

London: Christian Greek Cypriot teacher «forced out» of his job denies insulting Muslim girl over headscarf

A primary school teacher who claims he was forced out of his job today denied making offensive remarks about a Muslim pupil's headscarf.

Nicholas Kafouris (foto), who is suing his former school for racial discrimination, told the girl she was 'wearing a headscarf for no reason', according to a parent.



The parent claimed Mr Kafouris was promoting 'Christianity as better than Islam' and complained to the headteacher, an employment tribunal heard.

He denied making the comment, insisting it would make 'no sense' for him to have said it.

The teacher claimed that complaints were only made against him after he reported racist remarks made by the pupils.

Mr Kafouris submitted several letters from former pupils to the hearing which spoke of his respect for other religions, including Islam.

One letter, from former colleague Selima Chaudhury, described him as 'professional' and an 'excellent teacher'.

Mrs Chaudhury said: 'I never heard Nicholas make any comments about

children's race, colour or religion. On the contrary, he respected and valued all the religions. 'As a devout Muslim myself, I know very well that Nicholas has never and would never make any adverse remarks to the children or the parents about Islam.'

Mr Kafouris, a Greek Cypriot, taught for 12 years at Bigland Green Primary School in Tower Hamlets, East London. He claims he was forced to leave his £30,000-a-year job because he would not put up with the 'racist' and anti-Semitic behaviour of his pupils.

The predominantly Muslim youngsters, some as young as eight, openly praised Islamic extremists in class and described the September 11 terrorists as 'heroes and martyrs'.

One pupil said: 'Don't touch me, y-

ou're a Christian' when he brushed against him.

Others said: 'We want to be Islamic bombers when we grow up', and 'The Christians and Jews are our enemies – you too because you're a Christian'.

According to Ofsted 'almost all' the school's 465 pupils are from ethnic minorities and a vast proportion do not speak English as a first language.

Mr Kafouris claims racial discrimination by the school, its headmistress and her assistant head after they failed to take action about the pupils' comments.

He said there was a change in attitude of the pupils after the atrocities of September 11, 2001.

They told him: 'We hate the Christians' and 'We hate the Jews', despite his attempts to stop them.

He said he filled out a Racist Incident Reporting Sheet but claimed headmistress Jill Hankey dismissed his concerns.

Kafouris was signed off with stress by his GP at the end of February 2007 after assistant head Margaret Coleman warned him not to challenge the pupils in class about their remarks.

He says the lack of support from the school has made him clinically depressed and unable to work. He was sacked in April last year.

(source: daily mail, foto: Robin Bell)



Greek artists on new stamps

A new series of stamps pays tribute to six major Greek artists. The "Greek Art" series, which will be made available by the Hellenic Post as of tomorrow are dedicated to works by Yiannis Gaitis, Nikos Engonopoulos, Yiannis Moralis, Yannis Tsarouchis, Nikos Hadjikyriakos-Ghika and Diamantis Diamantopoulos.

It's been a while since the Hellenic Post dealt with Greek art and art history in general – a splendid series was produced back in 1977, featuring works by Nikolaos Gyzis, Nikiforos Lytras and Georgios Iakovidis, among others.

Accessible design

On the creative front, the new series follows a traditional, low-key approach to typography through clean-cut fonts and accessible visual art subject-matter. This is all most welcome, given that over the last few years a number of experiments have failed on the aesthetic level.

The new series, which also includes a special issue of envelopes and post-cards, will be available at the Hellenic Post gift shop (2 Vyssis & Aiolou) as well as Hellenic Post outlets until they run out of stock.

Greeke – Arabic robot travels on board Emirates flight



Nikolaos Mavridis (left) of Greece, poses with the robot



Ibn Sina, the Arabic speaking humanoid robot, recently thrilled other passengers as Emirates Airlines flight EK817 was transporting one of the world's most advanced robots from Dubai, United Arab Emirates (UAE) to Riyadh in Saudi Arabia, Emirates News Agency (WAM) reported.

A first for Emirates, Ibn Sina the robot, travelled as a First Class passenger on the flight accompanied by Dr Nikolaos Mavridis, Assistant Professor of Computer Science at the United Arab Emirates University College of Information Technology in Al Ain where the machine was developed, along with two of his assistants.

Able to verbally interact with people, Ibn Sina stunned fellow passengers as he was checked in at Emirates' dedicated First Class check-in counters and relaxed in Emirates' First Class

lounge prior to boarding his flight.

The transportation of Ibn Sina required countless hours of planning and input from multiple Emirates Group departments to ensure the humanoid was cleared for travel by the Dubai Police Authorities, the Dubai International Airport and Emirates' safety team.

Mohammed Mattar, Divisional Senior Vice President, Airport Operations said: "The planning and integration of numerous Emirates departments is testament to our commitment to give every passenger, human or not, the best level of care and service possible. Ibn Sina embodies the forward thinking and innovative ethos of Emirates and we were honoured to have him fly with us.

"This was certainly an interesting challenge for the team however through careful planning

Ibn Sina was successfully transported to his destination and we look forward to many more trips of the same nature."

Ibn Sina safely made the trip to Riyadh where he was the key exhibit at a conference and exhibition on higher education.

MIGRATION PROGRAM STILL UNCERTAIN

The Migration Institute of Australia (MIA) congratulates the Minister on a long-overdue overhaul of the migration system, but says yet-to-be-announced policy will have major implications for current and prospective visa applicants. "We sympathise with the 20,000 people who have had their applications cancelled as they are sure to be disappointed. They do, however, have some measure of certainty, which is something that current international students and those already in the migration pipeline and affected by priority processing don't have" said CEO Maureen Horder. The MIA sees improvements coming from this new migration process and welcomes a closer matching of skills and employment outcomes. However, the MIA waits with interest to see the new Skilled Occupation List (SOL), due for release in April, and the points test review.

"As long as these details are unknown, current and potential applicants are in the dark about Australia's migration requirements. Applicants still only have vague government information to use when making lifechanging decisions." A range of unregistered agents on and offshore as well as education institutions took advantage of the clear pathway that government had legislated for people who satisfied Australian study requirements.