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## LABOR IN THE MINBAR:

A Toolkit for Islamic Congregations



# Labor in the Minbar:

A Toolkit for Islamic Congregations

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## Introduction

Interfaith Worker Justice believes that people of faith are an integral part of the effort to guarantee that all workers are treated with dignity and respect. As corporations, unions, worker advocates and workers seek to cooperate and build together, the religious community can urge and help them grow in a moral context.

Since 1996, thousands of congregations have spent Labor Day doing this important work. From San Diego to New York, religious communities focus Labor Day weekend services on the injustices facing low-wage workers and the religious community’s efforts to support those workers’ struggles for living wages, family-sustaining benefits, and for dignity and respect on the job. Participating congregations integrate worker justice themes into their services, and many invite a worker from within their congregation, a union member or worker advocate to be a guest on Labor Day weekend.

Through *Labor in the Minbar*, congregations have the opportunity to talk about the connections between faith, work, and justice. This toolkit offers some introductory resources to help celebrate Labor Day in your community. If your worship service or congregation’s tradition does not accommodate outside speakers, you could have someone speak before or after the service, or at adult or teen education classes. If you would like more information on how to become a speaker or host a speaker, please e-mail [info@iwj.org](mailto:info@iwj.org).

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Labor Day Resources

## Getting Started

There are different ways to plan a Labor Day service that lifts up workers within your community and around the country. The suggestions below can help you get started. Many of these can be incorporated into groups and programs that already exist in your congregation.

- **Connect with your local federation of labor or Interfaith Worker Justice affiliate.** Many IWJ affiliates have strong Labor in the Pulpits/Minbar programs. Reach out to one in your area. A list of affiliates is available at [www.iwj.org](http://www.iwj.org).
- **Invite a speaker (worker, union leader, worker advocate).** Recruit someone from your community to speak on Labor Day weekend. If no one is available, IWJ and our affiliates can match your congregation with a guest speaker for Labor Day weekend. For more information, e-mail [info@iwj.org](mailto:info@iwj.org)
- **Focus on education.** Labor Day weekend offers congregations the opportunity to highlight and lift up issues that impact workers within the community. Immigration reform, minimum wage, health and safety, dignity at worker, low-wage worker organizing and wage theft are among the topics that your congregation can focus on. Issue and campaign-specific resources are included in this toolkit. Additional resources are also available at [www.iwj.org](http://www.iwj.org).
- **Get the word out.** Promote your Labor Day service in your congregation's bulletin and/or newsletter. IWJ will help promote events registered here: <http://bit.ly/2014labordayservice>
- **Develop a worship planning committee.** A worship committee can explore creative ways to integrate worker justice themes into the service either by using resources included in this toolkit or creating their own.
- **Lead a worker justice text study.** Throughout the month of September, have someone (maybe you!) teach a text study or lead a prayer group focusing on labor and faith.
- **Honor an outstanding congregation member (or members).** Lift up the good work of members of your community. Honor a congregation worker, volunteer or an outstanding member with a gift to IWJ. We will send you certificates to hand out.  
Honor a worker here: <http://bit.ly/2014honoraworker>

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## Publicity and Media Outreach

*Labor in the Minbar* provides a great opportunity for labor groups, worker advocates and faith communities to collaborate and lift up issues that impact workers, especially those in low-wage jobs. Below are a few tips on engaging the broader community.

- **Register your event with IWJ.** In the weeks leading up to Labor Day weekend, IWJ will actively promote services planned around the country. Include yours in the list: <http://bit.ly/2014labordayservice>
- **Promote your Labor Day service** in your congregation's bulletin and/or newsletter. Sample language is available below. Visit [www.iwj.org](http://www.iwj.org) to download Labor Day images.
- **Inform local media about the event.** Invite members of the media to your Labor Day event. Highlight issues – minimum wage, wage theft – that are already getting coverage.
- **Select a spokesperson from your congregation.** Have a “point person” for media interviews who might share personal stories about worker justice or reflections about Labor Day.

