule, Hafez Al-Assad waged a war for show, coordinated with Egyptian President Anwar Al-Sadat, known as the 1973 War. Many imaginary victories were achieved during that war, which Hafez Al-Assad took advantage of to buttress his control and strengthen his hold on power.*

*Red text shows removed content. *Green text shows added content.

The 2011 Civil War and the 2024 Revolution

Our 2018 report examining the 2017-18 Syrian curriculum found that textbooks explicitly addressed the Syrian civil war and its impact on everyday life in the country, including destruction of facilities, displacement, emigration, women and children as victims of war, and the maintenance of normalcy and stability. Students were encouraged to volunteer, support victims, and maintain social cohesion during wartime, while the broader political and humanitarian dimensions of the conflict were either minimized or omitted. In this way, the conflict was used pedagogically to promote positive social values and civic behavior. Much of that content was taught in the National Education textbooks, which the new curriculum sought to abolish completely, pursuant to the directives matrix. For example, a revoked Grade 7 National Education textbook taught that the second-place winner in the World Robot Olympiad was a project aiming to recycle the debris and rubble of destroyed buildings, "to contribute to the construction of what was left behind by the war in Syria."[246] Another example, from a revoked Grade 6 Social Studies textbook, contains a reference to Bashar al-Assad's speech on the Syrian army holiday in 2013, where he addressed the war's difficulties alongside the achieve-

246 *National Education*, Grade 7, 2017-18, p. 18.

ments of the army, praising the sacrifices of soldiers to "safeguard our homeland's unity."[247] These examples illustrate how the curriculum removes educational material that normalized or legitimized the Assad regime's narrative of the civil war, including its portrayal of state institutions, the military, and post-war reconstruction.

The 2017-18 curriculum sought to normalize life amid war by integrating the conflict into everyday educational and moral lessons rather than treating it as a contested political event. The material did not discuss the various parties involved in the war or their motivations, instead portraying the conflict primarily as a crisis imposed on Syria from outside forces. Thus, discussion of the 2011 uprising and the popular demands for democracy and freedom that preceded the civil war was omitted. At the same time, the textbooks largely ignored atrocities attributed to the regime and denied or marginalized distinct non-Arab identities and national aspirations in the region.

The revised curriculum reverses this narrative by addressing these historical omissions. It introduces the events of the 2011 uprising, presenting them as the "Blessed Syrian Revolution" and culminating in the overthrow of the Assad regime. Newly added content characterizes the Assad regime as autocratic and brutal, accusing it of committing crimes against its own civilian population. In contrast, revolutionary forces are described as peaceful actors who defended the Islamic-Arab identity of Syria against both internal and external enemies. The narrative implies that foreign allies of the former regime and affiliated domestic factions undermined national sovereignty, while revolutionary actors sought to restore authenticity and moral legitimacy. Although additions and revisions concerning these events have so far appeared in only a limited number of textbooks, their inclusion across multiple subjects–particularly History, Arabic Language, and Islamic Education–suggests that the curriculum editors attached considerable importance to them.

The revised curriculum gives considerable prominence to portraying the revolution as the corrective to decades of Assad family rule. A systematic and didactic account of the 2011 revolution appears in the new edition of the Grade 12 History textbook. The lesson, titled "the Blessed 2011 Revolution," begins by stating that "the first spark that launched the Arab Spring came from sisterly Tunisia," where al-Bouazizi's self-immolation symbolized the end of injustice, oppression, and tyranny. By linking the revolution to the Arab Spring to the Daraa children who were "arrested and tortured to the point of having their fingernails torn out," the curriculum portrays the revolution as a spontaneous and morally justified response to oppression rather than the acts of terrorist groups (see example in Arabic Language textbook below). The causes of the revolution are attributed to decades of Baʿthist repression, including the Baʿth party's "monopoly on power," the violation of human rights, corruption, poverty, and the transformation of the army into "a sectarian army whose goal was loyalty to the ruling authority," and distancing Syrian interests from "Arab and Islamic orientation." In contrast, the revolution is presented as pursuing freedom, justice, and democratic governance through objectives such as establishing "a revolutionary political system chosen by the people," removing the security forces from political life, drafting a new constitution, ensuring the independence of the judiciary, and restoring Syrians' "usurped right to life and prosperity" after overthrowing Bashar al-Assad.

***History*, Grade 12 (Humanities Track), 2025-26, pp. 57-58**

[p. 57]

ثورة آذار المباركة عام ٢٠١١م:

كانت الشرارة الأولى التي أطلقت الربيع العربي من تونس الشقيقة ، وذلك عندما أحرق (البوعزيزي) نفسه معلناً نهاية الظلم والقهر والاستبداد ، لتبدأ الثورة في سورية بعد اعتقال الأطفال في مدينة درعا السورية وتعذيبهم إلى حد قلع أظافرهم بسبب عبارات تطالب بالحرية ، لتتحول إلى ثورة شعبية عارمة ، بدأت سلمية وأصر الشعب السوري على اقتلاع النظام اللاشرعي من جذوره ، وإعادة وجه سورية العربي الأصيل.

(See the continuation of the example on the following page)

247 *Social Studies*, Grade 6, Vol. 2, 2017-18, p. 57. For more examples, See "Syrian National Identity," pp. 12-24.

أسباب الثورة:

- انفراد حزب البعث بالسلطة لأكثر من أربعين عام و إقصاء كافة القوى الوطنية عن المشاركة في الحكم.
- تسلّط الأجهزة الأمنية على المواطنين ، و التدخل في شؤونهم اليوميّة.
- انتشار الفساد المالي و الإداري في مفاصل الدولة ، و انتشار الرشوة.
- تحوّل الجيش العربي السوري إلى جيش طائفي ، هدفه الولاء الخاص للسلطة ، و إقصاء الضباط الشرفاء عنه.
- تدهور الاوضاع الاجتماعية والاقتصادية لمعظم المواطنين السوريين.
- محاربة قيم ومفاهيم و تقاليد الشعب السوري.
- انتهاكات حقوق الانسان ، و مصادرة الحريات ، و ارتكاب المجازر الرهيبة كما حصل في حماه عام ١٩٨٢م.
- ربط سورية بتحالفات ومحاور بعيدة عن الخط العربي و الاسلامي.

The Blessed March 2011 Revolution:
The first spark that launched the Arab Spring came from sisterly Tunisia, when al-Bouazizi set himself on fire, declaring the end of injustice, oppression, and tyranny. The revolution then began in Syria after children in the city of Daraa were arrested and tortured to the point of having their fingernails torn out because of phrases demanding freedom. It developed into a sweeping popular revolution that began peacefully, and the Syrian people insisted on uprooting the illegitimate regime from its roots and restoring the authentic Arab face of Syria.
Causes of the Revolution:

1. *The Ba‘th Party’s monopoly on power for more than forty years and the exclusion of all national forces from participation in governance.*
2. *The domination of the security apparatus over citizens and interference in their daily affairs.*
3. *The spread of financial and administrative corruption throughout the institutions of the state, and the spread of bribery.*
4. *The transformation of the Syrian Arab Army into a sectarian army whose goal was loyalty to the ruling authority, and the exclusion of honorable officers from it.*
5. *The deterioration of social and economic conditions for most Syrian citizens.*
6. *Fighting against the values, concepts, and traditions of the Syrian people.*
7. *Violations of human rights, confiscation of freedoms, and the perpetration of horrific massacres, as occurred in Hama in 1982.*
8. *Linking Syria to alliances and axes far removed from the Arab and Islamic orientation.*

[p. 58]

أهداف الثورة السورية المباركة:

١- تحقيق الحرية لكافة المواطنين من خلال مبدأ المساواة والعدالة الاجتماعية.

٢- إقامة نظام سياسي ثوري من قبل الشعب يحقق مبادئ و أهداف الثورة.

٣- مراعاة حقوق مكونات الشعب السوري ، و اعتباره جزء من النسيج الاجتماعي السوري.

٤- إبعاد الجيش وقوى الأمن نهائياً عن الحياة السياسية ، وجعل هدفهم هو حماية الوطن و المواطن ، واسترجاع الأراضي المغتصبة.

٥- وضع دستور جديد للبلاد يلبي طموحات الشعب السوري.

٦- استقلال القضاء ، وفصل السلطة التشريعية عن السلطة القضائية.

٧- بناء سورية حديثة متطورة ، ترتقي إلى مصافي الدول المتقدمة ، وترفع من مستوى دخل الفرد.

(See the continuation of the example on the following page)

استمرّت الثورة السوريّة وتمكّنت من تحقيق أهدافها واسقاط حكم بشار الأسد بتاريخ ٨-١٢-٢٠٢٤م، بعد أن قدّمت تضحيات جسيمة، وأعادت الحقّ المسلوب للشّعب السوري في الحياة والازدهار، واستعادت مكانة سوريةالتاريخيّة بين الأمم.

Objectives of the Blessed Syrian Revolution:

1. *Achieving freedom for all citizens through the principle of equality and social justice.*
2. *Establishing a revolutionary political system chosen by the people that fulfills the principles and objectives of the revolution.*
3. *Respecting the rights of all components of the Syrian people and considering them part of the Syrian social fabric.*
4. *Removing the army and security forces completely from political life, and making their mission the protection of the homeland and the citizen, and the recovery of occupied territories.*
5. *Drafting a new constitution for the country that fulfills the aspirations of the Syrian people.*
6. *Ensuring the independence of the judiciary and the separation of the legislative authority from the judicial authority.*
7. *Building a modern and developed Syria that rises to the level of advanced nations and raises individual income levels.*

The Syrian revolution continued until it succeeded in achieving its objectives and overthrowing the rule of Bashar al-Assad on 8 December 2024, after making tremendous sacrifices. It restored to the Syrian people their usurped right to life and prosperity, and restored Syria's historic status among the nations.

Similarly, the revised Grade 9 History textbook added a section in the lesson on post-Independence Syria, presenting the 2011 Syrian uprising as a legitimate, popular, and ultimately victorious revolution against a tyrannical regime, while portraying the Assad government as fundamentally oppressive and criminal. The text frames Bashar al-Assad as continuing "his father's policy of repression and tyranny" and attributes the revolution to systemic abuses including "the ruling family's monopoly over power," "the humiliation of the Syrian people's dignity," and "the confiscation of freedoms." The narrative legitimizes the uprising to a significant extent by describing it as a "spontaneous popular revolution calling for freedom, dignity, and the overthrow of the regime," while emphasizing regime brutality through references to "the tearing out of [children's] fingernails," the killing of "hundreds of thousands of martyrs," the use of "chemical weapons," and the deaths of detainees "under torture." The lesson also reframes the outcome of the conflict in explicitly triumphalist terms, asserting that "the revolutionaries eventually succeeded in achieving victory" and "overthrowing [Assad's] rule on 8 December 2024."

***History*, Grade 9, 2025-26, p. 32**

سابعاً : سورية من التوريث إلى الثورة:

عمل حافظ الأسد في أواخر سنوات حكمه على تهيئة الظروف في توريث الحكم لإبنه بشار والحصول على الموافقة الدولية بذلك ، وبعد وفاته في ١٠ حزيران ٢٠٠٠ م تم تعديل الدستور وأصبح بشار الأسد رئيساً للجمهورية والذي استمر على سياسة والده في القمع و الإستبداد ، وافتتح عهده بقمع انتفاضة الأكراد في القامشلي عام٢٠٠٤م ، وتعطيل ربيع دمشق ، ثم كانت مجزرة سجن صيدنايا٢٠٠٨م ، كل ذلك مهّد لاندلاع ثورة آذار عام٢٠١١م والتي كان من أبرز أسبابها احتكار السلطة من قبل الأسرة الحاكمة وشمولية الحكم وامتهان كرامة الشعب السوري ومصادرة الحريات وتردي الحالة الاقتصادية والمعيشية إلى درجة الفقر الشديد ، والرقابة الشديدة على حرية الرأي والتعبير إضافة إلى انطلاق الربيع العربي في بعض الدول العربية ، أما السبب المباشر فهو اعتقال مجموعة من أطفال مدينة درعا و سجنهم واقتلاع أظافرهم لكتابتهم شعارات الحرية.

(See the continuation of the example on the following page)

أحداثها : انطلقت الثورة من الجامع العمري في مدينة درعا وسرعان ما انتقلت إلى باقي المحافظات لتصبح ثورة عفوية شعبية سلمية طالبت بالحرية والكرامة واسقاط النظام ، واجهتها قوات الأمن بالسلاح حيث سقط مئات الآلاف من الشهداء واستخدمت الأسلحة بكافة أنواعها لقمع الثورة بما فيها الأسلحة الكيماوية ، كما هُجّر الملايين من الشعب السوري من منازلهم وتدمير معظم المدن السورية ، و اعتقال مئات الآلاف من المدنيين و قتلهم تحت التعذيب ، وقد تمكن الثوار من من تحقيق النصر و تحرير جميع الأراضي السورية من سيطرة نظام بشار الأسد و إسقاط حكمه في ٨/١٢/ ٢٠٢٤

Seventh: Syria from Hereditary Rule to Revolution:

In the final years of his rule, Hafez al-Assad worked to prepare the conditions for transferring power to his son Bashar and securing official approval for this succession. After his death on 10 June 2000, the constitution was amended and Bashar al-Assad became President of the Republic. He continued his father's policy of repression and tyranny. He opened his rule with suppressing the Kurdish uprising in Qamishli in 2004, shutting down the Damascus Spring, and then the Sednayah prison massacre of 2008. All of this paved the way for the outbreak of the March 2011 revolution, whose main causes included the ruling family's monopoly over power, the authoritarian nature of the regime, the humiliation of the Syrian people's dignity, the confiscation of freedoms, the deterioration of economic and living conditions into severe poverty, and strict censorship over freedom of opinion and expression, in addition to the spread of the Arab Spring in several Arab countries. The direct trigger, however, was the arrest of a group of children from the city of Daraa, their imprisonment, and the tearing out of their fingernails for writing slogans calling for freedom.

Its events: the revolution began from the Omari Mosque in the city of Daraa and quickly spread to the rest of the provinces, becoming a spontaneous popular revolution calling for freedom, dignity, and the overthrow of the regime. The security forces confronted it with weapons, resulting in the deaths of hundreds of thousands of martyrs. All types of weapons, including chemical weapons, were used to suppress the revolution. Millions of Syrians were displaced from their homes, most Syrian cities were destroyed, and hundreds of thousands of civilians were arrested and killed under torture. The revolutionaries eventually succeeded in achieving victory, liberating all Syrian territories from the control of Bashar al-Assad's regime, and overthrowing his rule on 8 December 2024.

4- ما هي أبرز أسباب الثورة السورية المباركة في آذار ٢٠١١م؟

4 – What are the major causes for the blessed Syrian Revolution in March 2011?

The legitimization of the revolution and the delegitimization of the Assad regime are also carried out through an Islamic framework. In the new Grade 10 Islamic Education textbook expands a lesson on the Islamic prohibition on oppression (ẓulm) by applying it to the Assad regime and contrasting it with praise for the Syrian revolution, which is presented as an example of God's support for the oppressed and their victory over an oppressive ruler. The lesson states that "God Almighty will grant victory to the blessed Syrian revolution, because it is oppressed, steadfast upon the truth," while asking students to write about the "massacres committed by the wicked regime and its supporters." By portraying the revolutionaries as oppressed believers deserving divine support and the Assad regime as tyrannical and criminal, the curriculum both religiously legitimizes the revolutionary cause and morally defaces Assad within an Islamic Education context.

***History*, Grade 12 (Humanities Track), 2025-26, pp. 57-58**

[p. 65]

فائدةٌ

- انتصرَ اللهُ تَعالى للمظلومِ من الظَّالمِ وأكرمَهُ بأنْ جعلَ دعاءَهُ عليهِ مستجاباً لا يُرَدُّ ، عن ابن عباس رضي الله عنهما أن النبي ﷺ بعث معاذاً إلى اليمن فقال :
" واتَّق دَعْوَةَ الْمَظْلُومِ فَإِنَّهُ لَيْسَ بَيْنَهُ وَبَيْنَ اللَّهِ حِجَابٌ " (١).

وكذلكَ نصرَ اللهُ تعالى الثَّورةَ السوريَّةَ المباركة، لأنَّها مظلومةٌ وثابتةٌ على الحقِّ، وسيكتبُ نصرهُ إن شاء الله تعالى للمُسلمينَ كافةً.

Beneficial [knowledge]:
God Almighty grants victory to the oppressed over the oppressor and honors him by making his supplication inevitably answered. […]
Likewise, God Almighty has granted victory to the blessed Syrian revolution, because it is oppressed, steadfast upon the truth, and He will write victory for all Muslims, God willing.

[p. 66]

٨- اكتبْ مقالاً تَبيِّنُ فيهِ واقعَ الظّلمِ الّذي وقعَ على أبناءِ سوريا جراء المَجازرِ التي قامَ بها النِظام الفاجِر وأعوانه.

8- Write an essay explaining the oppression suffered by the people of Syria as a result of the massacres committed by the wicked regime and its supporters.

Arabic Language textbooks have also undergone careful amendments to remove hostile framings to the revolution. In a section teaching about journalism, appearing in a Grade 5 Arabic Language textbook, students are presented with a dialogue between a reporter and an expert on the dangers of explosive remnants of war (ERW). Critically, the new edition of the textbook removed the reporter's opening statement, which frames the subject in relation to the ERWs left by the rebel Syrian forces, who are labeled as "terrorists" waging unjust war against "our beloved country." It also removes an accompanying activity in which students were asked to interview a member of the Syrian military.

***Arabic is My Language*, Grade 5, Vol. 1, 2023-24, pp. 26-27 (removed)**

أقرأُ المقابلةَ الصَّحفيَّةَ الآتيَةَ، ثمَّ أُنفِّذُ النشاط:

- الصَّحَفيَّةُ: انتهتِ الحربُ الظّالمةُ التي شنّها الإرهابُ على بلدِنا الحبيبِ، ولكنْ هناك الكثيرُ مِنَ المخاطرِ التي ما زالت قائمةً بعدَ انتهائِها، ومِنْ تلكَ المخاطرِ المخلّفاتُ المتفجّرةُ التي زرعَها الإرهابيّونُ في ترابِ هذهِ الأرضِ.

(See the continuation of the example on the following page)

I read the following newspaper article, then carry out the activity:
The reporter: “The unjust war waged by terrorism against our beloved country has ended, but many dangers still remain after its end. Among these dangers are the explosive remnants planted by the terrorists in the soil of this land.”

[…]

أُطبّقُ:

أُجرِي مقابلةً صَحفيَّة معَ أحدِ رجالِ الجيشِ العربيّ السّوريّ الّذينَ حمَوا الوطنَ ودافعُوا عنه.

I will implement:
I will hold a journalistic interview with a soldier of the Arab Syrian Military who protected and defended the homeland.

The title given to one of the new additions on the 2011 revolution–“Syria from Hereditary Rule to Revolution”–captures the broader historiographical transformation undertaken throughout the chapter: the Assad era is no longer presented as a period of national stability, resistance, or modernization, but rather as an illegitimate dynastic order defined by repression, corruption, massacres, and betrayal of Arab causes. This transformation is reinforced through the systematic removal of Assad symbols and regime collaborators, the portrayal of the regime as hostile to Islamic and Arab values, the reframing of Baʿthist history in overtly negative terms, the delegitimization of the “Corrective Movement” as merely a coup, and the reinterpretation of the 1967 and 1973 wars not as nationalist triumphs but as evidence of failure, betrayal, and incompetence. In contrast, the revolution is framed not merely as a political event, but as a redemptive turning point that restored Syria’s authentic identity, dignity, and historical trajectory. The title therefore reflects the chapter’s overarching objective of recasting modern Syrian history as a moral and political struggle culminating in the overthrow of Assad rule and the rebirth of the Syrian nation.

The revised curriculum constructs a clear moral dichotomy: the Baʿthist regime and the Assad family are portrayed as oppressive and corrupt, while the revolution is presented as protective, restorative, and legitimate. The curriculum abandons overt Ba‘thist propaganda and replaces it with a new ideological narrative centered on Islamic-Arab identity and moral renewal. While the dismantling of authoritarian glorification marks a significant shift, the revised curriculum introduces a new ideological framework, raising questions about whether it encourages pluralistic historical inquiry or replaces one dominant narrative with another.

Repositioning Syria within the Region: Regional and Intra-Islamic Relations

Syria's place within the wider community of Arabic-speaking and Muslim-majority states constitutes a major theme in school textbooks. This poses a challenge for textbook authors as both communities are characterized by a large degree of disunity, disputes and even open conflicts, all of which Syrian students must be made aware of without shaking their belief in their core unifying identities. The relationship between Arab and Islamic identity presents another source of tension, as the two can at times entail competing loyalties, political alignments, grievances, and hostilities. Syrian textbooks' shifting perspectives on the Arab and Islamic worlds represent some of the most noticeable transformations from the Assad era and reveal much about how the new Syrian government seeks to define its identity and place within the region.

Turkey and the Ottoman Empire

Turkey (Türkiye) is Syria's largest neighboring country, both in size and population, and shares the longest border with Syria. However, Turkey is mentioned infrequently in Syrian educational content. Whereas Syrian history textbooks devote entire chapters to the histories of Syria's Arab neighbors – Iraq, Jordan and Lebanon – and references to Israel and Palestine are ubiquitous throughout the curriculum, modern Turkey receives comparatively little attention. This may be interpreted as a legacy of Assad's pan-Arab outlook, which emphasized Syria's ties to other Arabic-speaking states and excluded Turkey, as a non-Arab nation, from Syrian students' conceptualized geography. Given the revised curriculum's more pan-Islamic orientation, greater attention to modern Turkey may have been expected, yet this shift has yet to materialize.

By contrast, the history textbooks devote coverage to the Turkish-ruled Ottoman Empire which controlled what is now Syria for roughly four centuries until World War I. It is in this area that a significant shift in the revised curriculum's historical narrative can be observed. The Assad-era textbooks portrayed Ottoman rule as an altogether negative period in Syria's history, emphasizing the empire's policies that promoted Turkish at the expense of Arabic. In all likelihood, at the heart of this depiction lies the view that the Turkish-speaking Ottoman Empire was fundamentally antithetical to the pan-Arab identity Syria had wished to cultivate.[248] In contrast, a key component of the new Syrian government's official guidelines for curriculum reform was to mitigate this negative portrayal of the Ottoman Empire through the use of a more neutral language to describe its history.[249] Possible explanations for this shift include: a desire to mend ties with Turkey, the Ottoman Empire's modern successor; a desire to break away from Assad-era Arab nationalism, including its associated historical narrative, loyalties and priorities; and lastly, but perhaps most importantly, the desire to repair and elevate the status of the last Islamic empire, as part of a broader re-orientation towards pan-Islamism.

The most immediate change in the portrayal of the Ottoman Empire is terminological. Previous versions of Syrian textbooks referred to Ottoman rule in the Arabic-speaking world as an "occupation" (*iḥtilāl*)–a negative term conveying both illegitimacy and impermanence. Instead, current History textbooks have been edited to regularly use the more neutral "Ottoman rule [*ḥukm*]," and generally reserve the term "occupation" for European colonial powers, the US and Israel. Some unamended references to the Ottoman "occupation" nevertheless remain outside the History curriculum.[250]

In addition, Ottoman conquests in Europe are now described using the positive Islamic term *fatḥ*, signifying the liberation of non-Islamic land.[251] More strikingly, Arab nationalist movements that acted against Ottoman rule are no longer taught as seeking "independence" (*istiqlāl*) or "liberation" (*taḥrīr*) or carrying out "uprisings" or "revolutions" (*ṯawrah*), but are instead derogatorily described as "rebellion" (tamarrud) movements, a terminological shift discussed in greater

248 "Syrian National Identity," p. 64.

249 *A Review of Hay'at Tahrir al-Sham*, pp. 12–13.

250 For example: *Geography*, Grade 10, 2025–2026, p. 11.

251 *Social Studies: History*, Grade 8, 2017–2018, pp. 24, 25, 29; *History*, Grade 8, 2025–2026, pp. 30, 31, 35.

detail later in this report.[252] Many of these trends are present in the Grade 8 History textbook's lesson titles devoted to teaching about the Early Modern Era, which includes Ottoman history. Also noteworthy is the lesson title's dismissal of Arab nationalist awakening as a mere "pretext" (*iddiʿāʾ*), without further explanation. By contrast, negative terminology referring to the European powers, similar to that previously applied to the Ottomans, remains unchanged.

***History,* Grade 8, 2025–2026, p. 5 (previously: *Social Studies: History,* Grade 8, 2017–2018, p. 7)**

2017-18	2025-26
الوحدة الثانية: الوطن العربيُّ والدولة العثمانية حتّى نهاية الحملة الفرنسيّة ٢٣ الدرس الأوّل: نشأة الدولة العثمانيّة وتوسّعها في أوروبّا. ٢٤ الدرس الثاني: تفكّك الوطن العربيّ مهّد للاحتلال العثمانيّ. ٢٨ الدرس الثالث: بلاد الشام ومصر تشهد حركات استقلالية. ٣٢ الدرس الرابع: الحملة الفرنسيّة على مصرَ وسورية حصيلة التنافُس الاستعماريّ ٣٦ الدرس الخامس: الحملة الفرنسيّة تفشل بتحقيق أهدافها. ٤٠ الوحدة الثالثة: المتغيّرات السياسيّة والقوميّة بعد الحملة الفرنسيّة في الوطن العربيّ ٤٥ الدرس الأوّل: محمّد علي يطمح لبناء الدولة العربيّة العصريّة. ٤٦ الدرس الثاني: محمّد علي يوطّد أركان دولته بمنجزات كبرى. ٤٩ الدرس الثالث: سياسة خلفاء محمد علي تؤدّي للتدخُّل الأجنبيّ. ٥٣ الدرس الرابع: العربُ يسعون لإحياء مجدهم بيقظة قوميّة. ٥٦ الدرس الخامس: مؤتمر باريس العربيّ ثمرة جهود الأدباء والجمعيّات. ٥٩ الدرس السادس: الثورة العربيّة الكبرى عام ١٩١٦م. ٦٣ الدرس السابع: الحلفاء يتآمرون على العرب باتّفاقاتٍ سريّة. ٦٧	الوحدة الثانية: الوطن العربيُّ والدولة العثمانيّة حتّى نهاية الحملة الفرنسيّة ٣٣ الدرس الأوّل: نشأة الدولة العثمانيّة وتوسّعها في أوروبّا. ٣٤ الدرس الثاني: تفكّك الوطن العربيّ مهّد للحكم العثمانيّ. ٣٨ الدرس الثالث: بلاد الشام ومصر تشهد حركات التمرّد ضدّ الحكم العثماني. ٤٢ الدرس الرابع: الحملة الفرنسيّة على مصرَ وسورية حصيلة التنافُس الاستعماريّ ٤٦ الدرس الخامس: الحملة الفرنسيّة تفشل بتحقيق أهدافها. ٥٠ الوحدة الثالثة: المتغيّرات السياسيّة والقوميّة بعد الحملة الفرنسيّة في الوطن العربيّ ٥٥ الدرس الأوّل: محمّد علي يطمح لبناء الدولة العربيّة العصريّة. ٥٦ الدرس الثاني: محمّد علي يوطّد أركان دولته بمنجزاتٍ كبرى. ٥٩ الدرس الثالث: سياسة خلفاء محمّد علي تؤدّي إلى التدخُّل الأجنبيّ. ٦٣ الدرس الرابع: العربُ يسعون إلى إحياء مجدهم تحت ادّعاء اليقظة القوميّة. ٦٦ الدرس الخامس: مؤتمر باريس العربيّ ثمرة جهود الأدباء والجمعيّات. ٦٩ الدرس السادس: تمرد حسين ضد العثمانيين ١٩١٦م. ٧٣ الدرس السابع: الحلفاء يتآمرون على العرب باتّفاقاتٍ سريّة. ٧٧
Unit Two: The Arab Motherland and the Ottoman State until the End of the French Campaign *Lesson 1: Founding of the Ottoman state and its expansion in Europe* *Lesson 2: Fragmentation of the Arab Motherland paves the way for Ottoman occupation* *Lesson 3: The Levant and Egypt see independence movements* *Lesson 4: French campaign on Egypt and Syria a product of colonial competition* *Lesson 5: French campaign fails at achieving goals* *Unit Three: Political and National Transformations after the French Campaign in the Arab Motherland* *[...]* *Lesson 4: The Arabs strive to revive their glory with National Awakening* *Lesson 5: Arab Paris Conference product of efforts from men of letters and clubs* *Lesson 6: 1916 Great Arab Revolt* *Lesson 7: The [Entente] Allies conspire against the Arabs with clandestine agreements*	*Unit Two: The Arab Motherland and the Ottoman State until the End of the French Campaign* *Lesson 1: Founding of the Ottoman state and its expansion in Europe* *Lesson 2: Fragmentation of the Arab Motherland paves the way for Ottoman rule* *Lesson 3: The Levant and Egypt see rebellion movements against Ottoman rule* *Lesson 4: French campaign on Egypt and Syria a product of colonial competition* *Lesson 5: French campaign fails at achieving goals* *Unit Three: Political and National Transformations after the French Campaign in the Arab Motherland* *[...]* *Lesson 4: The Arabs strive to revive their glory under the pretext of National Awakening* *Lesson 5: Arab Paris Conference product of efforts from men of letters and clubs* *Lesson 6: Hussein's 1916 rebellion against the Ottomans* *Lesson 7: The [Entente] Allies conspire against the Arabs with clandestine agreements*

*Highlighted text shows altered content. *Green text shows added content.

