ICE death of Chinese detainee raises questions of torture and coverup

Anthony Callahan
23 November 2025

On August 5, 2025, Chaofeng Ge, a 32-year-old Chinese national, was found dead at ICE's Moshannon Valley Processing Center (MVPC) in Philipsburg, Pennsylvania, run by the private GEO Group. In its initial news release on Ge's death, Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) claimed he was found "hanging by the neck" in the "shower room" but neglected to note that he was also found with his hands and feet bound together.

ICE's Detainee Death Report simply stated that Ge was found "with a cloth ligature around his neck in a shower stall." However, according to an autopsy report obtained by David B. Rankin, a lawyer for the Ge family, he was found with a bedsheet and linens tied around his wrists and ankles in what the report describes as a "hog-tied" position. Chillingly, the medical examiner noted that there had been other reported incidents of people who had been found hanged in a similar fashion. Whether these incidents also involved ICE detainees is not clear.

Ge had been in ICE custody for only five days before his death. ICE stated that Ge had denied any past medical or mental health issues. A handwritten note, implied to have been written by Ge, was also allegedly found, but its contents have not been released to the public. His death certificate states it was suicide by hanging.

The circumstances of Ge's death beg numerous obvious questions. If Ge's death is a suicide, how was he able to hang himself while hogtied? Or, how was he able to hogtie himself while in the midst of being hanged? Why would he hogtie himself if he intended to commit suicide? Under the circumstances, it is not unfair to ask whether Ge's death was, in fact, a suicide.

According to attorney Rankin, there has been no investigation into Ge's death. A "Notice to Preserve" was sent to MVCP on August 18, 2025, requesting all information and material related to Mr. Ge's detention and death be preserved. Ge's family filed a Freedom of Information Act (FOIA) request with ICE and the Department of Homeland Security (DHS) on September 9, 2025, seeking information about Ge's detention, the conditions at MVPC, his treatment by MVPC personnel and the circumstances of his death. As of this writing, these requests have been ignored by both ICE and DHS.

In response, Ge's family filed a FOIA lawsuit in the Southern District of New York on November 12, 2025. Rankin has stated that Ge was in extreme distress prior to his death and that no one in the facility could speak Mandarin. Ge had difficulty communicating his needs and issues to MVPC staff, being forced to write them as notes and relying on staff to send them to someone outside of the facility to be translated and sent back, which could take days. The lawsuit also alleges that the GEO Group did not provide Ge's family with an explanation of how his death occurred. No one at MVPC could speak Mandarin, and facility staff "refused to even try to communicate with" Ge and did not offer mental health care to him, the lawsuit states.

There is no question that a major cover-up is underway. Following Ge's death, ICE and DHS Secretary Kristi Noem unlawfully blocked both Pennsylvania Congresswomen Summer Lee's and Mary Gay Scanlon's oversight visits to MVPC on August 25, 2025 and August 28, 2025 respectively, a routine practice under the Trump regime. Congresswoman Scanlon alluded to Ge's death as a reason for her visit to the facility.

The ACLU of Pennsylvania, Legal Services of New Jersey and the Transnational Legal Clinic have filed a

© World Socialist Web Site

lawsuit against MVCP alleging inhumane conditions, denial of access to interpretive, medical, legal and other services to persons held in ICE custody at MVPC.

A full and accurate number of deaths of ICE detainees is somewhat difficult to determine. While ICE has been mandated by Congress since 2018 to report deaths in its custody, it does not adequately keep these lists updated. Chaofeng Ge is only one of at least 25 people in ICE custody to have died in 2025, the highest number reported in 20 years. For context, ICE reported 36 deaths during Donald Trump's entire first presidency, which includes the height of the COVID-19 pandemic in 2020.

Since Ge's death, ICE has reported three other detainee deaths: Lorenzo Antonio Batrez Vargas on August 31; Oscar Duarte Rascon on September 8; and Ismael Ayala Uribe on September 22. Notably, Gabriel Garcia-Aviles died on October 23 at the Adelanto ICE Processing Center, though ICE has not yet listed him on its website detailing detainee deaths.

Ge is not the first ICE detainee to die at MVPC. Frankline Okpu, a native of Cameroon, died at the detention center on December 6, 2023 from an apparent accidental death from MDMA toxicity.

While no response to this tragedy can be expected from the Republican Party, the response from the nominal opposition party to Ge's death has been muted. Democrats in the House and Senate voted to reopen the government without making any calls to investigate the spike in deaths in ICE custody in the last year.

In response to the record deaths in ICE detention, 45 members of Congress sent a toothless letter on November 21 to Secretary Noem and DHS Acting Director Todd Lyons. They "demanded" by December 5 an explanation of what steps ICE has taken to increase medical staff, revise its medical policies, track patterns of neglect and address delays in notifying families when detainees die. The letter gives no indication of any consequence should Noem or Lyons ignore it. It amounts to little more than a request that ICE follow its own procedures and ends with a flaccid appeal for the agency to honor its "legal and moral obligations." In the context of the lawless Trump regime, it is almost laughable.

This outcome is not surprising. The abuse of immigrants by DHS and ICE spans every presidential administration because it is a deliberate bipartisan policy aimed at criminalizing migration and terrorizing the working class. No change of personnel in Washington will end these crimes. Only the international working class, armed with a socialist program and united across national boundaries, can defeat this system of brutalization.

To contact the WSWS and the Socialist Equality Party visit:

wsws.org/contact

© World Socialist Web Site