

Supporters decry 'horrifying' 27-year sentence for slaughterhouse chief

Nicole Neroulias Religion News Service | Jun. 29, 2010

Orthodox Jewish leaders say the 27-year prison sentence announced Monday (June 21) against former kosher slaughterhouse chief Sholom Rubashkin far outweighs his white-collar crime.

Rubashkin, 51, was convicted last November on 86 counts of fraud stemming from a \$26.8 million loss to lenders after an immigration raid found nearly 400 undocumented workers at his Agriprocessors slaughterhouse in Postville, Iowa.

Prosecutors opted not to pursue the immigration charges after the decisive fraud conviction; a state trial recently acquitted him of knowingly employing underage workers.

Defense attorneys had asked for a six-year prison term, citing Rubashkin's 10 children, faith-based philanthropy and other contributing factors for leniency. Prosecutors also scaled back their original request for life imprisonment to 25 years. U.S. District Judge Linda Reade of Cedar Rapids has also ordered Rubashkin to pay back his lenders.

In a statement released after the sentence announcement, Agudath Israel, an ultra-Orthodox organization, called it "a dark day" for both American justice and American Jewry.

"While none of us condones any wrongdoing by Mr. Rubashkin, the extraordinary severity of the sentence imposed upon one of our Jewish brothers sends chills of shock and apprehension down our collective spine," the statement reads. "This is a horrifying development."

Rubashkin's defense team plans to appeal the verdict and sentence.

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