252 For example: *Modern and Contemporary History of the Arab Motherland*, Grade 12, 2017–2018, pp. 26–27.

Other changes to the portrayal of Ottoman history mostly take the form of condemnatory material being edited out, regardless of historical veracity or emotional tone. This includes the removal of content describing the empire's program of Turkification (*tatrīk*), or promotion of the Turkish language at the expense of Arabic,[253] and its replacement with a succinct statement that "Arab society [under Ottoman rule] preserved [...] its language and customs."[254] The economic and technological stagnation of Arabic-speaking areas under Ottoman rule is still acknowledged but is now attributed to the fact that "the Ottoman State was busy liberating territories [*futūḥāt*], and later, resisting European Colonialism, which attempted to occupy [Arab] lands."[255] Content criticizing Ottoman Sultan Abdul Hamid II (r. 1876–1909) as "autocratic" (*istibdād*) was also removed.[256] High school Arabic textbooks, which described Arabic-speaking emigrants from Ottoman Syria as being driven from a "tyrannical Sultanate, consecutively ruled by corrupt autocratic governments which robbed livelihoods and plundered wealth," now focus on the migrants' hopes of better living standards overseas.[257] A poem by Baghdad-born writer Jamil Sidqi Al-Zahawi (1863–1936), which, in the textbook's words, served as "a means to expose the injustice of Ottoman occupation and despotism, calling to rise up and resist it," was removed from a new textbook and replaced by a poem celebrating France's 1946 withdrawal from Syria.[258] Likewise, when describing the history of Yemen, locals' resistance to Ottoman rule was edited out entirely.[259] The revised textbooks also remove a brief reference to the Ottoman authorities' early twentieth-century decision to lift restrictions on Jewish immigration and land ownership in Palestine. One possible explanation is that the editors sought to avoid a portrayal of the Ottoman Empire that could be interpreted as facilitating the emergence of Zionism.[260]

On the other hand, as shown earlier, the curriculum's changing narrative of Ottoman history not only involves improving the image of the empire itself, but also inducing radically new disapproval of those Arab nationalists who acted to break free of its rule. Formerly celebrated heroes of Assad-ruled Syria who pioneered the formation of modern Arab identity are now seen as traitors in the service of the permanent villain–the non-Islamic, European colonial powers. This extreme transformation can be seen in a Grade 8 History account of the events leading up to the 1916 Arab uprising against Ottoman rule. Whereas the Assad-era version condemned the May 1916 execution of Arab liberals (*aḥrār*) who had been "defend[ing] the rights of their [Islamic] nation, language and [Arab] national identity" at the hands of Ottoman chief Djemal Pasha (1872–1922), terming him "the Butcher" (*al-saffāḥ*)–the currently taught version exonerates the Ottoman official for cracking down on what it sees as "conspirators [...] who were collaborating with Britain and France." A similar reversal of roles occurs for Arab uprising leader Hussein bin Ali (1853–1931), scion of the Hashemite dynasty, who trace their descent from the Prophet Muhammad and ancestor of the currently reigning royal family in neighboring Jordan. The new textbook strips Hussein of his title as Sharif of Mecca, removes his portrait, and introduces a new paragraph sharply criticizing him for allowing himself to be "deceived" by Britain and "provid[ing] it a great service with his rebellion against the Ottomans, only to hand the Levant and Iraq as gift to the European colonizer."

(See the continuation of the example on the following page)

253 *Social Studies*: History, Grade 8, 2017–2018, pp. 56, 57.

254 *History*, Grade 8, 2025–2026, p. 38.

255 *History* (Humanities Track), Grade 10, 2025–2026, p. 18.

256 *Social Studies*: History, Grade 8, 2017–2018, p. 58.

257 *Arabic Language and Its Literature* (Humanities Track), Grade 12, 2023–2024, p. 78; *Arabic Language and Its Literature* (Science Track), Grade 12, 2023–2024, p. 42; *Arabic Language and Its Literature* (Humanities Track), Grade 12, 2025–2026, p. 43; *Arabic Language and Its Literature* (Science Track), Grade 12, 2025–2026, p. 18. This change was prescribed in the directives matrix.

258 *Arabic Language and Its Literature* (Humanities Track), Grade 12, 2023–2024, pp. 13–19; *Arabic Language and Its Literature* (Humanities Track), Grade 12, 2025–2026, pp. 8–12.

259 *Modern and Contemporary History of the Arab Motherland*, Grade 9, 2017–2018, pp. 74, 75; *History*, Grade 9, 2025–2026, pp. 72, 73.

260 *Modern and Contemporary History of the Arab Motherland*, Grade 9, 2017–2018, p. 48; *History*, Grade 9, 2025–2026, p. 46.

***History*, Grade 8, 2025–2026, pp. 50–51 (previously: *Social Studies: History*, Grade 8, 2017–2018, pp. 45–46)**

2017-18

ـ سياسةُ جمال باشا في بلاد الشام:

حاولَ **جمال باشا** التقرُّبَ من العـرب في بدايةِ الحربِ العالميَّةِ الأولـى، ليحصـلَ على تأييدهم في حملتِه **إلى السويس** من أجلِ ضربِ القوّاتِ الإنكليزيَّةِ في مصرَ، واعتمـدَ في تمويلِ هذه الحملةِ على موارد بلادِ الشام، فتدهورَتْ أوضاعُ البلادِ، وعانى معظمُ السكّانِ من الفقرِ والمجاعةِ وبخاصَّةٍ بعـدَ أنْ فرضَ الأسطولُ البريطانيُّ حصاراً على غضبِه سواحلِها، وبعد **إخفاق حملتِه** على السويس صبَّ على العرب، وعدَّهمُ المسؤولين عن فشلِه، فلاحقَ أحرارَهم، واعتقلَ عدداً منهم، وفي ٦ أيّارِ عام ١٩١٦م أمرَ بإعدامِ الأحرارِ في **دمشقَ وبيروت**، وكان إعدامُهم سبباً في قطعِ صلةِ العـرب بالدولةِ العثمانيَّةِ، والتعجيلِ بإعلانِ الثورةِ.

ما سببُ إعدامِ جمال باشا السفّاحِ الأحرارَ العربَ في رأيِك من خلالِ قراءتِك النصَّ المجاورَ؟

في السادس من أيّار عام ١٩١٦م نفّذ حكمُ الإعدام بواحد وعشرين شهيد هم من أعلام الفكر العربيّ وقادة الحركة العربيّة، الذين دافعوا عن حقوق أمّتهم، ولغتهم وقوميّتهم. سبعة في دمشق وأربعة عشر في بيروت.

ثانياً: إعلانُ الثورةِ العربيَّةِ الكبرى:

ـ بريطانيا والشريف حسين: دخلتِ الدولةُ العثمانيَّةُ الحربَ العالميَّةَ الأولى إلى جانبِ ألمانيا، وأخذتْ **بريطانيا** تشجِّعُ **العربَ** على إعلانِ الثورةِ ضدَّ **العثمانيِّين**، مستغلَّةً توتُّرَ العلاقاتِ بين الطرفين، فبدأتِ الاتِّصالَ مع **شريف مكّةَ الحسين بن علي**، إذ كان يتمتَّعُ بمركزٍ دينيٍّ، فضلاً عن بُعدِ بلادِه عن مركزِ الدولةِ العثمانيَّةِ، وقد أبدتْ بريطانيا استعدادَها لمساعدتِه في إقامةِ دولةٍ عربيَّةٍ مستقلَّةٍ في حالِ حشدِه العربَ للثورةِ ضدَّ الأتراكِ (الاتِّحاديِّين).

الشكل (١١) الشريف حسين

Djemal Pasha's Policy in the Levant:
Djemal Pasha tried to curry favor with the Arabs in the beginning of the First World War, [... .] After his campaign in Suez failed, he poured his anger on the Arabs [...] so he persecuted their liberals and arrested some of them. On 6 May 1916 he ordered the execution of the liberals in Damascus and Beirut, and their execution contributed one factor [...] that expedited the declaration of the revolt.
What is the reason the Djemal Pasha the Butcher executed the Arab liberals in your view, by reading the accompanying text.

[Green infobox:] On 6 May 1916, a death sentence was carried out on twenty-one martyrs, who were some of the eminent personalities of Arab thought and leaders of the Arab movement. They had defended the rights of their [Islamic] nation, language and [Arab] national identity. Seven in Damacus and fourteen in Beirut.

2. The Declaration of the Great Arab Revolt:
Britain and Sharif Hussein: [... Britain] started a connection with Sharif of Mecca, Hussein bin Ali, as he enjoyed religious importance [...] Britain had expressed its preparedness to assist him in establishing an independent Arab state in case he rallied the Arabs to revolt against the Turks (the ittihadists).

2025-26

سياسةُ جمال باشا في بلاد الشام:

حاولَ **جمال باشا** التقرُّبَ من العرب في بدايةِ الحربِ العالميَّةِ الأولى، ليحصلَ على تأييدهم في حملتِه **إلى السويس** من أجلِ ضربِ القوّاتِ الإنكليزيَّةِ في مصرَ، واعتمدَ في تمويلِ هذه الحملةِ على موارد بلادِ الشام، فتدهورَتْ أوضاعُ البلادِ، وعانى معظمُ السكّانِ من الفقرِ والمجاعةِ وبخاصَّةٍ بعدَ أنْ فرضَ الأسطولُ البريطانيُّ حصاراً على غضبِه سواحلِها، وبعد **إخفاق حملتِه** على السويس صبَّ على العرب، وعدَّهمُ المسؤولين عن فشلِه، فلاحقَ المتآمرين منهم الذين يتعاونون مع بريطانيا وفرنسا، واعتقلَ عدداً منهم. وفي ٦ أيّارِ عام ١٩١٦م أمرَ بإعدامِهم في **دمشقَ وبيروت**، وكان إعدامُهم سبباً في قطعِ صلةِ العرب بالدولةِ العثمانيَّةِ، والتعجيلِ بإعلانِ التمرد.

ـ ما سببُ إعدامِ جمال باشا بعض العرب في رأيِك من خلالِ قراءتِك النصَّ المجاورَ؟

بريطانيا وحسين بن علي: دخلتِ الدولةُ العثمانيَّةُ الحربَ العالميَّةَ الأولى إلى جانبِ ألمانيا، وأخذتْ **بريطانيا** تشجِّعُ **العربَ** على إعلانِ الثورةِ ضدَّ **العثمانيِّين**، مستغلَّةً توتُّرَ العلاقاتِ بين الطرفين. فبدأتِ الاتِّصالَ مع **الحسين بن علي**، إذ كان يتمتَّعُ بمركزٍ دينيٍّ، فضلاً عن بُعدِ بلادِه عن مركزِ الدولةِ العثمانيَّةِ. وقد أبدتْ بريطانيا استعدادَها لمساعدتِه في إقامةِ دولةٍ عربيَّةٍ مستقلَّةٍ في حالِ حشدِه العربَ للتمرّدِ ضدَّ الأتراكِ (الاتِّحاديِّين).
ولكن بريطانيا كانت تخدعه حيث كانت في نفس الوقت تخطط لاقتسام بلاد الشام والعراق بينها وبين فرنسا من خلال اتفاقيّة سايكس بيكو السريّة حيث قدم لها حسين بن علي خدمة كبيرة بتمرّده ضد العثمانيين وليقدّم بلاد الشّام والعراق هديّة للمستعمر الأوربي بعد خروج العثمانيين منها.

Djemal Pasha's Policy in the Levant:
Djemal Pasha tried to curry favor with the Arabs in the beginning of the First World War, [... .] After his campaign in Suez failed, he poured [sic] on the Arabs [...] so he persecuted the conspirators among them who were collaborating with Britain and France and arrested some of them. On 6 May 1916 he ordered their execution in Damascus and Beirut, and their execution contributed one factor [...] that expedited the declaration of the rebellion.
What is the reason the Djemal Pasha executed some of the Arabs in your view, by reading the accompanying text.

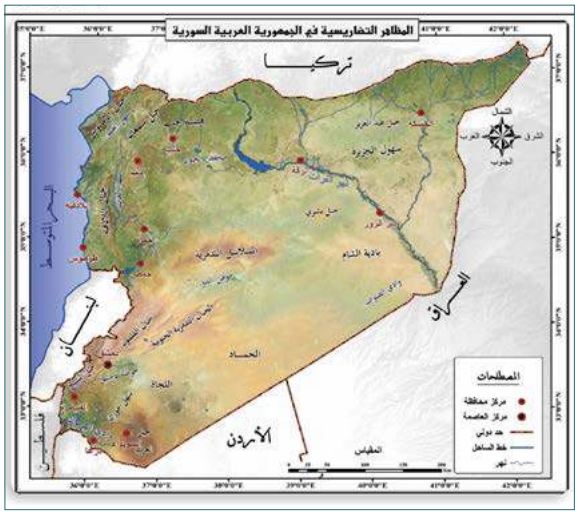
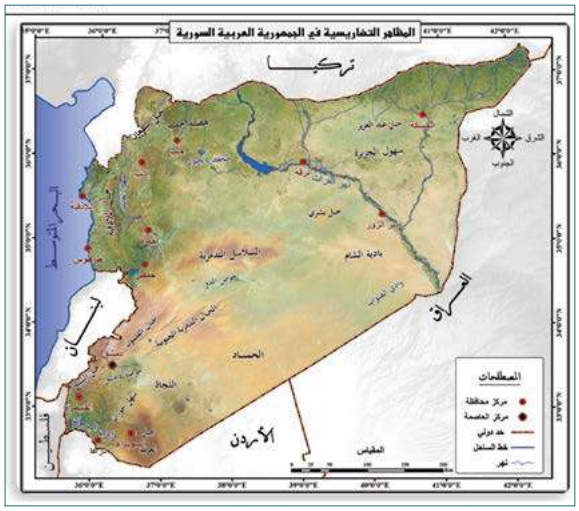
Britain and Hussein bin Ali: [... Britain] started a connection with Hussein bin Ali, as he enjoyed religious importance [...] Britain had expressed its preparedness to assist him in establishing an independent Arab state in case he rallied the Arabs to rebel against the Turks (the ittihadists).
However, Britain was deceiving him: at the same time it was planning to partition the Levant and Iraq between itself and France with the clandestine Sykes-Picot Agreement. Therefore, Hussein bin Ali provided it a great service with his rebellion against the Ottomans, only to hand the Levant and Iraq as gift to the European colonizer after the Ottomans had left [both regions].

*Highlighted text shows altered content. *Red text shows removed content. *Green text shows added content.

One area of the curriculum that indirectly references modern Turkey is the territorial dispute over the Alexandretta region (now Turkey's Hatay Province), a 5,500 km^2 territory on the Mediterranean coast, northwest of Syria proper and in the south of Turkey, centered on the cities of İskenderun (Alexandretta) and Antakya (Antioch). This territory was allocated to the French Mandate of Syria in the 1920 Treaty of Sèvres but was subsequently ceded by France to Turkey in 1939–before Syria had won its independence from French rule–and has been Turkish territory ever since. For much of its history as a sovereign nation, Syria has rejected the legality of the French concession and claimed the territory as rightfully Syrian.

Until recently, textbooks have reflected Syria's traditional position on the Alexandretta region depicting the territory on most maps as an integral Syrian territory and downplaying the dispute surrounding its ownership, including the fact that it is not de facto in Syrian hands.[261] The revised textbooks, however, adopt a markedly different approach, abandoning Syria's territorial claim to the region and instead recognizing Hatay Province as part of Turkey. For example, the Grade 3 Social Studies textbook saw virtually all maps of Syria amended so as to carve out the Alexandretta region and merge it with Turkey, as seen in the example below. Even incidental cartoon representations of the cartographic shape of Syria have been modified to change its northwestern border, imprinting the new shape of the country in students' minds.[262] Modifications of this nature are ubiquitous and show a clear systemic effort; however, a small number of maps remain unamended and continue to depict the territory as part of Syria.[263]

***Social Studies,* Grade 3, 2025–2026, p. 76 (previously: *Social Studies,* Grade 3, 2023–2024, p. 85)**

2023-24	2025-26
	
[Map title:] *Topographical features in the Syrian Arab Republic*	[Map title:] *Topographical features in the Syrian Arab Republic*

Textual descriptions of the Alexandretta region have been similarly edited. The Grade 9 History textbook previously contained a section decrying the territory's 1939 handover to Turkey as a "conspiracy" (*ta'āmur*), accusing France of "rigging" (*tazwīr*) the referendum which preceded its handover, criticizing Turkey for repressing the Arabic language in the territory and praising its Arab inhabitants for "struggling against the foreign intervention."[264] The current version of the textbook removes this section entirely and no longer mentions the historical event, eliminating the previous

261 *A Review of Hay'at Tahrir al-Sham*, pp. 42–46, https://www.impact-se.org/wp-content/uploads/A-Review-of-Hayat-Tahrir-al-Shams-Intended-Changes-to-the-Syrian-Curriculum.pdf.

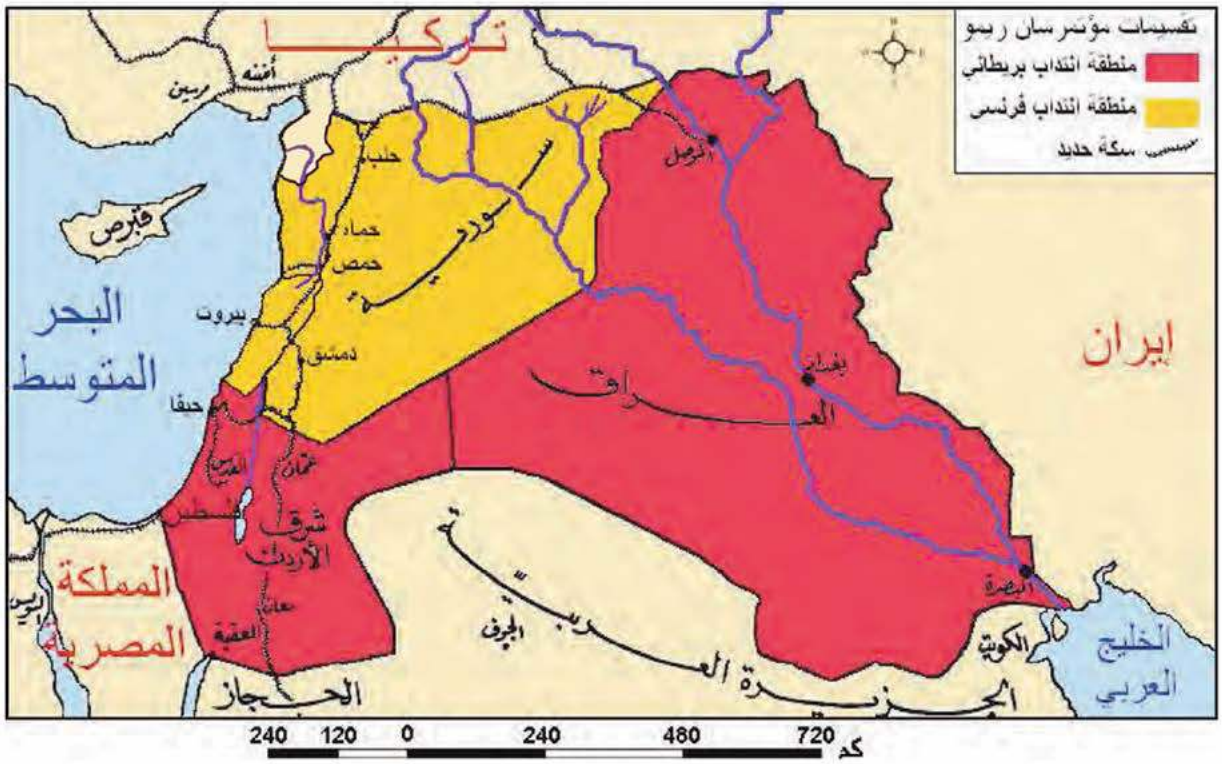
262 *Social Studies*, Grade 3, 2023–2024, p. 50; *Social Studies*, Grade 3, 2025–2026, p. 42.

263 *Arabic is My Language*, Grade 4, vol. 2, 2025–2026, p. 79.

264 *Modern and Contemporary History of the Arab Motherland*, Grade 9, 2017–2018, p. 29.

acknowledgment that the territory had once formed part of Mandatory Syria. This shift extends even to historical maps of Mandatory Syria, which now incorrectly depict the Alexandretta region as part of Turkey as early as the 1920s.[265] This example shows the extreme lengths to which the authors of the new Syrian curriculum have reshaped the historical narrative, presenting a position that may improve relations with Turkey.

***History,* Grade 9, 2025–2026, p. 19**



Map 3: Divisions of the 1920 San Remo Conference

In the example below, a biographical description of Syrian poet Sulayman al-Isa (1921–2013) was amended to reframe his "dream" of seeing the "recovery" of the "Al-Iskandrunah District" (*liwā' al-'Iskandrūnah*), as well as Palestine and the Golan Heights, from "occupation"–as only applying to the latter two. The change is particularly striking because al-Isa himself was born in what is now Hatay Province, making the omitted reference closely tied to his own biography. At the same time, a footnote explaining that "Al-Iskandarunah District" represents the "natural gateway to Syrian Arab country" was left unchanged. The omission of Alexandretta leaves the references to Palestine and the Golan Heights in the same context as somewhat gratuitous. At the same time, it underscores the curriculum's continued prioritization of the conflict with Israel over Syria's territorial dispute with Turkey. The maps reinforce the same pattern: they relinquish Syria's claim to Hatay while continuing to assert Syrian claims to the Golan Heights and Palestinian claims over Israel. It thus seems that unilateral concessions in this area will remain a point of serious contention.

(See the continuation of the example on the following page)

265 *History*, Grade 9, 2025–2026, pp. 22, 23; also: *History* (Humanities Track), Grade 12, 2025–2026, p. 33.

***Arabic is My Language,* Grade 6, vol. 1, 2025–2026, p. 20 (previously: *Arabic is My Language,* Grade 6, vol. 1, 2023–2024, p. 27)**

2023-24	2025-26
إنَّهُ سليمان العيسى ابنُ الجمهوريَّةِ العربيَّةِ السوريَّةِ التي كرَّمَتْهُ، ومنحَتْهُ وسامَ الاستحقاقِ السُّوريِّ، ذاكَ الذي نشأَ في قريةِ النُّعيريَّةِ في لواءِ الإسكندرونةِ*؛ أتمَّ تعليمَهُ بعدَ سلخِ اللواءِ في مدارسِ اللاذقيَّةِ ودمشقَ ... وعملَ لاحقاً مدرِّساً للُّغةِ العربيَّةِ في حلبَ، ثمَّ التقى رفيقةَ دربِهِ الطَّويلِ الدُّكتورة (ملكة أبيض) التي أسماها (نبضَهُ في الإبداعِ والعملِ)، وأكملَ حياتَهُ معَها في دمشقَ. قضى عمرَهُ كلَّهُ يحلمُ بالوحدةِ العربيَّةِ التي تجمعُ الوطنَ العربيَّ من المحيطِ إلى الخليجِ، وتجعلُ منهُ يداً واحدةً لتحريرِ الأرضِ، واستعادةِ فلسطينَ والجولانِ ولواءِ الإسكندرونةِ وغيرِها من الأراضي العربيَّةِ المُحتلَّةِ، ذاكَ حلمُهُ الجميلُ الذي أخبرَ كلَّ مَن زارَهُ أنَّهُ ينتظرُ تَحقُّقَهُ. لواءُ الاسكندرونة: يعدّ المنفذ الطّبيعيّ لشمالي القطر العربي السّوري، ويتميّزُ ببيئته الزّراعيّة الغنيّة وبثرواته الباطنيّة ومدنه الكبيرة.	إنَّهُ سليمان العيسى ابنُ الجمهوريَّةِ العربيَّةِ السوريَّةِ التي كرَّمَتْهُ، ومنحَتْهُ وسامَ الاستحقاقِ السُّوريِّ، ذاكَ الذي نشأَ في قريةِ النُّعيريَّةِ في لواءِ الإسكندرونةِ*؛ أتمَّ تعليمَهُ في مدارسِ اللاذقيَّةِ ودمشقَ ... وعملَ لاحقاً مدرِّساً للُّغةِ العربيَّةِ في حلبَ، ثمَّ التقى رفيقةَ دربِهِ الطَّويلِ الدُّكتورة (ملكة أبيض) التي أسماها (نبضَهُ في الإبداعِ والعملِ)، وأكملَ حياتَهُ معَها في دمشقَ. قضى عمرَهُ كلَّهُ يحلمُ بالوحدةِ العربيَّةِ التي تجمعُ الوطنَ العربيَّ من المحيطِ إلى الخليجِ، وتجعلُ منهُ يداً واحدةً لتحريرِ الأرضِ، واستعادةِ فلسطينَ والجولانِ وغيرِها من الأراضي العربيَّةِ المُحتلَّةِ، ذاكَ حلمُهُ الجميلُ الذي أخبرَ كلَّ مَن زارَهُ أنَّهُ ينتظرُ تَحقُّقَهُ. - لواءُ الاسكندرونة: يعدّ المنفذ الطّبيعيّ لشمالي القطر العربي السّوري، ويتميّزُ ببيئته الزّراعيّة الغنيّة وبثرواته الباطنيّة ومدنه الكبيرة.
Sulayman al-Isa is a son of the Syrian Arab Republic [...] He who was raised in the village of Al-Nu'ayriyah in Al-Iskandrunah District, [...] He spent his whole life dreaming of an Arab unity that would bring together the Arab Motherland from the [Atlantic] Ocean to the [Persian] Gulf and make it one hand to liberate the land and recover Palestine, the Golan [Heights], the Al-Iskandrunah District and all the other occupied Arab territories. That beautiful dream, which he told all those who visited him that he awaits its fulfillment. *Al-Iskandarunah District: considered the natural northern gateway to Syrian Arab country, distinguished for its rich soil, hidden treasures and great cities.*	*Sulayman al-Isa is a son of the Syrian Arab Republic [...] He who was raised in the village of Al-Nu'ayriyah in Al-Iskandrunah District*, [...] He spent his whole life dreaming of an Arab unity that would bring together the Arab Motherland from the [Atlantic] Ocean to the [Persian] Gulf and make it one hand to liberate the land and recover Palestine, the Golan [Heights] and all the other occupied Arab territories. That beautiful dream, which he told all those who visited him that he awaits its fulfillment. *Al-Iskandarunah District: considered the natural northern gateway to Syrian Arab country, distinguished for its rich soil, hidden treasures and great cities.*

*Red text shows removed content.

Overall, these examples demonstrate that the revised curriculum departs from the Arab nationalist interpretation of Ottoman and Turkish history that characterized the Assad era. In its place, it presents a more conciliatory view of the Ottoman Empire and modern Turkey while diminishing the legitimacy of Arab nationalist movements that opposed Ottoman rule.

Iran and Hezbollah

Iran, a non-Arab country that does not border Syria, nevertheless receives some attention in Syrian textbooks, much of it negative. This largely reflects Iran's historical conflicts with its Arab neighbors, particularly Iraq and the Gulf states, as well as the tensions surrounding its own Arabic-speaking minority. Even during the Assad era, when Syria and the Islamic Republic of Iran maintained close political relations, school textbooks generally portrayed Iran through a pan-Arab lens, prioritizing Arab nationalist concerns.[266] As the new Syrian government seeks to distance itself from Assad's political legacy and embraces the influence of Sunni hardliners, the portrayal of Shi'a Iran has not improved. At the same time, this invigorated criticism of Iran sits uneasily with the ideal of pan-Islamic solidarity promoted elsewhere in the revised curriculum.

The chief point of contention involving Iran is the Khuzestan region in the southwest of the country, a lowland area extending from the Mesopotamian plain of neighboring Iraq, and home to a historically significant Arabic-speaking community. Syrian textbooks generally present the region–also referred to as Al-Ahwaz (Ahvaz) or Arabistan–as an Arab territory under illegitimate non-Arab Iranian rule. Thus, a map of the Arab world for Grade 6 students depicts the Arabistan region–alongside the Tunb Islands in the Persian Gulf (see discussion below), the entirety of Israel, the Ogaden region of Ethiopia, and Spain's Ceuta, Melilla and the Canary Islands (but not Turkey's Hatay Province)–as

266 "Syrian National Identity," pp. 54–61.

"stolen areas" (*manātiq muġtaṣibah*).[267] A more restrained formulation appears in a Grade 9 Geography textbook, which describes the region simply as being "in southwest Iran," while adding that it constitutes "a natural extension of Iraq."[268]

By contrast with the de-emphasis of the Hatay dispute, the revised curriculum introduces new material that intensifies its treatment of the Khuzestan dispute. Previously, the Grade 9 History textbook had only indicated that the territory is associated with Iraq, that it is inhabited by Arab tribes and that Britain supported its "occupation" by Iran for imperialist goals.[269] The current version adds criticism of Iran's contemporary treatment of the region's population.[270] A similar addition has been made to the Grade 12 History textbook's discussion of modern Iraqi history, yet in considerably more detail and emotional tone, as presented in the below example. Here, students are told that the Iranian government has been "waging war on the Arabic language" in the region, imposing Persian toponyms, bombing its cities, and "torturing" (*ta'ḏīb*) its citizens. Pointedly, the text concludes that the "situation became worse after the Shah left, until the present day," conveying an indirect attack on the present-day Islamic Republic of Iran. Such strongly worded content likely reflects a desire by education officials to foster some degree of hostility toward contemporary Iran, at a higher level than before. On the other hand, the fact that the arguments employed appeal to Arab nationalist sentiments, rather than the Islamic values that the new curriculum promulgates so strongly, may indicate that this argumentation is a vestige of the Assad-era curricular narrative. Even so, the textbooks stop short of advocating the region's liberation or supporting the use of force to achieve it, unlike their treatment of Palestine and the Golan Heights. Nor do they advance an alternative claim to the territory's rightful sovereignty.

***History* (Humanities Track), Grade 12, 2025–2026, p. 104**

الخريطة(٨) إقليم الأحواز

• **سياسةُ إيرانَ في الأحواز:**

احتلَّت إيرانُ في عهد الشاه الأحوازَ عام ١٩٣٦م وقصفت عاصمةَ الإقليمِ المحمَّرةَ، وسعتْ في عهد الشاه إلى محوِ الطابعِ العربيِّ للأحواز، وسمَّتْهُ خوزستان، وحاربتِ اللُّغةَ العربيَّة، وفرضت أسماءً فارسيَّةً على كلِّ المدنِ والأنهارِ والمحافظاتِ، وربطته بالاحتكارات النفطيَّة، وقامت بتجزئته، كما اتَّبعت أسلوب الاضطهادِ والتعذيبِ للمواطنين.

ثم ازداد الوضع سوءاً بعد رحيل الشاه وحتى الوقت الحاضر.

(See the continuation of the example on the following page)

267 *Social Studies*, Grade 6, 2025–2026, p. 33.

268 *Geography*, Grade 9, 2025–2026, p. 26.

269 *Modern and Contemporary History of the Arab Motherland*, Grade 9, 2017–2018, p. 68.

270 *History*, Grade 9, 2025–2026, p. 66.

Iran's Policy in Al-Ahwaz:

Iran occupied Al-Ahwaz during the reign of the Shah, in 1936, and bombed the regional capital Al-Muhammarah [Khorramshahr]. During the reign of the Shah, [Iran] strived to erase the Arab nature of Al-Ahwaz, naming it Khuzestan, and waged war on the Arabic language, imposing Persian names on all the cities, rivers and districts. It tied [the region] to oil monopolies and partitioned it, as well as following a policy of repression and torture on civilians. Then, the situation became worse after the Shah left, until the present day.