*For questions and more information, email [info@iwj.org](mailto:info@iwj.org).*

### Sample blurb for congregation newsletter or bulletin:

#### Celebrate The Sacredness of Work

On \_\_\_\_\_, we will join with congregations across the nation in lifting up and honoring the sacred link between work and faith. This is an opportunity to educate ourselves about the issues that impact workers, especially those in low-wage jobs, and reflect on the true meaning of Labor Day.

[Name of speaker] will join us to speak on what it means to be a person of faith and a [worker, worker advocate].

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## Sample News Advisory

(Print on your letterhead.)

### For Immediate Release

<Enter date here>

### Contact:

<Name, E-mail, Phone number>

## **Celebrating the Sacred Link Between Faith, Justice, and Work [Worker/Labor leader/worker rights activist] brings [issue] to the Minbar on Labor Day Weekend**

**WHAT:** [Congregation] will join more than 500 congregations across the country in honoring workers and lifting up worker struggles this Labor Day weekend. The service is part of the annual Labor in the Pulpits/in the Minbar/on the Bimah program hosted by national worker rights organization, Interfaith Worker Justice, and its network of affiliates.

Presentations will celebrate the ever-growing relationship between religion and labor and their efforts to not only uplift the efforts of past labor leaders and workers, but also to educate people shine light on the oppressive working conditions and poverty wages millions of workers are forced to endure, educate workers' about their rights in the workplace, give life to living wage ordinances throughout the country, highlight anti-wage theft efforts, and a host of other initiatives that honor and respect the innate dignity of all workers.

**WHO:** [Speaker] will talk about [issue].

**WHEN:** [Specific date and time of your service]

**WHERE:** [Your congregation's address]

**WHY:** [Include additional information regarding particular issues impacting your community and why it is important for people of faith to be involved.]

###

## Speaker's Guide

1. Call the pastor/rabbi/imam as soon as you are assigned. Ask him/her:

- What time does the service start?
- At what point in the service will I be speaking, and how long a talk is appropriate?
- How do I get there?
- Which scripture readings/texts the congregation will use.
- The justice activities, ministries and relevant history of the congregation.

2. Getting there:

- Dress appropriately.
- Plan to arrive at least 15 minutes before the service begins.
- Identify yourself to the pastor/rabbi/imam. Thank him/her.
- Ask where you should sit and where you will be speaking from.
- Get a sense of the sound system, acoustics, and lighting.

3. Final reminders for giving your presentation:

- Speak slowly, loudly and clearly.
- Be brief.
- Be well prepared.
- Be creative.
- Introduce yourself and clarify your relationship to labor.
- Keep your presentation within the allotted time frame.
- Talk about your own experiences. It is far more important to believe what you are saying than to be eloquent.

4. Once you have finished:

- Take a deep breath and smile!
- Thank the pastor, rabbi or imam.
- Greet people after the service. This is a great opportunity to chat informally with interested people.

## Sample Outline

1. Introduction and thanks to the congregation

2. Reason for speaking

- Labor Day is an opportunity for people of faith to recognize God's commitment to justice.
- Reminder that Labor Day is a hard-earned holiday coming out of the struggles of working people for the eight-hour day and the right to organize unions.

3. Tie Labor Day to other Quranic readings, or the appropriate faith group statement on the right to organize.

4. Describe the importance of unions and worker centers in light of a current situation.

- Tell a personal story of how unions or worker centers have had a positive impact on you, your family and community.
- Offer up a historical perspective of unions and worker organizing: Unions are responsible for benefits we often take for granted, such as the eight-hour day, the end of child labor, the public school system and pensions.

5. Emphasize the importance of the religious community, unions and worker centers working together. Corporations and unions work most effectively when they can cooperate and build together. The religious community can urge them both and help them grow in a moral context.

