

## RACIST GROUP EYES PROTEST OF SOMALIS IN MAINE

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Seeking to capitalize on the controversial influx of Somali refugees, a small but high-profile white separatist group based in Illinois plans to rally in Lewiston, Maine - a move the church's leader said will help spread the group's racist message throughout New England.

"People are becoming disillusioned with liberalism, with the left-wing politicians in that area," Matthew Hale said yesterday from the headquarters of the World Church of the Creator in East Peoria, Ill. "They've grown tired of the Ted Kennedys of the world espousing their left-wing beliefs; they're tired of immigrants in America; they're tired of open borders."

If held as scheduled Jan. 11, the Lewiston appearance would be the latest in a quickening succession of rallies and incidents in New England involving the World Church and its white-supremacist counterpart, the National Alliance.

"This is classic," said Robert Leikind, director of the New England chapter of the Anti-Defamation League. "They piggyback off local controversies."

Hale chose Lewiston because of the widely publicized influx of 1,100 Somali refugees to the struggling, predominantly white city. Many residents have questioned how the cash-strapped former mill city can afford to provide jobs and meet the basic needs of the refugees.

Hale plans to deliver a speech, "White Power or Ruin," urging residents to drive the Somalis out of Lewiston. City officials yesterday debated the issue before granting Hale "conditional approval," which requires Hale to meet with them to discuss public safety and security issues.

Hale, and those who share his views, want the United States to become a "whites only" nation that bars minorities, Jews, and all immigration. Lewiston will be the latest venue for this racist agenda.

From World Church protests at the dedication of the Zakim Bridge to leafletting in numerous Boston suburbs to a September speech by Hale that drew 250 riot-equipped police to Wakefield, the drumbeat of racist propaganda has been heard more frequently in the region this year.

"I want to rally the white people of Lewiston for their own interests, and those interests do not tolerate the invasion of Somalis in their city," Hale said. Saying that he embraces the label of "racist," Hale added he will urge Lewiston residents "to make sure that the Somalis feel unwelcome."

"We want to have rallies, demonstrations, pickets, marches, and we can do all that within the law," he said. "The Somalis are unwelcome there, and they shouldn't be there."

Since February 2001, Lewiston has been grappling with how to best handle the surge of refugees. The city added nearly \$400,000 to the welfare and school budgets, amid concerns from longtime residents that property taxes would rise.

Then, an October letter by Mayor Laurier Raymond, asking newly arrived Somalis to discourage more migration to Lewiston, spurred fears that racial tension would

escalate. Raymond stressed that his concerns were strictly economic and Somali leaders said recently that relations with the city had improved.

However, Wakefield Police Chief Stephen Doherty said Lewiston officials should prepare carefully for Hale's visit. "Based on my experience, I think they have reason" to be nervous, Doherty said.

On Sept. 14, Doherty's entire 44-officer department, plus 200 riot-prepared police from regional forces, were deployed to keep more than 600 angry protesters away from Hale and his 40-member audience in the town library.

"It was a major tactical operation for us," Doherty said. "If we didn't have this help, we would have had a major, unchecked civil disturbance, with a high risk for personal damage and personal injury."

Leikind said the World Church has been linked to violence. In 1999, World Church member Benjamin Smith went on a shooting rampage against minorities and Jews in Indiana and Illinois, killing two people and wounding nine others.

"Hale talks about him like a patron saint," Leikind said of Smith.

The "conditional approval" Lewiston officials granted to Hale recommends that the speech be moved from the community center to the much-larger town armory, and that Hale meet with City Hall staff to discuss public safety.

In a statement, the city said none of Lewiston's elected officials "endorses the mission of the World Church of the Creator."

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