



Police investigating Islamic school over curriculum comparing Jews to Nazis

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Police are investigating a complaint about a Toronto Muslim school whose curriculum tells boys to exercise so they are “ready for jihad,” refers to “treacherous Jews” and contrasts Islam with “the Jews and the Nazis.”

“Yes, I can confirm for you that a complaint has been made and our Hate Crimes Unit is investigating,” Acting Sergeant Rebecca Boyd, a York Region Police spokeswoman, told the National Post on Monday.

“However, they are in the early stages of the investigation,” she added. The complaint was made by the Friends of the Simon Wiesenthal Centre, which found the material on the website of the East End Madrassah.

The Islamic school operates out of David and Mary Thomson Collegiate Institute, a public high school in Toronto. But the complaint was made to police in York because the Islamic school’s mailing address is in that region.

“We are looking into it,” said Masuma Jessa, principal of the East End Madrassah. She said the curriculum document in question had been removed from the school’s website. Later on Monday, the entire school website went offline.

The Toronto District School Board said in a statement it was cooperating with police and would “take appropriate action pending the conclusion of the investigation.”

Spokesman Ryan Bird said the board could revoke a school permit if the holder was found to be promoting hatred. “The TDSB does not support or tolerate any group that promotes hatred.”

The complaints concerned the school's Level 8 curriculum, which describe historical conflicts between Muslims and Jews. It refers to "Jewish plots and treacheries" as well as "crafty" and "treacherous" Jews.

Another section discusses jihad, which it says means "to strive for something." But it adds that jihad "sometimes also involves fighting a war against an unjust ruler." It then quotes Muslim scripture that says about "fighting (in the cause of Allah) is ordained unto you..."

In "Sports and Jihad," a section of the Level 7 curriculum, it says Islam encouraged boys to engaged in physical training in order to be ready for jihad, but girls were instead to stick to "hobbies" that prepare them to become wives and mothers.

The Level 3 curriculum asks students to color 10 boxes, each representing a branch of Islam. One of the boxes is labeled: Jihad. Later, it explains that jihad "is not just with a weapon, it can be with your writing and speech also," as well as an internal struggle.

"To think that this is happening right here in Canada, in our backyards, in our own country where we promote tolerance, diversity, understanding, human rights, and bringing those types of concepts over the from the ancient world if you will, its just unbelievable," said Avi Benlolo, President and CEO of the Friends of the Simon Wiesenthal Centre.

The Centre for Israel and Jewish Affairs also raised concerns about the curriculum in a press release issued Monday, as well as in a complaint to the Toronto school board.

"Using religion to promote hatred among youth is not just offensive and abhorrent – it shows a stunning disregard for Canada's basic values of decency and tolerance," said David Spiro, Greater Toronto Co-Chair of centre.

Ms. Jessa said the complaint about the material was made on Thursday. "We told them that we took the book off the website and yesterday [Sunday] we had a meeting and we looked at it and we are correcting it," she said. "It was an error."

She said the school was a "subsidiary" and the "parent company" had dealt with the matter. The Friends of the Simon Wiesenthal Centre said the response to its complaint had come from the Islamic Shia Ithna Asheri Jamaat, an Islamic centre on Bathurst Rd. in Toronto.

The centre's resident scholar could not be reached for comment on Monday. But in an email to Mr. Benlolo on Saturday, the group's honorary secretary, Mazahair Dhirani, promised an internal review.

"In the meantime, we have asked the book to be removed from the web portal and there should no distribution of any physical material (if available) until the necessary changes have been made to the text," he wrote.