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[www.iwj.org](http://www.iwj.org)

Labor Day Resources

## Next Steps: What You Can Do for Workers

- **PRAY** for all workers, especially those in low-wage and unsafe jobs. Pray also for employers and business owners, that they may all learn to value people over profit. Pray for our elected leaders, that they place those struggling on the margins at the center of their deliberations.
- **EDUCATE** yourself and other members of your community on worker and economic justice issues. Connect with a worker center in your area and visit [www.iwj.org](http://www.iwj.org) for resources on faith and labor.
- **ORGANIZE** a worker rights training at your congregation to learn how your Denomination's teachings apply to worker rights in your city.
- **PAY AND TREAT WORKERS WELL.** Seek to ensure that all the workers employed by your congregation are paid wages that can support families and provide family health coverage.
- **DEVELOP** a construction policy for your congregation that awards repairs and construction work to contractors and subcontractors that treat workers justly.
- **ADVOCATE** for public policies that seek justice for all workers, including decent wages and health care benefits for all workers.
- **SUPPORT** workers who are organizing for better wages and working conditions. Over the last few years, workers in the fast food, retail and service industries are standing up to demand dignity and respect on the job. Be inspired by the courage of Walmart, McDonald's and other workers in low-wage jobs.
- **SHOP ETHICALLY.** Make an impact with your dollars. Find out how your vendors treat their employees and support those with policies that promote fairness, fair wages and respect at the workplace
- **BECOME A WORKER JUSTICE CONGREGATION. Support IWJ's efforts to improve wages and working conditions for workers by joining our congregational membership program. As a member you will also receive discounts to ethical vendors and access to many of IWJ's education resource materials.**

*Take action on the ground and online. Join IWJ's e-advocacy team.  
Register at [www.iwj.org](http://www.iwj.org)*

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# Workers' Rights – A Cornerstone of Social Justice

يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا كُونُوا قَوَّامِينَ لِلَّهِ شُهَدَاءَ بِالْقِسْطِ وَلَا يَجْرِمَنَّكُمْ شَنَاَنُ قَوْمٍ عَلَىٰ أَلَّا تَعْدِلُوا  
اعْدِلُوا هُوَ أَقْرَبُ لِلتَّقْوَىٰ وَاتَّقُوا اللَّهَ إِنَّ اللَّهَ خَبِيرٌ بِمَا تَعْمَلُونَ ﴿المائدة ٨﴾

**“O you who believe!**

**Be steadfast witnesses for God in equity...Deal justly, that is nearer to your duty”** (*Quran 5:8*).

Some may not think of the theme of labor rights as being of central relevance to religious, or specifically Islamic, teachings. However, it is an issue that affects each one of us, and our *deen* (faith) offers clear guidance regarding the rights and responsibilities of the worker and employer to each other. If we work for our living, whether as an employee or an employer, we spend a great deal of our time at our work, and it is our duty to understand and uphold the rights of workers.

Labor rights are directly connected to Islam; social justice is a central Islamic theme. The guidance toward social justice in Islam is intended to promote and maintain social order, harmony, balance and general welfare. It is a comprehensive system that balances personal needs with the general good, so that one complements the other. Islam is both a religion and a comprehensive way of life and exemplifies justice for its practitioners. It is a formula that will satisfy anyone's moral and spiritual needs as well as natural aspirations. Islam instructs people on how to live in harmony and peace with others, regardless of socio-economic status, race, gender or faith.

The Islamic concept of justice is based on equality and human dignity. God has enjoined justice and righteousness for all humans in all matters including but not limited to family matters, workers' issues, trade and all relationships.



## Mercy and Compassion

As in all matters, we are reminded that all human beings are created equal. If one of us is given a position of authority (such as an employer) over another, we have an obligation to treat our fellow creatures with compassion and fairness.

