Study Revealed Numerous Passages in Saudi Textbooks Advocating Intolerance and Violence

Summary
The U.S. Commission on International Religious Freedom (USCIRF) had an independent contractor review 12 Saudi high school textbooks for the current 2017-2018 academic school year. The books, numbering more than 2,000 pages and focusing only on religious subjects, are much more intolerant than the six religious books from 2012-2014 that were reviewed by USCIRF. Based on the books reviewed, it appears that they are even more intolerant than the 2011-2012 textbooks studied by the International Center for Religion and Diplomacy (ICRD), which identified many intolerant passages. The 2017-2018 books are more akin to Saudi textbooks from the early years of the previous decade before the Saudi government promised to reform its curricula. The issues found in the books implicated religious freedom and other human rights.

Method
Twelve books were reviewed. All of them have to do with religious studies, which is where most of the troublesome content had been found in previous years. The books are as follows:

### Standard High School Curriculum (2017-2018)
- Shared Program
  - Hadith 1
  - Interpretation (Tafsir) 1
  - Monotheism (Tawhid) 1
  - Jurisprudence (Fiqh) 1
- Specialized Program
  - Hadith 2
  - Interpretation (Tafsir) 2
  - Monotheism (Tawhid) 2
  - Jurisprudence (Fiqh) 2
- Optional Program
  - Jurisprudence (Fiqh) 3

### Quarterly High School Curriculum (2017-2018)
- Monotheism (Tawhid) 1 – Quarterly
- Qur’an Sciences (Ulum al-Qur’an) 1 – Quarterly
- Jurisprudence (Fiqh) 1 – Quarterly
The most problematic material is organized by theme for ease of reference. Below are translations of select, representative passages from the textbooks.

**Infidels and Jihad**

Like the 2011-2012 books (ICRD study pp. 79-80), the 2018 books extol jihad and violence against infidels. The worst passages are those that urge violence against nonbelievers for their unbelief or for insulting Islam in some manner.

"Jihad for the sake of God is the pinnacle of Islam, and its purpose is calling to God and spreading the religion of Islam, which is why calling to God is preferred over fighting, in contradiction to what the enemies of Islam say is the purpose of jihad, that it is to kill, to destroy, and to take forcefully money and land." (Hadith (2): 48)

"[Among the types of Jihad is] striving with the infidels by proselytizing them and fighting them.” (Hadith (2): 197)

"Jihad in the path of God is the pinnacle of Islam.” (Hadith (2): 197; Interpretation (1): 97)

"3 – Being severe against enemy nonbelievers
4 – Encouraging jihad in the path of God and warning against neglecting that
5 - Explaining that the aim of the jihad in the path of God is to make the word of God supreme and spread His religion
6 – Exposing the people of the Book, explaining the falsity of their doctrines, and encouraging fighting of them until they give the jizya” (Interpretation (1): 94, explaining Surat al-Tawba, the Qur'an's ninth sura)

"The Hour will not come until the Muslims fight the Jews, and the Muslims will kill them until the Jews will hide behind the rocks and the trees. The rocks and the trees will say: O Muslim, O servant of God, there is a Jew behind me, come and kill him – except for the gharqad tree which is a tree of the Jews.” (Monotheism (2): 102)

"Anyone who makes fun of God, His verses, or His Prophet is an apostate. No excuse is acceptable from him, so either he repents or is killed for infidelity.” (Interpretation (1): 109)
Other passages urge believers to avoid befriending nonbelievers, in keeping with the Saudi doctrine of *al-wala’* (only befriending Muslims):

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Arabic Text</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>موالاة المؤمنين ومعاداة الكافرين أوثق عرى الإيمان</td>
<td>“Being loyal to Muslims and being the enemy of the infidels is the firmest handle of faith.” (Monotheism (1): 163)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>خطورة موالاة الكافرين المحاربين للمؤمنين</td>
<td>“…danger of befriending infidels who are fighting the believers.” (Interpretation (2): 69)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Muslims are urged to avoid befriending Jews and Christians because they are presumed to be hostile to Islam:

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<tr>
<td>إن اليهود والنصارى لا يرضىهم الا الكفر بالإسلام واتباع ملتهم.</td>
<td>“There is no satisfying the Jews and Christians except by disbelieving in Islam and following their faiths.” (Interpretation (2): 78)</td>
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<tr>
<td>بيان كيد اليهود وحرصهم على تثبيت الصف الإسلامي وزعريعة عقيدة المسلمين ونشر الشبهات والشهوات بينهم</td>
<td>“Explanation of the plotting of the Jews, and their effort to divide the ranks of Islam, unsettle the dogma of Muslims, and sow doubts and base desires among them.” (Interpretation (2): 116)</td>
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Similar passages discouraging inter-religious fellowship are found in the 2011-2012 textbooks studied by ICRD, as well as those in the USCIRF review of the 2012-2014 textbooks.

