

Muslim woman accuses St Andrews hotel of discrimination after being denied job

From [*The Times*](#)

A luxury St Andrews hotel has found itself at the centre of a religious row amid claims a Muslim woman was denied a job because of her beliefs. Fatima Elfakri has criticised management at Rufflets St Andrews after she was turned down for the position of food and beverage server following an interview earlier this month.

The job involved serving afternoon tea to hotel guests, which would include ham sandwiches, sausage rolls and champagne. In the interview Ms Elfakri, 20, told management that she would be unable to serve some of the items on religious grounds. She later received an email praising her interview performance but saying she was not suitable for the job.

It said the hotel did not have enough staff to enable her to avoid duties which offended her religion.

Ms Elfakri, who currently works as a waitress elsewhere, believes its stance may breach employment laws.

She said: "It was brought to my attention that my 'beliefs' were the main factor to which the Rufflets Hotel declined my job request, even though they were fully aware of my capabilities as a waitress.

"As a Muslim and a person of colour I find their reasoning extremely disheartening and I did not expect this offensive behaviour from such a well-known and successful company. This

type of behaviour will not be tolerated now and it won't be tolerated in the future.

"They would not be able to discriminate against a disability or someone with a different sexual orientation."

Stephen Owen, the general manager, told *The Times*: "At the end of the day we are a small family-run hotel. We sat and discussed how we could adapt the way we serve food to our clients across all areas, but after deliberation, we felt we would not be able to make the necessary changes to prevent her being placed in a difficult and awkward situation." He added: "For 60-odd years we have employed so many individuals of a different religion, race, age, gender and sexual orientation. It's disappointing that . . . we are now being accused of acting unfairly."

Parveen Ishaq, of the Edinburgh and Lothians Regional Equality Council, a charity, said: "It's a very small hotel so I understand their predicament and I think they acted fairly. If the role in particular involves handling pork and alcohol all day every day then yes in this case the hotel would be right.

"It is also worth asking why someone in this situation would apply for a job that they know they are not suitable for. If they know they can't handle alcohol and they know they can't handle pork why would they go for a role that requires exactly those tasks?" *Compo – that's why.*

I never heard of a Jewish waitress demanding that she not have to serve pork, or a methodist refusing to serve wine. They either don't apply for such a job, or they accept that others eat/drink it, but they don't have to.

Victimhood, entitlement and compensation.