

Laken Riley's Family Grieves Her Death, Honors Her Faith in Christ

The family of the 22-year-old nursing student who was found dead at the University of Georgia's campus last week is speaking out following her tragic death.

Laken Riley was murdered last Thursday in Augusta, Georgia while jogging on a well-used trail near her school's campus.

According to an affidavit filed on Feb. 23, Jose Antonia Ibarra, an illegal immigrant from Venezuela, was arrested in connection with the crime and is accused of "dragging the victim to a secluded area."

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It adds that Ibarra, 26, "did commit the offense of aggravated battery when he maliciously causes bodily harm to another by seriously disfiguring her body or a member thereof by disfiguring her skull."

Ibarra is charged with malice murder, murder, kidnapping, false imprisonment, aggravated assault, aggravated battery and concealing the death of another, as well as the misdemeanor of physically hindering a 911 call.

The University of Georgia police department found Riley's body in a forested area near Lake Herrick after her roommate called to say she went jogging that morning and still hadn't returned.

A sergeant arrived near the lake with a defibrillator attempting to revive her but was unable to.

Law enforcement has not revealed how Riley was killed, but shared that she was found with “visible injuries” and that blunt force trauma occurred.

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Cops called the murder a “crime of opportunity.”

“He did not know her at all,” UGA Police Chief Jeffrey Clark said Friday. “I think this is a crime of opportunity where he saw an individual and bad things happened.”

In a statement released Sunday, her family thanked Georgia law enforcement for their “quick response and diligent effort” in finding their daughter’s killer, Fox News reported.

“We wish to thank the public for their prayers and thoughts during this tragic time. We thank the University of GA Police Department, Athens-Clarke County Police Department, the Clarke County District Attorney’s Office and the Georgia Bureau of Investigation for their quick response, and diligent effort in the investigation and arrest of those individual(s) responsible for our daughter’s death,” the statement said.

“Laken was an amazing daughter, sister, friend and overall person in general. Her love for the Lord was exemplified in every aspect of her life. She will be missed every day, but we promise to honor her life moving forward in a very big way,” the family’s statement continued.

“During this most difficult time, we ask that you respect our privacy, and provide us the time and space necessary to grieve our daughter’s life that was tragically cut short,” it read.

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