

Muslim University Refuses to Hire Christians for Anything But 'Menial' Jobs

A public university in Pakistan defies court orders and misleads government authorities to avoid giving federally approved jobs to non-Muslims, a Christian politician in the nation's ruling party says.

In May 2009 the government passed a law requiring 5 percent of jobs to be allocated to religious minorities. The University of Sargodha is located in the Punjab province, where most of the country's Christians reside, has hired hundreds of employees since this legislation was implemented in 2010 but continues to use bureaucratic tactics to avoid hiring non-Muslims.

The legislation was created to protect religious minorities and minimize injustice for people applying for government jobs, but state officials are the main hurdle to its implementation. The legislation was initiated by Shahbaz Bhatti, a Christian MP who was assassinated three years ago. He had been a prominent figure in the support of Asia Bibi a Christian woman sentenced to death for allegedly insulting the Prophet Mohammed and for seeking amendments to Pakistan's blasphemy laws.

Pakistan is an Islamic state with 95-98 percent of the population practicing Islam, while the remainder of the population primarily practices other religions such as Hinduism, Christianity and Sikhism.

Chaudhry Mushtaq Gill is a Christian political leader in the Pakistan Muslim League (N), and he filed a case against the university through the ombudsman in September 2012. The university lost the case and the ombudsman ordered the

following in May:

“The University of Sargodha gave various advertisements for recruitment after March 2010 without prescribing [the] 5 percent quota for the minorities which violates the provisions of policy instructions ... Maladministration of the Agency is established.”

According to Gill, nearly one year has passed since this was ordered and the university has not rectified its wrongdoing.

The record provided by the university to the ombudsman verifies that 102 of 111 Christian hired since 2010 are working as street sweepers. While the nine remaining Christians are primarily working as clerks and gardeners with one working as a storekeeper and the other as a laboratory attendant.

The occupation of street sweeping is traditionally considered menial and degrading under the Indian caste system; hence, only “untouchables” are given jobs in this category.

“Untouchability” is a social-religious practice rooted in the Indian caste system that ostracizes minority groups by segregating them from the majority of society. Pakistani Muslims still observe the caste system due to having lived in close proximity with Hindus for hundreds of years. Christians are mostly considered to come from the untouchable class, so they are expected to work in menial jobs like those of street sweeping in both the public and private sectors.

Talking to World Watch Monitor, Gill said the affirmative action by the government was being rendered meaningless. “During the proceedings before the ombudsman, the university officials stated that the quota does not apply to high ranking jobs like that of teaching, while the notification clearly states that it applies to all posts across the board.”

Gill further added that the University of Sargodha was not the

only university ignoring the minority quota. "There are dozens of other universities. I am seeking same directions from the ombudsman [regarding these] and some have agreed to implement the quota as well," he said.