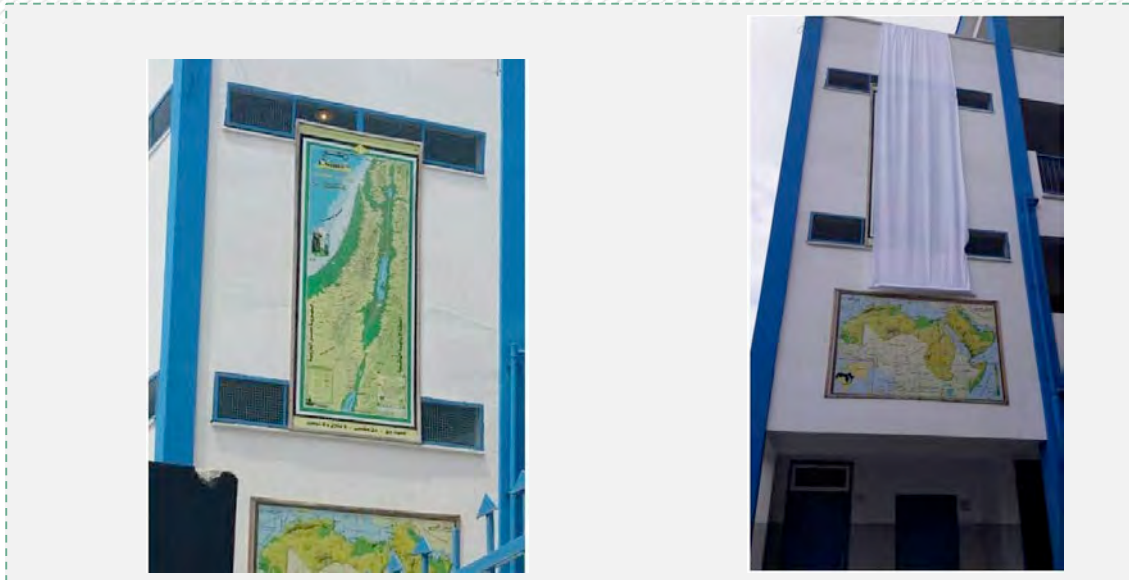




July 7, 2016

Geography and Politics

During the visit of UN Secretary General Ban Ki-moon to an UNRWA school in the Gaza Strip, a wall map of "Palestine" which ignored the existence of the State of Israel was temporarily hidden.



Left: The map before it was covered for the secretary general's visit to an UNRWA school in the Gaza Strip. The State of Israel does not appear on it. Right: The covered map of "Palestine" from the Jordan River to the Mediterranean Sea (Arabi21, June 28, date).

Overview

1. On June 28, 2016, the UN secretary general went to the Gaza Strip for a visit lasting several hours. While there he was taken to a number of places, including **UNRWA's al-Zeitun school in the Tel al-Hawa neighborhood of Gaza City.**
2. **During his visit a giant wall map of "Palestine," which completely ignored the existence of the State of Israel was, was covered.** That was apparently done to keep from embarrassing him and UNRWA. However, there was nothing unusual about the map itself, because many such maps can be found **throughout the Gaza Strip, Judea and Samaria** in administration buildings, schools, textbooks and in the

media.¹ The maps ignore the existence of the State of Israel, and many major Israeli cities do not appear.²

3. The maps of "Palestine, from the Jordan River to the Mediterranean Sea" used in educating the Palestinian younger generation reinforce the narrative of denying the existence of the State of Israel. They also reinforce the narrative of the so-called "right of return" of the Palestinian refugees to the territory of the State of Israel. For example, at the head of the map covered for the visit of the UN secretary general the word "Return" appears, under which is written, "The return is a sacred right – it cannot be waived and [replaced by] settling [the refugees in the countries hosting them]." To the left of the map are pictures of a woman and child in traditional Palestinian clothing. The woman is giving the child a key, the symbol of the so-called "right of return."



"Educating" the younger generation with maps: A counsellor in a Hamas summer camp in the Gaza Strip points to a map of "Palestine" issued by Hamas which ignores the existence of the State of Israel (Filastin al-A'an, June 8, 2016). Important Israeli cities do not appear on the map. Jaffa, considered a "Palestinian city," replaces Tel Aviv, and Um-Khaled, an Arab village which no longer exists, replaces Netanya.

4. For reactions to the covering of the map, see the **Appendix**.

¹ A study about the Palestinian educational system was carried out by IMPACT-se (Institute for Monitoring [global] Peace and Cultural Tolerance in School Education) in May 2016. On the one hand Israel is represented as an evil entity that should be destroyed. On the other, as a state, it does not appear on maps of "Palestine," where Palestine as an Arab state covers the entire geographical territory from the Jordan River to the Mediterranean Sea (IMPACT-se.org website, May 2016).

² A collection of map that ignore the existence of the State of Israel can be viewed at the display of captured Palestinian materials at the Intelligence and Terrorism Information Center at Giliot.

