

18. RANDALL GAMBOA ESQUIVEL.

Who was Randall Gamboa Esquivel? Randall Gamboa Esquivel was a 52 year old man from Costa Rica, who crossed into the U.S. across the US/Mexico border in December 2024 to seek work. He had previously lived in the U.S., undocumented, between 2002 and 2013. His family members describe himself as healthy, robust and “chubby”, with no mental health problems.

How did Randall Gamboa Esquivel end up in ICE custody? After crossing to the U.S. from Mexico, he was apprehended and detained by the U.S. Border Patrol. He was initially held at Texas’s Webb county detention center before being transferred to another south Texas facility in Port Isabel. For 6 months, until June 2025, he called his family daily, often via video calls. His younger sister, Greidy Mata Esquivel, thought he sounded and looked healthy when they talked on what would be their last video call on 12 June. After that, he seemed to suddenly vanish. “My brother disappeared and we had to reach out to agencies, lawyers, consulates, anyone willing to help,” his sister said in Spanish, in order to locate him. Medical records later indicate that there was a transfer request for Randall Gamboa from the Port Isabel detention facility to Valley Baptist Medical Center in Harlingen TX, on 23 June, 2025. Gamboa was hospitalized with an “altered mental status”, and the medical records indicate that he had been given antipsychotic and antidepressant medications. Relatives and friends denied Gamboa had a history of mental illness before he migrated to the US.

How did Randall Gamboa Esquivel deteriorate under ICE custody? Within two weeks of entering Valley Baptist Medical Center the medical records indicate that Randall Gamboa was suffering from several life threatening conditions, including sepsis, malnutrition, and toxic encephalopathy, which is often caused by an infection or by prolonged exposure to drugs or toxins

In August 2025 the family was able to find out where their brother was located. “The information didn’t come from the Costa Rican consulate, nor ICE, it came from a lawyer whom we asked for help and who called us saying: ‘I found him in a bed, he follows you with his eyes, but can’t talk, he is in a vegetative state’,” his sister said.

A doctor who visited Randall Gamboa on August 2 wrote: “He doesn’t move or respond. He does blink at times ... there is immobility and mutism present. The patient appears exhibiting the decerebrate posturing.”

Nearly 10 months after he crossed the border and 3 months after he went into Valley Baptist Medical Center, the Trump administration in September 2025 flew the 52-year-old back to Costa Rica on an air ambulance, with ulcers over his entire body and in a vegetative state with brain damage.

Sadly, in Costa Rica he never improved. Five weeks later Randall Gamboa was pronounced dead at a hospital in his home town of Pérez Zeledón, Costa Rica.

What happened after Randall Gamboa Esquivel’s death? After his death, family members shared an obituary: “Our beloved Randall is now with the Lord. We will soon announce the

details of his funeral service.” They plan to pursue the case further, including a possible complaint to the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights if needed. They demanded answers to their questions about what happened when under ICE care, and about his deportation and Randall’s condition upon return home.

“Have you ever smelled a cadaver?“, asked his family.

Sources

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