

Muslim scarf ban costs \$50K for Philadelphia security firm

Philadelphia-based Imperial Security will pay \$50,000 to settle EEOC charges it discriminated against a woman and fired her because of her religious attire.

When Julie Holloway-Russell, a devout Muslim, applied to become a part-time security guard at the Philadelphia Convention Center, she wore a khimar to her job interview. A khimar is a kind of scarf that some Muslim women wear to cover their hair, ears and neck. Imperial Security hired her.

She wore the khimar to work on her first day, but was told to remove it because it violated the company dress code. She explained that her religious beliefs required her to wear it and refused to take it off. The company terminated her.

Holloway-Russell filed a religious discrimination complaint with the EEOC.

In addition to the \$50,000 settlement, Imperial Security agreed to hire an equal employment opportunity officer to receive discrimination and retaliation complaints. The company will also change its policies to allow for religious accommodation and provide annual anti-discrimination training to all employees.

Note: Title VII of the Civil Rights Act requires employers to accommodate employees' religious beliefs as long as doing so does not cause an undue hardship. Employers that fire first without exploring religious accommodations are automatically in violation of the law.