



**\*\*\*PRESS RELEASE\*\*\***

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**Prominent Anti-Detention Groups Join Local Charitable, Religious, and Community Organizations in Calling for Closure and Investigation of Etowah Immigration Jail**

*Civil Rights complaint filed; Detention center is “warehouse” for prolonged detention and “among the worst” in nation*

BIRMINGHAM, Alabama — This Friday, a diverse collection of Alabama, regional, and national organizations issued a letter to Homeland Secretary Jeh Johnson urging his department to immediately terminate their contract with Etowah County to house immigrant detainees at the infamous Etowah County Detention Center in Gadsden, Alabama.

The letter comes in the wake of a civil rights [complaint](#) submitted to the Department of Homeland Security (DHS) by Community Initiatives for Visiting Immigrants in Confinement (CIVIC), which provides a harrowing picture of the many abuses at Etowah—including retaliatory beatings, dangerously mismanaged healthcare, inadequate nutrition, and prolonged detention—based on extensive firsthand testimony and evidence provided by current and former detainees. The letter’s signatories cite the complaint and previous investigations condemning conditions at the Etowah detention center in calling for its immediate closure, stressing that “[a]ll previous attempts at oversight and reform have failed to resolve fundamental problems” there.

“We are aghast and ashamed to know that this detention center exists in our state,” stated Lisa Moyer, an Alabama resident and member of Southerners on New Ground, one of the signatories to the letter. “Etowah is used to warehouse immigrants whom DHS obstinately refuses to release while they are fighting their cases, and individuals are transferred to Etowah to distance them from their families, communities, and legal counsel. The kind of folks detained in Etowah are those willing to choose months or even years of soul-crushing detention over deportation—which means they are often individuals with deep ties to this country and meritorious claims for immigration relief. For those detainees with criminal history, they have already served their time and are now being doubly punished, and in any event, no confined person should fear for their basic personal safety.”

Visit [www.shutdownetowah.org/resources](http://www.shutdownetowah.org/resources) to read the sign-on letter, CIVIC’s complaint, and access additional resources.

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