



Media Statement

AFIC stands with all religious communities in protection of their religious obligations, offers solutions to stop bullying in schools

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AFIC respects the right of all established faiths to have their religious observances respected and will always defend the rights of faith-adherents to the unhindered practice of their faith-teachings where these practices do not cause physical violence against others.

Whilst a religious symbol was used to cause violence recently, AFIC continues to hold the view that schools, all schools require to have strong mechanisms that allow pupils to learn in an environment that is free from bullying. Over the years, we have received direct reports of various horrific forms of bullying in schools. Some of this bullying has led to severe cases of depression, insulation and in some cases attempted suicide. Bullying is an epidemic that must be directly addressed.

Some schools have rightly established special classes for children exhibiting bullying behaviour where these children can be given proper counselling and remedial teaching whilst receiving the necessary tuition to keep up with their classmates. This system has proved to be exceptionally successful, kudos to all those private schools who have established this system.

The public system is not sufficiently funded/equipped to deal adequately with such matters, suspensions and expulsions are not a solution to bullying, these compound the problem, especially in cases where the child who exhibits this behaviour lacks proper supervision outside of school. The establishment of “reflection classes”, “cooling off classes” and “remedial classes” under whatever name has proved to be an effective treatment for bullying. Children allocated to such classes (maximum of 9 in a classroom) are given different break times to the remaining student population and are kept in these classes for two weeks or slightly longer subject to the assessment of the supervising teacher.

AFIC officers have seen the tremendous success of such programs in helping our Australian youth appreciate and respect the rights of others and their own ability to address their personal issues.

“The Kirpan incident must be seen in this light, it must not be seen as a danger caused by a religious symbol. The Kirpan is carried to prevent violence against the vulnerable, in this regard, this isolated school incident should not be sensationalised to the point of marginalising or offending a peaceful faith-community.” Said AFIC president Dr Rateb Jneid.

“We have seen numerous reports of incidents of school violence that did not involve a physical weapon, this violence betrays a societal need for greater attention to the environment faced by our children. We appeal to society to respect the religious symbols of the Sikh community, including the Kirpan and Turban and not to allow one incident in response to overwhelming bullying to divert us from the needs of our education system or to attack a minority.” Said AFIC CEO Keysar Trad.

Authorised by Dr Rateb Jneid
President

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