

23. Maksym Chernyak

Who was Maksym Chernyak? He was a 44 year old Ukrainian who entered the U.S. in August 2024 as a Humanitarian Parolee to escape the Russian invasion. Prior to that, he lived with his partner Oksana Tarasiuk in Kyiv, where he helped move women and children to safety. His partner described him as “warm and kind-hearted”, and said “Maksym was not only the person I loved. He was also someone to lean on, and my hope.”

In the U.S. Maksym and his partner lived in Miami, Florida.

How did Maksym Chernyak end up in ICE Custody? Maksym was arrested in January 2025 after a domestic dispute. His partner characterized the dispute as a misunderstanding in part fueled by a language barrier. While in jail, he was detained by ICE and transferred to the Krome Service and Processing Center.

How did Maksym Chernyak die under ICE custody? On February 2, 2025, Maksym Chernyak is said to have suffered a stroke. Neurologist Altaf Saadi said, “Every minute a stroke is not treated is brain tissue lost or damaged.” Chernyak had no prior medical conditions noted during intake, but exhibited seizure-like symptoms on Feb. 18. Despite suffering multiple seizures, staff waited for over 40 minutes to call for emergency help. After his condition deteriorated, he was transported to Kendall Hospital and was determined to have had a massive stroke. He died two days later.

Like hundreds of people before him, Maksym encountered harsh and inhumane conditions in ICE detention that very likely led to his premature death, which his family believes was a preventable death.

What happened after Maksym Chernyak’s death? Maksym’s partner Oksana said, “If not for all these conditions he was in, if not for all the injustice, he would still be alive.” Medical experts reviewing his case called the delayed response “substandard care,” especially given the controlled environment of a detention facility.

Sources:

<https://www.knowyourrightscamp.org/post/families-of-two-immigrants-who-died-in-ice-custody-question-their-death-due-to-natural-causes>

<https://www.miamiherald.com/news/local/immigration/article304966226.html> (photo)

<https://x.com/belkiswille/status/1947318954000556158?lang=en> (photo)

<https://www.themarshallproject.org/records/19218-maksym-chernyak>