

KNOW YOUR RIGHTS:

A Guide to Seeking Religious Accommodations for Ramadan at Work

Legal Rights



Title VII of the 1964 Civil Rights Act requires an employer with 15 or more employees to give an employee a “reasonable” accommodation for religious observance. The employer does not need to agree to allow religious observance if the accommodation would cost the employer “undue” money, would jeopardize workplace safety or efficiency, or would infringe upon the rights of other employees.

Most states—and many municipalities—have laws that protect employees, a number of which offer workers additional protections.

Religious Accommodation



A religious accommodation is an agreement with your employer that enables you to practice your religious beliefs in a manner that does not severely interfere with your employment.

Religious accommodations may include adjustments to the work environment. Common examples include schedule changes, reassigning job responsibilities and tasks and modifying workplace policies and practices.



What Are My Rights?

Requesting Accommodation for Ramadan?

Prior to requesting a religious accommodation, you should familiarize yourself with your employer's policies for guidance on how to proceed. Such policies are typically contained in an employee handbook.

If you are unable to find any guidance, send your request to your direct supervisor or Human Resources representative.

When submitting your request, specify that you are seeking accommodation for a religious belief. You do not have to explain the basis for your belief or cite a source.

Your request should specify the type of religious accommodation needed as well as the relevant time period.

You should ensure all correspondence is in writing. For example, if your request was approved verbally, it is a best practice to send a follow-up email thanking the person who approved it and briefly stating the agreed-upon accommodation to avoid any misunderstanding.

Facing Retaliation for Request?

An employer cannot take action against you, without violating the law, because you complained about discrimination in the workplace or because you requested an accommodation to practice your religious beliefs. For example, they can't cut your hours or demote you because you requested an accommodation for Iftar.

Title VII, a federal anti-discrimination law, directs employers to maintain a workplace free from religious harassment. Religious harassment can take the form of: (1) coercing or pressuring an employee to abandon, alter, or adopt a religious practice as a condition of employment; and/or (2) creating a hostile work environment where the employee is subjected to religiously-based, unwelcome statements and/or conduct that is so severe or pervasive that the employee finds the work environment to be hostile.

Protect Your Rights at Work

Employers are supposed to make sure that you do not suffer discrimination or retaliation in the workplace and have reasonable accommodations for religious practices. You should be able to work in an environment that is fully compliant with the law, and employers are prohibited from taking any action against you for asserting your rights.

If you believe your rights may have been violated, you can file a Charge of Discrimination with the U.S. Equal Employment Opportunity Commission. Many states and municipalities have similar agencies where you can file a complaint. Be advised that there are strict time limits for filing such complaints.

If you want to talk through options, you can contact Muslim Advocates via email at intakes@muslimadvocates.org or leave us a message at (202) 897-2622 letting us know that you have a question or issue relating to religious accommodations, and one of our attorneys will call you back within 48 hours.

