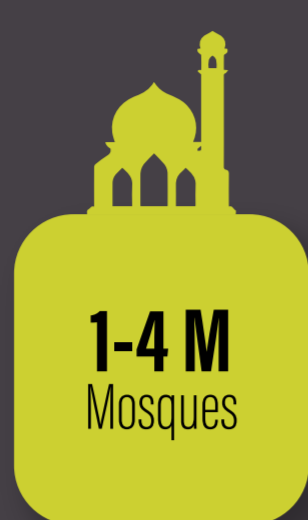
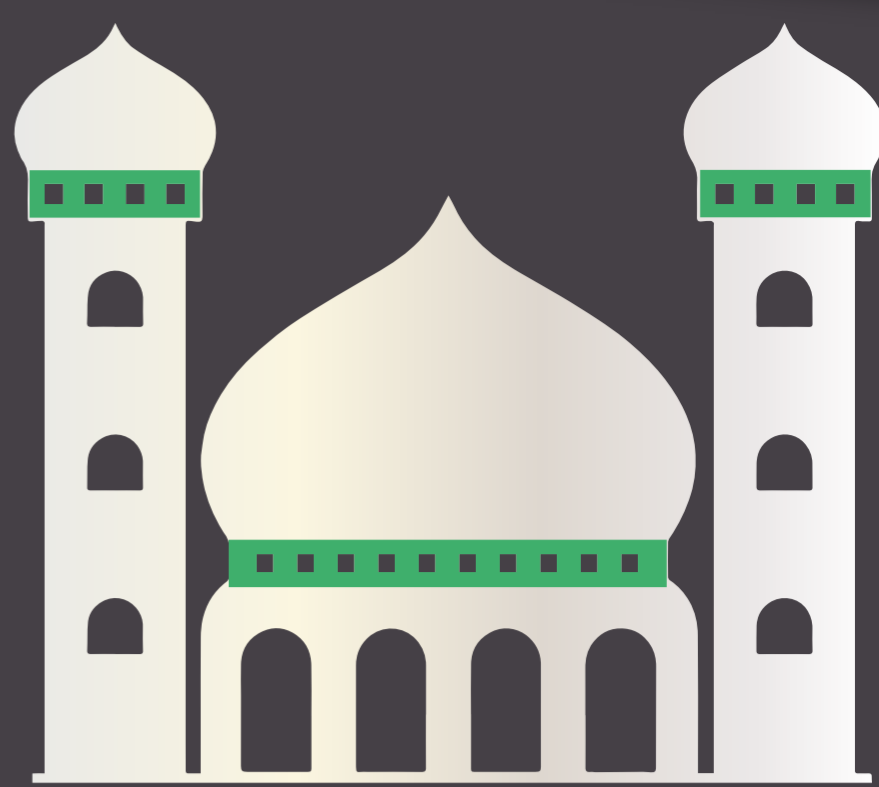
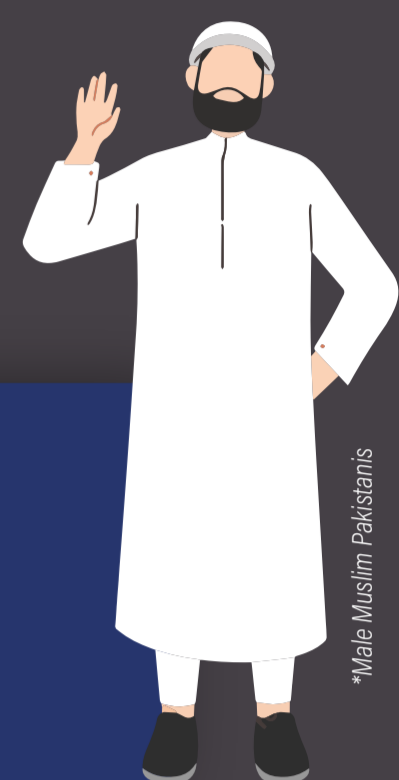


Labour Protections for Religious Workers



M = Millions ; K = Thousands



Who are religious workers?



- Imam
- Muezzin
- Khadim Masjid
- Teaching staff in Madaris

Decent Work Deficits

- Irregular and long working hours (starting from 4 am to 10 pm)
- Earning lower than the minimum wage for unskilled work
- No access to social protection
- No right to annual leave (maximum of one month of holidays including weekly rest days in a year)
- Highly stressful work (dealing with different members of the community with opposing religious views)
- No reasonable lodging facilities provided (for those with family)

Why should the Government Act?

Article 3 of the Constitution of Pakistan requires the state to eliminate all forms of exploitation. The current exploitation of religious workers has to stop as it is against the constitutional guarantee. It imposes a duty on the state to regulate the sector as an Islamic welfare state would do.

Bill of Rights for Workers in Religious Institutions

Right to written employment contract

Masjid committees/trustees must offer a written employment contract (full time or part-time) to a religious worker (imam, muezzin, teaching staff, etc.). The Quran requires financial agreements to be in written form (02:282). An employment contract specifying wages is also a financial contract. Hence, the requirement to have it in written form.

Right to Proper lodging with Family

Most religious workers have their families back in the villages/ rural areas. It deprives families of quality time because these workers cannot afford housing in cities. The construction laws overlooking the construction of mosques should ensure that the construction plan includes separate and proper accommodation for religious workers and their respective families. If the same is not provided at the premises, it should be the responsibility of the masjid committee to arrange the rental accommodation in the area or pay for it.

Loss to the Exchequer for not regulating the sector

The government departments are also losing big by not regulating the sector and registering these workers. PESSIs and EOBI are losing approximately an amount of 36 billion rupees per year on account of missed contributions that could have been paid for these workers by their institutions and masjid committees.

Right to a Minimum Wage

The Provincial Minimum Wage Boards must notify the minimum wages for religious workers. The minimum wages must consider the local cost of living and be declared on an area basis. Islam refers to a living wage requiring wages to be sufficient to provide the basic life necessities for the workers and their families. The Prophet (PBUH) instructed employers to "make workers satisfied regarding their basic needs" (Majma uz Zawaid). The second and third rightly guided caliphs, Umar (RA) and Usman (RA), fixed wages for the muezzins and imams during their respective times. It is related that Umar (RA) used to determine salaries according to the conditions prevalent in the city and the employees' personal needs (Al-Farooq). Withholding a worker's wage and giving less than what is due is considered one of the gravest sins.

(Mishkat : 2984)

Right to Social Security

Instead of looking towards charity, the religious workers should be registered with the social protection institutions (provincial employees social security institutions-PESSIs and EOBI), and their contributions should be payable by the employer, i.e., the masjid committee/trustees. This ensures that religious workers and their families are covered in the event of injury or sickness. (9:60)

CALL TO ACTION

On this May Day, CLR urges the Government of Pakistan to take up the issue and enact framework legislation guaranteeing basic labour protections to religious workers, as are available to the other workers in the country.