

50. Mamuka Artmeladze

Who was Mamuka Artmeladze? Mamuka Artmeladze was an immigrant from The Republic of Georgia. He was 43 years old. Little personal information about Mamuka has been published in the United States. Mamuka is described as having been paroled into the United States in September 2022. Mamuka Artmeladze had a case pending before an immigration judge when he was detained by ICE.

How did Mamuka Artmeladze end up in ICE custody? Mamuka Artmeladze was taken into ICE custody in February 2026, in Alabama, during an ICE operation targeting commercial vehicles. The operation was known as ICE Wall FY26—a joint operation between ICE and state law enforcement agencies across the U.S. South and Midwest to target truck drivers. Mamuka had no criminal convictions or known criminal activity, nor traffic violations. The enforcement data shows the indiscriminate nature of the dragnet. Of the more than 1,350 arrests tagged to “ICE Wall”, roughly seven in ten were of people with no criminal record -- the same classification ICE gave Mamuka Artmeladze: no criminal record.

Under Operation ICE Wall FY26, state troopers deputized under ICE’s 287(g) program stop trucks that bypass a weigh station and route the drivers to federal officers waiting on site. This process simply picks up whoever is behind the wheel. The nationalities swept up bear this out, with Indian, Uzbek, and Russian drivers near the top and Georgians like Mamuka also well represented. This tends to be the profile of the immigrant long-haul workforce. Those arrests are now drawing federal lawsuits from work-authorized drivers and asylum seekers who say they were detained without due process. Mamuka Artmeladze was classified as the lowest risk level in detention: he had no mandatory detention flag, he was not a known terrorist nor a suspected gang member (problematic as those categories are). As he never had a prior detainer, it is unlikely that he ever had a run-in with police. All of these factors, combined with the nature of his arrest, support the conclusion that he should not have been in detention in the first place.

Mamuka Artmeladze did not have a final removal order so ICE couldn’t remove him—instead, Mamuka had a case pending before an immigration judge the entire time he was held, and may have still been waiting on a final hearing when he passed.

How did Mamuka Artmeladze die in ICE custody? After being detained in Alabama for five days, Mamuka Artmeladze was moved to Winn ICE detention center in Louisiana where he spent about four months in detention before dying in custody. ICE says 43-year-old Mamuka Artmeladze died on June 4, 2026, after being found unconscious. An autopsy was said to be underway to determine the cause of death.

Winn Correctional Center in Winnfield, Winn Parish, was a state prison that converted to ICE detention in 2019, shifting from state prisoners to detaining asylum seekers and immigrants. Operated by LaSalle Corrections, it has been the subject of years of complaints about its filthy conditions, its history of inadequate medical care, brutal use of force, and other systemic problems.

Sources:

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