



Toronto Islamic school's anti-Jewish books came from Iran

Stewart Bell, *National Post* · May. 10, 2012

TORONTO — A Toronto Islamic school's teaching materials, which have prompted a police hate crimes investigation because of their portrayal of Jews, were originally published by Iranian organizations, records show.

The passages of the East End Madrassah's texts that drew the most widespread condemnation are excerpts from two books, including one published by the Al Balagh Foundation in Iran.

The other book, which contrasts Islam with "the Jews and the Nazis," was published by the Mostazafan Foundation of New York, which the U.S. alleges was a front organization for the Iranian government.

Jewish community groups were disappointed to learn that materials from Iran — whose president, Mahmoud Ahmadinejad, is known for his anti-Semitism, Holocaust denial and threats against Israel — had found their way into Canadian school texts.

"As Canadians, we are deeply troubled at the notion that children in our country are learning from materials published by an organization that, according to the FBI, is directly controlled by the Ayatollahs of Iran," said David Koschitzky, chair of the Centre for Israel and Jewish Affairs.

"We urge the Toronto District School Board — and all public institutions that house related programs — to ensure that radical, theocratic regimes that are hostile to our values are not permitted in our public schools."

Avi Benlolo, president and CEO of the Friends of the Simon Wiesenthal Center, which filed a complaint with police about the madrassa, said the Ontario Ministry of Education needs to examine the school.

“It’s shameful that the so-called literature from a foreign entity like Iran is being filtered here to educate young Canadian people, and transplanting the Iranian dogma into Canada,” Mr. Benlolo said.

Neither the madrassa nor its parent organization, the Islamic Shia Ithna Asheri Jamaat, could be reached for comment Wednesday.

The East End Madrassa rents space every Sunday in a high school owned by the Toronto District School Board. The madrassa apologized to the Jewish community earlier this week and promised to review its teaching materials.

“Our curriculum is not intended to promote hatred towards any individual or group of people, rather the children are taught to respect and value other faiths, beliefs and to uphold Canada’s basic values of decency and tolerance,” the madrassa said in a statement.

On Tuesday, Maulana Syed Muhammad Rizvi told reporters the materials in question had been lifted from two websites.

But the section of the school’s curriculum that describes “treacherous” and “crafty” Jews as well as Jewish “plots” and “conspiracies” is from the Iranian-published Prophet Muhammad: A Brief Biography, while the Nazi comparison is from A Glance at the Life of the Holy Prophet of Islam.

The publisher of the latter title, the Mostazafan Foundation of New York, was formed after the 1979 Iranian revolution by order of Ayatollah Khomeini, according to the FBI. It was later renamed the Alavi Foundation.

U.S. prosecutors arrested the Alavi Foundation’s president in 2008 and have gone to court to seize its assets, arguing it is secretly controlled by Iran.