

From: JIMENA: Jews Indigenous to the Middle East and North Africa **On Behalf Of** JIMENA: Jews Indigenous to the Middle East and North Africa

Sent: Friday, August 14, 2020 12:07 PM

To: IQC

Subject: [EXTERNAL] JIMENA Together: California Ethnic Studies Update, Sephardic Kabbalah, Online Programs

Having trouble viewing this email? [Click here](#)



August 14th, 2020
24 Av, 5780

Ethnic Studies Model Curriculum Update

A I M E E

Advocates for Inclusive Middle Eastern Education

[Who We Are](#) [Join Us](#) [Press](#) [FAQs](#) [Contact Us](#)

30 YEARS
AFTER



ASSYRIAN
FOUNDATION OF AMERICA

Los Angeles
Baha'i Center

KCSC
San Diego Community of Teachers' Education

COPTIC
SOLIDARITY

PAAIA





On Thursday, August 13th the Instructional Quality Commission (IQC) of the California Department of Education (CDE) met to review the second draft of its revised Ethnic Studies Model Curriculum (ESMC). JIMENA is deeply troubled by last minute recommendations by CDE to include an Arab American lesson plan which will not be available for public review. While JIMENA supports the inclusion of Middle Eastern-American experiences, it is our hope that the revised Ethnic Studies Curriculum will make clear that under the "broadly defined umbrella of Asian Studies" are Mizrahi Jews and other Middle Eastern and North African (MENA) groups which represent 60% of California's Middle Eastern community but have been excluded from both drafts of the ESMC.

During the IQC meeting, JIEMNA's Executive Director Sarah Levin noted that, "We need an Ethnic Studies Model Curriculum that is balanced and equitable for all Middle Eastern and North African school children - including Mizrahi Jews and the 500,000 Middle Eastern Californians who were excluded from both drafts of the curriculum." These concerns are shared by the ten members of the multi-ethnic Middle Eastern-American coalition, [Advocates for Inclusive Middle Eastern Education \(AIMEE\)](#) who continue to request inclusion of their stories in California's Ethnic Studies Model Curriculum.

AIMEE collation member, Peter Warda who serves as President of the Assyrian American Association of Southern California noted, "At present, our countries of origin are quickly becoming homogenous due to policies that either lead to the expulsion of minority groups or force them to conform to majority expectations. Our experiences as persecuted, indigenous minorities attest to this. We fear that our exclusion from a curriculum would

contribute to the ongoing cultural genocide and erasure of minority voices from the Middle East and North Africa."

These sentiments were shared by over 20 Mizrahi Jews who called into the IQC meeting. Sapir Taib, JIMENA's Program Director noted to members of the IQC that, "My grandparents fled antisemitic religious persecution in Libya and Tunisia and as a Mizrahi Jew, I was disappointed to see my indigenous Middle Eastern community completely omitted from the revised Ethnic Studies Model Curriculum. As a Jewish person of color, and as an immigrant, it was troublesome to me that the primary reference to Jews in the curriculum was in the context of our communities being the beneficiaries of white privilege." Echoing the sentiments of Stand With Us, Israeli American Council, and multiple Sephardic organizations, many of the Mizrahi Jews who called in requested that JIMENA's lesson plan, "[Antisemitism and Middle Eastern-American Jews](#)" be added to the curriculum.

JIMENA is seeking not only inclusion of materials reflecting Southwest Asian and North African demographics in California, but transparency in the process of the curriculum's development. We implore the California Department of Education to ensure that new materials added to the curriculum goes through the 45-day public comment period, in accordance with AB 2016.