

## News Article

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Group criticizes conditions at Cintas

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The National Interfaith Committee for Worker Justice, a faith-based advocacy group, issued a report Wednesday criticizing the treatment of workers at Cintas Corp., the nation's largest uniform supplier.

The Chicago-based group's report cited workers' complaints about pay, treatment by bosses and workplace safety.

"There is an overriding environment of fear as related to unions," said Kim Bobo, head of the 8-year-old group, which has previously looked into the conditions for U.S. poultry workers.

Cintas officials, speaking from company headquarters in Cincinnati, disputed the charges and said they matched ones previously raised by the Union of Needletrades, Industrial and Textile Employees, the nation's major garment workers union.

For the last 16 months, the union has been trying to organize Cintas, which has 27,000 workers in the U.S. and Canada. Only 700 of those workers belong to a union, according to the company.

The advocacy group based its report on meetings with workers by clergy and laypeople at facilities operated by Cintas or its subcontractors in six U.S. cities, including Chicago.

In Chicago, the group visited three subcontractors, where it said it found immigrant workers in sweatshop-like conditions. "In one factory, there were 40 Latino women who couldn't look up from their work," said Bobo.

However, Cintas officials said they have reviewed conditions of the company's subcontractors, including those in Chicago, and not found violations. They pointed to a recent Illinois Department of Labor inspection that cleared one facility, and said they have not yet received reports on the others.

One of the problems raised by the workers, according to the group, is "unrealistic" production quotas that allegedly lead to injuries. Workers, according to the report, fear being fired if they report their injuries.