Map 8: the Al-Ahwaz region

Another example of note is a newly instituted paragraph on the history of Syria's foreign policy under Hafez al-Assad. In the context of the 1980–1988 Iran-Iraq War, the late president is criticized for "supporting the Iranian enemy [*al-'adūw al-'īrānī*] in its war against the brotherly nation of Iraq."[271] This explicitly hostile language, traditionally reserved in Syrian textbooks for Israel, marks a clear departure from other accounts of the Iran-Iraq War, including elsewhere in the same textbook, which generally refrain from taking sides in the conflict.[272] Notably, even those neutral descriptions conceal an omission of earlier, more pro-Iranian content, including passages that had openly praised Iran's 1979 Islamic Revolution for supporting the Palestinian cause. Such content has now been removed.[273] This is especially evident in the removal of an entire lesson about the deposition of the Iranian Shah and the establishment of the Islamic Republic, which praised the revolution, the regime's support of the Palestinian cause, and Iranian technological developments, including the Omid satellite and the nuclear program "for peaceful purposes."[274] High school History textbooks have been similarly amended to criticize Assad for "siding with Iran during its aggression against Iraq," indicating that Syria's allegiance to Arab Iraq still takes precedence over Islamic fealty to (Shiʿi) Iran.[275] Another point of contention involving Iran concerns its control of Abu Musa and the Tunb Islands in the Persian Gulf, which are claimed by the United Arab Emirates. In addition to identifying them as "stolen areas" on the map discussed above, one textbook describes Iranian rule over the islands as an "occupation."[276]

Another important area where Syrian textbooks have changed curricular narratives is in reference to Lebanon. Not only do new Syrian textbooks harshly criticize Hafez al-Assad's intervention in Lebanon's 1975–1990 civil war as highly destructive, especially to Lebanon's resident Palestinian refugees (see chapter 8), but they also direct some of the ire towards Assad's ally, Iranian-backed, Shia Muslim-Lebanese militant organization Hezbollah. Previously coded as the "Lebanese National Resistance" (al-muqāwamah al-waṭanīyah al-Lubnānīyah) and credited for driving the "Zionist Aggression" out of Lebanon,[277] the new version of the textbook now calls the organization by name and accuses it of "exposing its sectarian face" by "standing with" the Assad regime during the 2011 protests and "committing horrific massacres" against Syrians. This is an unusual example of extremely harsh language used against fellow Arab-Muslim actors in the new Syrian curriculum (other than the Assad regime itself). The new textbook even implicitly dismisses Hezbollah's part in instigating Israel's 2000 retreat from its occupation of southern Lebanon, bestowing the credit upon unnamed "factions of the Lebanese resistance" instead.

(See the continuation of the example on the following page)

271 *History*, Grade 9, 2025–2026, p. 31.

272 *History*, Grade 9, 2025–2026, p. 65.

273 *Modern and Contemporary History of the Arab Motherland*, Grade 9, 2017–2018, p. 67.

274 *Modern and Contemporary History of the Arab Motherland*, Grade 11, 2017–2018, pp. 206-209.

275 *History* (Humanities Track), Grade 12, 2025–2026, p. 54.

276 *History* (Humanities Track), Grade 12, 2025–2026, p. 119.

277 *Modern and Contemporary History of the Arab Motherland*, Grade 12, 2017–2018, p. 66.

History **(Humanities Track), Grade 12, 2025–2026, p. 63**

فرض الكيان الصهيوني اتفاق ١٧ أيار عام١٩٨٣م على لبنان ، ولكنه لم ينفّذه لمعارضة القوى الوطنية اللبنانية له وبعد اشتراك عدة فصائل من المقاومة اللبنانية أرغم الكيان الصهيوني على الانسحاب من الجنوب (باستثناء مزارع شبعا والغجر) في٢٥ـ٥ـ٢٠٠٠م ، ثم اغتيل رئيس وزراء لبنان رفيق الحريري في عهد الرئيس اللبناني ايميل لحود واتُّهم تنظيم حزب الله باغتياله.

وكشف هذا التنظيم عن وجهه الطائفي بوقوفه إلى جانب نظام الأسد الاستبدادي وقيامه بارتكاب مجازر رهيبة بحق الشعب السوري خلال ثورته المباركة في عام ٢٠١١، وكان قد تسلم رئاسة الجمهورية اللبنانية مؤخراً العماد ميشيل سليمان بين عامي ٢٠٠٨ ـ ٢٠١٤م.

التدريباتُ والأنشطةُ

١- علِّلْ كلاً مما يأتي:

- قيامَ الحربِ الأهليَّةِ اللبنانيَّة عام ١٩٧٥م.

- عدوانَ الكيان الصهيونيّ على لبنان عام ١٩٨٢م.

٢- رتِّبِ الأحداثَ التاريخيَّة الآتية حسب تسلسلِها الزمنيّ بدءاً من الأقدم:

اغتيال رفيق الحريري	-	الحرب الأهلية في لبنان
استقلال لبنان	-	اتفاق الطائف

٣- بيّن رأيك في وقوف حزب الله إلى جانب النظام السوري عام٢٠١١م

٤- ما أسباب قيام الحرب الأهليّة في لبنان عام ١٩٥٨م؟

The Zionist Entity imposed the 17 May 1983 Agreement on Lebanon, but it never implemented it due to the opposition of the Lebanese national forces. After several factions of the Lebanese resistance joined in, the Zionist Entity was forced to retreat from the South [of Lebanon] (except Shebaa Farms and Ghajar) on 25 May 2000. Then, Lebanese Prime Minister Rafic Hariri was assassinated during the tenure of President Émile Lahoud, and the Hezbollah organization was accused of assassinating him.

This organization exposed its sectarian face by standing with the despotic Assad regime and committing horrific massacres against the Syrian people during their 2011 Blessed Revolution. Recently, the Lebanese presidency was assumed by General Michel Suleiman from 2008–2014.

Exercises and Activities:

[…]

3. Express your opinion about Hezbollah standing with the Syrian regime in 2011.

Taken together, these examples show that the revised curriculum adopts a more critical portrayal of Iran and Hezbollah than its predecessor, reflecting the new government's efforts to distance Syria from former allies of the Assad regime that it now regards as adversaries. The curriculum intensifies criticism of Iran's regional policies and territorial disputes yet stops short of advocating territorial revision or armed liberation, distinguishing its treatment of Iran from that of Israel. The curriculum similarly reverses its treatment of Hezbollah: once celebrated as the "Lebanese National Resistance," the organization is now explicitly named and harshly condemned for supporting the Assad regime and committing atrocities against Syrians, while its role in prompting Israel's 2000 withdrawal from southern Lebanon is downplayed.

The Arab World

The community of Arabic-speaking states serves as Syria's main point of reference for the outside world. Syrian textbooks refer to this community as the "Arab Motherland" (or "Arab Homeland"; *al-waṭan al-ʻarabī*) and treat it as a single national and territorial unit, defined by clear boundaries and shared national characteristics. A Grade 9 Geography textbook lays out the territorial delineations of the "Arab Motherland:" its borders correspond to the combined territory of the member states of the Arab League except the Comoro Islands, and with the addition of the Arabic-speaking nation of Eritrea. It also incorporates the territories of present-day Israel, South Sudan, and Western Sahara, which are not recognized as separate political entities but as integral parts of the Arab League members Palestine, Sudan, and Morocco, respectively. The textbook also lists the shared characteristics that define this region, other than the Arabic language: a central and strategic location between Asia, Africa and Europe; a rich history of ancient civilizations; religious significance for the "Heavenly Religions" (*al-diyānāt as-samāwīyah*), referencing Islam, Christianity and Judaism;[278] a wealth of natural resources, especially oil; and finally, shared victimhood from what is described as "Colonialism." The textbook especially stresses the last point, arguing that "Colonialism" has created certain "problems" between the individual states of the Arab Motherland in a cynical effort to seize control of it. The textbook thereby acknowledges the existence of intra-Arab disputes but places the blame for them on the amorphous entity of "Colonialism," that is, the non-Arab "Other." Another accusation leveled against "Colonialism" is that it "stripped" Arabs of their territory and merged it with neighboring states, which is likely a reference to the Hatay and Khuzestan disputes. Finally, the creation of Israel, or "implanting the Zionist Entity," is described as another cynical act by colonial states to guarantee hegemony over the Arab world.

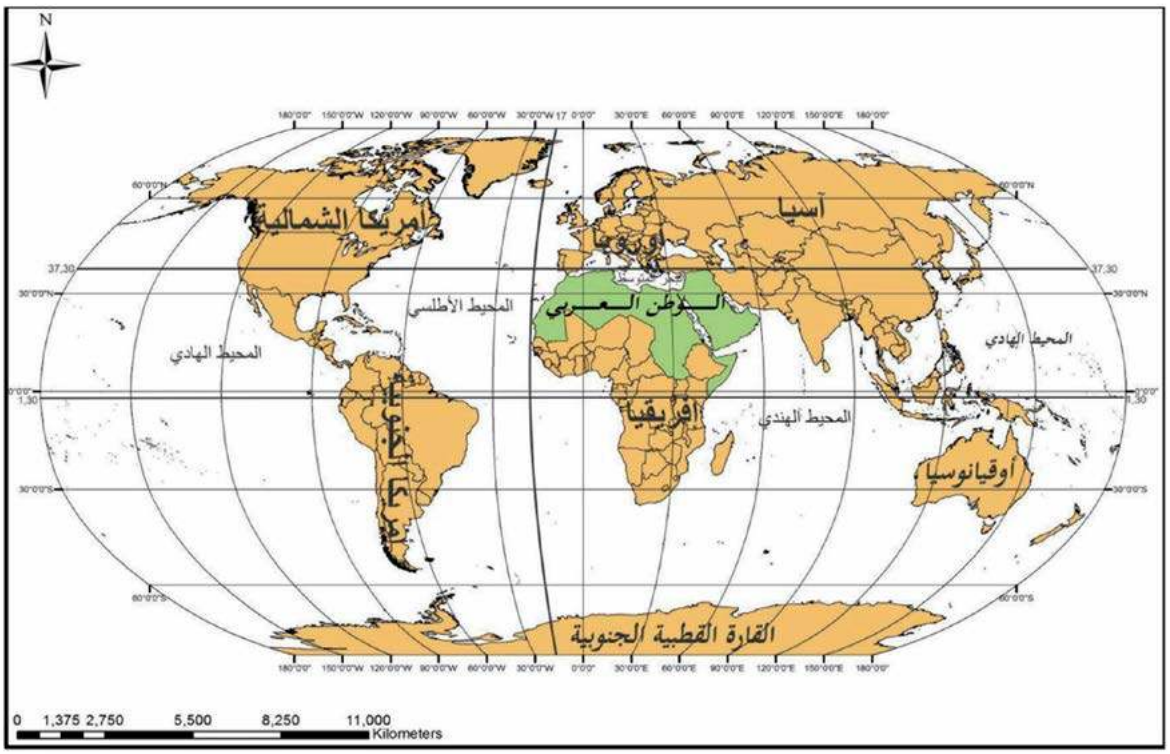
***Geography*, Grade 9, 2025–2026, pp. 8, 10**

الوَحْدةُ الأوّلى: الوطنُ العربيّ(موقعُه وأقاليمُه، ومكانةُ سورية فيه)

يتمتَّعُ الوطنُ العربيّ بما فيه سورية بموقعٍ جغرافيٍّ متميِّزٍ أعطاه أهمّيّةً كبيرةً من الناحية الاستراتيجيّة والدينيّة والثقافيّة، وقد قامَ الجغرافيّون بتقسيمه إلى سبعةِ أقاليمَ وَفْقَ أسس طبيعيَّةٍ وبشريّة لكلٍّ منها خصائصُها المميّزة، إلّا أنَّه اليوم مقَسَّم إلى بلدان رسم الاستعمار حدودها السياسيّة ، بحسب مصالحه، وبما يضمن هيمنتَه عليها من خلال اقتطاعِ أجزاء واسعة منه وضمّها إلى دولٍ مجاورة له، وزرعِ الكيان الصهيونيِّ في قلبِ الوطن العربيّ.

(See the continuation of the example on the following page)

278 Judaism is explicitly mentioned as a "Heavenly Religion" in *Geography*, Grade 9, 2025–2026, p. 14; yet, the accompanying images of religious sites in the next page fails to list a Jewish one. See also: "Syrian National Identity," p. 40.



موقع الوطن العربيّ من العالم

الدرس الأوّل : الوطن العربيّ موقع متميّزٌ وإمكاناتٌ كبيرة

يشغلُ الوطن العربيّ موقِعَ القلب بالنسبة إلى قارات (آسيا – أفريقيا – أوروبا)، وهو مهدٌ للحضارات والديانات السماويّةِ؛ ممّا أكسبه أهمّيّةً كبيرة، ازدادَتْ بعد اكتشاف النفط في أراضيه، وهذه المزايا كانت سبباً في سعي الاستعمار إلى السيطرةِ عليه، وخلقِ المشكلات بينَ دولهِ حتّى يومنا هذا.

لنتعرّفْ موقعَ الوطنِ العربيّ، ونستنتجْ أهمّيته الاستراتيجيّة والاقتصاديّة والحضاريّة.

Unit 1: The Arab Motherland (Its Location and Regions, and Syria's Place inside It)

The Arab Motherland, including Syria, enjoys a distinct geographical location, which has granted it great strategic, religious and cultural importance. […] Yet today it is divided into states whose political borders were drawn by Colonialism, based on its own interests, in a way that guarantees its hegemony over [the Arab Motherland]. This is done by stripping large swathes of it and annexing them to neighboring states, and implanting the Zionist Entity in the heart of the Arab Motherland.

[Below map:] The location of the Arab Motherland in the world

Lesson 1: The Arab Motherland, Distinct Location and Great Potential

The Arab Motherland occupies a central location from the perspective of the continents of Asia, Africa and Europe. It is the birthplace of civilization and the Heavenly Religions, which granted it great importance. This importance increased after the discovery of oil in its territory, and these characteristics have been one reason for Colonialism's effort to take over [the Motherland] and create problems among its states until this very day.

Let's learn where the Arab Motherland is located, and deduce what its strategic, economic and cultural importance is.

In fact, the same Geography textbook goes further in its allusion to intra-Arab and intra-Islamic disputes. Whereas the borders of the "Arab Motherland" are stated to be "natural,"[279] the borders of at least some Arab countries are described as an "artificial" creation of colonial empires. This description marks their existence as individual states as illegitimate, contrasted with the desirable state of political-ethnic union. In line with this view, the textbook authors give the accompanying political map of contemporary Arab states the ideologically imbued title: "political partition (*tajzi'ah*) of the Arab Motherland."[280] In addition, the textbook decries "transgressions" (*tajāwuzāt*) by "neighboring states," as a result of which the "current political borders" of the Arab Motherland do not match its "natural borders." An elucidation for what this latter part refers to was found in the Assad-era (2017–2018) version of the textbook, which defined "the State of Palestine, the District of Iskandarun and Al-Ahwaz (Arabistan)" as the most important of the "stolen areas" (*al-manātiq al-muġtaṣabah*), once again referencing the Israeli-Palestinian conflict alongside the Hatay and Khuzestan disputes. However, the current version of the textbook removed the latter two and left only Palestine as a "stolen region." This signals that Syrian education officials wish to inculcate the idea among students that the conflict with Israel is a matter of supreme importance but also desire to de-escalate intra-Islamic disputes–not solely with Turkey but also with Iran. The passage concludes by asking students how one can be "rid" (*taḵalluṣ*) of those "artificial borders"; this could have been previously interpreted as a call for Arab unity, but with the current version's singular focus on Palestine, can also be read as a call to war on Israel.

Geography of the Arab Motherland and Syria, Grade 9, 2017–2018, pp. 14–15	*Geography*, Grade 9, 2025–2026, pp. 12–13
الأطماعُ الاستعماريّةُ غيّرت حدودَ الوطنِ العربيِّ وجزّأته لا تتطابقُ الحدودُ السياسيّةُ الحاليّةُ للوطنِ العربيِّ مع حدوده الطبيعيّة؛ إذْ أصاب هذه الحدودَ العديدُ من التجاوزات من قبل الدول المجاورة، إضافةً إلى ما رسمتْهُ الدولُ الاستعماريّةُ من حدودٍ اصطناعيّةٍ بين أقطاره. كيف يمكنُ برأيك التخلّصُ من هذه الحدود المُصطنعة ؟ أهمّ المناطق المغتصبة: دولة فلسطين، وأهمّ الأقاليم: لواء إسكندرون، والأهواز (عربستان).	الأطماعُ الاستعماريّةُ غيّرت حدودَ الوطنِ العربيِّ وجزّأته لا تتطابقُ الحدودُ السياسيّةُ الحاليّةُ للوطنِ العربيِّ مع حدوده الطبيعيّة؛ إذْ أصاب هذه الحدودَ العديدُ من التجاوزات من قبل الدول المجاورة، إضافةً إلى ما رسمتْهُ الدولُ الاستعماريّةُ من حدودٍ اصطناعيّةٍ بين أقطاره، وكان آخرها احتلالُ فلسطينَ من قبل الكيان الصهيونيّ. كيف يمكنُ برأيك التخلّصُ من هذه الحدود المُصطنعة ؟ أهمّ المناطق المغتصبة: دولة فلسطين
Colonial Greed Changed the Borders of the Arab Motherland and Partitioned It *The current political borders of the Arab Motherland do not match its natural borders, as those borders were damaged by many transgressions from neighboring states, as well as the artificial borders drawn by colonial states between its regions.* *In your view, how can one be rid of these artificial borders?* *[Box, upper left:] The most important of the stolen regions: the State of Palestine, and the most important areas: the District of Iskandarun, and Al-Ahwaz (Arabistan).*	*Colonial Greed Changed the Borders of the Arab Motherland and Partitioned It* *The current political borders of the Arab Motherland do not match its natural borders, as those borders were damaged by many transgressions from neighboring states, as well as the artificial borders drawn by colonial states between its regions, the latest of which is the occupation of Palestine by Zionist Entity. In your view, how can one be rid of these artificial borders?* *[Box, upper left:] The most important of the stolen regions: the State of Palestine*

*Red text shows removed content. *Green text shows added content.

At the same time, an identifiable trend within the new curriculum is the downplaying of Arab identity, even in discussions of the Arab world. Thus, a Grade 9 History textbook saw some (but not all) references to the "Arab Motherland" replaced by the less ideologically infused term "Arab countries" (*al-bilād al-'arabīyah*).[281] Similar to the drastic shift of narrative around Arab nationalist figures who fought against Ottoman rule, much of the positive content on 20th century Arab leaders associated with pan-Arabism or secular Arab nationalism was edited out. Thus, Assad-era content praising Egyptian Arab nationalist leader Gamal Abdel Nasser (r. 1954–1970) was removed.[282] His accession to

279 *Geography*, Grade 9, 2025–2026, p. 13.

280 *Geography*, Grade 9, 2025–2026, p. 14.

281 For example: *Modern and Contemporary History of the Arab Motherland*, Grade 9, 2017–2018, p. 12; *History*, Grade 9, 2025–2026, p. 11.

282 *Modern and Contemporary History of the Arab Motherland*, Grade 9, 2017–2018, pp. 90–92.

power is now described as a "coup" (*inqilāb*) rather than a "revolution" (*ṯawrah*), and the highlight of his presidency is now presented as Egypt suffering its "greatest loss" in its 1967 war against Israel.[283] Libyan leader Muammar Gaddafi (r. 1969–2011) receives similar treatment, with his rule now characterized by "autocracy," "suppression of freedoms" and "massacres."[284] Meanwhile, the rule of Yemeni revolutionary leader Abdullah Al-Sallal (r. 1962–1967) is described in brief, dry terms.[285] Remarkably, the narrative on Iraqi leader Saddam Hussein (r. 1979–2003), who is typically associated with other Arab nationalist revolutionary leaders, remains somewhat positive in post-Assad textbooks. Saddam's time in office is described as bringing about various forms of "development" for Iraq, all while being a victim of "colonial powers" who "sought to weaken him." Yet even here, Saddam's 1990 "invasion" (*ḡazw*) of Kuwait is lightly criticized for causing "Arab and global discontent [*istiyāʾ*]."[286] These examples show that intra-Arab disputes and conflicts are now openly discussed.

Newly introduced content concerning the Arab world pertains to historical developments associated with the 2011 Arab Spring protests in various Arab countries. Outside Syria, such developments are discussed in the context of Tunisia,[287] Egypt,[288] Libya[289] and Yemen.[290] In all cases, the protests are presented briefly and positively–as a "popular uprising" (*ṯawrah šaʿbīyah*)–and their aftermath remains unexplored in textbooks. Such content was not present in the Assad-era curriculum,[291] and likely represents the new Syrian regime's first attempt to construct those protests as an implicit parallel to its own struggle to replace Assad rule, a struggle that traces its origins to the same historical context. However, the textbooks still avoid discussing the Arab Spring as an overarching regional phenomenon, and refrain from mentioning some of the more limited or less 'successful' manifestations of it, such as in Bahrain or Morocco.

Overall, the revised curriculum reconfigures Syria's place within its regional environment by redefining the hierarchy of allies, adversaries, and collective identities. While moving away from the Assad era's Arab nationalist framework toward a more pan-Islamic orientation, the textbooks do so selectively, improving the portrayal of the Ottoman Empire and Turkey while maintaining or intensifying criticism of Iran, Lebanon, Israel, and other actors viewed as hostile to Syria's interests. These changes reveal an attempt to align historical and geopolitical narratives with the priorities of the new Syrian leadership.

283 *History*, Grade 9, 2025–2026, pp. 87–88.

284 *History*, Grade 9, 2025–2026, pp. 114–115.

285 *History*, Grade 9, 2025–2026, p. 74.

286 *History*, Grade 9, 2025–2026, p. 65.

287 *History*, Grade 9, 2025–2026, p. 111.

288 *History*, Grade 9, 2025–2026, p. 88; see also chapter 8.

289 *History*, Grade 9, 2025–2026, p. 116.

290 *History*, Grade 9, 2025–2026, p. 74.

291 "Syrian National Identity," p. 100.

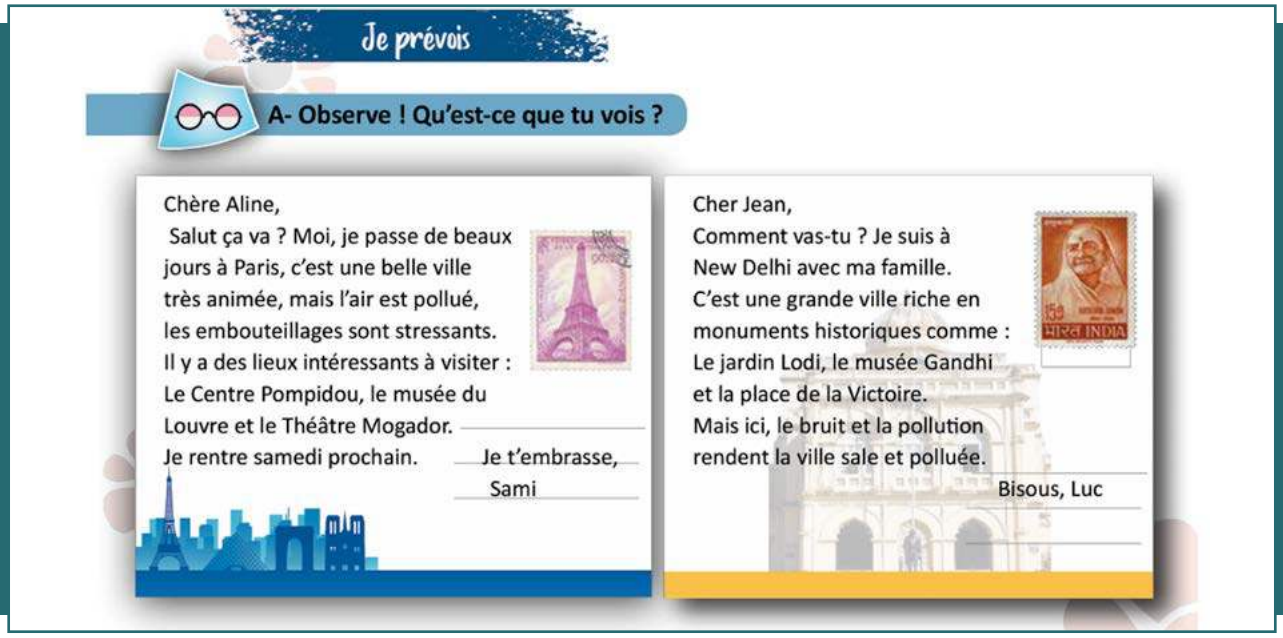
The West and Global Relations

The Syrian curriculum's approach to teaching about the wider world, including the culture, society and history of countries near and far, reveals the new government's geopolitical considerations as well as ones of values and ideology. Textbooks have the capacity to encourage students to be curious about the "Other," appreciate and respect them, or feel contempt or fear towards them. This, in turn, can have far-reaching consequences for societal attitudes and national policies, as well as reflect them in real time.

Of particular interest is the curriculum's portrayal of the non-Arab, non-Muslim "Other," who nevertheless had a significant impact on world history, including Syria's own–namely, the Christian, European, American or broadly "Westerner." Syria was formerly under French colonial rule and later participated in the twentieth-century ideological rivalry between the Soviet Union and the United States. Its curriculum thus addresses these powers and their historical roles, but not always in a nuanced and unbiased fashion. A lesson on the "dialogue of cultures" does very little to promote an understanding of how Western cultures (American and British) contributed to intercultural dialogue, emphasizing instead their offensive and oppressive approaches to Arab-Islamic, Asian and Hindu cultures, while acknowledging how the latter did promote peaceful dialogue with other cultures.[292] The curriculum's portrayal of the "Other" is also shaped by Syria's membership in the broader Arab and Islamic worlds, whose history is defined by a long and complex relationship of mutual interaction, diffusion and conflict with Europe and the West–from the Crusades of the Middle Ages to the Arab-Israeli conflict of today.

Foreign language instruction constitutes a key part of a globally oriented education, enabling communication across cultures, facilitating access to further research and knowledge, and exposing students to alternative narratives and perspectives. Foreign language instruction is well established in the Syrian curriculum, with English being taught from Grade 1. French, a legacy of the French Mandate that preceded Syria's 1946 independence, is taught from Grade 7. Russian continues to be taught from Grade 8, a legacy of the Assad regime's close allegiance with Russia. In general, Syria's foreign language textbooks offer students the opportunity to learn about other countries and humanize their inhabitants, whether French people in French textbooks or English people in English textbooks. In such cases, Syrian students are taught about children from those countries, their hobbies and daily life, providing them with an ideal example of the individual "Other"; they are also given a glimpse of France and Britain as countries. As the following examples show, these portrayals in the foreign language textbooks differ markedly from the way these countries, and Europe more broadly, are presented in the Arabic-language curriculum.

***Imar: Méthode français*, Grade 7, 2025–2026, p. 80**


Je prévois

A- Observe ! Qu'est-ce que tu vois ?

Chère Aline,
Salut ça va ? Moi, je passe de beaux jours à Paris, c'est une belle ville très animée, mais l'air est pollué, les embouteillages sont stressants. Il y a des lieux intéressants à visiter : Le Centre Pompidou, le musée du Louvre et le Théâtre Mogador. Je rentre samedi prochain.
Je t'embrasse,
Sami

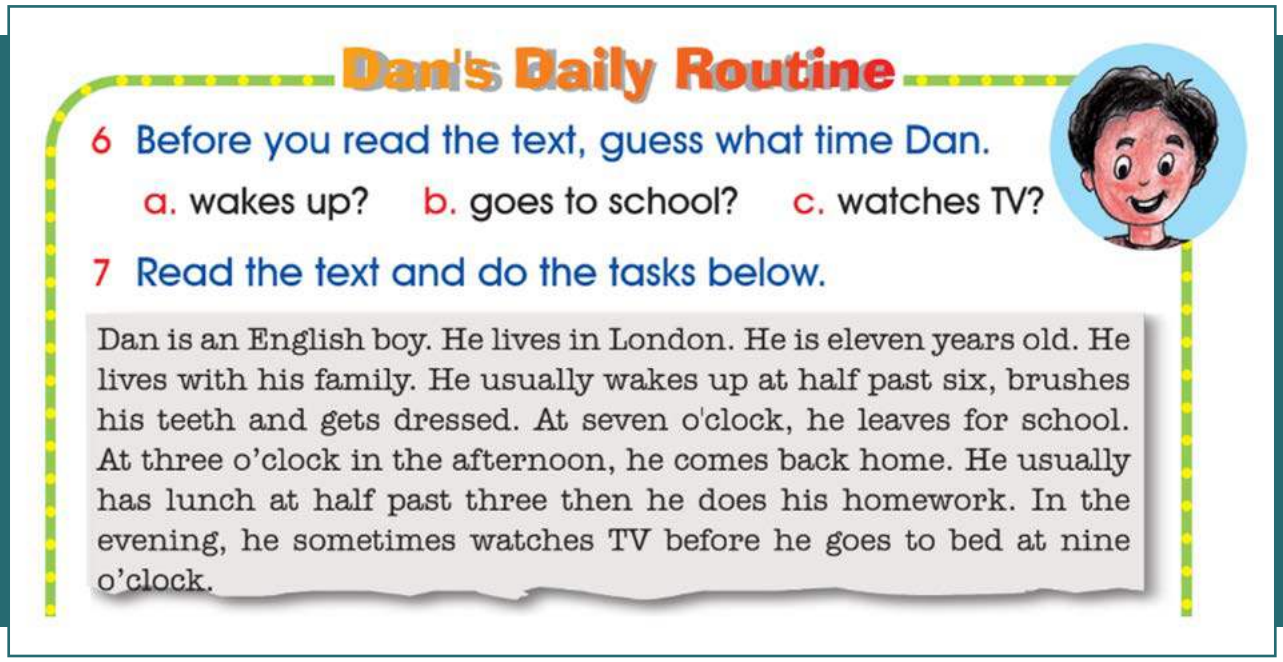
Cher Jean,
Comment vas-tu ? Je suis à New Delhi avec ma famille. C'est une grande ville riche en monuments historiques comme : Le jardin Lodi, le musée Gandhi et la place de la Victoire. Mais ici, le bruit et la pollution rendent la ville sale et polluée.
Bisous, Luc

(See the continuation of the example on the following page)

292 *History*, Grade 10, 2025-26, pp. 202-206.

