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Brown University's *Choices Curriculum*: Platform for an Anti-Zionist Narrative

For the full report: <https://www.camera.org/wp-content/uploads/2024/01/Choices-Report-with-Cover-Page.pdf>

Brown University's *Choices* program, affiliated with its Department of History since 2018, is marketed as social science curricula for secondary schools. The program's website claims it is used in 8,000 high schools across the U.S. states, as well as in 200 international schools.

After receiving complaints about the curriculum's treatment of Israel, Zionism and the Palestinian-Israeli conflict and cognizant of the anti-Israel activism of many Brown University faculty members (over 10% of its entire faculty support boycott, divestment and sanctions against Israel) as well as the antisemitic ideology opposing the Jewish state that emanates from the University's Center for Middle East Studies, CAMERA's Education Institute analyzed the curriculum's video collection and student texts addressing the above-mentioned topics. These were primarily associated with the program's unit on "The Middle East: Questions for U.S. Policy" although materials that tangentially addressed the topics, found in other units, were included in the analysis, as well.

We found that the videos and readings on those topics – forming the core of the curriculum – present high school students with an anti-Zionist narrative representative of Palestine Liberation ideology and aligned with the messaging of the Boycott Divestment and Sanctions (BDS) Movement, namely that the establishment and defense of the modern Jewish state is illegitimate and entirely to blame for the ongoing Arab-Israeli conflict. This narrative was advanced by the Qatar Fund International, the U.S. subsidiary of the Qatar foundation, through its funding of some of the *Choices* program's professional outreach workshops on teaching the Middle East and of the cost to teachers of the curriculum's Middle East-focused units.

The primary contributors to the videos about the history and development of the Arab-Israeli conflict are Rema Hammami, Adi Ophir, and Sreemati Mitter, academics affiliated with Brown's Center for Middle East Studies that's been criticized for its antisemitic ideology. Their videos teach students that Israel was established as a settler-colonialist state on the indigenous land of current-day Palestinians, that Israel continues to seize Arab land and to deprive Palestinians of their civil rights and liberties. (In other videos, the U.S. too is blamed for imperialism and colonialism and faulted for supporting Israel.)

Blame for the ills in the region is placed squarely on Israeli Jews – Israel is portrayed as a racist and apartheid state -- while Arab aggression is justified and Palestinian terrorism entirely erased. It is a narrative built largely on falsehoods and omission of historical context. These videos are freely accessible online even without a subscription to the *Choices* program, as well as being embedded in the digital unit and used as resources for student assignments.

The student readings similarly erase Palestinian terrorism from the equation: Terrorist groups are called "resistance groups" while deadly and brutal terror attacks perpetrated by them are ignored, or whitewashed and justified as "armed struggle against Israeli occupation." Even the terrorist designation by most Western countries of Hamas, responsible for the deadliest massacre of Jews since the Holocaust is downplayed. "While the United States and Israel say Hamas is a terrorist organization," reads the text, "the United Nations does not. Hamas calls itself an Islamic national liberation and resistance movement."

The *Choices* curriculum is replete with historical revisionism that whitewashes Palestinian aggression and terrorism, erases Hamas' stated goals and genocidal intent and portrays the existence of the Jewish state as illegitimate. It leaves students woefully unprepared to deal with the burgeoning antisemitism that we're seeing today. A curriculum that entrenches anti-Zionist stereotypes and falsehoods, like that of *Choices* can only feed the growing antisemitism in U.S. classrooms.