

Indianapolis company accused of breaking Muslim sharia law

HDG Mansur, a multinational property company based in Indianapolis, is poised to launch the first global real estate investment fund compliant with Islamic sharia law. But the firm has drawn complaints from a U.S. imam, Indiana clergy, the Service Employees International Union and Britain's Unite union, who say Mansur underpays and mistreats the workers who clean its facilities.

Islamic sharia law in a business context forbids charging interest and requires earnings to be backed only by tangible assets—not futures, for example. More broadly, Muslims consider sharia a sacred, ethical framework within which to conduct the secular aspects of their lives.

Unions joined with a religious group, Interfaith Worker Justice, in prayer meetings at the company's headquarters, demanding organizing rights, higher pay, health insurance, holidays and sick pay for the workers. Sheikh Abdool Khan of the Islamic Society of North America said the "company cannot claim to be sharia compliant if it does not follow the whole process, which means treating poor workers with honor and dignity." The workers are paid \$7.20 an hour.

In an interview with London's *The Guardian*, Harold Garrison, Mansur's chairman, said, "We are obviously upset that the people who clean our offices feel they are being hurt and badly used, but I am afraid we are not in a position to intervene legally. The building is owned by a third party who employ Executive Management Services ... It would be illegal for us to sack them."