

August 9, 1979  
Honolulu Advertiser

A-12 Thursday, August 9, 1979 HONOLULU ADVERTISER

## Hale Mohalu protest held at Damien statue

As a protest by the Hale Mohalu Ohana, a black shroud yesterday was draped over the statue of Father Damien that stands at the state Capitol.

A similar protest was staged in Washington, where a duplicate statue of the Belgian priest who worked with leprosy patients in Hawaii is on display at the U.S. Capitol.

The Ohana — which is fighting state efforts to close the Hale Mohalu leprosy facility at Pearl City — called for the "return" of the statues to the Kalaupapa leprosy settlement on Molokai and to Hale Mohalu.

"Damien was for the people and remains with the people," they said in a statement.

About 50 persons took part in the prayer ceremony and shrouding of the statue in Honolulu.

The controversy is over whether the state should close down the aging Pearl City facility. The state wants to move all leprosy patients on Oahu to Leahi Hospital.

The Health Department says it would be expensive and unnecessary to fix up Hale Mohalu for the few remaining patients.

The Hale Mohalu Ohana, however, argues that Leahi is an "institutional" setting that is inappropriate for patients who do not need full-time hospital care. They also say the cost of preparing a facility at Leahi is higher than the cost of repairing Hale Mohalu.