روى الإمام البخاري ومسلم عن أبي ذر رضي الله عنه أن النبي صلى الله عليه وسلم قال: "إخوانكم خولكم، جعلهم الله تحت أيديكم، فمن كان أخوه تحت يده فليطعمه مما يأكل وليلبسه مما يلبس، ولا تكلفوهم ما يغلبهم، فإن كلفتموهم ما يغلبهم فأعينوهم".

Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings of God be upon him, said, "Your servants/workers are your brothers whom God the most High has placed under your authority. Therefore, a person who has a brother under his authority, should feed him out of that which he eats himself and should dress him with the same kind of clothes which he wears himself; he should not assign work to him which is beyond his capacity, and if you do so, then help him in his work" (Bukhari collection).

روى البخاري ومسلم في صحيحه عن أبي هريرة رضي الله عنه عن النبي صلى الله عليه وسلم أنه قال: "إذا أتى أحدكم خادمه بطعامه فإن لم يجلسه معه فليناوله لقمَةً أو لقمَتين أو أكلة أو أكلتين، فإنه ولي عياله" أي: تولى صنعه وعمله.

Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings of God be upon him, said, "When your cook or servant brings your meal to you, if you do not invite him to sit with you and eat, at least give him some of the meal to take. After all, it was he who prepared it." (Bukhari Collection)

وقد صح عن الرسول صلى الله عليه وسلم أنه قال: "الراحمون يرحمهم الرحمن، ارحموا من في الأرض يرحمكم من في السماء".

Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings of God be upon him, also said, "Those who have mercy on others will receive the mercy from the Most Compassionate, God. Be merciful to those in the Earth, then the One in the Heaven, God, will be merciful to you"

## Fulfill Fair Pay, and Promptly

With the same reasoning, the worker has the right to expect fair treatment and payment from his or her employer. In Islam, workers' rights are made clear:

وَيَا قَوْمِ أَوْفُوا الْمِكْيَالَ وَالْمِيزَانَ بِالْقِسْطِ وَلَا تَبْخَسُوا النَّاسَ أَشْيَاءَهُمْ وَلَا تَعْتُوا فِي  
الْأَرْضِ مُفْسِدِينَ ﴿هُود ٨٥﴾

“And O my people! Give just measure and weight, nor withhold from the people the things that are their due” (Quran 11:85).

The employer-worker relationship must be based on justice and mutual consent, honoring the dignity of the worker. To illustrate this, it is ordained that workers' wages should be clearly agreed upon before a worker commences his or her work, and these wages must be paid promptly.

صح عن الرسول صلى الله عليه وسلم أنه قال: “أعطوا الأجير أجره قبل أن يجفّ عرقه”

More so, the Prophet Muhammad said, “Give the employee his wages before his sweat has had time to dry.” (Ibn Majah collection)

ولولا عظم هذا الذنب لم يتكفل الرسول أن يدافع عن مثل هؤلاء الأجراء عند الله يوم القيامة، روى الإمام البخاري أن النبي صلى الله عليه وسلم قال: “ثلاثة أنا خصمهم يوم القيامة: رجل أعطى بي ثم غدر، ورجل باع حرًا فأكل ثمنه، ورجل استأجر أجيرًا فاستوفى منه ولم يعطه أجرته.”

Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings of God be upon him, also said, “I will be the opponent of three types of people on the Day of Judgment,” and he listed one of them as “one who hires a worker, but does not pay him his right wages owed to him after fulfilling his work.” (Bukhari collection)

## Justice and Fairness

في الحديث القدسي: “يا عبادي، إني حرّمتُ الظلمَ على نفسي، وجعلته بينكم محرّمًا، فلا تظالموا”

In the Qudsi Hadith, it is narrated that God says, “O my servants, I have made injustice forbidden on me and I made it forbidden for you among yourselves, so do not engage in oppression or injustice.”

وفي الصحيح قال النبي صلى الله عليه وسلم: "اتقوا الظلم؛ فإن الظلم ظلمات يوم القيامة".

Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings of God be upon him, said, "Beware of committing injustice because injustice turns into a punishment of darkness on the Day of Judgment." (Sahih Hadith)

It is also required of employers not to give workers tasks beyond their capacity. Employers are accountable for their workers and have to ensure that their workers are justly treated at all times.

## Mutual Work Ethics

It is the characteristic of a believer to fulfill promises and abide by agreements. In the Quran, God

وَالَّذِينَ هُمْ لِأَمَانَاتِهِمْ وَعَهْدِهِمْ رَاعُونَ ﴿٨﴾ الْمُؤْمِنُونَ

describes the believers as: "those who are faithfully true to their trusts (all the duties which God has ordained, honesty, moral responsibility and trusts) and to their covenants." (Quran 23:8)

However, there must be equilibrium. As employers have responsibilities toward their workers, employees too have obligations toward their employers.

عَنْ عَائِشَةَ ، أَنَّ النَّبِيَّ صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ قَالَ : "إِنَّ اللَّهَ يُحِبُّ إِذَا عَمِلَ أَحَدُكُمْ عَمَلًا أَنْ يُتَّقَنَهُ."

The Prophet, peace and blessings of God be upon him, said "God likes, if one of you performs a piece of work, that he should do it well."

This saying of the Prophet reminds us that a Muslim who is entrusted with a job should do it to the best of his or her ability.

## Our Role

- Live by the Islamic ethics of compassion, justice, honesty. We must be mindful of them in every situation, including in our roles as employer or employee.
- Be part of the political, economic, and social struggle to defend workers' rights to fair living wages, healthcare, a safe work environment, the right to organize, the right to enjoy religious freedom, and the like.

As Muslims, we know that working towards establishing social justice is a mandate of our faith. The concept of equality in labor laws is prerequisite to attaining social justice.

*Prepared by Hussam Ayloush, Executive Director of the Council on American-Islamic Relations, Greater Los Angeles Area and Board Member of Interfaith Worker Justice*



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# Worker Justice

Social justice is a central Islamic theme, the objective of social justice in Islam is to promote and maintain social order, harmony, balance and general welfare. It is a comprehensive system that balances the private with the general good, so that the one compliments the other. Islam is both a religion and a comprehensive way of life and exemplifies justice for its practitioners. It is a formula that will satisfy anyone's moral and spiritual needs as well as natural aspirations. Islam instructs people on how they may live in harmony and peace with others, regardless of socio-economic status, race, gender or faith.

The notion of justice in Islam is based on equality and human dignity. God has enjoined justice and righteousness for all humans in all matters including but not limited to family matters, workers issues, trade and all relationships. Prophet Muhammad peace and blessings of God be upon him said, "Your servants/workers are your brothers whom God the most High has placed under your authority. Therefore, a person who has a brother under his authority, should feed him out of that which he eats himself and should dress him with the same kind of clothes which he wears himself; he should not assign work to him which is beyond his capacity, and if you do so, then help him in his work" (Bukhari collection). This saying emphasizes the importance of ensuring that our hired workers receive a fair pay that ensures a dignified living that guarantees basic needs such as food, housing, and healthcare; as an employer will surely seek for himself or herself.

In Islam, workers issue are lucid: "And O my people! Give just measure and weight, nor withhold from the people the things that are their due" (Quran

11:85). The employer-worker relationship must be based on justice and mutual consent honoring the dignity of the worker. To illustrate this, it is ordained that workers' wages should be made clear before a worker commences his or her work. The Prophet Muhammad said "Give the employee his wages before his sweat has had time to dry" (Ibn Majah collection). It is also required by employers not to give workers work that is beyond their capacity. Employers are accountable for their workers and have to ensure that there workers are justly treated at all times.

Those who cheat their employees are warned of serious consequences in the Hereafter. The Prophet Muhammad said: "There are three types of people to whom I am going to be an adversary on the Day of Judgment," and he lists one of them as "the one who hires the services of a worker who then fulfills his work but yet that employer does not compensate him his due pay".