**Apostasy**

As in the 2011-2012 Jurisprudence textbooks (ICRD report, p. 69), the current books state that Muslims who convert to another religion should be killed:

<table>
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<tr>
<td>حد الردة هو القتل لا فرق ذلك بين الرجل والمرأة</td>
<td>“The punishment for apostasy is death. There is no distinction in that between a man and a woman.” (Jurisprudence (1): 277)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>قتل المرتد حيث إن دره مفسدة ووجوده كإنساد غيره من أهله وولده وفتته الناس به وتجربتهم على الدين اولي من مصلحة بقائه التي فيها من المصالح</td>
<td>“Killing the apostate since fending off the corruption of his existence—like corrupting others among his people and children, causing dissension among the people, and making them risk religion—is better than the benefit of him remaining…” (Jurisprudence (3), 46)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
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<tr>
<td>القتل إن لم يتب</td>
<td>“Death [for the apostate] if he does not repent.” (Jurisprudence (1) - Quarterly: 137)</td>
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</table>

The two Jurisprudence textbooks for 2013, by contrast, do not call for the execution of apostates or sorcerers. Instead, the textbooks stress that the apostate should be treated like any other nonbeliever.
## Women, Homosexuals, and Illicit Sex

The textbooks advocate beating women when they disobey and stoning them to death if they have an affair:

<table>
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<tr>
<td>“Hitting [your wife] is only permitted when necessary.” (Interpretation (2): 174)</td>
<td>&quot;وانما يجوز الضرب عند الضرورة&quot;</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>&quot;...go and check on [that man's] wife, if she admits adultery, then stone her.” (Jurisprudence (3): 83)</td>
<td>&quot;واعد يا أمير هذا فإن اعترفت فارجها&quot;</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>&quot;The punishment of adultery is stoning to death.” (Jurisprudence (1) – Quarterly: 154)</td>
<td>&quot;وحدة إذا زنى الزوج بالحجارة حتى يموت&quot;</td>
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Similarly, homosexuals are to be stoned to death regardless of whether they are married:

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<tr>
<td>“Some of the ulama say the punishment for sodomy is death, so the giver and the receiver should be killed regardless of whether they are married or not.” (Jurisprudence (1): 256)</td>
<td>&quot;وقال بعض العلماء: عقوبة اللواط القتل فيقتل الفاعل والمفعول به سواء أكانا محصنين أم غير محصنين.&quot;</td>
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<tr>
<td>“The majority of jurists say the punishment of sodomy is the same as the punishment of adultery [i.e., stoning to death].” (Fiqh (1) - Quarterly: 161)</td>
<td>&quot;ذهب حجمه الأئمة إلى أن حد اللواط كحد الزوج.&quot;</td>
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</table>
ICRD’s study did not focus on homosexuality and the USCIRF review of the 2012-2014 books only turned up one passage that condemned homosexuality. The passage did not call for the death of homosexuals.

Finally, women are to be isolated socially from strangers:

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<tr>
<td>يحرم على الرجل مسافحة المرأة الأجنبية</td>
<td>“It is forbidden to shake hands with a woman who is not a close relative.” (Jurisprudence (1) – Quarterly: 148)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>يحرم اختلاط الرجال بالنساء في الوظائف و على مقاعد الدراسة وفي الحفلات وما اشبه ذلك.</td>
<td>“It is forbidden to be close to women at work, in schools, in parties, and in similar places.” (Jurisprudence (1) - Quarterly: 149)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>يحرم سفر المرأة بغير محرم محرم</td>
<td>“It is forbidden for women to travel without a mahram.” (Jurisprudence (1) - Quarterly: 149)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>إذا لم تجد المرأة المريضة إلا طبيبا رجلا واحتاج العلاج إلى كشف شيء من بدنها كاذنها مثلًا فلا يجوز كشف ما زاد على الاذن.</td>
<td>“If a sick woman can only find a male doctor and treatment requires revealing part of her body, like her ear for example, she can only reveal the ear.” (Jurisprudence (3): 42)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Conclusion**

These passages are more intolerant than what USCIRF found in similar books from 2012-2014; they resemble passages in the Saudi school textbooks written before curriculum reform was initiated in the years after the September 11, 2001 attacks on the United States. They also reflect Wahhabi doctrines and not other trends of Islamic scholarship that are more accepting, some of which were represented in the 2012-2014 textbooks. In addition, this review did not turn up any expressions of tolerance in the textbooks for the current 2017-2018 school year.
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