

The Ninth of Av sets stage for rally

By Shayndi Raice - Monday August 14 2006

Committee presents ashes to company executives

Jews, Christians and Muslims gathered on Aug. 3 to protest a security company they call "one of the biggest roadblocks standing in the way of worker dignity and better pay in the security industry."



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Organized by the Massachusetts Interfaith Committee for Worker Justice, protesters included Margie Klein, a Hebrew College rabbinical student and founder of Brookline's Kavod House, Rabbi Jonah Pesner of Boston's Temple Israel and Rabbi Moshe Waldoks of Brookline's Temple Beth Zion.

According to the committee, Northeast Security Company – one of the region's largest – pays its workers \$300 a week with few benefits. The committee said that Northeast refuses to allow its workers to

unionize with the Service Employees International union Local 615.

Staged outside One Financial Center, the group asked BlackRock Inc., owner of the building and one of Northeast's largest clients, to pressure the company to allow its workers to unionize. The company could not be reached for comment.

The protest fell on Tisha B'Av, the Jewish fast day mourning the destruction of the Temple in Jerusalem. According to Waldoks, the committee did not initially realize that they had scheduled the protest on Tisha B'Av. Despite the scorching heat, the rabbis involved decided to use the day's theme to their advantage.

"On Tisha B'Av, we first mourn what is lost, and then we celebrate the coming redemption," said Waldoks, who then blew the shofar. After the outdoor rally, the group of clergy entered the building to present executives at BlackRock with a sack of ashes. The group also acknowledged that some companies had been receptive to improving conditions for its workers. Presenting a symbolic jar of honey to cooperative companies, Father Edward J. Boyle of the Archdiocese of Boston Labor Guild said: "In their honor, we present this honey to symbolize the sweet taste of hope for workers who with your help hope to work hard and live decent lives."