

# Tel Aviv and the Israeli Government Spar Over School Maps Showing 1967 Borders

The Tel Aviv municipality is spearheading a rare initiative: teaching students about the Green Line. But the Education Ministry is barring the use of maps depicting occupied territories, 'not even as a poster on the wall'



An old map of 'Greater Israel,' other countries labeled 'Enemies.' Art by Sivan Hurwitz. Credit: Sivan Hurwitz



Or Kashti

 Follow

Aug 23, 2022



Listen to this article now

04:51



Powered by [Trinity Audio](#)

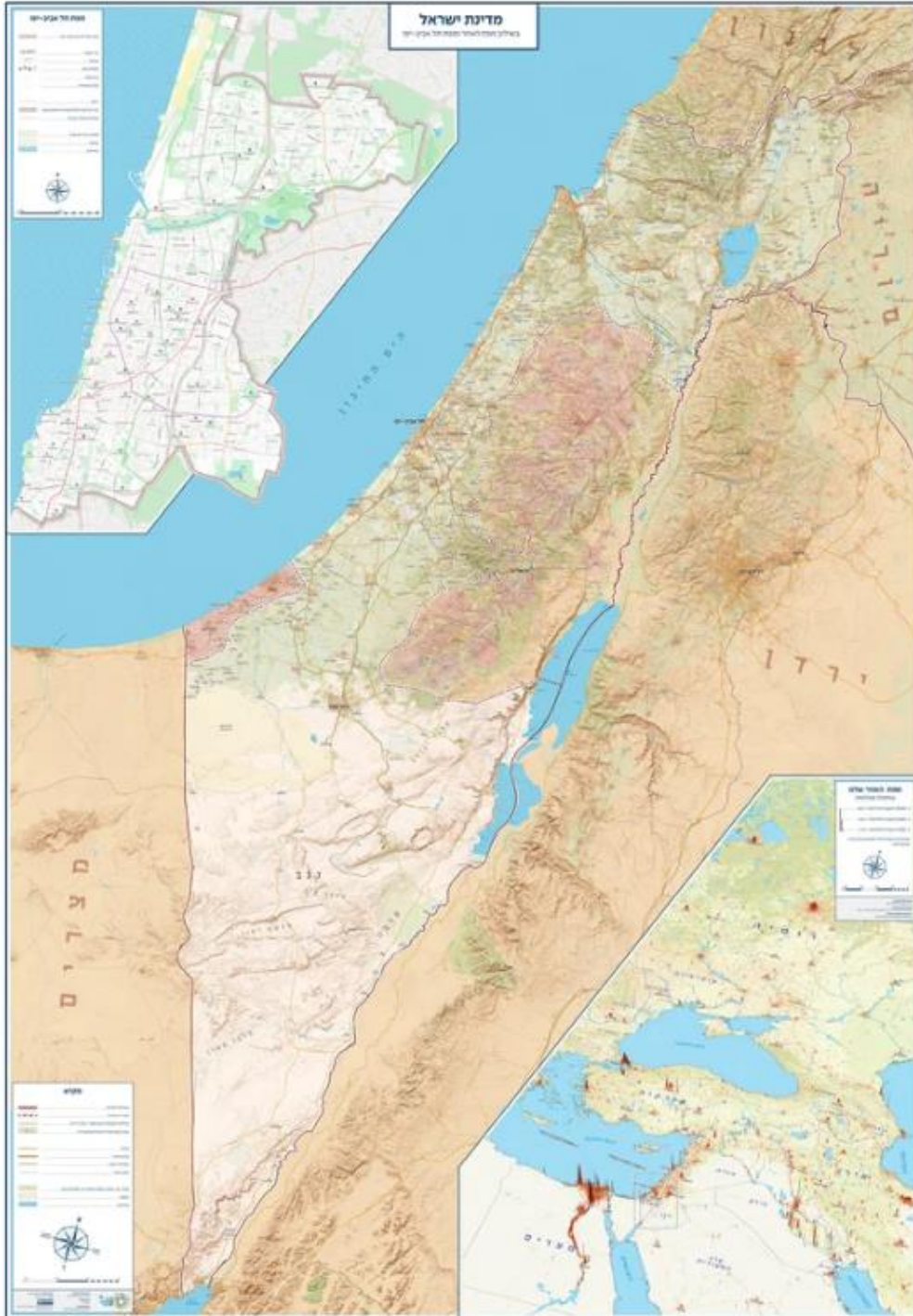
With the new school year about to open, the Tel Aviv-Jaffa municipality sent its schools maps showing the Green Line, which was Israel's pre-1967 border. But the Education Ministry told the municipality on Monday that it can't use the map – “not even as a poster on the wall.”

