

43. Luis Beltrán Yáñez-Cruz

Who was Luis Beltrán Yáñez-Cruz? Luis Beltrán Yáñez-Cruz was a 68-year-old Honduran father and grandfather from San Pedro Sula who had made Newark, New Jersey his home for more than two decades. Family and friends described him as lively, healthy, talkative, and well known among day laborers by the nickname “pico de oro,” a phrase suggesting eloquence and the “gift of the gab.” His daughter described Luis as an extraordinary father, “always looking out for us, even as we got older and became adults. He looked out for his grandchildren He always worried about them and called to ask how they were doing.

Luis Beltrán Yáñez-Cruz entered the U.S. in 1999 and was granted TPS (Temporary Protected Status) which allowed him to visit Honduras on at least two occasions. According to his daughter his status lapsed because he was unable to renew it.

How did Luis Beltrán Yáñez-Cruz end up in ICE Custody? One day in November 2025, Luis Beltrán Yáñez-Cruz, who worked in construction, went for breakfast at a McDonald’s, stopping to chat with day laborer friends who gathered there to pick up work. Suddenly, ICE agents pulled up and began arresting people, including Luis. He was placed in detention in New Jersey, then moved to Calexico, CA. He spent Thanksgiving, Christmas and New Year’s in detention.

How did Luis Beltrán Yáñez-Cruz die under ICE custody? Luis Beltrán Yáñez-Cruz called his family regularly. He began feeling ill only after ICE transferred him to the Imperial Regional Detention Facility in Calexico, California. His health appeared to worsen the longer he was in detention even though he had been healthy before his arrest. Inside the facility he suffered from stomach and chest pains, and sometimes felt like vomiting after eating. He complained of shortness of breath while walking around the facility. When he reported this to the staff, they only gave him pills to ease the pain, Luis’ daughter Yanez said.

Yanez said the last time she spoke to her father was January 3rd, 2026, a usual check-in when he asked about her children as she walked home from work. At the end of the call he said “*Cuidate, te amo mucho.*” Take care, I love you a lot. ICE said Luis was evaluated for chest pain and sent to hospitals. He died at John F. Kennedy Memorial Hospital in Indio, California, on January 6, 2026, while in ICE custody.

Sources:

<https://kesq.com/news/2026/01/14/daughter-of-man-who-died-in-ice-custody-at-local-hospital-speaks-out/>

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