



Wage Theft Study Guide: A Muslim Perspective

By Imam Mahdi Bray

We at MAS Freedom (Muslim American Society) are deeply concerned with all forms of abuse and injustice suffered by millions of working people in America. And among the most widespread and egregious forms of workplace abuse is the actual theft of wages from the pockets of working people.

Just as the law of the Old Testament proclaims that "Thou Shalt Not Steal," the practice of wage theft is also contrary to the injunctions found in the Holy Qur'an, including that of Surah (Chapter) 11, Ayah (Verse) 85, which clearly demands justice for those who toil:

"And O my people! Give just measure and weight, Nor withhold from my people the things that are their due: Commit not evil in the land with intent to do mischief."

For Muslims, the theft of any wages is not only a violation of civil law, but equally, it is a violation of the commandment of the Lord of Creation to treat workers with fairness. Prophet Muhammad (Peace Be Upon Him) stated, "Pay the worker while the sweat is still wet upon their brow."

Our faith, as Muslims, compels us to stand with all human beings, both Muslim and others, who are treated unjustly. In the case of wage theft, this abuse can take on many manifestations, ranging from bosses who pay sub-minimum wages to their employees, to workers denied proper compensation for overtime work, to those who are actually denied any compensation for their labor because of they are terrorized for being, or for suspected of being, undocumented immigrants in America.

Yet, whatever the circumstances might be, the theft of billions of dollars in wages from workers in this society is alarming. And although people of diverse economic classes are affected by wage theft, all evidence proves that the most vulnerable and lowest-paid workers in society are the most likely to be victimized by this injustice. Immigrants, agricultural workers, restaurant employees, working people who care for the sick and the elderly, and persons employed by the poultry industry, are particularly vulnerable to the theft of their wages.

We stand in solidarity with the work initiated on behalf of working people by Interfaith Worker Justice (IWJ). This broad, inter-religious coalition had taken this struggle for justice from the factories and fields to the corridors of corporate power. This good struggle must continue until fairness, equity, and justice are enjoyed by all those who bring food, clothing, shelter, and indispensable services to all the people of America.

Our work for justice is an affirmation of the principles of our faith, and the faith of all who believe in morality and goodness. We re-affirm today our continued support for, and involvement in, this critical movement to end, for all time, the theft of the wages of American workers.

*"Establish weights with justice and fall not short of the balance." -Surah (Chapter) 55,
Ayah (Verse) 7*

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