I anticipate
A – Observe! What do you see?
[Left:]
Dear Aline,
Hi, how are you? I'm having a wonderful time in Paris. It is a beautiful and lively city, but the air is polluted and the traffic jams are stressful. There are some interesting places to visit: the Pompidou Centre, the Louvre Museum, and the Mogador Theatre.
I'm coming back next Saturday.
Love,
Sami
[Right:]
Dear Jean,
How are you? I'm in New Delhi with my family. It is a large city rich in historical monuments, such as the Lodi Garden, the Gandhi Museum, and Victory Square.
But here, the noise and pollution make the city dirty and polluted.
Kisses,
Luc

***Emar: English Series*, Grade 4, 2025–2026, p. 10**


Dan's Daily Routine

6 Before you read the text, guess what time Dan.

a. wakes up? b. goes to school? c. watches TV?

7 Read the text and do the tasks below.

Dan is an English boy. He lives in London. He is eleven years old. He lives with his family. He usually wakes up at half past six, brushes his teeth and gets dressed. At seven o'clock, he leaves for school. At three o'clock in the afternoon, he comes back home. He usually has lunch at half past three then he does his homework. In the evening, he sometimes watches TV before he goes to bed at nine o'clock.

Most Syrian textbooks present the nation as a proud and interconnected member of the community of Arabic-speaking and Muslim-majority states. This collective identity is frequently reinforced through contrast with the "West," which is portrayed as the principal external "Other" and positioned in opposition to the values and interests of the "Self." In Arabic Language textbooks, Europe and the West are primarily discussed through the prism of European colonialism, even in the context of supposedly unrelated topics, such as the history of the Renaissance. In many cases, these portrayals are accompanied by explicit or implicit contrasting comparisons with Arab-Islamic civilization, emphasizing the distinctions between the Syrian, Arab, or Muslim "Self" and the European, Christian, Western, or American "Other." Those differences are not presented neutrally, but rather as a normative reflection on the moral and spiritual superiority of the "Self." Islamic and Arab history are therefore presented as sources of pride, often through comparisons that cast European history and civilization in a less favorable light.

The Crusades

The Crusades, which began in the eleventh century, constitute an important entry point for the curriculum's portrayal of the European "Other" and are presented as a historical precursor to European colonialism. As a historical movement explicitly antagonistic to Islam, responsible for significant bloodshed and devastation for the people who lived in the territory of what is now Syria and its neighboring countries, it is hardly surprising that a Grade 7 History textbook treats the Crusades as a dark period in history. Notably, however, the textbook devotes relatively little attention to the devastation caused by the Crusades themselves, instead focusing on criticizing the Crusaders' perceived cultural background and motivations.

Eleventh-century Europe, the textbook explains, had been defined by "backwardness (*taḵalluf*) and poverty"; feudal lords wished to "divert the people's attention" from this backwardness by focusing it on "the magic of the Orient and its many treasures." This was accompanied by what the textbook describes as "the greedy ambition" (*ṭama'*) of Italian merchants "to take possession of trade" in the Near East, and by the Byzantines' "colonialist greedy ambitions (aṭmā' isti'mārīyah) to take over the Arab Motherland and seize its treasures." Thus, the textbook concludes, Europeans "used the excuse (*mutaḏarri'ūn bi-ḥujjah*) of saving Jerusalem" to launch the Crusades.[293] Notably, the explanation attributes the Crusades entirely to cynical political and economic motives, without acknowledging that the Crusaders may also have been driven by sincerely held religious beliefs. This is a significant omission in a conservative, religious society like Syria's. The textbook also anachronistically applies "colonialism" to medieval Europeans, essentializing Europeans as connected with subjugation and oppression in a manner that transcends time and is intimately connected to their collective personality. Incidentally, another textbook inserted new content also associating the Crusades with the present-day State of Israel, stating that "the Zionists have formed a special committee to study [...] the destruction of the kingdom of the Franks in Jerusalem," and asks students to explain this connection.[294]

The historical narrative surrounding the Crusaders has also undergone a subtle yet revealing process of Islamization, resulting in a more explicitly dogmatic and, in some respects, more hostile portrayal. In a chapter about the Crusades in the new Grade 10 History textbook, the term "Crusaders" (*al-Ṣalībiyyūn*) was consistently replaced with the term "Franks" (*al-Faranjah*). Unlike the former, *Faranjah* (or *Ifranj*) was the term commonly employed by medieval Muslim historians writing contemporaneously with the Crusades to refer to anyone inhabiting the Frankish (Carolingian) territories in Western Europe; it was gradually utilized to portray the Christians as the enemy of Islam.[295] The shift from "Crusaders" to "Franks" in this context not only reflects an attempt to revert to more accurate Islamic terminology, but also uses rhetoric charged with historic anti-Christian invective. This historical transposition is consistent with a broader phenomenon identified by scholars of modern Islamism, whereby medieval categories and memories are redeployed to interpret present political realities.[296]

***History*, Grade 10 (Humanities Track), 2025-26, pp. 137, 156, 158 (previously: *History of Civilization*, Grade 10, 2014-15, pp. 133, 151, 153).**

2014-15	2025-26
[p. 133] ٤- يبرز دور الوحدة العربيّة في التصدّي للخطرين: الصليبيّ والمغوليّ.	[p. 137] ٣- يبرز دور الوحدة العربيّة في التصدّي للخطرين: الفرنجيّ والمغوليّ.
4. Highlight the role of Arab unity in confronting the two dangers: the Crusaders and the Mongols.	*4. Highlight the role of Arab unity in confronting the two dangers: the Franks and the Mongols.*

*Highlighted text shows altered content.

(See the continuation of the example on the following page)

293 *History*, Grade 7, 2025–2026, pp. 69–70.

294 *History* (Humanities Track), Grade 10, 2025–2026, p. 158.

295 On the prominence of the term *al-Faranjah* (and *al-Ifranjah*) in medieval Muslim sources discussing the Crusades, see Emmanuel Sivan, *Interpretations of Islam: Past and Present*, Darwin Press, 1985, pp. 3, 116. See also Nizar F. Hermes, *The [European] Other in medieval Arabic Literature and Culture: Ninth-Twelfth Century AD*, Palgrave Macmillan, pp. 9, 135ff.

296 Daniel Lav, Radical *Islam and the Revival of Medieval Theology*, Cambridge University Press, 2012, pp. 1-12.

2014-15	2025-26
[p. 151] استطاع نورُ الدين محمودُ في حلبَ توحيدَ بلادِ الشامِ تحتَ سلطانِه ليحاربَ الصليبيين الذين أرسلوا الحملةَ الثانيةَ لإعادة احتلال الرُّها، التي حررها عماد الدين، ولم تتمكّنْ هذه الحملـــةُ مـــن	[p. 156] استطاع نورُ الدين محمودُ في حلبَ توحيدَ بلادِ الشامِ تحتَ سلطانِه ليحاربَ الفرنجةَ الذين أرسلوا الحملةَ الثانيةَ لاستردادِ الرُّها ولم تتمكّنْ هذه الحملةُ من دخولِ دمشقَ بسببِ مساعدة نـــور
[...] Nur al-Din Mahmud in Aleppo was able to unite Bilad al-Sham under his authority to fight the Crusaders [...]	*[...] Nur al-Din Mahmud in Aleppo was able to unite Bilad al-Sham under his authority to fight the Franks [...]*
[p. 153] استطاع نورُ الدين محمودُ في حلبَ توحيدَ بلادِ الشامِ تحتَ سلطانِه ليحاربَ الصليبيين الذين أرسلوا الحملةَ الثانيةَ لإعادة احتلال الرُّها، التي حررها عماد الدين، ولم تتمكّنْ هذه الحملـــةُ مـــن	[p. 158] استطاع نورُ الدين محمودُ في حلبَ توحيدَ بلادِ الشامِ تحتَ سلطانِه ليحاربَ الفرنجةَ الذين أرسلوا الحملةَ الثانيةَ لاستردادِ الرُّها ولم تتمكّنْ هذه الحملةُ من دخولِ دمشقَ بسببِ مساعدة نـــور
The third: He directed all his efforts to the war with the Crusaders [...]	*The third: He directed all his efforts to the war with the Franks [...]*

*Highlighted text shows altered content.

The Crusades are not only used to cast Europeans collectively in a negative light, but also to contrast them with the virtues of the Arab Muslim "Self." Spiritually, the textbooks contrast the cynicism of Europeans with the tolerance of Arab Muslims; materially, they contrast Europe's alleged backwardness with the scientific, cultural, and civilizational achievements of the Arab-Islamic world. In the Grade 7 History textbook, the greed and dishonesty of the Crusaders are presented in contrast with "the Arab Muslims" who guaranteed "safety and security" for the Christian pilgrims in Jerusalem.[297] At the end of the lesson, students are informed of the technological and cultural advancements innovated by the Arabs which the Crusaders brought to Europe, leading to the Renaissance and the Age of Discovery. This narrative stands in marked contrast to the textbook's earlier portrayal of pre-Crusade Europe as "backward," implying that Europe's subsequent advancement was made possible through contact with Arab-Islamic civilization.[298] Lessons on the European Renaissance also heavily stress Arab Muslim contributions, as illustrated by the title of a Grade 10 History textbook lesson on the Renaissance: "European Renaissance and the Influence of Arab Civilization on It."[299] While historical achievements are commonly presented to inspire pride, the Syrian curriculum appropriates European material achievements while using uniquely harsh language to describe Europeans' spiritual and moral failings—seemingly to prevent those achievements from generating respect for Europeans themselves.

These examples show that the Crusades serve as one of the curriculum's foundational narratives for constructing the European "Other," reinforcing Arab-Islamic identity through a combination of historical memory, moral contrast, and civilizational comparison.

Explorations During the Age of Discovery

This narrative continues in discussions of the Early Modern period. In a Grade 8 History textbook, European discovery expeditions of the 15th and 16th centuries are also framed as inexorably linked to colonialism, and the new edition inserts a comment associating those endeavors with Europeans' "greedy ambitions" (*aṭmāʿ*).[300] Additionally, in accordance with the established narrative, the technical achievement of long-distance navigation as well as the spirit of curiosity necessary to make those discoveries possible are ascribed to the precedent created by Arab Muslims of the Middle Ages. Those Arab Muslim explorations, such as the tenth-century expedition sent by Abbasid Caliph Al-Muqtadir (r. 908–932) up the River Volga, are taken as a sign of Arab Muslims' advancement, and unlike the Europeans', do not reflect cynical goals such as territorial expansion.[301] Both Arab Muslim and European discoveries are now taught in the same chapter, reinforcing the contrast between the two.

297 *History*, Grade 7, 2025–2026, p. 69.

298 *History*, Grade 7, 2025–2026, p. 72.

299 *History* (Humanities Track), Grade 10, 2025–2026, p. 170.

300 *History*, Grade 8, 2025–2026, pp. 14, 15.

301 *History*, Grade 8, 2025–2026, pp. 10–11.

Colonialism itself is defined as an explicitly "Western" phenomenon, and a singularly immoral one. The Grade 8 History textbook now includes a new lesson on "Western colonialism" (*al-isti'mār al-ġarbī*), apparently introduced by the Sharaa government, which precludes any neutral understanding of colonialism as a historical phenomenon. "Western colonialism," as defined by the current textbook, is when "a country or nation takes possession of another country or nation to plunder [*nahb*] their riches." In the opening words of the lesson, the textbook stresses that the "goals" of colonialism are "greater than taking over land; it targets the human being, and his riches." The "outcome" is presented as destructive: it "led to [colonized countries'] impoverishment, tore apart their unity with artificial borders, raised discord amongst sons of a single nation (divide and conquer policy), and spread ignorance, backwardness and illiteracy." Particularly noteworthy is that this presentation, beyond its emotional tone and lack of nuance or objectivity, ascribes the moral failures of colonialism exclusively to others: the "West," Europe, even the Roman Empire and the State of Israel ("Zionist Occupation"; see chapter 8). At no point are students invited to consider that comparable forms of expansionism or domination might also have been pursued by actors within the Arab or Islamic worlds. Rather than teaching historical facts, the curriculum consistently attributes such motives and practices to the external "Other," reinforcing a moral dichotomy between the Arab-Islamic "Self" and the West and potentially encouraging students to view the latter with contempt or fear.

***History*, Grade 8, 2025–2026, pp. 93–95**

الدّرسُ الرّابعُ

الاستعمارُ الغربيُّ وليد الكشوف الجغرافيَّة والثورة الصناعيّة

ارتبطت ظاهرةُ الاستعمارِ الحديثِ بعصرِ النهضةِ الأوروبيَّةِ والكشوفِ الجغرافيَّةِ فأصبحَتْ أسبابُهُ أعمَقَ، وأهدافُهُ أكبَرَ من السيطرةِ على الأرضِ إذِ استهدَفَ الإنسانَ وثرواتِه.

سنتعرَّفُ في هذا الدرسِ مفهوم الاستعمارِ، وأسبابَهُ، وعواملَ قوَّتِه، موضِّحين نتائجَ الاستعمارِ على الصعيدِ العالميِّ.

اولاً: مفهومُ الاستعمار الغربيِّ: الاستعمارُ ظاهرةٌ سياسيَّةٌ اقتصاديّةٌ اجتماعيَّةٌ وثقافيَّةٌ، ويُعرَّف بأنّه استيلاءُ دولةٍ أو شعبٍ على دولةٍ أخرى وشعبٍ آخر لنهبِ ثرواتِه و تسخير طاقاتِ أفرادِه والعملِ على استثمارِ مرافقِه المختلفةِ.

أشكالُ الاستعمار ومراحلُه:

الاستعمارُ القديمُ: أخذَ هذا الاستعمارُ شكلَ السيطرةِ المُطلَقةِ على المناطق المُستعمَرةِ باستخدامِ القوَّةِ العسكريَّةِ، مثل الإمبراطوريَّات القديمة كالإمبراطوريَّةِ الرومانيَّة.

الاستعمارُ الحديثُ: وهو الأسلوب الذي اتّخذَه الاستعمارُ مع الكشوفِ الجغرافيّةِ ويُقسم إلى:

الاستعمارِ المباشرِ: وهو احتلالُ مناطقَ واسعةٍ من العالمِ متَّخذاً من القوَّةَ العسكريَّةَ وسيلةً لتحقيق غاياتِهِ في السيطرةِ على المستعمراتِ وثرواتِها، رافقَ ذلك عمليَّاتٌ استيطانيَّةٌ مثل الاحتلالِ الصهيونيِّ لفلسطين...، وقد اتَّخذَ مسمَّياتٍ جديدةً كالانتدابِ والوصايةِ والحمايةِ في المرحلةِ المعاصرةِ بهدفِ تبرير وجوده في هذه البلدان.

(See the continuation of the example on the following page)

حاولْ أن تذكرَ أمثلةً أخرى عن الاستعمار المباشَر.

رابعاً: نتائجُ الاستعمارِ على العالَم:

سيطرَتِ الدولُ الاستعماريَّةُ سياسيًّا واقتصاديًّا وثقافيًّا من خلالِ فرضِ سياستِها بشكلٍ قسريٍّ على الدولِ المُستعمَرَة، واستَغلَّت ثرواتِها اقتصاديًّا ممَّا أدّى إلى إفقارِها، ومزَّقت وحدتَها من خلالِ الحدودِ المصطنَعة وأثارتِ الفتنَ بينَ أبناءِ الشعبِ الواحدِ (سياسة فرِّق تسُد)،

Lesson Four: Western Colonialism is the Produce of Geographical Discoveries and the Industrial Revolution

The phenomenon of modern colonialism is tied to the age of European Renaissance and geographical discoveries, yet its causes are deeper, and its goals greater than taking over land; it targets the human being, and his riches.

In this lesson, we will familiarize ourselves with the concept of colonialism, its causes, and the factors for its power, while explaining the outcome of colonialism on the world stage.

One: The concept of Western colonialism: colonialism is a political, economic, social and cultural phenomenon. It is defined as when a country or nation takes possession of another country or nation to plunder their riches, exploit the energies of their individuals and endeavor to benefit from their various facilities.

[…]

Forms and stages of colonialism:

Ancient colonialism: this colonialism took the form of absolute control over colonized areas, using military power, such as the ancient empires, like the Roman Empire.

Modern colonialism: this is the form colonialism took alongside the geographical discoveries. It is divided into:

Direct colonialism: occupation of large areas of the world […] this was accompanied by settlement operations, like the Zionist Occupation in Palestine… It has taken many names, such as Mandate, Trusteeship and Protectorate in the contemporary stage, to justify its existence in those countries.

[…]

Four: The outcome of colonialism for the world:

Colonial states held political, economic and cultural control by imposing their policy by force on colonized states. They took advantage of their riches economically, leading to their impoverishment, tore apart their unity with artificial borders, raised discord amongst sons of a single nation (divide and conquer policy), and spread ignorance, backwardness and illiteracy. As a result, the world was divided into rich states and poor states, leading to the emergence of resistance against colonial practices.

Try and mention other outcomes for colonialism for the world.

The curriculum also distinguishes linguistically between European and Arab-Muslim expansion. Whereas European expansion is frequently described as "occupation" (*iḥtilāl*), a term connoting illegitimacy and impermanence, Arab-Muslim expansion is frequently positively framed as *fatḥ*, an Islamic term that recalls the victories of the Prophet Muhammad against pagan Arabian tribes (in the example below this is rendered as "conquest"). Recent textbooks were amended to also apply this more positive term to Ottoman conquests in Christian Europe (see chapter 6). In the text below, describing the expansion of the Arab Muslim Umayyad Caliphate at the end of the seventh century into Central Asia and North Africa, the modern secular term "liberation" (*taḥrīr*) is also used. Conversely, opposition to imperial expansion, which Syrian textbooks usually refer to as "resistance" (*muqāwamah*), is derisively termed "rebellion" (*tamarrud*) when applied to the actions of native peoples in North Africa against Umayyad rule. One consequence of this terminological discrimination is that oppression and liberation are not presented as universal historical concepts; they are utilized to enforce a sense of self-supremacy and encourage resentment and contempt towards others.

(See the continuation of the example on the following page)

***History*, Grade 7, 2025–2026, p. 13**

وفتحَ هذا القائدُ كلّاً من بَلخ وسمرقندَ وبُخارى وخَوارزمَ ووصلَ إلى كاشغرَ متجاوزاً حدودَ الصّينِ، وحبّبَ الناسَ بالدخول في الإسلامِ. أمّا في بلاد السّندِ فقد قادَ الفتحَ فيها محمّدُ بنُ القاسمِ الثّقفيُّ الّذي تمكّنَ من فتحِ مدينة الديبلِ (كراتشي حاليّاً)، وتابعَ زحفَهُ شمالَ السّندِ حتّى وصلَ إلى كشميرَ على حدودِ الهندِ.

تمرّدتِ قبائلُ المناطق الجبليّةِ في جبهة شمال إفريقيا على الحُكمِ العربيِّ نتيجة الاضطرابات الداخلية للدولة الأموية، وبعد أن تخلص الخليفة الأموي عبد الملك بن مروان من تلك الاضطرابات، جهز جيشاً بقيادة حسان بن النعمان، لاستعادة إفريقيا، فقضى على تمرد القبائل.

وفي عهد الوليدِ بن عبد الملك، عين موسى بنُ نُصيرٍ والياً على شمال إفريقيا فوطدَ الحكمِ العربيِّ فيها، وأرسلَ طارقَ بنَ زيادٍ لتحريرِ مدينَةِ طنْجةَ (على مَدخلِ جبلِ طارق) من الإسبان (الفاندال)، ثم حررت سَبتةَ على ساحلِ المتوسّطِ (شرقي طنجةَ).

[Qutaybah ibn Muslim] conquered Balkh, Samarkand, Bukhara and Khwarazm, and reached Kashgar across the border with China, and urged the people to enter Islam. As for Sindh, the commander of the conquest there was Muhammad ibn Al-Qasim Al-Thaqafi, who succeeded in conquering Debal (present-day Karachi), and his troops continued to northern Sind until they reached Kashmir on the border with India.

[…]

The tribes of the mountain regions on the North Africa front rebelled against Arab rule, as a result of internal unrest in the Umayyad State. After Umayyad Caliph Abd al-Malik ibn Marwan got rid of that unrest, he assembled an army led by Hassan ibn Al-Nu'man to recover Africa. He then destroyed the tribes' rebellion.

During the reign of [Caliph] Walid ibn Abd al-Malik, he appointed Musa ibn Nusayr as governor of North Africa. He strengthened Arab rule there, and sent Tariq ibn Ziyad to liberate the city of Tangier (on the Strait of Gibraltar) from the Spanish (the Vandals). Later, the city of Ceuta was liberated, on the Mediterranean coast (east of Tangier).

Collectively, these examples reveal a systematic reinterpretation of historical expansion, in which European exploration is recast as the precursor to colonial exploitation, while Arab-Muslim conquests are framed as legitimate and beneficial.

France and Britain

In discussions of modern history, France and Britain, two European colonial powers which held varying levels of control over much of the Arab world during the earlier half of the 20th century, are portrayed as oppressive both in their domestic governance and in their treatment of other peoples. A telling example is found in a Humanities Track high school lesson on "culture in the United Kingdom," which, rather than fostering an appreciation of British culture and heritage, presents British history primarily through the lens of capitalist exploitation. In the introductory passage to the lesson, it is acknowledged that Britain was the original home of the Industrial Revolution, with the caveat that "this revolution was not a victory of industry onto itself, but of capitalistic industry; not of freedom and equality writ large, but of the middle class and *bourgeois* society."[302] The equivalent lesson on France is slightly more favorable, emphasizing the French Revolution and its contribution to democracy. At the same time, it notes disapprovingly that France "occupied many countries," including several Arab states, "stood by the Zionist Entity" (i.e., Israel) at its establishment, and supported the 2001 US invasion of Afghanistan.[303] Given the introductory nature of these lessons, associating these nations with unflattering imagery indicates a desire to preemptively impede the development of positive sentiments towards them, even in a modern-day, interpersonal setting.

302 *History* (Humanities Track), Grade 10, 2025–2026, p. 176.

303 *History* (Humanities Track), Grade 10, 2025–2026, p. 183.

The historic accusations made against France and Britain in Syrian textbooks are numerous. Not only are both countries heavily criticized for their conduct during their rule of present-day Arab countries, as seen below, but they are also implicated for their perceived support of Israel at the Arabs' expense and their supposed anti-Arab role in the Hatay and Khuzestan disputes with Turkey and Iran, respectively (see chapter 6). One legacy of Assad-era pan-Arabism is criticism through emphasizing the colonial powers' language policies. Thus, Britain is accused of "waging war on the Arabic language" during its rule over Egypt,[304] while France is described as "waging war on the Arabic language and the Islamic faith" as part of "a colonial policy" allegedly pursued throughout the Arab countries it occupied.[305]

Another feature of the Syrian curriculum's narrative on colonial history is the frequent use of conspiratorial language and ideas. For example, during the 1882 British conquest of Egypt, Britain is accused of instigating riots and conflict in Alexandria to serve its goals of taking over the country.[306] The Grade 9 History textbook was recently amended to suggest that King Ghazi of Iraq (r. 1933–1939), known for his Arab nationalist and anti-British sentiment, died in an "orchestrated" (*mudabbar*) car accident, strongly insinuating that Britain had him removed from office through insidious means.[307] On the other hand, a passage in the same textbook on post-independence Syria's "internal difficulties left by French colonialism" and "colonialist conspiracies in the service of British interests"–referring to such developments as the 1955 Baghdad Pact–was drastically reduced in 2025–2026 to a vaguely worded brief statement that "the policy of colonialist alliances failed."[308]

The Grade 9 History textbook's overview of the period of French rule in Syrian history (1920–1946) represents a typical example of the prevailing Syrian narrative on Europeans in modern history. French and British rule of the Arab world and Syria in particular is described in terms of "conspiracy" (*ta'āmur*) as well as "occupation" (*iḥtilāl*) and "greedy ambitions" (*aṭmā'*), continuing the hostile terminology consistently applied to Europeans and other "outsiders" seen above. In this brief outline, French rule of Syria is presented as one-dimensionally negative; the colonial power is accused of "weakening" Syria by "partitioning" the country into "statelets" (*duwaylāt*), while the account omits the French Mandate's role in shaping the borders and administrative structures of modern Syria. Incidentally, one of those French-created "statelets" is the present-day country of Lebanon, a fact indirectly alluded to by the accompanying map, and more subtly by the accusation that France economically "choke[d]" the "Syrian interior" by isolating it from "the seacoast." As with other cases, France is also accused of suppressing the Arabic language and "looting the riches" of Syria. This presentation leaves little room for a more nuanced assessment of the legacy of French rule in Syria or potential for forgiveness and reconciliation with present-day France, instead presenting it in overwhelmingly negative terms. Notably, the accompanying map also anachronistically depicts the Alexandretta region as part of Turkey (see chapter 6).

***History*, Grade 9, 2025–2026, pp. 18, 22**

الدرس الثالث

فرنسا تحتلّ سورية وتنهي الحكم العربيّ فيها

تآمرت بريطانيا وفرنسا على الحكم العربيّ، وانعقد المؤتمرُ السوريُّ العام للوقوف في وجه أطماعهما، فردّ الحلفاءُ بعقد مؤتمر سان ريمو عام ١٩٢٠م، الذي فرض الانتدابَ الفرنسيَّ على سورية، وأدّى إلى احتلالها بعد معركة ميسلونَ.

(See the continuation of the example on the following page)

304 *History*, Grade 9, 2025–2026, p. 85.

305 *History*, Grade 7, 2025–2026, p. 89.

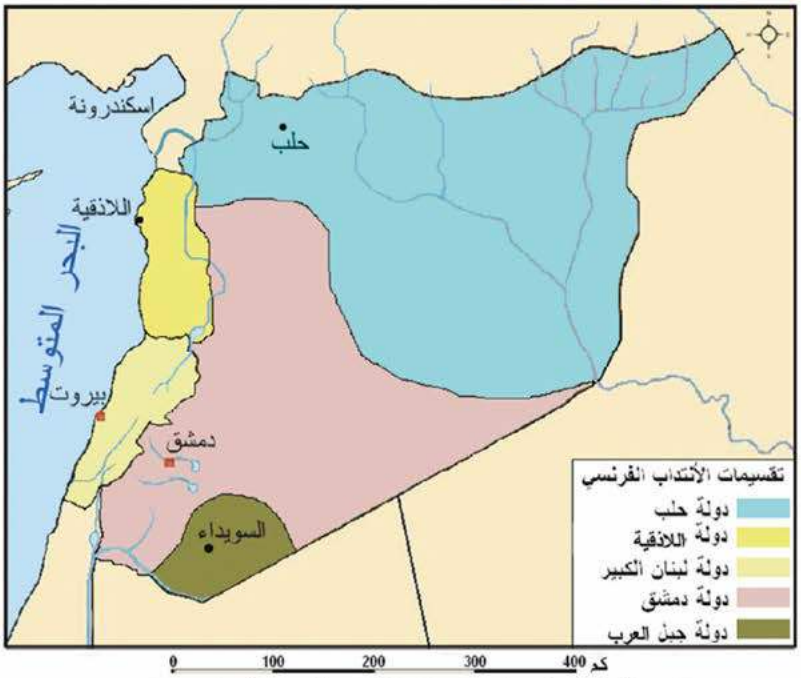
306 *History*, Grade 9, 2025–2026, pp. 83–84.

307 *History*, Grade 9, 2025–2026, p. 63.

308 *Modern and Contemporary History of the Arab Motherland*, Grade 9, 2017–2018, p. 31; History, Grade 9, 2025–2026, p. 29.

أوّلاً: فرنسا تحاولُ إضعافَ سورية بسياستِها الاستعماريّة:

حكمت فرنسا البلاد من قبل المندوب الساميّ الفرنسيّ، يساعده عددٌ كبير من الموظَّفين الفرنسيِّين، وجزَّأت البلاد إلى دويلاتٍ عدّة، ولاحقت الوطنيِّين، وعزلت الداخلَ السوريَّ عن البحر لخنقه اقتصاديّاً، كما نهبت خيراتِ البلاد ومواردَها، وحاربت اللُّغة العربيّة وفرضت لغتَها وثقافتَها.



الخريطة (٤) تقسيمات الاحتلال الفرنسيّ لسورية عام ١٩٢٠م.

بعد قراءتِك الخريطة(٤) تبيِّن تقسيمات الاحتلال الفرنسيّ لسورية عام ١٩٢٠م؟

One: France Attempts to Weaken Syria with Its Colonial Policy

France ruled the country through the French High Commissioner, assisted by a large number of French bureaucrats. It partitioned the country into several statelets, persecuted civilians and isolated the Syrian interior from the seacoast in order to choke it economically. [France] also looted the riches and resources of the country, waged war on the Arabic language and imposed its language and culture.

After reading Map 4, find out how the French occupation divided Syria in 1920.

[Caption under map:] *Map 4: divisions of the French occupation of Syria, 1920*

Nevertheless, neutral or positive content about Europe can also be found in Arabic-language textbooks. For instance, students are introduced to a relatively neutral overview of the continent in the Grade 7 Geography textbook. While the textbook states that the continent's advanced economies "have benefitted from resources found all over the world,"[309] notes that Spain "has attempted to remove Arab influence from its culture"[310] and claims that the word "Europe" itself is derived from an "ancient Arab[ic] Semitic" linguistic form,[311] it nevertheless acknowledges European countries' achievements in the economy, and no less importantly, in culture. An overview of European cities such as Paris and London references their historic importance and their key monuments and landmarks, creating an image of Europe as a place whose cultural heritage and historical achievements are worthy of appreciation. In a notable editorial error, the textbook illustrates the cultural importance of Paris with a photograph of the Paris Hotel in Las Vegas, rather than the French capital itself.

309 *Geography*, Grade 7, 2025–2026, p. 107.

310 *Geography*, Grade 7, 2025–2026, p. 117.

311 *Geography*, Grade 7, 2025–2026, p. 97.

***Geography*, Grade 7, 2025–2026, pp. 105, 106.**

الخريطة (٦) أوروبا السياسية

وتتميَّز معظمُ العواصم الأوروبيَّة باقتصادياتها الضخمة وأهمِّيَّتها الثقافيَّة المتمثِّلة بالمواقع التاريخيَّة العديدة. ومن أهمِّها برلين، بودابست، لندن، مدريد، موسكو، باريس، روما، استوكهولم، فيينا...

