

Erdogan Says He Wants Improved Relations with Israel, But Turkey's School Curriculum Says Otherwise

by Hugh Fitzgerald



Recep Tayyip Erdogan has had his closest collaborators let the world know that he “wants to improve relations with Israel, and hopes to sign an agreement on maritime borders with the Jewish state.” On Dec. 25, 2020, Erdogan himself called for “better ties with Israel.” He has returned the Turkish ambassador to Israel, who had been ordered home after the Mavi Marmara incident. Also this past December, Israel Hayom reported that former admiral Cihat Yayci, a close confidant of Erdogan, had proposed a bilateral agreement on the countries’

shared exclusive economic zones in the Mediterranean Sea. Four months earlier, Ankara sent a clear message to Jerusalem on its desire to start talks on the subject, but due to the ongoing coronavirus pandemic, talks were never held. According to Yaici's proposal, both countries' maritime borders would join together at Cyprus' expense. This has no chance of being accepted by Israel, which will not betray its Cypriot ally, but the fact of Turkey's attempted outreach to Israel is worth noting, for it takes place at the very time when Erdogan is sending a different signal, in insisting that what is taught in Turkish schools continue to follow a curriculum that is weighed down with anti-Zionist messaging.

Now we learn that the Turkish schools have steadily been increasing the anti-Israel content of their classes – a development especially disturbing in light of Erdogan's insistence that he wants to improve ties with the Jewish state. The report on the anti-Israel messages in Turkish schools is