However, there must be equilibrium, as employers care for their workers; employees too have dutiful rights and obligations toward their employer. The Prophet peace and blessings of God be upon him, said "God likes, if one of you performs a piece of work, that he should do it well." This saying of the Prophet means to exemplify that a Muslim who is entrusted with a job should do it the best of manners. Muslims believe that working towards establishing social justice is a mandate of their faith. The notion of equality in labor laws is prerequisite to attaining social justice.

For more information, contact the Council on American-Islamic Relations (CAIR), [www.cair.com](http://www.cair.com), 202-488-8787; [info@cair.com](mailto:info@cair.com)

"O you who believe, be maintainers of justice, bearers of witness for God, even though it be against your own selves or (your) parents or near relatives – whether he be rich or poor; for God can best protect both. Follow not the lusts (of your hearts), lest you swerve. And if you distort or turn away (from truth), surely God is ever Aware of what you do." (Quran 4:135).

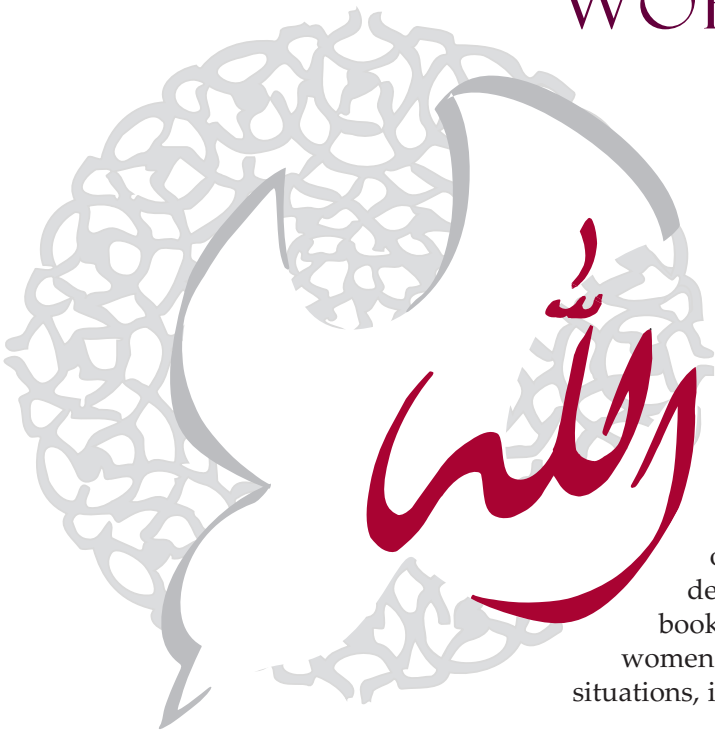
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# THE QUR'AN *and* WORKER JUSTICE



The Muslim community and the labor movement share the common goals of social justice, economic fairness, and fair treatment in the workplace. In fact, the history of Islam is rooted in a firm stand against economic exploitation. When Prophet Muhammad ibn (son of) Abdullah, *may Allah be pleased with Him*, began teaching Islam in Mecca, it shook up an unjust economic structure that allowed the rich to take advantage of the poor. Before Prophet Muhammad departed, he left behind The Holy Qur'an, a book filled with guidance on how men and women should treat each other in various situations, including the workplace.

The Holy Qur'an urges the proper treatment and respect of workers. Several Muslim leaders discussed the relevance of the Holy Qur'an to the struggle for dignity in the workplace with union leaders and other religious leaders during the "Islam and Labor: Forging Partnerships Conference," held Nov. 10, 2001, in Washington, D.C. Co-convened by Interfaith Worker Justice and the Muslim Public Affairs Council, the conference sought to build relationships between the Muslims, interfaith committees and labor communities.