باريسُ: عاصمةُ فرنسا وأكبر مدنها،وتعرف باسم مدينةِ الأضواء؛ وذلك لأنَّها كانت أوَّلَ مدينةٍ في أوروبَّا تضاء بمصابيحَ، تقعُ في شمالي كتلة الهضبة المركزيَّة، على نهرِ السينِ على بعد ٣٧٠كم من مصبِّ النهر في القنال الإنكليزيِّ، تشتهرُ مدينةُ باريس بوظيفتها الثقافيَّة ففيها مقرُّ اليونسكو منظَّمة الأمم المتَّحدة للتربية والثقافة والعلوم؛ كما تشتهرُ بوظيفتها الاقتصاديَّة فهي مركزٌ صناعيٌّ وميناءٌ هامٌّ، وتحوي العديدَ من المعالم السياحيَّة كبرج إيفل وقوس النصر ومتحف اللوفر.

الصورة (٣) مدينة باريس

لندن: عاصمةُ المملكة المتَّحدة، وتعرف باسم مدينة الضباب، تقعُ في جنوبيِّ شرقيِّ إنكلترا على نهر التايمز، ويبلغ عددُ سكَّانها حوالي ٧ مليون نسمة، وقد كانت من أهمِّ المُدُن في القرن التاسعَ عَشَرَ، أمَّا اليومَ فهي مركزٌ ماليٌّ وثقافيٌّ هامٌّ، وفيها يمر خطُّ التوقيت العالميِّ غرينتش، ومن أشهر معالمِها السياحيَّة القصر الملكيُّ وساعة بيغ بن.

(See the continuation of the example on the following page)

Map 6: Political [Map of] Europe

Most European capitals are distinguished for their huge economies and their cultural importance, as manifested in numerous historic sites. […]

Paris: the capital of France and its largest city. […] The city of Paris is known for its cultural function, therefore it is the home of the headquarters of UNESCO […] It is also known for its economic function, as it is an important industrial center and port, and contains many touristic landmarks such as the Eiffel Tower, the Arc de Triomphe and the Louvre Museum.

[Caption under photo:] *Image 3: the city of Paris*

London: the capital of the United Kingdom. […] It was one of the most important cities during the 19th century. As for today, it is an important financial and cultural hub. It is where the world date line Greenwich passes. Its famous landmarks include the Royal Palace and the Big Ben clock.

Overall, the curriculum frames France and Britain principally as colonial powers, making their imperial legacy the dominant lens through which students encounter both countries.

The United States of America

Similar to the presentation of European nations, the portrayal of the United States in Syrian textbooks is highly negative. In this respect, the revised curriculum shows little departure from the Assad-era narrative, which likewise constructed the US as an overbearing and oppressive imperial power, serving at times as a negative counterpart to Russia.[312] Although much of the anti-American rhetoric was contained in the now-revoked National Education curriculum, substantial material remains in other subjects, particularly History.

The most illustrative and balanced depiction of the US is present in the Grade 8 History textbook, which introduces the general outline of the country's history to Syrian students. The textbook emphasizes that the US was created as a form of militant "resistance" (*muqāwamah*) to British colonialism, thereby presenting its origins in a relatively sympathetic light, consistent with the curriculum's broader endorsement of struggle against European colonialism. However, the ideological aspects of the American independence movement–such as human rights and democracy–are heavily downplayed in favor of focusing on the oppressive nature of British colonial rule. In effect, the textbook emphasizes the factors driving the American colonies away from British rule over the attractions drawing them toward independence in North America, reinforcing the negative portrayal of British colonialism while limiting sympathetic treatment of the emerging United States. While the 1776 US Declaration of Independence is quoted as stating "all of humanity [sic, *al-bašar*] are created equal," students are then rhetorically asked whether the US preserved those humanistic values in practice. Likewise, whereas the US is credited with many important and useful inventions, the textbook immediately accuses the US of focusing on "developing weapons" and imposing its hegemony on the world. Overall, the curriculum avoids presenting the United States in an uncritically positive light, even when discussing episodes that might otherwise lend themselves to a more favorable interpretation.

***History*, Grade 8, 2025–2026, pp. 96–98**

[p. 96]

الدَّرسُ الخامسُ

العالم الجديد يقاوم الاستعمار ويسعى للاستقلال

شهِدَتْ أمريكا الشَّماليَّة وأُستراليا قيامَ حركاتٍ استقلاليَّة عنِ الوطنِ الأمِّ بريطانيا، وعرفَتِ الولاياتُ الأمريكيَّةُ بعدَ استقلالِها وتوحُّدِها نهضةً شاملةً جعلَتْها تُسيطِرُ على مناطقَ واسعةٍ من العالمِ.

(See the continuation of the example on the following page)

312 "Syrian National Identity," pp. 75–79.

Lesson 5: The New World Resists Colonialism and Strives for Independence

North America and Australia saw the rise of movements for independence from the mother country Britain. The United States of America experienced, after its independence and unification, a comprehensive rebirth that allowed it to take over large parts of the world.

[pp. 97–98]

وثيقةُ إعلانِ الاستقلالِ الأمريكيِّ:"إنّنا نؤمنُ بأنَّ هذهِ الحقائقَ بديهيّةٌ: إنَّ جميعَ البشرِ خُلقوا متساوونَ إنَّهم مُنِحوا من قِبَلِ خالقِهِم حقوقاً ثابتةً من بينِها حقُّ الحياةِ والحريَّةِ والسَّعيِ وراءَ السَّعادةِ ...

إنَّ الحكوماتِ تنشأُ للمحافظةِ على هذهِ الحقوقِ وهي تستمدُّ سلطاتِها العادلةِ منَ المحكومينَ...

عمر عبد العزيز عمر، معالمُ التّاريخِ الأوروبّيِّ والأمريكيِّ الحديث، ص٢٤٨

هل حافظتِ السِّياسةُ الأمريكيَّةُ على المبادئِ الإنسانيّةِ الّتي نصَّت عليها وثيقةُ الاستقلالِ في رأيك؟

[Box:] *The American Declaration of Independence: "We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all of humanity [sic] are created equal, that they are endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable Rights, that among these are Life, Liberty and the pursuit of Happiness…*

That to secure these rights, Governments are instituted [among Men], deriving their just powers from [the consent of] the governed…["]

Umar Abdul Aziz Umar, Milestones of Modern European and American History, p. 248

[Main text, red:] *In your view, has American policy preserved the humanistic principles laid out in the Declaration of Independence?*

[p. 98]

حقّقتِ الثَّورةُ الصِّناعيَّةُ نجاحاً في الولاياتِ الأمريكيَّةِ خلالَ القرنِ التّاسعَ عشرَ الميلاديِّ وبلغَتْ ذروتَها في القرنِ العشرين تمثَّلت بأحدثِ الاكتشافاتِ العلميَّةِ ولاسيَّما بعدَ استخدامِ النِّفطِ والطاقةِ الذَّريَّةِ، وتأسَّستِ الشَّركاتُ الكبرى (الصِّناعيَّةُ، والنَّقلُ، والنِّفطُ...) والمصارفُ.

كان من أهمِّ الاختراعاتِ والاكتشافاتِ: "المصباحُ الكهربائيُّ، الفوتوغراف، المولِّدُ الكهربائيُّ، الآلةُ الكاتبةُ، الهاتِفُ، التِّلغراف، السِّككُ الحديديّةُ الكهربائيّةُ والسّياراتُ..."

إسماعيل أحمد ياغي، معالمُ التّاريخِ الأمريكيِّ الحديث، ص١٦٢

لنقرأ النَّصَّ المجاور ونتعرَّفَ أهمَّ الاختراعاتِ الأمريكيَّةِ.

وتهتمُّ الولاياتُ المتَّحدةُ اليومَ بتطويرِ الأسلحةِ والصَّواريخِ والطَّائراتِ والأجهزةِ الفضائيَّةِ والحواسيبِ، وغدَتِ الدَّولةَ الصِّناعيَّةَ الرَّأسماليَّةَ الأولى في العالمِ، وأخذتْ تمارسُ هيمنتَها السِّياسيَّةَ والعسكريَّةَ والإعلاميَّةَ على الدُّولِ والشُّعوبِ دعماً لمصالحِها.

(See the continuation of the example on the following page)

> *[…]*
> *Let's read the adjacent text and get to know the key American inventions.*
> [Box, left:] *Some of the key American inventions and discoveries include: "the electric lamp, photographs, the electric generator, the typewriter, the telephone, the telegraph, the electric railway and cars…"*
> *Ismail Ahmad Yaghi, Milestones of Modern American History, p. 162*
> *[Main text:] The US is concerned today with developing weapons, rockets, aircraft, spacecraft and computers. It has become the top capitalist state in the world, and begun to impose its political, military and media hegemony over states and nations in support of its interests.*

However, most depictions of the United States are far less balanced. The 2003 US invasion of Iraq is frequently discussed in textbooks, where the US is universally portrayed as an unconscionable aggressor motivated by greed, that brought about nothing but suffering to the Iraqi people. The Grade 9 History textbook's account of the war in a lesson on modern Iraqi history presents the US as having schemed to "occupy [Iraq] and steal its riches" as soon as the 1990 Gulf War ended, leaving Iraq in "difficult conditions" which the US "exploited." The US's earlier role in preventing Iraq's takeover of Kuwait is ignored. When the invasion finally took place, the textbook continues, it brought widespread death and destruction to Iraq, including the statement that "the treasures of the Iraqi Museum were stolen," a formulation that implicitly attributes responsibility for the looting to the United States. Non-military consequences of the invasion, such as the institution of parliamentary democracy in Iraq, are not discussed. Finally, the US's 2011 withdrawal from Iraq is linked to "heavy losses" incurred at the hands of "the national [Iraqi] resistance," and is not taken as genuine American recognition of Iraqi sovereignty.[313]

The US invasion of Iraq is inserted into other subjects as well, contributing to a sustained negative portrayal of the US. The Grade 10 History textbook, which teaches medieval history, compares the US invasion of Iraq to the 1258 Mongol sacking of Baghdad, an infamously catastrophic event which is widely perceived as marking the end of the Golden Age of early Islam.[314] The textbook also asks students to contrast the US occupation with the conduct of Arab Muslim conquerors, once again using the Western "Other" to establish the moral supremacy of the Arab Muslim "Self."[315] The United States also serves as an antagonist in a Grade 6 Social Studies textbook, which advocates for Arab unity by rhetorically asking if the US would have been able to "destroy [Iraq's] infrastructure and kill its learned men" if the Arabs were united.[316] A Grade 5 Social Studies lesson introducing the geography of Iraq also discusses the invasion, as illustrated below. Here, the textbook frames the U.S. invasion primarily as a cynical attempt to seize Iraq's oil reserves. After outlining Iraq's natural resource wealth, the lesson concludes with a cartoon depicting a drinking straw painted in the colors of the US flag inserted into an oil barrel labeled "Iraq," visually reinforcing the claim that the invasion was driven by a desire to exploit the country's oil resources. The accompanying text tasks students with writing a short essay on "America's exploitation of Iraqi oil."

***Social Studies*, Grade 5, 2025–2026, p. 140**

٥ـ تأمَّلِ الصُّورةَ المرافقةَ واكتُبْ موضوعاً خمسةَ أسطر بمساعدةِ معلِّمكَ عن استغلالِ أمريكا النِّفطَ العراقيَّ.

(See the continuation of the example on the following page)

313 *History*, Grade 9, 2025–2026, p. 65.

314 *History* (Humanities Track), Grade 10, 2025–2026, p. 120.

315 *History* (Humanities Track), Grade 10, 2025–2026, p. 135.

316 *Social Studies*, Grade 6, 2025–2026, p. 33.

5. Examine the following image and write a five-line essay, with the help of your teacher, about America's exploitation of Iraqi oil.
[Map of Iraq reads:] *Iraq; [barrel of oil reads:] oil*

The curriculum also portrays the US negatively in a range of other contexts. In Lebanon, the US is accused of exacerbating social tensions in the country and indirectly causing its devastating civil war, although a passage explaining President Eisenhower's policy of replacing European colonial rule in the Middle East has been recently removed.[317] In Sudan, the US is condemned for aiding South Sudan's secession from the Arab-dominated country.[318] The US's role in the Arab-Israeli conflict is also portrayed as uniformly destructive, especially in the context of the US's perceived support for the Zionist movement before Israel's establishment.[319] An introductory lesson to South America explains that "now the United States strives to expand its influence there, and take over its economy."[320] As presented below, in a lesson on the humanistic values of Islamic civilization, Caliph Abu Bakr's (r. 632–634) ethical orders to Muslim troops not to harm the elderly or children are contrasted with the US's 1945 nuclear bombing of Japan. This provides another example of the curriculum using the United States to illustrate the perceived moral shortcomings of the Western "Other."

***History* (Humanities Track), Grade 10, 2025–2026, p. 132**

وضع تشريعات تحفظ حقوق الناس، وإقرار مبدأ الشورى في اختيار الحكّام.

وبعد أربعةَ عشرَ قرناً، يُفتَرضُ أن القُوى الكُبرَى قد ارتقتْ بحضارتِها وقيمها الإنسانيّةِ. إلاّ أنَّ الواقع يشير إلى عكس ذلك.

اقرأ النصّ المجاور، وقارنْ بينَ أخلاقياتِ الحربِ التي أمر بها الخليفةُ أبو بكر الصديق وتلك التي أمر بها الرئيس الأمريكي ترومان.

إنَّ تماسكَ المجتمعِ يعتمد على تمتُّع سكّانه بكامل حريّتهم وبحفظ حقوقِهم

١- أوصى الخليفة أبو بكر الصديق جيوشه قائلاً : "لا تخونوا، ولا تغدروا، ولا تمثلوا، ولا تقتلوا طفلاً ولا شيخاً كبيراً ولا امرأة... ولا تقطعوا شجرة مثمرة، ولا تذبحوا شاة ولا بقرة ولا بعيراً، ودعوا النسّاك في صوامعهم يتعبدون".

ابن الأثير، الكامل في التاريخ، ج٢،ص ٢٢٧

٢- "أمر الرئيس الأمريكي ترومان بإلقاء أول قنبلة ذرية على هيروشيما ١٦ آب ١٩٤٥م فذهب ضحيتها ١٦٠ ألف قتيل ومفقود وجريح، وبعد ثلاثة أيام ألقيت قنبلة ثانية على ناغازاكي".

لبيب عبد الساتر، أحداث القرن العشرين، ص١٣٥

[…]
Read the adjacent text, and compare the war ethics commanded by Caliph Abu Bakr Al-Siddiq and those commanded by American President Truman.
[Left, box:] 1. Caliph Abu Bakr Al-Siddiq commanded his armies, saying: "Do not betray. Do not forsake. Do not make an example. Do not kill a child, an elderly man or a woman… do not cut down a fruit-bearing tree, do not slaughter a sheep, cow or camel, and let their pious men in their monasteries practice their worship."
Ibn Al-Athir, The Complete History, Vol. 2, p. 227
2. "American President Truman ordered the dropping of the first atomic bomb on Hiroshima on 16 August 1945. Its casualties reached 160 thousand dead, lost and injured. After three days, a second bomb was dropped on Nagasaki."
Labib Abd al-Satir, Events of the Twentieth Century, p. 135

These examples show that the revised curriculum largely preserves the Assad-era portrayal of the United States as the principal contemporary embodiment of Western imperialism and a recurring antagonist across diverse historical and geographical contexts.

317 *Modern and Contemporary History of the Arab Motherland*, Grade 9, 2017–2018, pp. 40–41; History, Grade 9, 2025–2026, pp. 38–39.

318 *History* (Humanities Track), Grade 12, 2025–2026, pp. 149–150.

319 *History*, Grade 9, 2025–2026, p. 53.

320 *Geography*, Grade 8, 2025–2026, p. 49.

Russia

Russia is the only European country portrayed consistently positively in Syrian textbooks, reflecting a continuity with the Assad era, when it was one of Syria's principal allies.[321] The curriculum favorably describes Russia's cultural heritage, economic development and social advancement, especially in the area of gender equality. A Grade 8 History lesson also notes the Soviet Union's "strong relations" with Arab countries, especially Syria, and its support for Arab causes, intoning that Syria and Russia continued to have good relations even after the USSR's breakup.[322]

At the same time, Russia's history of imperial expansion and colonialism is generally not addressed, and textbooks refrain from using the language of "occupation," "conspiracy" or "greedy ambitions" when applied to Russia. For instance, a high school lesson on Russian history vaguely indicates that "the Russian Empire reached [*waṣalat*] the area overlooking the Sea of Japan," referring to Russia's seventeenth-century conquest of what is now its far eastern territory.[323] In fact, the Grade 8 History lesson on Russia presents the USSR itself as a victim of a "conspiracy of colonialist states" leading to its 1991 breakup, once again insinuating that the US remains a colonial power.[324]

Nevertheless, recently amended textbooks insert condemnatory descriptions of domestic oppression during the Soviet era, a drastic development from the unqualified praise of Assad-era textbooks. The new History textbook particularly emphasizes the domineering control of the Soviet Communist Party and the repression of personal freedoms, in what may be an attempt to draw a parallel with Syria's own history under the Assad-ruled Ba'ath Party. It also makes a note of the USSR's persecution of religious faiths, a particularly sensitive point for Syria's new Islamic government.

***History*, Grade 8, 2025–2026, p. 110**

روسيا بين الثورة والحرب العالميّة الثانية:

حدث بعد أن استولى الشيوعيون على السلطة في روسيا.

- ألغى النّظام الإقطاعي، وكان يفترض أن توزّع الأراضي على الفلاحين، لكنّها أصبحت فعليّاً ملكاً للدولة، فحلّت الدولة بأجهزتها الإداريّة المترهّلة محل الإقطاعي ونظامه.
- اتّسعت رقعة الدولة اتساعاً هائلاً، وأصبحت الدول التي تشكّل الإتحاد السوفياتي خمس عشر دولة أكبرها روسيا، وقد أدّى هذا التوسّع إلى توفير المواد الأوليّة للصناعات كافّة، وتوفير مصادر الطّاقة، وأدّى إلى الاهتمام بالمواصلات.
- طوّر الاتحاد السوفياتي التعليم بزيادة عدد المدارس والمعاهد والجامعات ومراكز البحث العلمي...
- تحسّنت سويّة الطبقة العاملة، وأعطيت المرأة دوراً كبيراً في مجال العلم والإدارة.
- صادر الشيوعيون الحريّات جميعاً ومن بينها الحريّات الفكريّة، فأغلقت الصحف والمجلات ماعدا تلك التي يصدرها الحزب، كما صادر الحزب وذراعه الضّاربة (جهاز أمن الدولة المسمّى الحريّات العامّة، فأصبح المواطن يخشى ظلّه بعد القمع الهائل الذي مارسته السلطات في عهد جوزيف ستالين على نحوٍ خاص، حيث بلغ عدد الذين نفّذ فيهم حكم الإعدام أرقاماً مهولة.
- حارب الحزب الشيوعي السوفياتي الأديان كلّها، فأغلق عشرات الكنائس ودمّر العشرات، وأغلق الجوامع وفرض رقابةً شديدة الصرامة والقسوة على الحياة الدينيّة.

(See the continuation of the example on the following page)

321 "Syrian National Identity," pp. 47–54.

322 *History*, Grade 8, 2025–2026, p. 111.

323 *History* (Humanities Track), Grade 10, 2025–2026, p. 186.

324 *History*, Grade 8, 2025–2026, p. 111.

Russia between the [October] Revolution and World War II:
After the communists took power in Russia, the following happened:
- The feudal regime was abolished, and it was expected that land would be redistributed to farmers, yet in practice, it became state property. Thus, the State, with its bloated administrative apparatus, replaced the feudal landowner and his regime.
- The scope of the state awfully expanded […]
- The Soviet Union developed education by increasing the number of schools […]
- The equality of the working class improved, and women received a large role in science and administration.
- The Communists took away all freedoms, including ideological freedoms. Newspapers and magazines were shut down, except those published by the Party. The Party and its striking arm (known as the State Security Apparatus) took away public freedoms, as well. Citizens began fearing their own shadow after the awful repression carried out by the authorities, especially during the time of Joseph Stalin, when the number of people in whom execution was carried out reached staggering heights.
- The Soviet Communist Party waged war on all religions. It shut down dozens of churches and demolished dozens more, shut down mosques and imposed strict, harsh and rigorous control over religious life.

Overall, these examples suggest that the revised Syrian curriculum continues to construct the West as the principal external "Other" against which Arab-Islamic identity is defined. While limited positive depictions of Europe remain, particularly in geography and foreign-language instruction, these are overshadowed by historical narratives that consistently associate Western powers with colonialism, exploitation, aggression, and moral decline. At the same time, the exceptional treatment of Russia demonstrates that the curriculum does not apply a consistent standard in its portrayal of foreign powers but instead evaluates them through distinct historical and ideological lenses.

Israel, the Palestinians, and the Golan Heights

Relations between Syria and Israel have been marked by conflict since the birth of both states. Syria declared war on its southern neighbor Israel immediately upon its independence, in 1948, two years after Syria's own. Thus began a period of ongoing hostilities that has defined both countries' entire history as independent states, occasionally escalating into open warfare. While Syria has undergone multiple regime changes since independence and has found itself in conflict with several of its neighbors, hostility toward Israel has remained one of the defining constants of Syrian history, politics and foreign policy, and repeated efforts to reconcile the two countries have thus far failed. The attitude towards Israel in Syrian educational content has reflected this hostility.

Current Syrian textbooks address Israel through several largely distinct thematic frameworks: in the context of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict or "the Palestinian Issue;" in the context of Syria's own territorial conflict with Israel regarding the ownership of the Golan Heights; in the context of the historical multinational Arab-Israeli wars; and in the context of individual countries' conflicts with Israel, such as Lebanon. References to Israel outside of the realm of conflict are practically non-existent. Where non-conflict topics arise, they are presented in ways that deny or ignore Israel's existence, leaving no opportunity for students to encounter humanizing or otherwise positive portrayals of Israel or Israelis.

Non-recognition of Israel

Syrian textbooks follow a clear policy of non-recognition of Israel's existence. The country is seldom referred to by name, but rather by disparaging epithets, such as "the Zionist Entity" (*al-kiyān aṣ-ṣahyūnī*) or "the Zionist Enemy" (*al-ʿadūw aṣ-ṣahyūnī*), fundamentally framing it as an illegitimate, antagonistic entity. In the vast majority of maps, textbooks label the entirety of Israel's territory within its internationally-recognized pre-1967 borders as "Palestine" or "Occupied Palestine" (*Filasṭīn [al-muḥtallah]*), regularly merging it with the West Bank and the Gaza Strip as a unified territorial and political unit. This factually misleading approach is often followed by textual descriptions of geography, which designate locations and areas in core Israeli territory – such as the Negev and Galilee regions,[325] Mount Carmel[326] and Mount Tabor[327] – as being located in Palestine. Jerusalem is designated as "the capital of Palestine," without acknowledging competing claims to the city or its de facto status as Israel's capital.[328] One possible exception is found in a high school History textbook, where a revised map of Africa and adjacent regions removes all national borders and colors the area around the West Bank as lying outside the "Arab countries." However, this appears more likely to be an editorial or graphic error than a deliberate change in policyn.[329]

A typical example of this dominant narrative appears in a Grade 4 lesson introducing the geography of Syria's neighboring countries, reproduced below. Here, a map of Levantine countries and a basic description of Syria's geographical location make it clear that Syria's neighbor to the southwest is "Palestine," ignoring the fact that no area of the internationally-recognized Palestinian Territories borders Syria. Furthermore, the map featured in this lesson, like other maps of Syria across the curriculum, depicts the Golan Heights as an undisputed part of Syria, without acknowledging the territorial dispute or the fact that the area is not under Syrian control (see below). In this representation, Israel is effectively absent. Yet the textbook disrupts this otherwise straightforward geographical description by defining Palestine as "the Arab territory stolen by the Zionist Enemy." This hints at the existence of another Levantine geopolitical entity–albeit one framed in advance as abnormal, illegitimate and immoral–and reveals a tension between the curriculum's cartographic representation and the political reality it implicitly acknowledges.

325 *Social Studies*, Grade 5, 2025–2026, p. 105.

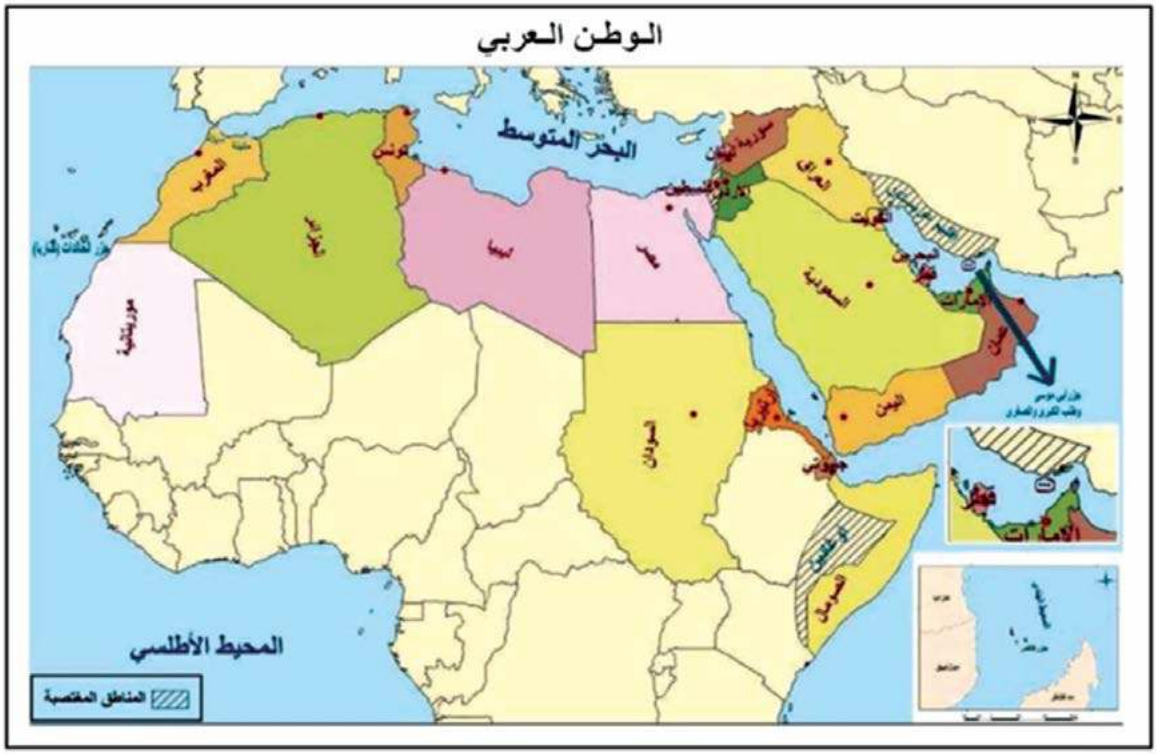
326 *Social Studies*, Grade 5, 2025–2026, p. 104.

327 *History*, Grade 8, 2025–2026, p. 46. This content was not found in the 2017–2018 version of the same textbook, but it is unclear whether it was introduced recently or before the downfall of the Assad regime.

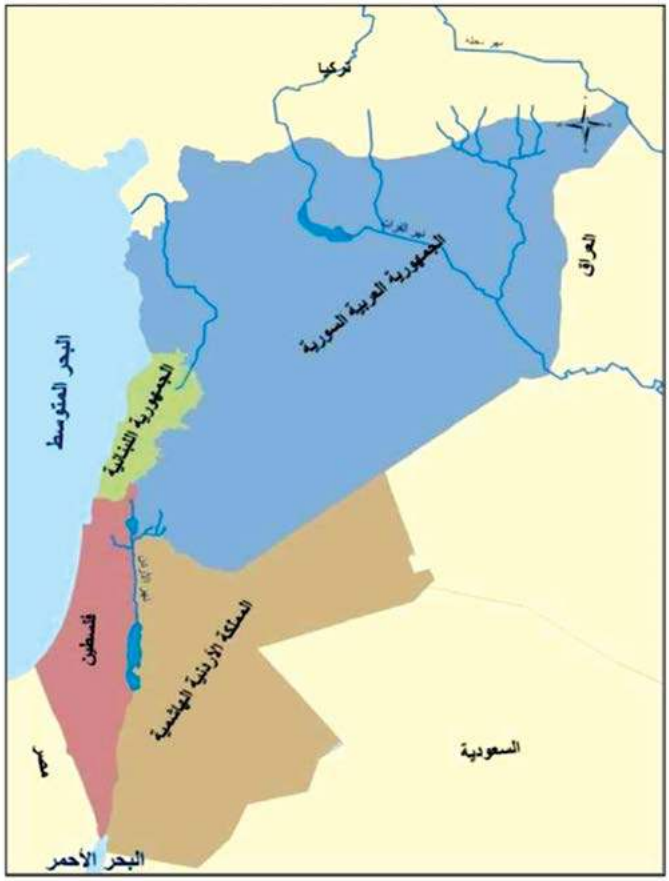
328 *Social Studies*, Grade 5, 2025–2026, p. 110.

329 *History* (Humanities Track), Grade 10, 2014–2015, p. 165; *History* (Humanities Track), Grade 10, 2025–2026, p. 164.

***Social Studies*, Grade 4, 2025–2026, pp. 10–12**



الخريطة (٣)



الخريطة (٤) بلادُ الشّام

(See the continuation of the example on the following page)

من خلالِ دراسة الخريطتين (٣) و(٤)، أحاولُ أنْ أحدِّدَ وأسمّيَ الآتي:

- البحرَ الّذي يجاورُ الجمهوريَّةَ العربيَّةَ السوريَّةَ.
- الدّولَ التي تحدُّ (تجاورُ) الجمهوريَّةَ العربيَّةَ السوريَّةَ منَ الغربِ.
- الدّولَةَ الّتي تحدُّ الجمهوريَّةَ العربيَّةَ السوريَّةَ منَ الجَنوبِ.
- الدّولةَ الّتي تحدُّ الجمهوريَّةَ العربيَّةَ السوريَّةَ منَ الشَّرقِ.
- الدّولةَ التي تحدُّ الجمهوريَّةَ العربيَّةَ السوريَّةَ منَ الشّمالِ.
- الأرضُ العربيَّةُ التي اغتصبَها العدوُّ الصهيونيُّ.

