

ACLU of Texas Sues On Behalf Of Immigrant Inmate Who Died In Solitary Confinement In Pecos Prison

Federal Government Ignores Substandard Medical Treatment At Reeves County Detention Center, Lawsuit Contends

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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AUSTIN – The American Civil Liberties Union (ACLU) of Texas and El Paso co-counsel Mike Torres and Leon Schydlower today announced the filing of a lawsuit against the federal government and administrators of a West Texas for-profit prison on behalf of the survivors of Jesus Manuel Galindo. Mr. Galindo, 32, died on December 12, 2008, after suffering a seizure in solitary confinement where he had been placed for complaining about the facility's failure to provide him medication to control his epileptic seizures.

For a copy of *Galindo, et al. v. Reeves County, et al. (W.D. Tex. Dec. 7, 2010)*, go to <http://www.aclutx.org/galindo>

The suit names as defendants individual employees of the Federal Bureau of Prisons, The GEO Group (which operates the for-profit prison), Reeves County and the facility's contracted medical provider, Physicians Network Association (PNA).

"The Galindo family has suffered a terrible loss, a loss that could have been prevented if Reeves County Detention Center officials had responded to Jesus Manuel Galindo's repeated pleas for care as well as requests on Galindo's behalf from fellow inmates and his mother, Graciela Galindo," said Mike Torres. "A prison sentence should not be a death sentence because officials are unwilling to provide basic medical care," added Schydlower.

Mr. Galindo's death came after repeated attempts by Galindo, his family and others to persuade prison and medical staff to move him out of isolation and provide effective medication to control his seizures.

"U.S. taxpayer dollars were used to pay a for-profit medical provider with a documented record of providing constitutionally inadequate care, and federal officials looked the other way while inmates like Mr. Galindo were denied access to the most basic medical necessities," said Lisa Graybill, Legal Director for the ACLU of Texas. "A prisoner's citizenship status does not matter when it comes to medical care – federal inmates are entitled to equal protection of the law, and no inmate held in a United States prison should be subject to the deliberate denial of life-saving medication, then left in solitary to die."

In recent years, the federal government has increasingly relied on private firms like The GEO Group, which operates the Reeves County Detention Center (RCDC) in Pecos, to manage

prisons where immigrant prisoners serve criminal sentences, mostly for non-violent crimes like illegal entry.

Gouri Bhat, Senior Staff Attorney for the ACLU of Texas, said, “Prisoners at RCDC face an impossible situation. Private prison officials cut costs and provide deficient care, and the Bureau of Prisons won’t hear grievances about private prisons. That is a Catch-22 with deadly consequences.”