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**Pakistan teachers concerned about new education policy**

Sunday, 2nd December 2007. 8:14am

By: Nick Mackenzie.

A GROUP OF teachers in Pakistan have attacked new plans to revise the country's education policy.



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At the heart of their concerns are worries that the new proposals were lacking a sense of values, but they were also unhappy about bias in the planned books. They say that the current inclusion of the material is unlikely to lead to 'harmony, tolerance, acceptance and universal brotherhood'.

The Pakistan Minorities Teachers' Association say that the 'purpose of the textbooks must be to create an atmosphere of social and interfaith harmony among students of all faiths and races.'

In their submission to the Pakistan Prime Minister, Mohammadmian Somro, they are also calling for religious teaching in school to be banned because of the fear of causing offence and sparking religious conflict. They particularly highlight the Muslim faith in that regard.

"The followers of other faiths cannot even defend their faith due to the discriminatory laws such as Section 295 B and C of Pakistan Penal Code. (Pakistan Blasphemy Laws). Negation of other faiths in the textbooks must be abolished because educationists from the other faiths are deliberately kept aside," they say.

"There is disinformation and propagation against the other faiths by such biased Muslim educationists, who are unluckily the authors of these textbooks. Curriculum Wing (Ministry of Education) is held responsible for this all because textbooks are written under the instructions of this wing", they said.

Instead of teaching this material in classes, they say that the teachings and preaching of Islam, Islamic heroes and Islamic ways of life must be only for the Muslim students in the subject of Islamic Studies.

They argue that the subject of 'Religion' should be compulsory for students of all faiths as it is in the case of Muslim students or it should be abolished altogether.

They added that the students of other faiths must be given exemption from studying Islam and Arabic.

They also want a repeal of the law that requires people applying for admission to declare their religion. And they want believers from other religions that just Islam to be featured in textbooks on the creation and construction of Pakistan.