أولاً) موقع الجمهوريَّة العربيَّة السوريَّة وأهمِّيَّتها وحدودها:

تقعُ الجمهوريَّةُ العربيَّةُ السوريَّةُ في الجزءِ الشّمالِي مِنْ بلادِ الشّامِ ويحدُّها:

منَ الغربِ: البحرُ المتوسّطُ والجمهوريَّةُ اللبنانيَّةُ وفلسطينُ.

منَ الجنوبِ: المملكَةُ الأردنيَّةُ الهاشميَّةُ.

من الشرقِ: الجمهوريَّةُ العراقيَّةُ.

من الشمالِ: تركيا.

The Arab Motherland
Map 3
[Map key:] Stolen areas
[…]
Map 4: the Levant
By studying Maps 3 and 4, I will try and identify and name the following:
- The sea that borders the Syrian Arab Republic.
- The countries that border the Syrian Arab Republic from the West.
[…]
- The Arab territory stolen by the Zionist Enemy.
1. Location of the Syrian Arab Republic, Importance and Borders:
The Syrian Arab Republic is located in the northern part of the Levant. It is bordered:
To the West: by the Mediterranean Sea, the Lebanese Republic and Palestine.
To the South: by the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan.
To the East: by the Iraqi Republic.
To the North: by Turkey.

Collectively, these examples show that the curriculum systematically denies Israel's legitimacy by erasing it from maps and geographical descriptions while acknowledging it only as an illegitimate and hostile "Zionist" entity.

The Palestinian Cause and the Israeli-Palestinian Conflict

The Israeli-Palestinian conflict is a frequently discussed topic in Syrian textbooks, and the approach is a decidedly biased one. In Grade 6 Social Studies textbooks, students are presented with a basic overview of the conflict: "the thieving Zionist Entity has occupied Arab Palestine in 1948 in an attempt to establish a state for [itself] on [Palestine's] pure Arab soil." Students are then asked why "this terrorist Entity" lacks the attributes of a proper "country."[330]

In the Grade 8 History textbook, more background to the conflict is provided in a chapter titled "The [Entente] Allies Conspire against the Arabs in Secret Agreements," where it is claimed that after World War I, Britain assisted Israel's creation in order to keep the Asian and African parts of the Arab world separate.[331] Two textbooks, one mandatory for all students and an additional one solely for the humanities track, devote entire lessons to discussing the history of the conflict at length.[332] Both textbooks frame the conflict under the heading "Modern History of Palestine," paralleling equivalent units on the modern history of Syria's Arab neighbors–Iraq, Jordan, and Lebanon–yet focusing almost entirely on the Palestinians' conflict with Israel. The narrative in both textbooks is consistently one-sided, antagonistic, and absolute. Israel is presented as an entirely illegitimate political entity, established solely through the false historical and religious claims of European Jewish migrants and the imperial greed of the colonial powers that supported them. At the same time, Israel is portrayed as responsible for countless atrocities against the Palestinian people, while Palestinian actions against Israel are consistently presented as justified. These lessons, together with similar material elsewhere in the curriculum, do not seek to present the Israeli-Palestinian conflict objectively as a dispute involving competing historical narratives, grievances, and aspirations. Instead, they consistently frame the conflict in a way that encourages sympathy for the Arab and Palestinian side while leaving little room for understanding or humanizing the Israeli "Other."

To illustrate, a lesson on the nineteenth century historical background for Israel's establishment presents the country's very existence as fundamentally illegitimate. Syrian students are taught that a group called "the Zionists" lacks the attributes necessary to justify their treatment as a national group with the right to self-determination, such as shared history or geographical origin. In context, however, the term "Zionists" is clearly used not merely to denote adherents of the nineteenth-century Zionist movement, but Jewish people more broadly, whose collective identity is itself called into question. Somewhat confusingly, the text then accuses those "Zionists" of aiming to "stir up religious sentiment among the Jews of the world" implying the existence of other Jewish groups that do not share a common Jewish identity. To further undermine the identity of the Jewish collective, the lesson notes that the word "Zion" is of "Canaanite" origin rather than Hebrew, presenting this as evidence that Jews lack a common linguistic heritage.

History **(Humanities Track), Grade 12, 2025–2026, p. 65**

أوّلاً: المتغيِّراتُ الأوروبيَّةُ سببٌ لانطلاق الحركةِ الصِّهيونيّة:

أدَّعتِ الحركةُ الصِّهيونيّةُ أنَّها حركةُ بعثٍ قوميٍّ تهدف إلى بناء وطن قوميّ لليهود على أرض فلسطينَ، زاعمةً أنَّ لهم حقّاً دينيّاً وتاريخيّاً على هذه الأرض، ساعدهم على ذلك التغيُّراتُ السياسيَّة التي سادت أوروبا في القرن التاسعَ عشرَ، وأُطلِقَ عليه عصرُ القوميّات، فظهرت فكرةُ إقامةِ وطنٍ قوميٍّ لليهود، أسوةً بالدول الأوروبيَّة التي استطاعت تشكيلَ وحدتِها السياسيَّة على أساس قوميّ (ألمانيا وإيطاليا).

يفتقدُ الصهاينةُ إلى معظم مقوّمات القوميَّة: فهم لا ينتمون إلى أصول مشتركة، ولا يتكلّمون لغة واحدة، ولا ينتمون إلى بيئة جغرافيَّة واحدة، ولا إلى تاريخ واحد، وقد أُطلق لفظُ صهيون على الحركة الصِّهيونيّة نسبةً إلى جبل صهيون الذي يقع في الجزء الشرقي من مدينة القدس، وهي كلمةٌ كنعانيَّةُ الأصل، وذلك بهدف إثارة الشعور الدينيّ لدى يهود العالم.

(See the continuation of the example on the following page)

330 *Social Studies*, Grade 6, 2025–2026, p. 34.

331 *History*, Grade 8, 2025–2026, pp. 73–74.

332 *History*, Grade 9, 2025–2026, pp. 45–57; *History* (Humanities Track), Grade 9, 2025–2026, pp. 64–88.

1. European Transformations are the Cause for the Launch of the Zionist Movement:
The Zionist movement claimed to be a national revival movement aiming to build a national homeland for the Jews on the territory of Palestine. It alleged that they have a religious and historical right to this land. This was aided by political changes that dominated Europe in the 19th century. […]
The Zionists lack most features of nationhood: they do not belong to shared roots, nor speak a single language, nor belong to one geographical environment or one history. The term "Zion" was applied to the Zionist movement in reference to Mount Zion, in the eastern part of Jerusalem, which is a word of Canaanite origin, with the aim of stirring up religious sentiment among the Jews of the world.

Another example associating Israel with atrocities is found in a chapter from the Grade 12 History textbook titled "The Palestinian Cause between World War II and the Nakba." The chapter presents a historical narrative of Israel's establishment and the events surrounding the 1948 war, covering key developments including the 1947 Partition Plan and the 1948 Arab-Israeli War, while consistently portraying Israel's creation as a colonial project enabled by British and American support. Besides claiming that the Arab defeat resulted from a truce "imposed" by "the West" – thereby implying that the Arab armies would otherwise have succeeded in preventing Israel's establishment – the chapter construes the "Deir Yassin massacre" as a foundational event in the creation of the Israeli state. The Deir Yassin incident occurred on 9 April 1948, when fighters from the Irgun and Lehi attacked the Palestinian Arab village near Jerusalem, resulting in a battle and the deaths of approximately 100 villagers, including civilians, as well as several attackers. Most notably, the incident is presented through a textbox quoting the English historian Arnold J. Toynbee, who described it as a crime "similar to the Nazi crimes against the Jews." The textbox further describes former Israeli prime minister Menachem Begin as "the commander of that massacre" and states that he justified the incident by asserting that "without it, Israel would not have been established."

Within the chapter's broader account of the conflict, this comparison reinforces the portrayal of Israel's establishment as rooted in atrocity: by equating Zionist violence with the Nazi atrocities committed against Jews during the Holocaust, it diminishes the Holocaust's distinct historical context and scale and places Zionist and Nazi actions within the same moral framework, invoking the type of comparison identified as antisemitic under the IHRA Working Definition. Overall, the example demonstrates how the curriculum presents the conflict through a morally dichotomous narrative in which Israel's establishment is intrinsically associated with colonial intervention, conspiracy, and atrocity, leaving little room for historical complexity or competing perspectives.

***History* (Humanities Track), Grade 12, 2025–2026, pp. 76-82**

[p. 76]

الدّرسُ الثالث

القضيَّةُ الفلسطينيّة بينَ الحربِ العالميَّة الثانيةِ والنكبة

استغلَّ الصهاينةُ ظروفَ الحربِ العالميَّة الثانيةِ لتحقيق حلمِهم الصِّهيونيّ مستفيدين من الدعم الاستعماريِّ لهم، هذا الدّعمُ الذي تجلّى بجملة من المشاريع والمؤتمرات المنحازةِ لهم، بينما نرى عدمَ جدوى مقرَّراتِ الجامعةِ العربيَّة، فما أنْ أعلنت بريطانيا انسحابَها من فلسطينَ حتّى أسرعَ الصهاينةُ إلى إعلان قيام دولتهم، فجابهها العربُ بالكفاح المسلَّح، إلى أنْ تدخَّلَ الغربُ بفرض الهدنة.

Lesson 3: The Palestinian Cause between World War II and the Nakba
The Zionists exploited the circumstances of World War II to achieve their Zionist dream, benefiting from colonial support for them. This support was manifested in a number of biased endeavors and conferences in their favor, while we see the futility of the resolutions of the Arab League. As soon as Britain announced its withdrawal from Palestine, the Zionists rushed to declare the establishment of their state, and the Arabs confronted them with an armed struggle, until the West intervened by imposing a truce.

[p. 80]

وصف المؤرخ توينبي مذبحة دير ياسين بأنها جريمة شبيهة بجرائم النازية ضدَّ اليهود. بينما قال مناحيم بيغن قائد تلك المذبحة إنها ليست مبررة فحسب، بل لولاها لما قامت (إسرائيل).

عبد الله عبد الدائم، نكبة فلسطين، ص ٥٥

The historian Toynbee described the Deir Yassin massacre as a crime similar to the Nazi crimes against the Jews. While Menachem Begin, the commander of that massacre, said that not only was it justified, but without it, Israel would not have been established. [...]

The dominant approach to the present-day Israeli-Palestinian conflict is exemplified in the Grade 9 History textbook's brief description of the recent history of the conflict. In this text, describing historical developments that took place in the 2000s, Israel is described as being "savage" and "perfidious," accused of provoking Palestinians, besieging them, killing and injuring thousands, and using weapons banned by the Geneva Conventions–all abominable actions without any discernible human motivation.

Meanwhile, acts of violence on the Palestinian side are consistently justified, glorified and downplayed: framed within the context of the then opposition leader and previous Israeli Prime Minister Ariel Sharon's visit to the Al-Aqsa compound,[333] Palestinian suicide bombings during the Second Intifada (2001–2004) are explained as being "in defense of [the Palestinians'] holy sites," glowingly described as "martyrdom operations" (*'amalīyāt istishādīyah*) and are praised for "embarrassing the Zionist Enemy," without mentioning their perfidious nature or the fact that these operations claimed the lives of many innocent victims. In the context of the 2008 Israel-Hamas war, the latter is dubbed "the Palestinian Resistance," and is justified by the textbook for "bombarding Zionist settlements", i.e. launching rockets at (internationally-recognized) Israeli towns and villages, "in response" to Israel's "aggression" on Gaza–when in reality the Israeli operation was launched in response to Hamas rocket fire. The rocket fire is subsequently lauded for having "exacted painful losses from the Enemy." Even Israel's 2005 unilateral withdrawal from the Gaza Strip is presented as a humiliating defeat inflicted on Israel by Palestinian "martyrdom operations," rather than as a unilateral policy decision that could be interpreted as reflecting peaceful intentions.

(See the continuation of the example on the following page)

333 See also *History*, Grade 12 (Humanities Track), 2025-26, p. 87 where Sharon is labeled a "terrorist". For mention of Israel's invasion of Lebanon under the leadership of the Ariel Sharon and its involvement in the Sabra and Shatila massacres, see Ibid., pp. 85-86 (previously: *Contemporary and Modern History of the Arab Motherland*, Grade 12 [Humanities Track], 2017-18, pp. 88-90).

***History*, Grade 9, 2025–2026, p. 56**

ثامناً: وجودُ شارون في الأقصى يُشعِل الانتفاضة الفلسطينيّة الثانية عام ٢٠٠٠م:

استمرّت وحشيّة العدوّ الصهيونيّ بحصار الشعب الفلسطينيّ، وفي أواخر أيلول عام ٢٠٠٠م قام شارون بزيارةٍ استفزازيّةٍ للمسجد الأقصى، فهبَّ الفلسطينيّون للدفاع عن مقدَّساتهم، فكانت **الانتفاضة الثانية**، التي نالت دعمَ المجتمعِ العربيِّ والدوليّ، وتميّزت بعمليّاتها الاستشهادية التي أربكت العدوّ الصهيونيّ، وجعلته يقرّر الانسحاب من قطاع غزة.

وفي عام ٢٠٠٨م شنَّ الكيان الصهيوني عدواناً غادراً على قطاع غزّة، أسفر عن تدمير البنية التحتيّة؛ واستشهاد وجرح الآلاف، فخرجت مظاهراتٌ حاشدة في كلّ أرجاء دول العالم، تندّد بالأعمال الوحشيّة وردّت المقاومة الفلسطينيّة بقصف المستوطنات الصهيونية، وإلحاق الخسائر الفادحة بالعدو.

استخدم الصهاينةُ الأسلحةَ المحرَّمةَ دوليّاً مثل الفوسفور الأبيض المحرّم استخدامُه دوليّاً ضدّ المدنيين أو حتّى ضد الأعداء في اتّفاقية جنيف عام ١٩٨٠م.

بعد قراءتك مربّع النصّ بماذا تفسر استخدام الصهاينة الأسلحة المحرّمة دولياً؟

8. Sharon's Presence in Al-Aqsa [Mosque] Lights the Fire of the 2000 Second Intifada:
The savagery of the Zionist Enemy continued with a siege on the Palestinian people. At the end of September 2000, Sharon [i.e. Ariel Sharon, then Head of the Opposition at the Israeli Knesset] conducted a provocative visit to the Al-Aqsa Mosque. The Palestinians thus rallied to protect their holy sites. Thus, the Second Intifada broke out. It gained the support of the Arab and international community and was distinguished for martyrdom operations which embarrassed the Zionist Enemy, and made it decide to withdraw from the Gaza Strip.
In 2008, the Zionist Enemy launched a perfidious aggression on the Gaza Strip, leading to the destruction of infrastructure and making thousands martyrs or injured. Mass demonstrations broke out in all countries of the world in condemning the savage acts. The Palestinian Resistance responded by bombarding the Zionist settlements and exacting painful losses from the Enemy.
The Zionists used internationally-banned weapons, such as white phosphorus, which is internationally banned for use even against civilians or even enemies under the 1980 Geneva Conventions.
After reading the text: how do you explain the Zionists' use of internationally-banned weapons?

The Palestinian cause is frequently embedded in other subjects beyond the specific history of the conflict itself, signaling its importance to Syrian curriculum planners. In Arabic Language textbooks, students are presented with numerous works of literature written about the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. Such works elevate the anti-Israel historical narrative to a more emotional register, often expressing intense hostility toward Israel and glorifying violence against it, both as a state and through its individual citizens. A compulsory Grade 10 Arabic Literature textbook contains a unit titled "[Syrian and Arab] National Issues," which comprises several such works. For instance, Egyptian poet Ali Al-Jarim (1881–1949) is quoted as writing, "My soul is sacrifice for Palestine and what it has endured/for in whose ear can affection whisper, if not Palestine's?!"[334] Likewise, a short story by Syrian writer Badi' Haqqi (1922–2000) titled "The Sad Soil" (*At-Turāb Al-Ḥazīn*) is featured, portraying a fictional Palestinian student from Qalqilya who is shot dead after attempting to pick oranges from his family's old orchard, which was "now in the hands of the Jews."[335] In another textbook, a poem titled "With the Martyrs" (*Ma'a š-Šuhadā'*) by Palestinian writer Samih Al-Qasim (1939–2014) appears to favor violence in confronting Israel, featuring the verses: "Your [i.e. the Martyrs'] blood alone is the map/Not to the Negev or the Galilee/Your blood is the signpost on the long road [...] It is time for the thief and murderer to know/That

334 *Arabic Language and Its Literature*, Grade 10, 2025–2026, p. 138.

335 *Arabic Language and Its Literature*, Grade 10, 2025–2026, pp. 149–151.

dialogue will not go on for long." The textbook then comments on this poem, using somewhat poetic language: "the blood of martyrs who have declared their festival [*'īd*] to be a Palestinian festival of perseverance and sacrifice, a festival Palestinians have declared their participation in."[336]

In many cases, the Literature textbooks supplement the studied works with commentary that reinforces and explicates their violent and nationalistic imagery. A poem by Syrian writer Sa'id Qandaqji (1931–1991) titled "We are the Land" (*Al-'Arḍu Naḥnu*) celebrates the sacrifice of Palestinian children against what the Grade 10 Literature textbook authors describe, in their own words, as "Occupation and injustice." The textbook's commentary continues, stating that the Palestinians' "spirits have turned [...] into rebels [*maradah*] fighting with all they have, yearning for greatness, making a mockery of the power of the Tyrannical Enemy [*al-'adūw al-ǧāšim*], even if their weapon is a stone in a child's hand."[337] In a high school textbook, a short story by Syrian writer Sabah Muhyi al-Din (1925–1962) titled "The Returnee" (*Al-'Ā'id*), portraying a Palestinian yearning to return to their home in what is now Israel, is prefaced by the textbook stating that Israel is a "Usurper [*ǧāṣib*] who cannot be removed from [the Palestinians'] land except through confrontation [muwājahah] and arms."[338]

Notably, many of the selected works are authored not by Palestinians, but by writers from elsewhere in the Arab world expressing solidarity with the Palestinian cause through a pan-Arab perspective. This is a sentiment the textbooks explicitly wish to convey to Syrian students, as a novel titled "A Palestinian Wedding" (*'Urs Filasṭīnī*) by Syrian author Adib Al-Nahwi (1926–1998) is taken as an example of "the deep connection between the Syrian writer and the Palestinian Issue, as [... the novel] documents the start of the journey of armed struggle."[339] A notable exception is Palestinian writer Mahmud Darwish (1941–2008), whose works are taken as an authentic representation of the Palestinian experience. A high school textbook notes on one of his poems, "The Bridge" (*Al-Jisr*), that it "clarifies [...] the illegitimacy of Zionist existence in Palestine."[340] Another textbook summarizes Darwish's biography as a poet who has "strived strenuously to free his homeland from the filth [*rijs*] of the Zionists."[341] These examples illustrate how literary education is employed to transform the curriculum's historical and political narratives into emotional and moral commitments.[342]

The Arab-Israeli conflict is also inserted in subjects aside from Literature, albeit less frequently. For example, Grade 3 Islamic Education students are tasked with composing an Islamic prayer to express their "love and desire for the liberation of Palestine and the Al-Aqsa Mosque."[343] Moreover, Grade 5 students are asked how they should react if they see a news item about "Zionists [...] destroying Palestinians' trees and fields."[344] In the Grade 8 Geography textbook, students are told to compare the mass deaths of Native Americans after the arrival of European settlers to the Palestinian experience,[345] while a Grade 10 History textbook asks students to discuss whether the Universal Declaration of Human Rights is implemented in practice, with "Palestine" being the textbook's sole provided prompt for discussion.[346] In the Islamic Education example below, an illustration of Palestinian children throwing rocks at a tank branded with a star of David is offered as an example of "guarding for the sake of God" (*al-ḥirāsah fī sabīl Allāh*), a form of conduct that, according to the textbook, protects the believer from Hellfire.[347] Students are tasked with studying the illustration, which effectively essentializes Israelis as a faceless war machine, and then express their support of the pictured children by composing a prayer for their success.

336 *Arabic Language and Its Literature* (Humanities Track), Grade 11, 2025–2026, pp. 137–138.

337 *Arabic Language and Its Literature*, Grade 10, 2025–2026, pp. 143–144.

338 *Arabic Language and Its Literature* (Humanities Track), Grade 11, 2025–2026, pp. 95–100.

339 *Arabic Language and Its Literature* (Humanities Track), Grade 12, 2025–2026, pp. 130–131; Arabic *Language and Its Literature* (Science Track), Grade 12, 2025–2026, pp. 92–94.

340 *Arabic Language and Its Literature* (Humanities Track), Grade 12, 2025–2026, pp. 13–18; *Arabic Language and Its Literature* (Science Track), Grade 12, 2025–2026, pp. 12–17.

341 *Arabic Language*, Grade 8, 2025–2026, p. 72.

342 See also *Arabic is My Language*, Grade 5, vol. 2, 2025–2026, p. 59, for an example glorifying female Palestinian terrorist Dalal al-Mughrabi (expounded in this report in chapter 2: *Violence, Armed Struggle, and Self-Sacrifice*, p. 71).

343 *Islamic Education*, Grade 3, 2025–2026, p. 96.

344 *Islamic Education*, Grade 5, 2025–2026, p. 62.

345 *Geography*, Grade 8, 2025–2026, pp. 26, 60.

346 *History* (Humanities Track), Grade 10, 2025–2026, p. 136.

347 *Islamic Education*, Grade 4, 2025–2026, p. 92.

***Islamic Education,* Grade 4, 2025–2026, p. 94**

٣- أتأمّلُ الصُّورةَ الآتيةَ :

* أُعبِّرُ في سطرَين عن دور أطفالِ الحجارةِ في حِراسةِ بلادِهِم .

_____

_____

ثمَّ أَدعُو لهُم : _____

3. I will contemplate the following picture:
** In a couple of lines, I will express the role of the Children of the Rocks in guarding their country.*
_____
_____
Then I will pray for them to: _____

Aside from glorification of Palestinian violence against Israelis, examples of which are numerous, one may also occasionally find textbooks opening the door for students themselves to partake in violence. However, this is generally done in an ambiguous manner with regard to the role played by the individual student. In a lesson on the Prophet Muhammad's nightly journey and ascension to Heaven from the Al-Aqsa Mosque, a fourth-grade Islamic Education textbook suggests that "unity" (*waḥdah*) is one of the "ways to liberate the Al-Aqsa Mosque" in Jerusalem. The lesson prompts students to propose two other ways, opening the possibility for them to choose violence.[348] A geography textbook newly defines "Palestine" as the "most important of the stolen areas" and its "occupation by the Zionist Entity" as the latest of "artificial borders drawn by colonial states". The current version of the textbook immediately proceeds to ask students how these "artificial borders" can be "rid" (*tak̲alluṣ*) of, which can be read as a call to destroy Israel (see further in chapter 6). A more explicit call to violence can be found in an eighth-grade Islamic Education lesson on Muhammad's historic battle against the Banu al-Mustaliq tribe in the mid-620s AD. One of the concluding exercises of the lesson, which otherwise pertain to various aspects of the historic battle, asks students to list as many "new weapons to wage war on the Zionist Enemy" as they can. The exercise also quotes the Qur'anic verse "And prepare [*wa-'a'iddū*] against them…" (Al-Anfal: 60), widely interpreted as a call on Muslims to prepare for war against their enemies, and infamous for being used as a slogan by the Muslim Brotherhood movement and many other Islamist groups. This lesson–which was carried over unchanged from the Assad-era curriculum[349] –conveys the message that war against Israel is a sacred Islamic duty.

348 *Islamic Education*, Grade 4, 2025–2026, p. 104.

349 *Islamic Religious Education*, Grade 8, 2017–2018, p. 96.

***Islamic Education,* Grade 8, 2025–2026, p. 94**

٥ – فسّر قولَه تعالى: ﴿وَأَعِدُّوا لَهُم مَّا اسْتَطَعْتُم مِّن قُوَّةٍ . . .﴾ [الأنفال: ٦٠] ، واكتبْ أكبرَ عددٍ ممكنٍ من الأسلحةِ الجديدةِ لمحاربةِ العدوِّ الصهيونيِّ.

5. Explain the Almighty's Saying: "And prepare against them whatever you are able of power [and of steeds of war by which you may terrify the enemy of Allah and your enemy and others besides them whom you do not know but whom Allah knows. And whatever you spend in the cause of Allah will be fully repaid to you, and you will not be wronged]" (Al-Anfal: 60), and write as many new weapons to wage war on the Zionist Enemy as you can.

To further entrench animosity towards Israel, Syrian textbooks include a significant amount of misinformation and conspiracy theories. The Grade 9 History textbook identifies the Canaanites, who inhabited the southern Levant in the Bronze Age, as ancient "Arabs," and takes this alleged fact as proof that Arab territorial claims to what is now Israel carry more historical legitimacy than that of the Jews.[350] In a more contemporary example, the Grade 10 Geography textbook contends that one of the unstated goals of Israel's 1982 invasion of Lebanon was to seize the drinking water of the Litani river.[351] Similarly, when teaching about water crises in the Arab world, the Grade 8 Geography textbook makes note of "the efforts of Zionism to seize control of the waters of the Jordan, Yarmouk and Hasbani rivers, and the sources of the Nile."[352] Perhaps in connection with this, the Grade 9 History textbook advances sweeping claims about Israel's influence in northeastern Africa during the latter half of the twentieth century, accusing it of working alongside the United States to destabilize Sudan and benefit from Ethiopia's "colonization" of Eritrea.[353] The 2003 US invasion of Iraq is likewise presented as having sought to "remove [Iraq] from the arena of the Arab-Zionist conflict" as its "true objective." At the same time, however, the revised textbook omits the Assad-era claim that the 1980–1988 Iran-Iraq War had similarly been orchestrated for Israel's benefit.[354]

One nuance to the Syrian curriculum's otherwise impregnable narrative on the Arab-Israeli conflict is how it portrays Palestinians' relations with other Arabs. While the textbooks generally advocate for pan-Arab solidarity with the Palestinian cause, they also mention situations of conflict between Palestinians and other Arabs in passing. Some of these instances are newly introduced, and serve to criticize the legacy of the Assad regime; for example, a high school History textbook criticizes the Arab Deterrent Force—a pan-Arab military force led by Assad's Syria that intervened in the Lebanese Civil War in 1976—for having "deviated from its tasks" and "helped eradicate the armed Palestinian Resistance." The accusation is illustrated through the example of the 1976 Tel al-Zaatar massacre.[355]

In addition, the Grade 9 History textbook now accuses Israel of perpetrating the 1982 massacre at Sabra and Shatila Palestinian refugee camps in Lebanon, "in collaboration with the Syrian Regime and some Lebanese elements."[356] The curriculum also acknowledges periods of conflict between Palestinians and Jordan, although the presentation continues to exhibit a slight pro-Palestinian bias. King Abdallah I's 1951 assassination in Jerusalem is attributed to the fact that "the Palestinians considered him responsible for ceding Lydda and Ramla to the Zionists."[357] The 1970 Black September incident–a failed Palestinian armed uprising against Jordanian King Hussein, which ended with the expulsion of

350 *History*, Grade 9, 2025–2026, p. 45. The narrative that the Canaanites were "Arab" may be a misunderstanding of a linguistic theory which holds that the historic homeland (*Urheimat*) of Semitic languages, including the Canaanite language(s), was located somewhere in the Arabian Peninsula. However, this theory is not accepted by most historical linguists, and using the textbooks' logic would imply that all speakers of Semitic languages, Jews included, are Arabs. See: Edward Lipiński, *Semitic Languages: Outline of a Comparative Grammar* (Leuven: Uitgeverij Peeters en Departement Oosterse Studies, 1997), p. 42.

351 *Geography*, Grade 10, 2025–2026, p. 111.

352 *Geography*, Grade 8, 2025–2026, p. 126.

353 *History*, Grade 9, 2025–2026, pp. 91, 95.

354 *History* (Humanities Track), Grade 12, 2017–2018, p. 106; *History* (Humanities Track), Grade 12, 2025–2026, p. 103.

355 *History* (Humanities Track), Grade 12, 2025–2026, p. 62.

356 *History*, Grade 9, 2025–2026, p. 39.

357 *History*, Grade 9, 2025–2026, p. 43.

Palestinian militant groups to Lebanon–appears to be treated with sensitivity, as it is a topic of particular embarrassment. One textbook refers to it as "the regrettable September events" (*aḥdāṯ 'aylūl al-mu'sifah*) with little elaboration,[358] and another dismisses it as mere "disagreements" (*ḵilāfāt*) between the Jordanian leadership and Palestinian organizations, as a result of which the latter "moved" its activities to Lebanon.[359] At the same time, the decision to acknowledge these episodes at all suggests a limited willingness to engage with more complex aspects of the Arab-Israeli conflict, potentially leaving room for a more pluralistic discourse in the future.

The examples in this section demonstrate that the Israeli-Palestinian conflict is presented not as a complex political dispute involving competing historical narratives, but as a clear moral struggle between an entirely legitimate Palestinian cause and an entirely illegitimate Israeli adversary. This narrative is consistently reinforced across History, Literature, Geography, Islamic Education, and other subjects, encouraging students to adopt not only a particular interpretation of the conflict but also an emotional, moral, and religious commitment to the Palestinian cause. Limited acknowledgements of intra-Arab tensions provide only a modest degree of nuance and do little to alter this overarching framework.

The Golan Heights

The Golan Heights, a strategically important plateau of approximately 1,200 km^2 along Syria's border with Israel, is a unique topic of discussion in textbooks. Allocated to the French Mandate of Syria in the 1920 San Remo Conference, the territory became a part of sovereign Syria from its independence in 1946 until it was seized by Israel in the 1967 Six Day War; it has remained under Israeli control ever since. The longstanding dispute over the rightful ownership of the territory has become one of the greatest points of contention between Syria and any of its neighbors, and a major obstacle for Syrian-Israeli reconciliation.[360]

Textbooks introduce the issue in Grade 5 Social Studies textbooks, in an otherwise largely non-political geography lesson on the natural features of Levantine countries (which, as seen above, specifically exclude Israel). As the Golan Heights are mentioned on one page as an example of a mountainous area, a special information box is inserted, explaining to students that the Golan Heights are a "Syrian Arab" territory bordering "Occupied Palestine." The authors then erroneously estimate the size of the territory at 18,000 km,[361] and poetically compare its basaltic terrain to the characteristic of its human inhabitants, stating that they are likewise "tough in withstanding the terrorist Zionist Entity." The textbook thus draws attention to the Golan Heights and associates both the territory and its inhabitants with a vague sense of hostility toward Israel, which is portrayed as a one-dimensional "terrorist" entity. At the same time, it sidesteps the fact that the territory is disputed, offering no explanation of the competing claims or acknowledging that it is not currently under Syrian control. This aligns with the general approach of the curriculum towards cartographic representations of the dispute, as seen earlier.