Referencing heavily from the Holy Qur'an and the life of Prophet Muhammad, several Muslim Imams (leaders) discussed worker justice, the connection between faith and works, class and gender equality, and the responsibility of employers. The essence of their remarks can be summed up in one sentence uttered by Prophet Muhammad to his companions about 1400 years ago:

**"None of you has faith unless you love for your brother what you love for yourself."**

The Imams pledged to work with organized labor to secure economic justice for low-wage workers in America. This booklet is a result of the dialogue and highlights key themes discussed during the conference.

## Standing Together for Worker Justice

Qur'an – (k̄-ran', -rān' also spelled Koran, Quran, Alkoran) is the holy scripture revealed by Allah (God) to Muhammad ibn Abdullah. The word Qur'an literally means readings or recitations. These revelations consist of verses (*ayat*) grouped into 114 chapters (*suras*).

In Islam, it is neither a person's wealth, gender, or ethnicity that makes them a better person. "Islam teaches that the best in God's sight are those that stand for righteousness," said Imam Mahdi Bray. "To me, that signals a commonality of the human spirit regardless of our faith tradition, ethnicity, social status." The Holy Qur'an calls on all of humanity to stand for justice and to work together to ensure that people are treated fairly. "This alliance that we're working to build, reinforcing a traditional relationship between labor and religion, is needed now probably more than ever," said Imam Johari Abdul-Malik, Director of Outreach for the Dar Al Hijrah Islamic Center in Northern Virginia. "Workers being laid off are looking to the traditional sources of support – labor unions, the church, the synagogue, the mosque and other community service organizations – to fill the gap that's being created by some of these (corporations). We have to be together with labor. We have to be on the picket line. We have to be before Congress and organizing workers around the country to fight against this consolidation of wealth."

This statement reflects a core teaching of Islam. Muslims are told to strive for justice – even "against your own self" and to establish justice coalitions that transcend faith. Prophet Muhammad discussed this very idea.

"One day a trader came to do business in Mecca (a major place of

trade at the time), but was wronged by a businessman who didn't pay him his money. The trader stood on a mountain and he cried out for justice. When he cried out, people of Mecca decided to create an alliance that transcended tribal and religious barriers to fight for the rights of those wronged. Before Muhammad Ibn Abdullah received revelation and became a prophet, he joined this coalition and after becoming a prophet, he said to one of his companions, 'I was called to this coalition before I became a prophet and if somebody called me today to stand for what is just and address issues of equality and fairness with people of different backgrounds, I would respond,'" said Imam Mohamed Magid of the Washington, D.C.-based ADAMS Center. "One of the missions of a Muslim is to work with those who work for justice."

- O you who believe! Stand out firmly for justice, as witnesses to Allah, even as against yourselves, or your parents, or your kin, and whether it be (against) rich or poor.... *Holy Qur'an 4:135*
- The Messenger of Allah said, "Help thy brother whether he is the doer of wrong or wrong is done to him." His companions said, "O Messenger! We can help a man to whom wrong is done, but how could we help him when he is the doer of wrong?" He said: "Take hold of his hand from doing wrong." *Manual of Hadith*

Imam Johari Abdul-Malik,  
Imam Makram El-Amin,  
and Imam Mohamed Magid



## Faith, Works, and Dignity

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The idea of “faith and good works” is a theme highlighted often throughout the Holy Qur’an. Though there are some spiritual connotations, it also refers to the duties and responsibilities placed on people to earn a living by contributing to society and taking care of their families. In general, Muslims are encouraged to work hard and be honest.

“With works comes dignity,” said Imam Makram El-Amin of Minnesota. “No one enjoys a meal more than a person who actually gives their time, effort, and labor to go out and to provide a way, to take care of themselves and their families.” In Islamic tradition, every profession, organization, corporation, and union of service oriented or trade workers should be established with the purpose of serving humanity. Therefore, all are regarded with dignity and honor. This principle is also revealed in the hadith (sayings) of Prophet Muhammad Ibn Abdullah who viewed all professions honorably and taught those who followed him to do the same. Even the humblest of work

carries with it dignity, as long as one’s worldly pursuit does not take them away from remembrance of God.

