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The dawning of an interfaith movement in Pakistan

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Pakistan today isn't exactly known for religious tolerance. If anything, religious differences can lead to violence. Islam is the official state religion, and the country is about 98 percent Muslim, mostly Sunni Muslim. And thanks to blasphemy laws, saying something negative about Muhammad can get you sent to jail, or worse.

So it took no small amount of courage to conceive an academic program where students take mandatory classes in "respecting the other" and "valuing diversity." And plans are moving ahead despite the dangers. These courses will be part of the first interfaith curriculum ever offered in Pakistan. The program is called the Center for Dialogue and Action, and it will be located at Forman Christian College in Lahore. The college is an old and respected university on the sub-continent, predating the partition of India and Pakistan.

This week, I had the privilege of interviewing the founder of this new interfaith program, Dr. Amineh Hoti. She is a Muslim Pakistani woman convinced that this work is worth whatever risks loom in Lahore. She learned the rubrics of interfaith work and dialogue at the University of Cambridge in Great Britain. She also learned a lot from her father, Dr. Akbar Ahmed, a leading Islamic scholar and participant in interfaith dialogues.

After the interview, she told me Catholic sisters in Pakistan educated her, and she remains grateful for the experience and education.

Listen to the interview online.

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