



Media Advisory
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Community Members Urge the Department of Homeland Security to Release a Crucial Document on Systemic Civil Rights Violations at the Etowah County Immigrant Detention Center

BIRMINGHAM, AL -- Civic and faith leaders, immigrants' rights activists, and their legal representatives will gather this Thursday, September 8 at 3:00 PM in historic Kelly Ingram Park to announce the filing of a Freedom of Information Act (FOIA) request for a key document issued by the Department of Homeland Security's civil rights watchdog office calling for the closure or overhaul of the infamous Etowah immigrant detention center in Gadsden, Alabama.

DHS's Office of Civil Rights and Civil Liberties stated in its most recent [annual report](#) that it had issued its first-ever "super-recommendations memorandum," a category specifically created to "super-recommend" that ICE terminate its contract with Etowah. In their report DHS cites numerous complaints of civil rights violations and repeated failures to implement DHS's previous recommendations for reforms. The memorandum itself has not been released to the public. Members of the #ShutDownEtowah campaign and other civil and immigrants' rights organizations are filing the FOIA request to seek disclosure of the memo and shed light on abuses at Etowah.

As an immigrant in Alabama living under the daily threat of racial profiling and detention, I think that it's essential that we stand up against the abuses occurring at Etowah and all over our state," says Carlos Ramos, immigrant rights activist and #ShutDownEtowah campaign member. "I put my body on the line in a civil disobedience at Etowah two years ago and I'm ready to do it again."

"It is a longstanding open secret that Etowah is one of the worst immigrant jails in the country. Human rights violations in Etowah are rampant and well-documented. It's time to shut it down," states Silky Shah, Co-Director of Detention Watch Network.

"Alabama residents and the public at large have a clear-cut right under the Freedom of Information Act to see DHS's super-recommendations memorandum and know what is going on inside the walls of Etowah," states Jessica Vosburgh, attorney with Adelante Alabama Worker Center.

The call to end immigrant detention, deportations, and raids is a groundbreaking step for Black Lives Matter," states Jilisa Milton, local #BlackLivesMatter activist. "We stand in solidarity with the immigrant community because we are all affected by state policies and practices that criminalize people of color. As an advocate for racial justice and immigrants' rights, I believe that we are

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stronger together. We must also remember that many immigrants—including a disproportionate number of Etowah detainees—are black immigrants who embody the intersection between our movements.”

The organizations submitting the request are: Adelante Alabama Worker Center, National Day Laborer Organizing Network, the National Immigration Project of the National Lawyers Guild, Alabama Coalition for Immigrant Justice, Detention Watch Network, Greater Birmingham Ministries, Immigrant Defense Project, Southerners on New Ground, and the Southern Poverty Law Center.

Visit www.shutdownetowah.org to learn more

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