Appendix

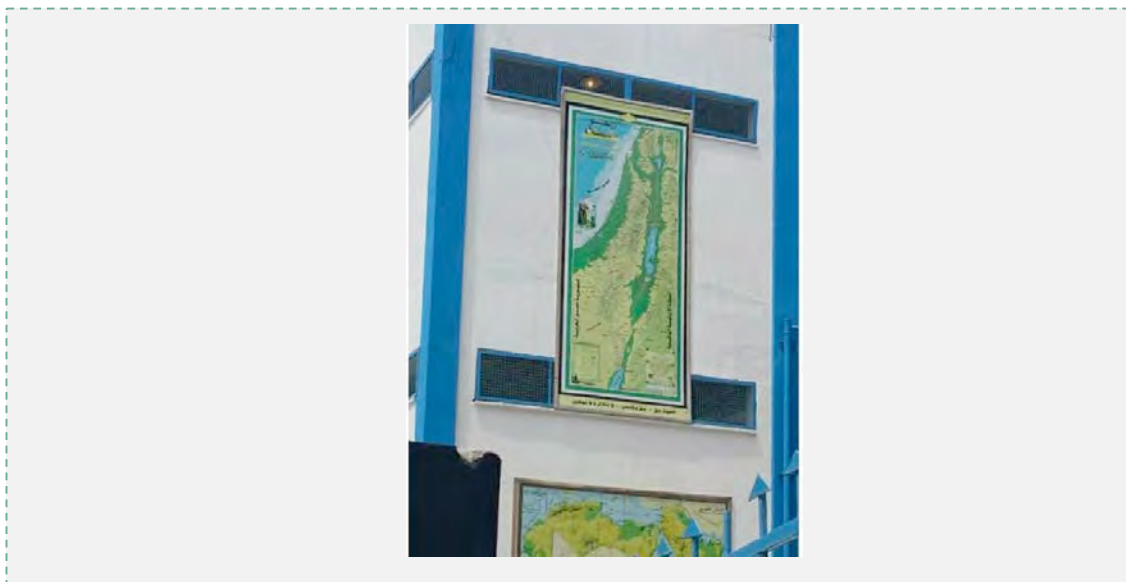
Covering the Map of "Palestine" for the Visit of the UN Secretary General

1. On June 28, 2016, Ban Ki-moon spent a few hours in the Gaza Strip. The visit was part of trips he is making to mark the end of his term of office as UN secretary general. He entered through the Erez crossing. While in the Gaza Strip he was taken to an UNRWA school in Gaza City and a rehabilitation center. He also met with UNRWA employees. He held a press conference where he warned that the continuation of the closure of the Gaza Strip, which he referred to as "collective punishment," would increase the probability of renewed escalation. He thanked the countries that had contributed to the reconstruction of the Gaza Strip.



UN Secretary General Ban Ki-moon holds a press conference in the Gaza Strip (Facebook page of Paldf, June 28, 2016).

2. Correspondents in the Gaza Strip reported that **for his visit to UNRWA's al-Zeitun school in the Tel al-Hawa neighborhood of Gaza City, a wall map of "Palestine from the Jordan River to the Mediterranean Sea" was covered.** According to the correspondents, **it was covered to keep UNRWA from being embarrassed** (Ramallah News, June 28, 2016). Apparently the UNRWA employees felt a picture of the UN secretary general with a map of "Palestine" permanently on the wall in back of him might lead to a diplomatic incident.



The map of "Palestine" covered during the UN secretary general's visit to the UNRWA school (Arabi21, June 28, 2016).

3. **Covering the map was condemned by many Palestinians**, who posted before and after pictures to the social networks. Many comments were posted, **some criticizing Hamas for allowing the map to be covered** (Watan, June 28, 2016). Others even called it a **"moral disgrace" for which the UN was responsible** (QudsN, June 29, 2016).

4. **A hashtag was created on the social networks with the name "#Why_cover_it,"** which posted harsh criticism. For example, a Gazan named Jihad Hiles (an employee of the Palestinian ministry of endowments) Tweeted, **"UNRWA covered the map of Palestine when despicable Ban Ki-moon visited the Gaza Strip today. UNRWA forgot it is engraved on the hearts of millions of Muslims #Why_cover_it"** (Twitter account of Jihad Hiles, June 28, 2016). Wael Abu Omar – Gaza, a photographer from the Gaza Strip, Tweeted, **"The entire world will fall in opposition to Palestine #Why_cover_it"** (Twitter account of Wael Abu Omar – Gaza, June 28, 2016).



Criticism of covering the map during Ban Ki-moon's visit. Left: Right: Wael Abu Omar – Gaza, a photographer from the Gaza Strip, Tweeted, "The entire world will fall in opposition to Palestine #Why_cover_it" (Twitter account of Wael Abu Omar – Gaza, June 28, 2016). A Tweet from a Gazan named Jihad Hiles (an employee of the Palestinian ministry of endowments) reading, "UNRWA covered the map of Palestine when heinous Ban Ki-moon visited the Gaza Strip today. UNRWA forgot it is engraved on the hearts of millions of Muslims #Why_cover_it" (Facebook page of Jihad Hiles, June 28, 2016).



A cartoon from Hamas' Twitter account in response to the outcry over Ban Ki-moon's visit to the UNRWA school. There is a picture of a Palestinian child,³ who points to the covered map of "Palestine" and says, "Anyone who is worried is invited to drink seawater..." (Twitter account of Palinfo, June 28, 2016).

5. Adnan Abu Hasna, UNRWA's media advisor in the Gaza Strip, responded to the criticism in an interview with the Pentagon Post website in Arabic. He claimed UNRWA had made a decision to cover the map of Palestine. It was the result of an "independent decision" made by one of the UNRWA employees who thought the map

³ The picture of the Palestinian child is reminiscent of Handala, the creation of cartoonist Al Naji, assassinated in London in 1987. Handala is a Palestinian refugee child who sees the injustice done to his people, and became a symbol of the Palestinian struggle.

might embarrass the UN secretary general. He therefore covered it the day before the visit (Palestine.hayatweb.com, June 30, 2016). He also said that **the map was part of the [UNRWA] curriculum and no one could deny it** (Al-Hayat al-Jadeeda, June 28, 2016). **He claimed the presence of the map [in the UNRWA school] did not harm the agency's neutrality** (Ma'an, June 28, 2016).