

SUPREMACIST ARRESTED IN MURDER PLOT

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LEWISTON, Maine - The leader of a white separatist group scheduled to lead a rally here Saturday against this city's Somali refugees was arrested yesterday by federal agents in Chicago on charges of soliciting the murder of a US judge.

Matthew Hale , the self-styled high priest of the World Church of the Creator, was seized by agents of the FBI-led Joint Terrorism Task Force as he arrived at federal court for a contempt hearing. Hale is charged with soliciting the murder of US District Judge Joan Humphrey Lefkow, who is presiding over a case of trademark infringement by the Illinois-based hate group. Hale had been ordered by Lefkow not to use the name World Church of the Creator, for which an Oregon group devoted to racial tolerance had a valid trademark, and to surrender its Internet site names, brochures, documents, and books, including the group's "White Man's Bible."

Hale, whose group promotes racist and anti-Semitic views, refused the order and had been summoned to explain why he should not be held in contempt. He faces up to 20 years in prison for allegedly soliciting a murder, and 10 for alleged obstruction of justice.

The arrest came three days before a rally here where Hale planned to call for the expulsion of 1,100 Somali refugees who have moved in over the past 18 months. Hale's organization has said it will find a replacement to deliver his message that the United States should bar minorities, Jews, and all immigration.

Security concerns prompted a month of intense planning for what city officials said would be the largest law-enforcement presence in the history of the state. More than 2,000 protesters are expected at a simultaneous, pro-diversity rally to be held across the city at Bates College.

Phil Nadeau, the assistant city administrator, said the charges against Hale show why heavy security is still warranted. "I still think we're going to see representatives from this group on Saturday," he said. "It won't change our planning."

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