

Over this Labor Day weekend, we are called to reflect on what our faith teaches on the rights of workers and the dignity of work. It is our duty to build up a society in which all have enough; however, we see every day the harsh realities of ever-increasing income inequality and deregulation where workplace accidents and deaths are far too common.

The theme of labor rights is of central relevance to Islamic teachings. However, it is an issue that affects each one of us, and our deen (faith) offers clear guidelines regarding the rights and responsibilities of the worker and employer. It is our duty to understand and uphold the rights of all workers.

Labor rights are directly connected to Islam, because as in all teachings, we are reminded that human beings are created equal. If one of us is given a position of authority over another, we have an obligation to treat that person with compassion and fairness.

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”

The employer-worker relationship must be based on justice and mutual consent, honoring the dignity of the worker. Therefore, workers’ wages should be clearly agreed upon before a worker commences his or her work, and these wages must be paid promptly. Employers are accountable for their workers and have to ensure that their workers are justly treated at all times.

Throughout this Labor Day weekend, we hope you will reflect on how we as the Muslim community are called to end workplace exploitation. Many of us are proud to partner with Arise Chicago, a 28 year old interfaith workers-rights organization. Arise Chicago teaches workers their rights, builds leadership skills, and advocates for public policy changes – all of which transforms lives and communities.

Let us remember to turn away from the idolatry of wealth and, instead, embrace the truth that we are interconnected. For we cannot live in a world without auto mechanics, shoe salespersons, teachers, hotel workers, grocery store clerks, nurses, and others. Through our work, we must contribute to the common good of humanity and strive every day to create a more equal society.

Happy Labor Day!

Halil and Donna Demir
Members of The Mosque Foundation