

# Fired Muslim meatpackers file grievance against Swift

## Workers wanted to change lunch break for Ramadan fast

By Ivan Moreno  
Associated Press

DENVER — A union officially filed grievances Friday on behalf of several dozen Muslim workers who were fired from a Greeley meatpacking plant after a dispute over prayer breaks.

The United Food and Commercial Workers Local 7 filed the grievances against JBS Swift & Co., after more than 100 workers were fired Wednesday, spokesman Manny Gonzales. He said the grievances were for discrimination and wrongful termination.

Plant workers said they were refused a request to time their breaks at sunset so they could pray and end their fast during the holy month of Ramadan.

Swift spokeswoman Tamara Smid said she hadn't seen any grievances but that the company would not "comment publicly on these types of issues."

Gonzales said that according to the union's calculation, about 130 workers were fired, but Swift put that number at 101.

The company said the workers were fired because they walked away from work Sept. 5 before their shifts ended. Smid said those workers were suspended and warned that if they didn't return for work when recalled that they would be fired.

Smid said the company had changed the workers' lunch

breaks from 9 p.m. to 8 p.m. to accommodate them, but Muslim employees said that still would be too late.

The workers said the company had promised them a break at 7:30 p.m. but changed the offer Sept. 5.

Somali Aid, the Colorado Muslim Council, and the Colorado Immigrant Rights Coalition decried the firings and demanded that Swift respect religious rights.

Muslim workers at a Swift plant in Grand Island, Neb., quit last year, citing the same concerns. They eventually returned to work.

Colorado State Refugee Services Program coordinator Paul Stein said Thursday that some of the workers who were fired from Swift were applying for jobs at the Cargill Meat Solutions plant in Fort Morgan, about 55 miles east of Greeley.

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Sunday. Older kids (5-11) will

eyes