



Paul Noursi – Co-chair
Nancy Wein – Co-chair

Participating Organizations

American Muslims for Palestine

Appalachian Peace Education Center

Arab American Association of Central Virginia

Community for Justice in Palestine & Israel of the Alliance of Baptists

Defenders for Freedom, Justice, and Equality

Israel Palestine Mission Network of the Presbyterian Church - USA

Jewish Voice for Peace

National Arab American Women's Association

New Dominion PAC

Northern Virginians for Peace & Justice

Palestinian Christian Alliance for Peace

Plowshares Peace & Justice Center

Richmonders for Peace in Israel and Palestine

Unitarian Universalists for Justice in the Middle East, Northern Virginia Chapter

United Methodists for Kairos Response

US Campaign for Palestinian Rights

Washington Interfaith Alliance for Middle East Peace

January 25, 2019

Jack Lynch
President and CEO
Houghton Mifflin Harcourt
125 High Street
Boston, MA 02110

Dear Mr. Lynch,

We are co-chairs of the Education Committee of the Virginia Coalition for Human Rights, and we write to thank you for Houghton Mifflin Harcourt's (HMH) response of June 28, 2018 and for promising to give prompt attention to our concerns about inaccuracies and misinformation in *Modern World History Virginia Edition*. Since that time, we have learned that HMH's Customer Experience Team inadvertently forwarded our letter to Cengage Publishing. It is in this effort that we begin anew with Case # 05784363.

In general, we have found the text related to Israel and Palestine and the Middle East more broadly to be biased and inaccurate. We are concerned that it has generalizations and over simplifications, which lead to historical errors. Some problem areas include: a one-sided, largely pro-Israel account of conflict; the absence of discussion of indirect cause-and-effect relationships; the homogenization of a variety of perspectives that exist on the issue; the reinforcement of stereotypes; and the usage of charged and polarized language that distorts the history and manipulates emotions. Moreover, the textbook fails to take into account recent research, especially that on the Ottoman Empire, and uses classic historical tropes, such as the notion that modernization is equivalent to democracy.

We have attached a review by Virginia-based academicians—many of whom are Middle East experts—of the problematic sections of the text. Our concerns are in Modules 23, 26, 29, 30 and 32—with Module 30 being the most disturbing. For each problematic statement, we have noted the passage and have provided a possible rewording of that passage, along with our rationales and multiple citations.

In addition to our review, we have attached a summary of the rating sheet for this text completed by a Virginia Department of Education Textbook review committee in December of 2017, which rated WHII.2 and WHII.7 in Section I as "Limited." Our scholars also rated these two standards as limited, in addition to SOLs WHII.1, WHII.13.c, WHII.14.d, and WHII.15.a.

Thank you in advance for responding to this letter as part of your ongoing commitment to provide "rich programs that challenge assumptions and encourage critical thinking" in history and social science textbooks.

Kathy Drinkard
Co-chair, Education Committee

Jeanne Trabulsi
Co-chair, Education Committee

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