



# Group calls for investigation into death of Salvadoran immigrant held at ICE facility

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The death of a Salvadoran man held in U.S. immigration custody has drawn calls for an independent investigation into his treatment and revived questions about the controversial privately run detention center in California where he was held.

Raúl Ernesto Morales-Ramos, 44, was admitted to a hospital in Palmdale, California last Friday after experiencing some unusual bleeding while being detained at the Adelanto Detention Center. Test indicated that Morales-Ramos appeared to have intestinal cancer requiring inpatient care and possible surgery, but before anything could be done the man died on Monday, an Immigration and Customs Enforcement statement said.

Christina Fialho, an attorney who helps runs a visitation program at Adelanto, partly blamed the death on the center's doctors, who she claims did not do enough to help Morales-Ramos, even when he complained about worsening symptoms.

Fialho said she received multiple complaints from others detained at Adelanto in the weeks leading up to his death "about a man who was suffering from diarrhea, severe abdominal pain and uncontrollable leakage of urine."

"When this man asked for a catheter, medical staff at Adelanto denied him," Fialho told the Los Angeles Times.

An ICE spokeswoman, Virginia Kic, told the Los Angeles Times that the agency's Office of Professional Responsibility has begun an inquiry into Morales-Ramos' death and the Los Angeles County coroner's office is conducting an autopsy.

Morales-Ramos had been in ICE custody since February of 2010, when he was arrested on a warrant issued by authorities in El Salvador charging him with conspiracy to commit aggravated homicide. Investigators in El Salvador allege Morales-Ramos had hired two former Los Angeles-area gang members to kill one of his step children in El Salvador in a dispute over an insurance settlement.

Originally ordered deported by an immigration judge in August 2010, Morales-Ramos had since filed multiple legal appeals seeking to block his removal. At the time of his death, he had a petition for review pending before the Ninth Circuit Court of Appeals.

The detention facility where Morales-Ramos was held has been under fire in the past for neglecting its patients.

Operated by the Florida-based prison company GEO Group, workers at the Adelanto Detention Center were accused in 2012 of neglect following the death of Fernando Domínguez from pneumonia.

An inspection report released by the Department of Homeland Security that year found Domínguez "received an unacceptable level of medical care" at the facility, and that his death could have been prevented. A medical malpractice suit was filed by his family against GEO, but that case is still pending.

An inspection report from GEO in 2014 found that medical care at Adelanto met the agency's standards.

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