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Contact:

Dotty Griffith, Public Education Director
ACLU Foundation of Texas
(713) 942 8146 x 103 or (832) 291 4776
dgriffith@aclutx.org

ACLU Of Texas Sues ICE Officials, Williamson County And CCA For Sexual Assault Of Immigrant Women

Suit Seeks Class Damages On Behalf Of Numerous Victims

AUSTIN, TX [October 19, 2011] – The ACLU of Texas today filed suit in federal district court seeking class action damages on behalf of three immigrant women who were sexually assaulted while in custody of Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) at the T. Don Hutto Family Residential Center in Taylor, along with numerous others who experienced similar trauma.

Defendants named in the suit include three ICE officials; Williamson County; Corrections Corporation of America (CCA), the private corporation in charge of managing the Hutto facility; the former facility administrator for Hutto; and Donald Dunn, a guard who pled guilty in state court to three counts of official oppression and two counts of unlawful restraint based on his assaults of five women. Separately, Dunn has been charged with four additional federal counts of criminal violation of civil rights and is awaiting sentencing on two of them.

The three named plaintiffs are identified in the lawsuit as Sarah Doe, Kimberly Doe and Raquel Doe to protect them from further harm. All three were seeking asylum in the United States, fleeing sexual assault and extreme violence in their home countries.

“The fact that these women sought sanctuary in the United States -- only to find abuse at the hands of officials they thought would protect them – is wholly inconsistent with America’s self-proclaimed reputation as a beacon of human rights and protector of human dignity,” said Lisa Graybill, Legal Director for the ACLU of Texas.

The assaults occurred when Dunn alone was transporting women from the Hutto facility to the airport or bus station in nearby Austin. Log books and other documents obtained by the ACLU of Texas indicate that in addition to the seven known occasions on which

Donald Dunn is believed to have assaulted a total of nine women, at least 20 different male guards transported at least 44 female detainees alone between December 2008 and May 2010. The lawsuit alleges that ICE, Williamson County and CCA were deliberately indifferent and willfully blind to the fact that Dunn and other employees regularly violated the rule that detainees not be transported without another escort officer of the same gender present.

“Unfortunately, we believe these complaints are just the tip of the iceberg,” said Mark Whitburn, Senior Staff Attorney for the ACLU of Texas. “Government records reveal that since 2007, 185 complaints have been made to the Department of Homeland Security about sexual abuse in ICE custody, 56 of which were from facilities in Texas. Immigrants in detention are uniquely vulnerable to abuse, and those holding them in custody know it,” Whitburn added. “Many do not speak English, many – like our plaintiffs – have fled violence in their home countries, and are terrified of being returned. They may not be aware of their rights or they may be afraid to exercise them.”

“It has taken enormous courage for these women to step forward in the face of potential retaliation and deportation to speak out against this injustice,” said Graybill. “They’ve done it in the hopes that no other woman will have to experience the fear and violation they did.”

For a [copy of the complaint](#), please see www.aclutx.org.

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