***Social Studies,* Grade 5, 2025–2026, p. 106**

الصورة (٧) هضبة الجولان

والبرودةِ شتاءً، أمَّا أمطارُها فهي أغزرُ من المنطقةِ السَّاحليَّةِ، ونباتاتُها أعشابٌ وغاباتٌ متوسطيَّةٌ (بلُّوط وأرز وصنوبرٌ) وهي ذاتُ أهميَّةٍ كبيرةٍ لدورِها في تنقيةِ الهواءِ، إضافةً إلى أهميَّتِها الجماليَّةِ والسِّياحيَّةِ، ومن حيواناتِها الذِّئبُ والسِّنجابُ .

السُّهولُ والهضابُ الدَّاخليَّةُ هي أوسعُ المناطقِ التَّضاريسيَّةِ في بلادِ الشَّامِ.

(See the continuation of the example on the following page)

358 *History* (Humanities Track), Grade 12, 2025–2026, p. 85.

359 *History*, Grade 9, 2025–2026, p. 44.

360 For further reading, see: Uri Sagie, *The Frozen Hand* (Tel Aviv: Yedioth Ahronoth Books, 2011).

361 This appears to be a proofreading error: 1,800 km^2 is the approximate combined area of the Israeli-controlled Golan Heights and adjacent areas which Syria considers to be part of the Golan and administers as Quneitra Governorate.

من أهمِّ السهول والهضاب، الهضبةُ الشَّماليَّة الغربيَّةُ، وسهولُ الجزيرةِ والفُراتِ في الشَّمالِ الشرقي، وهضبةُ حورانَ في الجنوبِ، وأهمُّ أجزائها هضبةُ الجولانِ ذاتُ المياهِ الوفيرةِ والتُّربةِ الخصبةِ، أمَّا الباديةُ فتشغلُ الجزءَ الشَّرقيَّ في بلادِ الشَّامِ وتمثِّلُ أكثرَ من نصفِ المساحةِ، وتتميَّزُ بالحرارةِ المرتفعةِ

الجولانُ أرضٌ عربيَّةٌ سوريَّةٌ تقعُ في أقصى جنوب غرب سورية، على امتدادِ حدودها مع فلسطين المحتلة، وتُقَدَّرُ مساحتها بـ ١٨٠٠٠ كم مربع، وصخورُ الجولان بازلتيَّة صلبةٌ كصلابةِ أهلِها الصامدين في وجهِ الكيانِ الصهيونيّ الإرهابيّ.

[Right:]
Internal lowlands and highlands are the largest topographical regions of the Levant.
Some key lowlands and highlands include […] the Houran Highlands in the South, a key part of which is the water-rich and fertile-soiled Golan Heights. […]
[Left:]
Image 5: the Golan Heights
The Golan is an Arab Syrian territory, located in the far southwest of Syria, along its border with Occupied Palestine. Its area is an estimated 18,000 [sic] km². The rocks of the Golan are basaltic and tough, like its people are tough in withstanding the terrorist Zionist Entity.

A more informative introduction is offered to Grade 9 students. Here, they are taught that the Golan Heights was taken from Syria by Israel in the 1967 war and remains in Israeli hands. The text strongly claims that Israeli control of the territory is illegitimate, asserting that its inhabitants firmly maintain Syrian identity in spite of Israel's undisclosed "practices" (*mumārasāt*). However, the text refrains from calling for violence to recover the territory, instead stating that Syrians collectively "look forward" (*nataṭalla'u*) to its future return to Syria, which may give way to peaceful negotiations. Above all, the text emphasizes the point that concern for the Golan issue is a cornerstone of Syrian identity, as the title states that it is "in the heart of every Syrian." Interestingly, the text describes the Golan Heights as including the village of Ghajar, without mentioning that it is also claimed (and partially controlled) by Lebanon.

***Geography,* Grade 9, 2025–2026, pp. 19–20**

اقرأ الصورةَ (8)، ثمَّ حاولِ الإجابةَ عن الأسئلة الآتية:

1. ما اسم الجبلِ الذي يظهر في الصورة؟
2. أين يوجدُ هذا الجبلُ ؟
3. مَنِ الذي قام باحتلال هذه المنطقة السوريّة؟

الصورة (8) الجولان السوري المحتل

(See the continuation of the example on the following page)

جولانُنا الحبيبُ في قلب كلِّ سوريّ

قام العدوُّ الصهيونيّ بالعدوان على سوريةَ في حزيران عام 1967، فاحتلَّ الجولانَ السوريَّ وشرّد نحو 131 ألف نسمة من سكّانه، وتُشكّل أراضي الجولان أقدامَ جبل الشيخ الشرقيّة، وهي من أغنى الأراضي السوريّة، لوفرة مياهها(بحيرة طبريا ومسعدّة)، وخصوبتها الزراعيّة ، وعلى الرغم من ممارسات العدو الصهيوني في الجولان المحتل ، إلا أنّ أهلنا لا يزالون يتمسكون بالهُويَّة السورية ، ولا نزال نتطلّع إلى تحريره وإعادته إلى وطننا الغالي.

تبلغُ مساحةُ الجولان المحتل 1200كم²، وتتألف من عدة قرى منها: مجدل، شمس، مسعدَة، بقعاثا، عين قنية، الغجر.

من خلال دراستك، حاول أنْ تبيّن أهمّيّةَ الجولان بالنسبة إلى سورية .

Look at Image 8, then try to answer the following questions:
1. What is the name of the mountain seen in the image?
2. Where is this mountain located?
3. Who is the one who placed this Syrian region under occupation?
Our Beloved Golan is in the Heart of Every Syrian
The Zionist Enemy launched an aggression on Syria in June 1967. It then occupied the Syrian Golan and expelled approximately 131,000 of its inhabitants. The territory of the Golan consists of the eastern [sic] *flanks of Jabal al-Shaykh* [i.e. Mount Hermon]. *It is one of the most bountiful parts of Syria, thanks to its abundance of water (the lakes of Tiberias* [i.e. the Sea of Galilee] *and Mas'adah) and fertile soil for agriculture. In spite of the Zionist Enemy's practices in the Occupied Golan, our people remain true to their Syrian identity, and we continue to look forward to its liberation and return to our dear motherland.*
In your study, try to explain the importance of the Golan to Syria.
[Information box, left:*] The area of the Occupied Golan covers 1,200 km2, and consists of a number of villages, including: Majdal, Shams* [sic, i.e. Majdal Shams], *Mas'adah, Buq'atha, 'Ayn Qunya and Al-Ghajar.*

To reinforce students' awareness of the issue, the curriculum embeds the Golan Heights, both as a geographical territory and as a political issue, across a variety of subjects and contexts. One Grade 9 History textbook was amended to accuse former President Hafez al-Assad of conspiring to have the territory ceded to Israel in the 1967 war (see chapter 5). This demonstrates how the villainous archetype of Israel is used to demonize political rivals in the same way as the Assad regime had accused the Ottoman Empire of aiding Zionism (see chapter 6).

Middle school Geography textbooks use the Golan Heights both to illustrate geographical features in Syrian territory such as natural springs[362] or volcanic features,[363] and to reinforce Syria's political claim to the territory by accusing Israel of "effacing" its historic "Arab character."[364] Texts also ask students to conduct research into "practices" taken by Israel "against our people" in the Golan.[365] Social Studies textbooks for younger ages present the example of "the Occupied Golan" to teach about bodies of water,[366] and describe a children's field trip to southwest Syria as including sites in

362 *Geography*, Grade 9, 2025–2026, p. 171.
363 *Geography*, Grade 7, 2025–2026, p. 9.
364 *Geography*, Grade 9, 2025–2026, p. 45.
365 *Geography*, Grade 9, 2025–2026, p. 48.
366 *Social Studies*, Grade 2, 2025–2026, p. 73.

the Golan Heights, blatantly ignoring its disputed political status.[367] Arabic Language textbooks also include works referring to the Golan Heights, although far less frequently than the Palestinian issue and without the same level of detail or emotional intensity. One poem expresses longing for the Golan;[368] another graphically describes it as a place where one may smell "a fragrance/of martyrdom or a couple of body parts [*šilwān*]."[369] One of the suggested final projects for Grade 9 Arabic students is to write an assignment titled "the Golan is our land."[370] However, Syria's current Arabic curriculum seems to overall contain far fewer literary references to the Golan Heights when compared to 2018 textbooks, suggesting a policy of downplaying the issue.[371]

Islamic Education is one subject in which the treatment of the Golan Heights underwent a significant revision. Whereas previously, the Golan Heights were mentioned in a number of textbooks as an example of an Islamic cause Muslim students are expected to show a special interest in, in most cases new editions replaced the Golan with examples from the wider Islamic world. For example, in one Grade 8 textbook, a task which instructed students to write three suggestions to "our people in the Golan urging them to confront the Zionist Occupation" was changed to "our people in Islamic countries confronting dictators and occupiers."[372] The same textbook also featured an example of two Muslims, one negative and one positive, contrasting a person who "does not pay attention to what is happening in Palestine and the Golan" with one who "follows [... ditto]." This was changed to "does not pay attention to [...] Muslim countries" and "follows [...] Islamic countries [...]," respectively.[373] In a nearly identical example, a Grade 7 textbook modified "displays concern for what is taking place in Palestine and the Occupied Golan" to "[...] taking place in Muslim countries, in terms of oppression and authoritarianism."[374] All of these changes reflect a tendency to downplay national Syrian identity in favor of a more pan-Islamic orientation.

In some instances, references to the Golan Heights were singled out for removal. For example, the previously discussed Grade 7 Islamic Education textbook originally cited both the Golan Heights and Gaza as places where "the bravery of the heroes of the Resistance [... against] the Zionist Enemy" could be witnessed. In the current edition, this incendiary passage remains largely unchanged, except that the reference to the Golan Heights has been removed while Gaza is retained.[375] Likewise, a Grade 3 Islamic Education textbook modified a prayer from God to "save the children in the Golan, Palestine and Iraq" to "save and protect the children of Muslims in Palestine and everywhere."[376] Beyond departing from the curriculum's broader tendency to subsume the Palestinian cause into the wider Islamic struggle, the decision to retain the emphasis on Palestine while scaling back references to the Golan Heights suggests a shift in the relative prominence accorded to these two issues, one that the Assad-era curriculum generally avoided. It is possible that, given the Golan Heights' currently Druze-dominated population, with only a negligible Muslim minority, it offers a less attractive cause for a pan-Islamic worldview.

Nevertheless, in a few cases the Golan continues to be taught as an Islamic cause. In the same Grade 3 textbook, a positive example of a classmate collecting money to donate to "help our people in the Golan and Palestine" was left unchanged.[377] Likewise, in the example below, the Golan Heights are still invoked in the context of the Islamic Prophet Nuh (Noah). The lesson implies that in the same fashion that God punished Nuh's contemporaries for mistreating him–by condemning them to perish in a flood–God will similarly end the "occupation" faced by the people of the Golan as well as Jerusalem. This example is notable for directly linking Islamic teaching to Syria's conflict with Israel, portraying Syria's national aspirations as part of a divinely ordained plan while implying a violent end for Israel. At the same time, it stops short of explicitly calling on students to take action.

367 *Social Studies*, Grade 3, 2025–2026, p. 74.

368 *Arabic is My Language*, Grade 7, vol. 1, 2025–2026, p. 21.

369 *Arabic Language*, Grade 8, 2025–2026, p. 38.

370 *Arabic Language*, Grade 9, 2025–2026, p. 200.

371 "Syrian National Identity," pp. 66–68.

372 *Islamic Religious Education*, Grade 8, 2017–2018, p. 35; *Islamic Education*, Grade 8, 2025–2026, p. 33.

373 *Islamic Religious Education*, Grade 8, 2017–2018, pp. 99, 103; Islamic Education, Grade 8, 2025–2026, pp. 97, 101.

374 *Islamic Religious Education*, Grade 7, 2011–2012, p. 56; *Islamic Education*, Grade 7, 2025–2026, p. 53.

375 *Islamic Religious Education*, Grade 7, 2011–2012, p. 85; *Islamic Education*, Grade 7, 2025–2026, p. 82.

376 *Islamic Religious Education*, Grade 3, 2017–2018, p. 32; *Islamic Education*, Grade 3, 2025–2026, p. 30.

377 *Islamic Education*, Grade 3, 2025–2026, p. 83.

***Islamic Education*, Grade 3, 2025–2026, p. 94**

٤- أُفكِّرُ في ضوءِ ثِقَتِي باللهِ تَعالى وأَستنتج.

إنَّ اللهَ تعالى نصرَ نوحاً عليهِ السَّلام على قومِهِ
بعدَ طولِ الزَّمانِ وأَنَّهُ بمشيئتهِ تَعالى ستحرَّرُ الجولان
و بيتُ المقدسِ مهما طالَ زمانُ الاحتلالِ .

(١) سورة نوح / ٥ -٧

4. I will consider [the following] in light of my trust in God Almighty and draw conclusions.
God Almighty granted Nuh, peace be upon him, victory over his people at the end. With Him willing, the Golan and Jerusalem will be liberated, no matter how long the Occupation lasts.

Overall, the treatment of the Golan Heights illustrates the coexistence of continuity and change in the revised curriculum. Syria's territorial claim remains unequivocal, but the issue has been partially deprioritized, especially in Islamic Education, where a specifically Syrian national cause is increasingly subsumed within a wider Islamic narrative that accords greater prominence to Palestine.

Peace Agreements Involving Israel

Peace agreements involving Israel are presented somewhat neutrally, occasionally with implicit criticism, with the compulsory Grade 9 History textbook version tending to be briefer and drier than the Grade 12 Humanities track version. The latter contains expanded versions of the same text found in the ninth grade, but with additional details providing context that sometimes serves to cast those peace agreements in a more negative light. This is true of the 1994 peace agreement with Jordan, for example. The Grade 12 version's account, while similar to the Grade 9 History textbook,[378] also subtly criticizes Jordan for indulging "the Zionist Entity's desire to sign separate agreements with Arab states."[379]

The description of the Oslo Accords, signed between Israel and the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO) in 1993, shows a similar variation. While the Grade 9 History textbook presents the agreement as mostly neutral, with the caveat that it ultimately failed because "the Zionist Entity refused to recognize the [West] Bank and the Gaza Strip as Palestinian territories,"[380] the Grade 12 version is markedly disapproving, accusing Israel of "conspiring" to thwart the preceding 1991 Madrid Conference "to eliminate the Palestinian Issue" and adding that Israel "wanted the Palestinian Authority to be a tool of oppression against any armed Palestinian operation facing the Zionist Entity."[381] This portrayal does not differ markedly from previous iterations of the curriculum, which likewise omitted any discussion of Syria's own, ultimately unsuccessful, peace negotiations with Israel during the 1990s and 2000s.[382]

Egypt's 1978 peace agreement provides an interesting counter-example, showing how the current Syrian government reconstructs the narrative around peace treaties with Israel. In this case, the Grade 12 version is more neutral and brief,[383] and is considerably shorter than its equivalent in the 2018 curriculum, which contained many since-removed details about the various terms of the peace deal, including Israel's internationally-recognized borders and rights.[384] The compulsory Grade 9 History textbook, meanwhile, adopts a no less brief but somewhat more critical tone. Its account of

378 *History*, Grade 9, 2025–2026, p. 44.
379 *History* (Humanities Track), Grade 12, 2025–2026, p. 93.
380 *History*, Grade 9, 2025–2026, p. 56.
381 *History* (Humanities Track), Grade 12, 2025–2026, pp. 87–88.
382 "Syrian National Identity," p. 75.
383 *History* (Humanities Track), Grade 12, 2025–2026, p. 143.
384 *Modern and Contemporary History of the Arab Motherland* (Humanities Track), Grade 12, 2025–2026, pp. 146–147.

the Egyptian-Israeli peace process notes that President Anwar Sadat was assassinated "because" he signed the peace agreement, a point made neither in the Grade 12 Humanities Track textbook nor in previous editions of the compulsory textbook. While this may not be a direct justification of the assassination, it is followed by the statement that Sadat was immediately succeeded by his deputy Mobarak who was ultimately overthrown in a popular revolt. This juxtaposition may implicitly present the legacy of both leaders and the peace process they pursued as illegitimate.

In contrast, the Assad-era Grade 9 History textbook openly criticized Sadat for abandoning Syria in its 1973 war against Israel and immediately entering peace negotiations, thus taking Egypt "out of the circle of the Arab-Zionist conflict." One possible explanation for the omission of this criticism is that the new curriculum has significantly reduced the Assad-era textbooks' glorification of Syria's role in the 1973 war (see Chapter 5 for further discussion). At any rate, peace with Israel is not legitimized by the current Syrian curriculum any more than in the past.

***History,* Grade 9, 2025–2026, p. 88 (previously: *Modern and Contemporary History of the Arab Motherland*, Grade 9, 2017–2018, p. 92).**

2017-18	2025-26
رابعاً: أوضاع مصر في النصف الثاني من القرن العشرين: توفي الرئيس جمال عبد الناصر في عام ١٩٧٠م، وتسلّم الرئاسة نائبه **محمّد أنور السادات**، في عهده انضمّت مصر إلى اتّحاد الجمهوريّات العربيّة مع سورية وليبيا عام ١٩٧١م، وشاركت مصرُ مع سورية في حرب تشرين التحريريّة في عام ١٩٧٣م، لكنّ السادات أوقف القتال على الجبهة المصريّة، ودخل في مفاوضات مع الكيان الصهيونيّ انتهت بتوقيع اتّفاقيّة **كامب ديفيد** عام ١٩٧٨م، التي أخرجت مصرَ من دائرة الصراع العربيّ – الصهيونيّ، مقابلَ حصول مصر على سيناء مجرّدة من السلاح. وفي عام ١٩٨١م اغتيلَ أنورُ السادات، فتسلّمَ منصبَ الرئاسة من بعده نائبُهُ محمد حسني مبارك، الذي سار على نهج سلفه في سياسته الخارجيّة والتزامه باتّفاقيّة كامب ديفيد. الشكل (٤) عبور القوّات المصرية قناة السويس في حرب تشرين التحريرية.	ثالثاً: مصر منذ عدوان حزيران حتى الوقت الحاضر: بعد وفاة جمال عبد الناصر عام ١٩٧٠م تسلم الحكم نائبه أنور السادات الذي قام بالإشتراك مع سوريا بشن حرب عام ١٩٧٣م ضد الكيان الصهيوني ثم قام بزيارة عاصمة الكيان الصهيوني ، تلاها توقيع اتفاقية كامب ديفيد عام ١٩٧٨م وبسبب ذلك تم اغتياله عام١٩٨١م ليتولى نائبه محمد حسني مبارك الحكم حتى قيام ثورة شعبية ضده أنهت حكم في عام ٢٠١١م. الشكل (٤) عبور القوّات المصرية قناة السويس في حرب ١٩٧٣
4. Egypt's State during the Second Half of the 20th Century: *Gamal Abdel Nasser passed away in 1970, and his deputy Mohammed Anwar Sadat ascended to the presidency. [...] Egypt joined Syria in the 1973 October Liberation War, yet Sadat stopped the fighting on the Egyptian front and entered negotiations with the Zionist Entity, ending with the 1978 Camp David Accords. This took Egypt out of the circle of the Arab-Zionist conflict, in return for Egypt gaining demilitarized Sinai.* *In 1981, Sadat was assassinated, and his deputy Mohammed Hosny Mobarak ascended to the presidency after him. He followed his predecessor's foreign policy and adherence to the Camp David Agreement.*	*3. Egypt after the June Aggression until the Present:* *After Gamal Abdel Nasser passed away in 1970, his deputy Anwar Sadat took power. He participated with Syria in waging the 1973 war against the Zionist Entity. Then he visited the capital of the Zionist Entity, followed by the signing of the 1978 Camp David Accords. Because of this, he was assassinated in 1981, only for his rule to be succeeded by his deputy Mohammed Hosny Mobarak, until a popular uprising against [the latter] ended [his] rule in 2011.*

*Highlighted text shows altered content. *Red text shows removed content. *Green text shows added content.

Taken together, these examples show that Israel still occupies a prominent position in the Syrian curriculum as a principal political, ideological, and moral "Other." Unlike other foreign countries, Israel is not presented as a normal state or society, but rather as an inherently illegitimate entity defined almost exclusively through occupation, aggression, and hostility. This portrayal is reinforced across History, Geography, Literature, Social Studies, and Islamic Education, where students are encouraged to identify emotionally, morally, and at times religiously with the Palestinian cause, while encountering no opportunity to engage with Israeli perspectives, competing historical narratives, or the possibility of coexistence. Although the revised curriculum introduces limited signs of change, including a modest acknowledgement of certain intra-Arab tensions, a partial de-emphasis of the Golan Heights in favor of broader pan-Islamic themes, and a somewhat more restrained treatment of some peace agreements, these developments remain exceptions. Overall, the curriculum continues to present the Arab-Israeli conflict in absolute moral terms, reinforcing support for the Palestinian cause while denying the legitimacy of Israel as a political, historical, and national actor.

Conclusion

The new Syrian national school curriculum demonstrates a far-reaching ideological transformation that extends well beyond routine pedagogical adjustments. Across subjects and grades, textbook amendments collectively attempt to reconfigure national identity, historical memory, civic values, and regional positioning through what appears to be a consolidated Islamist and Sunni-centered framework. Rather than introducing pluralism after the fall of the Ba'thist regime, the curriculum begins the process of replacing one dominant ideological narrative with another, restructuring the educational landscape around religious hierarchy, moral absolutism, and selective historical reinterpretation. One important finding is the inconsistency with which changes have been applied. For example, while the imagery of Assad has been meticulously edited out, certain geopolitical issues received more variable and uneven treatment. Additionally, the alleged Ministry of Education directives for curriculum reform leaked to the press have only been partially followed, indicating that the 2025–2026 Syrian curriculum is a work in progress, with many potentially more substantial changes expected in the near future.

The main ideological pillar of the new curriculum is the placement of Islam as the primary organizing principle of belonging. In this sense, the 2025–2026 curriculum reflects a decisive shift from Assad-era constructions of identity and society. Across subjects, Islam is presented as the nation's primary unifying framework and fundamental common denominator. Elements of Assad-era Syrian identity frameworks, whether rooted in local Syrian nationalism, pan-Arab nationalism, pre-Islamic Syrian heritage, broader humanist concepts or modern scientific frameworks, are repeatedly subordinated to Islamic categories, rather than combined into a layered identity framework as before. Universalist moral messages previously applied to all human beings are now restricted to Muslims alone or reframed in Islamic terms. Content advocating for loyalty and devotion to Syria has been amended to redirect those sentiments towards the wider Muslim collective, or "Ummah," whose obligations transcend national borders. Historical narratives likewise reframe Arab civilization under the umbrella of Islamic civilization, and Arab causes and conflicts are recast as Islamic ones; in some cases, the concept of "resistance" is replaced with the concept of "*jihad*." Civic and political order are redefined through Islamic categories, in which legitimate authority is grounded less in secular state law or democracy and more in *shariah* law, *shura* consultation and divine command. Conversely, practices perceived as conflicting with Islam, such as ancient forms of idol worship, are censored or criticized. Evolutionary theory is also censored, and other scientific phenomena are explained using religious terms. In this way, the curriculum puts forward a new conception of Syria as a fundamentally Islamic nation, with far-reaching consequences for its non-Muslim minorities and neighbors.

In parallel, the curriculum normalizes violence as a morally legitimate and even noble response to perceived injustice. Armed conflict, whether termed "resistance," "liberation," "struggle," or "*jihad*," is presented as a defining feature of Islamic, Arab and Syrian history. This is accomplished by teaching history as primarily revolving around battles and conflicts, honoring historic figures such as Izz al-Din Al-Qassam for their role in conflict, and commemorating geographical sites associated with conflict. Preparedness to participate and sacrifice oneself in war is thus presented as the cornerstone of Islamic, Arab and Syrian identity. Death in battle, whether for religious or nationalist goals, is consistently venerated as "martyrdom" and portrayed as desirable through a variety of artistic devices and religious legitimizations. Furthermore, students are exposed to literary works that normalize or glorify graphic violence. The Islamic concept of *jihad* is interpreted primarily through violent and conflict-related examples and is held to be a religious duty. In addition, numerous violent representations in Syrian textbooks are found in association with the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, thus connecting violence with Arab-Islamic solidarity. While it is also possible to find discussions of the ethical limitations on warfare, non-violent interpretations of *jihad* and the permissibility of temporary peace agreements, the curriculum maintains a strong emphasis on legitimizing armed struggle, military preparedness, and sacrifice for Muslim lands and holy places. As a consequence, civic consciousness is primarily shaped around confrontation rather than coexistence.

Sectarian recalibration is another defining feature of the revised curriculum. Building on the Arab nationalist legacy of its predecessor, it places renewed emphasis on Sunni Muslim identity, resulting in the marginalization of most of Syria's diverse ethnic and religious minority communities. Islamic lessons promoting religious tolerance have been

removed, as are secular references to equality before the law. The dominant narrative of history projects Arab identity into the ancient past and sidesteps references to the ethnic and linguistic diversity of the region. Christians are the only Syrian minority group recognized in textbooks: Christians are represented as part of Syrian society and the Arab world, and Christian holy sites and places of worship are shown. However, historical examples of Muslim-Christian coexistence in early Islam have been deleted. Jews are recognized as a religion but their history in Syria is ignored and their collective identity denied. Overtly antisemitic content, identifying treachery and disloyalty as essential "traits of the Jews" and accusing Jewish people collectively of being hostile to the Prophet Muhammad, is found in several Islamic Education textbooks. Both Christianity and Judaism are presented as theologically inferior to Islam. Syria's other minority communities, including Kurds, Alawites and Druze, are almost entirely ignored, while historical figures belonging to these groups are seldom identified as such. There is a concerted effort to combat and falsify Shiʻi (and by extension Alawite) beliefs: Shiʻi-associated historical states, such as the Fatimid Empire, are delegitimized; Shiʻi-associated figures are absorbed into Sunni genealogical and doctrinal frameworks; and contested Sunni figures are elevated. In addition, some Alawite historical figures are deleted or receive less attention. In a society marked by deep sectarian fractures following years of civil conflict, such educational restructuring risks reinforcing rather than healing communal divisions.

Gender representation reflects a similarly restrictive change. Assad-era egalitarian and feminist depictions of women, in positions of leadership and as equal members of society, have been significantly reduced. Women's employment is now allowed under restricted conditions, in accordance with their foremost duty as wives and mothers. Women are uniquely explicitly expected to obey their husbands, whereas men are held to be solely responsible for the household and its leadership. References to Syrian civic laws guaranteeing gender equality have been removed from textbooks. Many depictions of women, particularly images of identifiable individuals and generic female figures in school or everyday social settings, whether photographs or illustrations, have been removed from the revised textbooks. In other cases, illustrations of women were modified to adhere to Islamic prescriptions of dress for women. Usually, this was accomplished by covering female characters' hair with a *hijab* veil, yet one lesson on Islamic dress now advocates for a *niqab* facial covering as well, while depictions of young girls have been mostly unaffected. Sexual misconduct, implied to be a female-related issue, is now condemned as damaging to society. These changes reflect a clear shift toward the Islamization of the curriculum and away from civic conceptions of gender equality and women's rights.

The reconfiguration of recent history underscores the curriculum's broader ideological shift. To dismantle the personality cult and propaganda of the Assad era, the textbooks replace it with a new legitimizing narrative grounded in disparaging the previous regime, Islamic-Arab authenticity and revolutionary moral renewal. The new textbooks do not merely omit earlier praise of Hafez and Bashar al-Assad but actively replace it with narratives portraying the regime as authoritarian, corrupt, sectarian, and destructive to Syrian society and Arab causes. This process is reflected in the systematic removal of Assad-era symbols, such as the national flag and anthem, institutional references, portraits, and even the regime's associates and supporters. The Assad regime is also delegitimized by ejecting content associating it with Islamic causes, and by demonizing Bashar as singularly associated with systematic violations of human and especially children's rights.

Furthermore, the curriculum reinterprets modern Syrian history to recast events linked to the Assad family, previously celebrated as milestones of nationalism, resistance and modernization, in overtly negative terms, thus transforming the Assad era into a cautionary historical period defined by disaster and oppression. As such, the 1970 "Corrective Movement" is reframed as a "military coup" that enabled the Assad family's dictatorship and repression, and sent the country into political, social, and economic turmoil, while the Assad period itself is associated with massacres, corruption, economic decline, and political oppression. The narrative surrounding the 2011 protests and the subsequent civil war is also drastically restructured. Whereas earlier textbooks largely depoliticized the conflict and framed it as an externally imposed crisis fueled by terrorist groups, the new curriculum presents the uprising as a legitimate, morally and religiously justified revolution against tyranny. The Assad regime is accused of systemic violence and atrocities, while the revolutionary movement is portrayed as restoring freedom, dignity, and Syria's authentic Islamic-Arab identity. The narrative culminates in the "Blessed Revolution" of 2024, presenting the fall of the Assad regime not merely as a political transition, but as the moral and historical restoration of the Syrian nation after decades of authoritarian rule. Thus, rather than fostering critical historical inquiry, the new curriculum often presents dichotomous moral frameworks that replace one politicized historiography with another.

Internationally, the curriculum advances a polarized worldview. As under the Assad regime, the Arab world remains its primary frame of reference, presented as a natural and cohesive geographical and political unit bound together by a shared history, common identity, and common adversaries, while the borders separating its constituent states are treated as artificial. However, a reduction in use of the term "Arab Motherland" reflects the beginning of a shift away from this pan-Arab worldview. In new textbooks, solidarity is especially encouraged with those Arab nations that, like Syria, overthrew despotic regimes of Arab nationalist character, or who have faced external foes, such as the Iraqis and the Palestinians. By contrast, the Lebanese group Hezbollah is heavily criticized for supporting the former Assad regime. The curriculum also reflects a marked reorientation toward Turkey. Syria's territorial dispute with its northern neighbour, previously discussed across multiple textbooks, is now largely swept under the rug as if it never existed, at times at the cost of historical inaccuracy. At the same time, Turkey's predecessor, the historic Ottoman Empire, previously portrayed as an oppressive foreign occupier, is reinterpreted as an Islamic state callously overthrown by foreign adversaries and Arab nationalists. This latter group of historic individuals, including personalities such as Sharif Hussein of Mecca, founder of Jordan's Hashemite dynasty, are now recast as fools or villains. On the other hand, Iran is now treated with greater hostility, perceived as both oppressive to its Arabic-speaking minority as well as threatening to its Arab neighbors.

