



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

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## **Activists From Around The Country Descend On Etowah's Detention Center Demanding Closure**

**GADSDEN, Alabama** — Immigrants rights organizations and their allies from across the US will be traveling to the Etowah County Detention Center (ECDC) this weekend in an effort to see the jail closed. The Shut Down Etowah campaign – a conglomerate of different groups and activists working to close the facility – has been highlighting the injustices taking place therein.

After the recent death of Mr. Teka Gulema in late January – an Ethiopian immigrant who passed away after spending nearly a year in serious condition while in detention – activists are again highlighting why Etowah must be closed. Gulema's death comes on the heels of a two-week hunger strike waged by Bangladeshi detainees against the inhumane treatment they've been subjected to in Etowah. Activists have been highlighting that the conditions in Etowah can be deadly if not at least torturous.

Community Initiatives for Visiting Immigrants in Confinement (CIVIC) has issued a complaint against Etowah on behalf of Gulema in this regard. It recommends that ICE terminate its contract, perform an unannounced inspection, and investigate Gulema's death immediately. It also calls for the immediate release of Mohammed Baraka and Pacheco Arias Gonzalez – two detainees of the many caught up in Etowah's systematic neglect – as well as an audit of all current detainee medical records at ECDC.

Lucia Hermo, Public Advocacy Director for the ACLU of Alabama, stated: "Tucked away in a building such as this, it can be easy to turn our eyes away from the long list of ways in which the Etowah County detention center is not taking care of its immigrant detainees. It's certainly what some people want us to do. But we're here today to send a message, not just to ICE officials and the nation in general, but especially to the men within these walls: we will not turn away, and will we continue to stand up and make noise until this center is shut down."

Local activist Lisa Moyer echoed this saying, "The conditions in a place like the Etowah County Detention Center are not fit for anyone, certainly not those who came here only asking for asylum from the US."

Immigration And Customs Enforcement (ICE) is faced with a choice: either they can allow the injustices at Etowah to continue or they can close this detention center and do what's right. It's the priority of the movement taking place to make sure that they choose the latter, but they are more than willing to keep going if they don't.

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