**Policy of hatred**

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In November, Israel’s public broadcaster, Kan, uploaded on its official X page a video of Israeli children singing a song celebrating their country’s ongoing genocide of Palestinians in Gaza. The broadcaster deleted the video clip after a huge online backlash.

Even after the video was silently erased from social media, however, the song remained a subject of discussion and controversy. Many across the world were shocked to see children sing happily about ‘eliminating’ an entire people ‘within one year’.

Yet a closer look at Israeli literature and curricula shows this open celebration of genocide was the only natural outcome of Israel’s persistent indoctrination – or brainwashing to be more blunt – of its children to ensure that they do not view Palestinians as human and fully embrace apartheid and occupation.

There is myriad evidence of Israel’s brainwashing of its citizens to erase the humanity of Palestinians spanning many decades.

Israeli scholar Adir Cohen, for example, analysed for his book titled ‘An Ugly Face in the Mirror – National Stereotypes in Hebrew Children’s Literature’ some 1700 Hebrew-language children’s books published in Israel between 1967 and 1985, and found that a whopping 520 of them contained humiliating, negative descriptions of the Palestinians.

He revealed that 66 percent of these 520 books refer to Arabs as violent; 52 percent as evil; 37 percent as liars; 31 percent as greedy; 28 percent as two-faced and 27 percent as traitors.

Such persistent negative descriptions dehumanised Palestinians in the eyes of generations of Israelis, established them as dangerous ‘others’, and paved the way for children to celebrate their genocide in a video produced by the state broadcaster in 2023.

Towering Palestinian academic and literary critic, Edward Said, also elaborated on the issue in his 1979 book ‘The Question of Palestine’, noting that Israeli children’s literature “is made up of valiant Jews who always end up by killing low, treacherous Arabs, with names like Mastoul (crazy), Bandura (tomato), or Bukra (tomorrow). As a writer for Haaretz said on September 20, 1974, “children’s books ‘deal with our topic: the Arab who murders Jews out of pleasure, and the pure Jewish boy who defeats ‘the coward swine!’”

Israel has also used the painful memory of the Holocaust to desensitise Israeli children to the suffering of Palestinians and support without question Israel’s treatment of them.

In his 1999 book, One Nation Under Israel, historian Andrew Hurley explained how Israel weaponises the Holocaust education it provides to Israeli children against the Palestinians.

“The mind of a child (or of anyone else for that matter) cannot absorb the horrors of the Holocaust without finding someone to hate,” Hurley argued. “Since there are no Nazis around against whom vengeance can be sought, [Former Israeli Prime Ministers] [Menachem] Begin, [Yitzhak] Shamir and [Ariel] Sharon have solved this problem by calling the Arabs the Nazis of today and a proper target for retribution.”

Israel’s current Prime Minister, Benjamin Netanyahu, appears to be eagerly continuing with this tradition and has even claimed that it was a Palestinian who gave Adolf Hitler the idea for the Holocaust.

Israeli professor Meytal Nasie strongly corroborates Hurley’s view above on the ramifications of the way the Holocaust is taught. In her 2016 study, Young Children’s Experiences and Learning in Intractable Conflicts, she found that 68 percent of Israeli children suggested “beating,” “fighting,” “killing,” or “expelling” the Arabs as a solution. Nasie states that imparting these beliefs at such an early age, in a frequent and intense manner, leads to inculcation of these conflict-related narratives deep within the children’s socio-psychological repertoires.

Of course, the Israeli state’s brainwashing of its citizens against the Palestinians is not limited to ridiculous lies about history told by political leaders or to children’s literature. This propaganda effort is highly systemic and at the very core of Israeli education.

Just take a look at Israel’s official textbooks.

For his 1998 research paper, ‘The Rocky Road Toward Peace: Beliefs on Conflict in Israeli Textbooks’, Israeli academic Daniel Bar-Tal analysed 124 Israeli textbooks on various subjects and for various age groups approved by the Israeli Ministry of Education to be used in religious and secular schools across the country.

To map out the ideological content transmitted to Israeli children in the education system, he looked at which “societal beliefs (society members’ shared cognitions on topics and issues of special concern for their society)” received the most coverage in state-approved textbooks. He found that overall, the societal beliefs relating to (national) security received the most emphasis, followed by those concerning a positive self-image of Jews, and those that present Jews as the victims of the conflict. A majority of the analysed books were also found to include negative stereotypes about Arabs, portraying them as “cruel, immoral, unfair” and determined “to annihilate the State of Israel”.

The widespread demonisation of the Palestinian “Other” in textbooks, coupled with the emphasis placed on the positive representations of Jews and the claim that they are the “victims” in the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, and supported by overarching narratives about the importance of national security and survival, created the perfect conditions for generations of Israelis to leave the education system convinced that any and all aggression against Palestinians – including ethnic cleansing and genocide – are at least justifiable, if not necessary.

This is because when children are thought that they belong to an inherently good “chosen people” and that they are being attacked and victimised by a demonic and inhuman “Other”, they easily accept the oppression, displacement or mass killing of those who belong to this “Other” (ie, the Palestinians) without any moral qualm or hesitation.

Bar-Tal’s study is from over 20 years ago, but more recent studies show that the situation is hardly any different today.

Excerpted: ‘It’s not shocking to see

Israeli children celebrate the Gaza genocide’.

Courtesy: Aljazeera.com