- No one eats better food than that which he eats out of the work of his hand. *A Manual of Hadith*
- They believe in Allah and the Last Day; they enjoin what is right, and forbid what is wrong; and they hasten (in emulation) in (all) good works: they are in the ranks of the righteous. *Holy Qur’an 3:114*
- And those who believe and whose seeds follow them in Faith – to them shall We join their families: nor shall We deprive them (of the fruit) of aught of their works: (yet) is each individual in pledge for his deeds. *Holy Qur’an 52:21*
- O ye messengers! Enjoy (all) things good and pure, and work righteousness: for I am well-acquainted with (all) that ye do. *Holy Qur’an 23:51*
- It is these who hasten in every good work, and these who are foremost in them. *Holy Qur’an 23:61*

Hadith – is the record of an individual saying or action or approvals of Muhammad taken as a model of behavior by Muslims. The word *hadith* literally means communication or narrative. The sayings and the traditions of Prophet Muhammad are called *hadith*. These are explanations, interpretations, and the living examples of the Prophet. His sayings are found in books called the *Hadith*, which have been compiled into different books by various authors. Some famous collectors of *hadith* are Imam Al-Bukhari, Imam An-Nasa’i, and Imam Majah.

## Equality

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One of the tools used by Prophet Muhammad and his companions to end the unjust economic system in Mecca, Arabia, was to teach the concept of equality. During that time in Mecca there was a large underclass of slaves who served the rich. Prophet Muhammad made it clear that all are equal. The same concept is relevant today.

“Prophet Mohammed and his companions ended slavery in Arabia. We now have what some people would call wage slavery,” said Imam Abdul-Malik. “The first step of ending slavery (in Arabia) was to say that the slave is equal to the master. Once there is the idea that the slave, or today, the worker, is equal to the master (or employer) that becomes the unraveling of this and other forms of discrimination. We all

have rights. No matter whether you are working in the corporate penthouse, or down in the basement sorting the mail, all people have rights. They’re equal before their Lord.” This principle speaks to class, race and gender differences.

- Men shall have the benefit of what they earn, and women shall have the benefit of what they earn. *Holy Qur’an 4:32*
- I will not waste the work of a worker among you, whether male or female, the one of you being from the other. *Holy Qur’an 3:194*
- O mankind! We created you from a single (pair) of a male and a female, and made you into nations and tribes, that ye may know each other (not that ye may despise each other)...*Holy Qur’an 49:13*

## Employer Responsibility

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The Holy Qur'an teaches that people should "fulfill all of your obligations," said Imam El-Amin. "An employer is obligated to properly compensate, which is not just about money. We're talking about providing a good atmosphere; good working conditions, benefits, and allowing a person to have time with their families." In Islam, perfect honesty is enjoined in all business transactions, including how an employer treats an employee. Those who are in a better financial position and employ others have more responsibility to ensure that they treat people with fairness, remembering that all humanity is one.

This principle in Islam is displayed during the annual Hajj (pilgrimage) ritual where people from all walks of life come together shedding their traditional ethnic clothing, jewelry, and all other articles that reveal different levels of social status. This helps to demonstrate that God is the God of all, rich and poor.

"Muhammad the Prophet said, 'Pay the worker while the sweat is still on the brow.' This speaks of timely compensation," said Imam El-Amin.

- Give full measure when you measure out and weigh with a fair balance. This is fair and better in the end. *Holy Qur'an 17:35*
- When you hire, compensate the workers and treat them fairly. *A Manual of Hadith*
- Woe to those that deal in fraud. Those who when they have to receive by measure, from men exact full measure, but when they have to give by measure, or weight to men, give less than due. *Holy Qur'an 83:1-3*
- Give just measure, and cause no loss (to others by fraud). *Holy Qur'an 26:181-183*



### Interfaith Worker Justice

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