The West, including Europe and the US, is constructed as the chief civilizational adversary of Arab and Islamic identity. Colonialism is defined as a quintessentially Western phenomenon and an enduring feature of Western character that transcends any historical time period, while a shared experience of colonial subjugation is portrayed as a defining bond uniting the Arab states. The West is presented as both materially and spiritually inferior to the Arab Islamic world, through the curriculum's use of language, narratives, and explicit comparisons. Western conquests and wars are condemned as destructive, illegitimate and cynically driven by greed, while their Arab Islamic equivalents are often praised or go uncriticized. Western scientific and technological achievements and economic prosperity are recognized but are frequently attributed to Arab Islamic origins or accompanied by qualifying criticism of other aspects of Western civilization. Conspiracy theories are often employed to place blame on the West for various contemporary issues facing Arab countries, such as territorial disputes. Inter-civilizational dialogue is not encouraged, nor is forgiveness or reconciliation. Nevertheless, the curriculum also contains positive references and objective information about Western countries, particularly in foreign language textbooks. Notably, Russia is portrayed in uniquely positive terms, reflecting narratives found in previous textbooks, although the Soviet Union is now criticized for suppressing freedoms and religions.

The Arab-Israeli conflict is a central theme of the curriculum, spanning multiple subjects and grades, receiving more attention than any other modern political issue external to Syria. The Palestinian issue is presented as a litmus test distinguishing allies from adversaries and as a central pillar of both Arab and Islamic identity. The revised curriculum further elevates its significance by reducing attention to nearly all other geopolitical disputes. Support for Israel, whether real or alleged, serves as a recurring criterion for condemning a wide range of present and former designated adversaries, including Britain, France, the US, or even Hezbollah and the Assad regime (and, in earlier editions, Ottoman Empire). Unlike the occasionally ambivalent representation of the West, Israel is depicted in Syrian textbooks in uniformly absolute terms. No humanizing portrayals of Israelis, or even depictions of Israel outside the context of conflict, are found in the curriculum. Jewish history and national identity are denied outright, and textbooks consistently express defiant non-recognition of Israel's existence through maps and nomenclature, referring to it using vocabulary such as "enemy," "thieving," and "filth." Israel is presented as an entirely illegitimate, relentlessly aggressive and a singularly destructive force seeking to harm the entire Arab and Islamic community. Conversely, Palestinian violence against Israel is consistently justified and glorified in historical narratives, short stories, poems and visual art. These narratives extend beyond political criticism to portray Israel and Israelis in collectively dehumanizing and historically distorted terms, raising serious concerns about incitement and radicalization. Peaceful reconciliation with Israel is not presented as a legitimate option, and Arab states or actors that pursue it are portrayed critically. At the same time, the curriculum continues to assert undisputed Syrian ownership of the Golan Heights, although the issue appears to receive less prominence than under the Assad-era curriculum.

Overall, the 2025–2026 Syrian curriculum fails to meet international standards of peace and tolerance education in a number of important ways. RESPECT is generally not encouraged towards groups other than the Muslim, Arab and Syrian "Self." Christianity is recognized as a minority religion but held to be subordinate to the teachings of Islam.

Western civilization is repeatedly presented as inferior and contemptible, characterized by cynical or inhuman motivations and a unique version of harm dubbed "colonialism." The achievements of the West are either treated with disapproval or claimed to be Arab-Islamic in origin, preventing students from appreciating them. Syria's own ancient heritage is presented as quintessentially Arab, marginalizing non-Arab groups and their history in the region. The curriculum adopts an even more disrespectful stance toward Israelis and Jews, questioning the authenticity of their collective identity while explicitly attributing to them a range of immoral and undesirable qualities. Islamic denominations and religious groups that are not recognized by orthodox Islam, including Alawites and Druze, are ignored entirely, missing another opportunity for fostering respect. Politically, no respect is afforded towards supporters of the Assad regime, presumably including the Alawite community, impeding the possibility of national reconciliation. The INDIVIDUAL OTHER receives little attention within this framework, leaving the designated "Other" as a largely faceless, inhuman foe. Syrian figures from minority backgrounds are generally not mentioned as such and in some cases have been deliberately edited out of textbooks. A notable exception is foreign language textbooks, which create isolated scenes of friendship between Syrians and people from all over the world.

The curriculum expresses HATE for several groups of people. Foremost among them is the broad civilizational adversary referred to as "Colonialism", which encompasses Europe, especially Britain and France, the United States, and the closely associated Israel. History textbooks express the view that these countries should be seen as a threat, denounced for their oppressive nature and not be befriended. Israel is a target of particularly visceral hate, as content demonizing the nation with language such as "enemy" and "filth" is embedded not only in History lessons but also Geography, Arabic Literature and Islamic Education. This is closely linked to the curriculum's portrayal of Jews, who are presented as collectively hostile toward Muslims and as possessing fundamentally immoral characteristics. Hostile narratives are also propagated towards allies of the Assad family, especially Iran and Hezbollah, and implicitly also towards Assad's domestic supporters. The glorification of violence, especially against the West and Israel, is common across the curriculum and contributes to overall INCITEMENT. Typically framed as "resistance" and, more recently, as "*jihad*," armed conflict is elevated as a matter of principle as part of both national and religious identity and duty. Violence against Western powers in historical contexts and against Israel in all contexts is consistently justified, glorified, or presented as legitimate, at times through explicit religious sanction. The curriculum views violent action in general and against Israel in particular as a favorable course of action, and in some cases may be understood by students as encouraging their own participation in such violence. The curriculum's literary portrayals of violence, often presented in elevated and romanticized language, may further normalize or desensitize students to its use.

Syrian textbooks fail to advocate for PEACEMAKING. Forgiveness, dialogue and peace are generally not treated as core Syrian or Islamic virtues in textbooks. By contrast, war and violence against designated foes of the Arab Islamic community are glorified, sometimes through the use of Islamic language such as "*jihad*" and "*fatḥ*" (conquest), otherwise as "liberation" and "resistance." Limited forms of peacemaking are acknowledged but are presented as subordinate to armed conflict. Peacemaking as a principle is not applied to Syrian history, and past conflicts are either left unresolved, such as the struggle against French colonial rule, or ignored as if they never existed, such as the territorial dispute with Turkey. Syria's historical peace negotiations with Israel are not acknowledged and peace is not presented as a viable solution for the conflict between the two nations. Meanwhile, past peace agreements between Israel and Egypt, Jordan and the Palestinian Authority are acknowledged, but are qualified by varying levels of criticism. Domestically, the end of Syria's civil war is celebrated for terminating Assad rule rather than for bringing peace to the land, and there is no indication in textbooks of a desire for further reconciliation with Syria's diverse communities.

The 2025–2026 curriculum made strenuous efforts to edit out Assad-era content promoting the regime, but often replaced it with its own ideological narrative, thus failing at incorporating UNBIASED INFORMATION. The Assad family and rule, previously the subject of unmitigated praise, is now universally condemned as oppressive and disastrous, and no open dialogue is permitted regarding the beliefs and interests of those groups in Syrian society which had supported them. Information about Syria's ethnic and religious diversity is lacking from textbooks, and Islamic teachings are purposefully constructed to delegitimize Shiʿi, Alawite and Druze perspectives. Likewise, political conflicts across the Arab world are conveyed in a restricted and selective fashion, leaving students with a narrow understanding of key regional contemporary issues. Of particular note is the retroactive deletion of Syria's dispute with Turkey and the one-sided presentation of the Arab-Iranian conflict. Cherry-picking, conspiracy theories, and factual inaccuracies especially abound in discussions surrounding the Arab-Israeli conflict, in an effort to preclude sympathies

towards Israelis and foster unquestioning solidarity with the Palestinian cause; as a consequence, Syrian students are prevented from understanding the nature of the conflict and potential solutions to it. To a lesser extent, world history is told through a narrative which portrays Western powers as singularly oppressive and unsympathetic. There has been an effort, however, to introduce a more nuanced historical narrative about the USSR.

In terms of GENDER IDENTITY and REPRESENTATION, the reduction and restriction of female depictions, the removal of the civic principle of gender equality, restrictions on women's participation in the workforce, and the codification of male guardianship collectively reinforce a highly unequal and restrictive model of gender relations grounded in religious doctrine. These changes have broader civic implications, limiting women's agency and increasing the potential for infringements on the rights of women and girls. By contrast, the curriculum contains no meaningful discussion of SEXUAL ORIENTATION.

As a consequence, the Syrian curriculum hardly promotes SOUND PROSPERITY and COOPERATION. The disputes, tensions and divisions that characterize Syrian society and culminated in its long and devastating civil war, are largely left unaddressed by the curriculum. No political position other than unequivocal condemnation of the Assad regime is presented as legitimate, creating an ironic mirror image of the political intolerance that characterized the Assad era. At the same time, most minority communities, including Druze, Alawites, Kurds, and Shi'is, are either ignored or portrayed in ways that delegitimize their beliefs, harming the curriculum's potential to promote intercommunal reconciliation through education. More concerningly, many elements of civic democracy–such as equality before the law, regardless of religion or language–have been downplayed or removed, undermining the foundations of equal citizenship and potentially laying the groundwork for future sectarian violence. While the curriculum has gone to considerable lengths to reduce tension with nearby Turkey, it does so at the cost of extensive historical revisionism. At the same time, Syria's future relations with its other neighbors remain uncertain, as the curriculum advocates prolonged confrontation with Israel more emphatically than ever before while beginning to cast doubt on the legitimacy of Jordan's monarchy. The curriculum also reinforces tensions with the wider world, portraying Iran on the one hand and the United States and the West on the other as persistent adversaries. Coupled with its consistent portrayal of armed conflict as an honorable, legitimate, and at times obligatory course of action, this raises serious questions about the curriculum's capacity to contribute to lasting peace within Syria and constructive relations across the region.

Taken together, the 2025-2026 curriculum reflects the start of a sharp and comprehensive ideological realignment. It moves Syrian identity towards an Islamic and pan-Islamic orientation at the expense of local patriotism and embeds sectarian and gender hierarchies while marginalizing civic democracy and universal humanist values. At the same time, it preserves the normalization of armed struggle and the advancement of adversarial international narratives. While the removal of Ba'thist propaganda marks a rupture with Syria's troubled past, the emerging educational model does not yet demonstrate a parallel commitment to pluralism, critical inquiry, or reconciliation.

As Syria navigates a fragile post-conflict transition, education will play a decisive role in shaping the next generation's civic imagination. The findings of this report suggest a sobering picture of a curriculum that entrenches exclusionary identities and conflict-oriented worldviews at a formative stage. Without meaningful revision toward inclusive citizenship, historical accuracy, diversity of points of view, gender equality and peace education, the curriculum may contribute to the exacerbation of regional instability and bloodshed and condemn Syria to long-term societal polarization.

List of Textbooks

The following list contains all textbooks reviewed by IMPACT-se for the purposes of this study. Not all are quoted in the body of the report. The sources are presented in both their original (Arabic-language) title as well as their translated English title. English and French titles are presented as is with no translation. For the purposes of convenience, the translated title alone is quoted throughout the report.

Textbooks dated 2025–2026 were all verifiably published by the Syrian Arab Republic's Ministry of Education in digital editions made freely available on the Syrian Educational Platform (*al-minaṣṣah at-tarbawīyah as-Sūrīyah*) operated by the Ministry of Education as of June 2026. Pre-2025 editions were obtained from diverse official and non-official digital platforms, many of which are no longer active. IMPACT-se versions of these textbooks can be made available on request.

#	Grade	Original Title	English Translation of Title	Volume	Edition Year
1	1	العربية لغتي	Arabic is My Language	1	2023–2024
	1	العربية لغتي	Arabic is My Language	1	2025–2026
2	1	العربية لغتي	Arabic is My Language	2	2023–2024
	1	العربية لغتي	Arabic is My Language	2	2025–2026
3	1	التربية الدينية المسيحية	Christian Religious Education		2022–2023
	1	التربية الدينية المسيحية	Christian Religious Education		2025–2026
4	1	Emar: English Series			2023–2024
	1	Emar: English Series			2025–2026
5	1	Emar: English Series Workbook			2023–2024
	1	Emar: English Series Workbook			2025–2026
6	1	التربية الدينية الإسلامية	Islamic Religious Education		2023–2024
	1	التربية الإسلامية	Islamic Education		2025–2026
7	1	الرياضيات	Mathematics	1	2023–2024
	1	الرياضيات	Mathematics	1	2025–2026
8	1	الرياضيات	Mathematics	2	2023–2024
	1	الرياضيات	Mathematics	2	2025–2026
9	1	العلوم	Sciences	1	2023–2024
	1	العلوم	Sciences	1	2025–2026
10	1	العلوم	Sciences	2	2023–2024
	1	العلوم	Sciences	2	2025–2026
11	1	الدراسات الاجتماعية	Social Studies		2023–2024
	1	الدراسات الاجتماعية	Social Studies		2025–2026
12	1	التربية الفنية الجمالية والبصرية	Visual and Aesthetic Art Education		2022–2023
	1	التربية الفنية الجمالية والبصرية	Visual and Aesthetic Art Education		2025–2026

13	2	العربية لغتي	Arabic is My Language	1	2023–2024
	2	العربية لغتي	Arabic is My Language	1	2025–2026
14	2	العربية لغتي	Arabic is My Language	2	2023–2024
	2	العربية لغتي	Arabic is My Language	2	2025–2026
15	2	التربية الدينية المسيحية	Christian Religious Education		2023–2024
	2	التربية الدينية المسيحية	Christian Religious Education		2025–2026
16	2	التربية الدينية الإسلامية	Islamic Religious Education		2023–2024
	2	التربية الإسلامية	Islamic Education		2025–2026
17	2	الرياضيات	Mathematics	1	2023–2024
	2	الرياضيات	Mathematics	1	2025–2026
18	2	الرياضيات	Mathematics	2	2023–2024
	2	الرياضيات	Mathematics	2	2025–2026
19	2	الدراسات الاجتماعية	Social Studies		2023–2024
	2	الدراسات الاجتماعية	Social Studies		2025–2026
20	2	التربية الفنية الجمالية والبصرية	Visual and Aesthetic Art Education		2022–2023
	2	التربية الفنية الجمالية والبصرية	Visual and Aesthetic Art Education		2025–2026
21	3	العربية لغتي	Arabic is My Language	1	2023–2024
	3	العربية لغتي	Arabic is My Language	1	2025–2026
22	3	العربية لغتي	Arabic is My Language	2	2023–2024
	3	العربية لغتي	Arabic is My Language	2	2025–2026
23	3	التربية الدينية المسيحية	Christian Religious Education		2023–2024
	3	التربية الدينية المسيحية	Christian Religious Education		2025–2026
24	3	التربية الدينية الإسلامية	Islamic Religious Education		2017-18
	3	التربية الإسلامية	Islamic Education		2025–2026
25	3	الرياضيات	Mathematics		2023–2024
	3	الرياضيات	Mathematics		2025–2026
26	3	الدراسات الاجتماعية	Social Studies		2023–2024
	3	الدراسات الاجتماعية	Social Studies		2025–2026
27	3	التربية الفنية الجمالية والبصرية	Visual and Aesthetic Art Education		2022–2023
	3	التربية الفنية الجمالية والبصرية	Visual and Aesthetic Art Education		2025–2026
28	4	العربية لغتي	Arabic is My Language	1	2023–2024
	4	العربية لغتي	Arabic is My Language	1	2025–2026
29	4	العربية لغتي	Arabic is My Language	2	2023–2024
	4	العربية لغتي	Arabic is My Language	2	2025–2026
30	4	التربية الدينية المسيحية	Christian Religious Education		2023–2024
	4	التربية الدينية المسيحية	Christian Religious Education		2025–2026
31	4	Emar: English Series			2023–2024

	4	Emar: English Series			2025–2026
32	4	Emar: English Series Workbook			2023–2024
	4	Emar: English Series Workbook			2025–2026
33	4	التربية الإسلامية (الحكومة السورية المؤقتة)	Islamic Education (Interim Syrian Government)		2012–2013
	4	التربية الإسلامية	Islamic Education		2025–2026
34	4	الرياضيات	Mathematics		2023–2024
	4	الرياضيات	Mathematics		2025–2026
35	4	الدراسات الاجتماعية	Social Studies		2025–2026
36	4	التربية الفنية الجمالية والبصرية	Visual and Aesthetic Art Education		2022–2023
	4	التربية الفنية الجمالية والبصرية	Visual and Aesthetic Art Education		2025–2026
37	5	العربية لغتي	Arabic is My Language	1	2023–2024
	5	العربية لغتي	Arabic is My Language	1	2025–2026
38	5	العربية لغتي	Arabic is My Language	2	2023–2024
	5	العربية لغتي	Arabic is My Language	2	2025–2026
39	5	التربية الدينية المسيحية	Christian Religious Education		2023–2024
	5	التربية الدينية المسيحية	Christian Religious Education		2025–2026
40	5	Emar: English Series			2023–2024
	5	English Pupil's Book			2025–2026
41	5	Emar: English Series Workbook			2023–2024
	5	Emar: English Series Workbook			2025–2026
42	5	التربية الدينية الإسلامية	Islamic Religious Education		2017–2018
	5	التربية الإسلامية	Islamic Education		2025–2026
43	5	الرياضيات	Mathematics		2023–2024
	5	الرياضيات	Mathematics		2025–2026
44	5	الدراسات الاجتماعية	Social Studies		2019–2020
	5	الدراسات الاجتماعية	Social Studies		2025–2026
45	5	التربية الفنية الجمالية والبصرية	Visual and Aesthetic Art Education		2022–2023
	5	التربية الفنية الجمالية والبصرية	Visual and Aesthetic Art Education		2025–2026
46	6	العربية لغتي	Arabic is My Language	1	2023–2024
	6	العربية لغتي	Arabic is My Language	1	2025–2026
47	6	العربية لغتي	Arabic is My Language	2	2023–2024
	6	العربية لغتي	Arabic is My Language	2	2025–2026
48	6	التربية الدينية المسيحية	Christian Religious Education		2023–2024
	6	التربية الدينية المسيحية	Christian Religious Education		2025–2026
49	6	Emar: English Series			2023–2024

	6	English Pupil's Book			2025–2026
50	6	التربية الدينية الإسلامية	Islamic Religious Education		2017–2018
	6	التربية الإسلامية	Islamic Education		2025–2026
51	6	الرياضيات	Mathematics		2023–2024
	6	الرياضيات	Mathematics		2025–2026
52	6	العلوم	Sciences	1	2023–2024
	6	العلوم	Sciences	1	2025–2026
53	6	العلوم	Sciences	2	2023–2024
	6	العلوم	Sciences	2	2025–2026
54	6	الدراسات الاجتماعية	Social Studies		2012–2013
	6	الدراسات الاجتماعية	Social Studies		2025–2026
55	6	التربية الفنية الجمالية والبصرية	Visual and Aesthetic Art Education		2022–2023
	6	التربية الفنية الجمالية والبصرية	Visual and Aesthetic Art Education		2025–2026
56	6	التربية المهنية	Vocational Education	1	2024–2025
57	6	التربية المهنية	Vocational Education	2	2024–2025
58	7	اللغة العربية	Arabic Language	1	2023–2024
	7	اللغة العربية	Arabic Language	1	2025–2026
59	7	اللغة العربية	Arabic Language	2	2023–2024
	7	اللغة العربية	Arabic Language	2	2025–2026
60	7	علم الأحياء والأرض	Biology and Geology		2023–2024
	7	علم الأحياء والأرض	Biology and Geology		2025–2026
61	7	التربية الدينية المسيحية	Christian Religious Education		2023–2024
	7	التربية الدينية المسيحية	Christian Religious Education		2025–2026
62	7	Emar: English Series			2023–2024
	7	English Pupil's Book			2025–2026
63	7	الجغرافية	Geography		2025–2026
64	7	التاريخ	History		2025–2026
65	7	Imar: Méthode français			2025–2026
66	7	التربية الدينية الإسلامية	Islamic Religious Education		2011–2012
	7	التربية الإسلامية	Islamic Education		2025–2026
67	7	الرياضيات	Mathematics		2023–2024
	7	الرياضيات	Mathematics		2025–2026
68	7	التربية الفنية الجمالية والبصرية	Visual and Aesthetic Art Education		2022–2023
	7	التربية الفنية الجمالية والبصرية	Visual and Aesthetic Art Education		2025–2026
69	8	اللغة العربية	Arabic Language		2023–2024
	8	اللغة العربية	Arabic Language		2025–2026
70	8	علم الأحياء والأرض	Biology and Geology		2023–2024
	8	علم الأحياء والأرض	Biology and Geology		2025–2026
71	8	التربية الدينية المسيحية	Christian Religious Education		2023–2024

	8	التربية الدينية المسيحية	Christian Religious Education		2025–2026
72	8	Emar: English Series			2023–2024
	8	Emar: English Series			2025–2026
73	8	Emar: English Series Workbook			2023–2024
	8	Emar: English Series Workbook			2025–2026
74	8	الجغرافية	Geography		2025–2026
75	8	التاريخ	History		2017–2018
	8	التاريخ	History		2025–2026
76	8	التربية الدينية الإسلامية	Islamic Religious Education		2017–2018
	8	التربية الإسلامية	Islamic Education		2025–2026
77	8	الفيزياء والكيمياء	Physics and Chemistry		2023–2024
	8	الفيزياء والكيمياء	Physics and Chemistry		2025–2026
78	8	التربية الفنية الجمالية والبصرية	Visual and Aesthetic Art Education		2022–2023
	8	التربية الفنية الجمالية والبصرية	Visual and Aesthetic Art Education		2025–2026
79	9	اللغة العربية	Arabic Language		2023–2024
	9	اللغة العربية	Arabic Language		2025–2026
80	9	علم الأحياء والأرض	Biology and Geology		2023–2024
	9	علم الأحياء والأرض	Biology and Geology		2025–2026
81	9	التربية الدينية المسيحية	Christian Religious Education		2022–2023
	9	التربية الدينية المسيحية	Christian Religious Education		2025–2026
82	9	Emar: English Series			2023–2024
	9	Emar: English Series			2025–2026
83	9	Emar: English Series Workbook			2023–2024
	9	Emar: English Series Workbook			2025–2026
84	9	جغرافية الوطن العربي وسورية	Geography of the Arab Motherland and Syria		2017–2018
	9	الجغرافية	Geography		2025–2026
85	9	الرياضيات: الجبر	Mathematics: Algebra		2023–2024
	9	الرياضيات: الجبر	Mathematics: Algebra		2025–2026
86	9	تاريخ الوطن العربي الحديث والمعاصر	Modern and Contemporary History of the Arab Motherland		2017–2018
87	9	التاريخ	History		2025–2026
88	9	التربية الدينية الإسلامية	Islamic Religious Education		2017–2018
	9	التربية الدينية الإسلامية	Islamic Education		2025–2026
89	9	التربية الفنية الجمالية والبصرية	Visual and Aesthetic Art Education		2022–2023
	9	التربية الفنية الجمالية والبصرية	Visual and Aesthetic Art Education		2025–2026

90	10	اللغة العربية وآدابها	Arabic Language and Its Literature		2023–2024
	10	اللغة العربية وآدابها	Arabic Language and Its Literature		2025–2026
91	10	علم الأحياء والبيئة (العلمي)	Biology and Ecology (Science Track)		2023–2024
	10	علم الأحياء والبيئة (العلمي)	Biology and Ecology (Science Track)		2025–2026
92	10	التربية الدينية المسيحية	Christian Religious Education		2023–2024
	10	التربية الدينية المسيحية	Christian Religious Education		2025–2026
93	10	Emar: English Series			2023–2024
	10	Emar: English Series			2025–2026
94	10	Emar: English Series Workbook			2023–2024
	10	Emar: English Series Workbook			2025–2026
95	10	الجغرافية	Geography		2014–2015
	10	الجغرافية	Geography		2025–2026
96	10	تاريخ الحضارات	History of Civilizations		2014–2015
97	10	قضايا تاريخية (الأدبي)	Historical Issues (Humanities Track)		2023–2024
	10	التاريخ (الأدبي)	History (Humanities Track)		2025–2026
98	10	قضايا تاريخية (العلمي)	Historical Issues (Science Track)		2023–2024
	10	التاريخ (العلمي)	History (Science Track)		2025–2026
99	10	التربية الإسلامية	Islamic Education		2025–2026
100	10	الفلسفة والعلوم الإنسانية (الأدبي)	Philosophy and the Humanities (Humanities Track)		2023–2024
	10	الفلسفة والعلوم الإنسانية (الأدبي)	Philosophy and the Humanities (Humanities Track)		2025–2026
101	10	الفلسفة والعلوم الإنسانية (العلمي)	Philosophy and the Humanities (Science Track)		2023–2024
	10	الفلسفة والعلوم الإنسانية (العلمي)	Philosophy and the Humanities (Science Track)		2025–2026
102	10	التربية الفنية الجمالية والبصرية	Visual and Aesthetic Art Education		2022–2023
	10	التربية الفنية الجمالية والبصرية	Visual and Aesthetic Art Education		2025–2026
103	11	اللغة العربية وآدابها (الأدبي)	Arabic Language and Its Literature (Humanities Track)		2023–2024
	11	اللغة العربية وآدابها (الأدبي)	Arabic Language and Its Literature (Humanities Track)		2025–2026
104	11	اللغة العربية وآدابها (العلمي)	Arabic Language and Its Literature (Science Track)		2023–2024
	11	اللغة العربية وآدابها (العلمي)	Arabic Language and Its Literature (Science Track)		2025–2026

105	11	علم الأحياء والأرض (العلمي)	Biology and Geology (Science Track)		2023–2024
	11	علم الأحياء والأرض (العلمي)	Biology and Geology (Science Track)		2025–2026
106	11	التربية الدينية المسيحية	Christian Religious Education		2023–2024
	11	التربية الدينية المسيحية	Christian Religious Education		2025–2026
107	11	Emar: English Series (Humanities Track)			2023–2024
	11	Emar: English Series (Humanities Track)			2025–2026
108	11	Emar: English Series (Science Track)			2023–2024
	11	Emar: English Series (Science Track)			2025–2026
109	11	Emar: English Series Workbook (Humanities Track)			2021–2022
	11	Emar: English Series Workbook (Humanities Track)			2025–2026
110	11	Emar: English Series Workbook (Science Track)			2021–2022
	11	Emar: English Series Workbook (Science Track)			2025–2026
111	11	الجغرافية (الأدبي)	Geography (Humanities Track)		2017–2018
	11	الجغرافية (الأدبي)	Geography (Humanities Track)		2025–2026
112	11	تاريخ العالم الحديث والمعاصر (الأدبي)	Modern and Contemporary History of the World (Humanities Track)		2017–2018
	11	التاريخ (الأدبي)	History (Humanities Track)		2025–2026
113	11	التربية الدينية الإسلامية	Islamic Religious Education		2017–2018
	11	التربية الإسلامية	Islamic Education		2025–2026
114	11	الفلسفة والعلوم الإنسانية (الأدبي)	Philosophy and the Humanities (Humanities Track)		2023–2024
	11	الفلسفة والعلوم الإنسانية (الأدبي)	Philosophy and the Humanities (Humanities Track)		2025–2026
115	11	الفلسفة والعلوم الإنسانية (العلمي)	Philosophy and the Humanities (Science Track)		2023–2024
	11	الفلسفة والعلوم الإنسانية (العلمي)	Philosophy and the Humanities (Science Track)		2025–2026
116	12	اللغة العربية وآدابها (الأدبي)	Arabic Language and Its Literature (Humanities Track)		2023–2024
	12	اللغة العربية وآدابها (الأدبي)	Arabic Language and Its Literature (Humanities Track)		2025–2026
117	12	اللغة العربية وآدابها (العلمي)	Arabic Language and Its Literature (Science Track)		2023–2024
	12	اللغة العربية وآدابها (العلمي)	Arabic Language and Its Literature (Science Track)		2025–2026
118	12	علم الأحياء (العلمي)	Biology (Science Track)		2023–2024

	12	علم الأحياء (العلمي)	Biology (Science Track)		2025–2026
119	12	التربية الدينية المسيحية	Christian Religious Education		2023–2024
	12	التربية الدينية المسيحية	Christian Religious Education		2025–2026
120	12	Emar: English Series (Humanities Track)			2023–2024
	12	Emar: English Series (Humanities Track)			2025–2026
121	12	Emar: English Series (Science Track)			2023–2024
	12	Emar: English Series (Science Track)			2025–2026
122	12	Emar: English Series Workbook (Humanities Track)			2023–2024
	12	Emar: English Series Workbook (Humanities Track)			2025–2026
123	12	Emar: English Series Workbook (Science Track)			2023–2024
	12	Emar: English Series Workbook (Science Track)			2025–2026
124	12	جغرافية الوطن العربي والعالم (الأدبي)	Geography of the Arab Motherland and the World (Humanities Track)		2017–2018
	12	الجغرافية (الأدبي)	Geography (Humanities Track)		2025–2026
125	12	تاريخ الوطن العربي الحديث والمعاصر (الأدبي)	Modern and Contemporary History of the Arab Motherland (Humanities Track)		2017–2018
	12	التاريخ (الأدبي)	History (Humanities Track)		2025–2026
126	12	التربية الدينية الإسلامية	Islamic Religious Education		2017–2018
	12	التربية الإسلامية	Islamic Education		2025–2026
127	12	الرياضيات (العلمي)	Mathematics (Science Track)	1	2023–2024
	12	الرياضيات (العلمي)	Mathematics (Science Track)	1	2025–2026
128	12	الرياضيات (العلمي)	Mathematics (Science Track)	2	2023–2024
	12	الرياضيات (العلمي)	Mathematics (Science Track)	2	2025–2026
129	12	الفلسفة والعلوم الإنسانية (الأدبي)	Philosophy and the Humanities (Humanities Track)	1	2023–2024
	12	الفلسفة والعلوم الإنسانية (الأدبي)	Philosophy and the Humanities (Humanities Track)	1	2025–2026
130	12	الفلسفة والعلوم الإنسانية (الأدبي)	Philosophy and the Humanities (Humanities Track)	2	2023–2024
	12	الفلسفة والعلوم الإنسانية (الأدبي)	Philosophy and the Humanities (Humanities Track)	2	2025–2026

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