Most religious public schools have also opposed use of the map. But other schools plan to hang the maps in some 2,000 classrooms around the city on Tuesday.

On Tuesday morning, Deputy Mayor Chen Arieli said that the city will post the maps in classrooms in defiance of the Education Ministry. In a tweet she published, Arieli said that students "deserve to be raised in a realistic space, and not a censored one."

“It’s important to us that students know Israel’s sovereign borders and the complex reality in areas where Jewish citizens of Israel and Arabs under the Palestinian Authority’s control live side by side,” [Mayor Ron Huldai](#) wrote in a letter to school principals.

In most schools, there is almost no discussion of Israel’s borders. Commercially produced maps are hung in classrooms only at the initiative of local governments or individual schools, and they generally don’t show the Green Line.



The map that will be placed in classrooms across Tel Aviv. Credit: Tel Aviv-Jaffa Municipality

Textbooks, which require ministry approval, also barely address this issue. And no official Israeli map shows the Green Line, under a cabinet decision made back in 1967.

Consequently, Tel Aviv's initiative is exceptional.

The kit it sent to schools contains three maps – a map of Tel Aviv-Jaffa; a map of Israel, the West Bank and Gaza Strip that shows both the Green Line and Israel's current political borders (which aren't identical); and a map of the eastern Mediterranean Basin. The middle map also shows the areas transferred to Palestinian Authority control under the Oslo Accords. Arab schools received the same three maps in Arabic.

- Israeli Schools' Map to Ignorance
- Why Do U.S. Jewish Camps Erase the Green Line?
- No One Knows Where Israel Ends and the Palestinian Territories Begin

In most places, Israel's current borders are similar to the Green Line, which is where the cease-fire line ran following the 1948 War of Independence. But it annexed East Jerusalem and the Golan Heights, both areas beyond the Green Line, after 1967. In contrast, it never annexed the West Bank or Gaza.



In his letter to schools, Huldai said that familiarity with “the state, its landscapes and its borders is essential for producing an involved citizen,” and the map should be used as a “necessary accessory in almost every subject in the curriculum,” including history, geography, language arts and current events.

### **'Censoring reality'**

The city began preparing the maps two years ago at the initiative of Deputy Mayor Chen Arieli, who cosigned the letter to principals, and the head of the city’s education department, Shirley Rimon.

“Instead of censoring reality, the map allows it to be discussed,” Arieli said. “To raise active citizens, they have to understand the region – which includes the Green Line.” The map, she added, “will enable students to better understand the reality we live in; that should be in everyone’s interest.”



Education Minister Yifat Shasha-Biton. Credit: Ohad Zwigenberg

But the letter to principals also acknowledged that discussing Israel's borders involves some "complexity," since Israel's situation is "sometimes controversial, sometimes changeable and sometimes does change in accordance with government policy."

In 2007, then-Education Minister Yuli Tamir ordered school maps to show the Green Line. Rightists were furious, and the decision hadn't yet been implemented when Tamir was replaced by Gideon Sa'ar two years later.

A study conducted by Prof. Avner Ben-Amos of Tel Aviv University two years ago concluded that history, civics and geography textbooks, with only a few exceptions, treat "Jewish control and the Palestinians' inferior position as almost natural and self-evident developments that don't need to be thought about." He acknowledged that the Green Line appears on historical maps, but otherwise, he said, all Israeli governments have sought to obscure its existence.

The Education Ministry said that Tel Aviv's map was "unprofessional and amateurish" in both its cartography and "its tendentious use of the term 'sovereignty line.'" Moreover, the ministry never approved it, so it can't be "taught or even used as a poster on the walls."

The only party authorized to draw Israel's maps, it added, is the Survey of Israel. But in the past, that government agency has reportedly refused to reveal where the Green Line runs, saying this information "would endanger Israel's foreign relations."