

ICE Arrest Mom, Daughter at Hospital After Vehicle Smashes Into Their Car

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Two Ecuadorian women who were injured in a rollover crash in Central Florida were taken into [immigration](#) custody after being discharged from a hospital, with family members saying they were questioned about their legal status while receiving treatment.

Grace Stephanie Calero Cabanilla, 39, and her daughter, Giulianna Mía Carriel Calero, 19, were involved in a crash on August 20 at Marigold Avenue and Sheldrake Road in Poinciana, according to affidavits obtained from the Polk County Sheriff's Office.

Calero Cabanilla's cousin, Jonathan Bravo, 37, told *Newsweek* that she was driving to work with her daughter when another vehicle struck the passenger side of their car in a crash that he said they "almost died" in.

"It was a very severe accident," Bravo said. "The car was completely totaled."

Bravo said the impact caused the vehicle to roll about four times. He said its wheels and trunk came off and its front end was severely damaged.

A spokesperson for [Immigration and Customs Enforcement](#) (ICE) told *Newsweek* that Calero Cabanilla entered the United States legally on March 8, 2023, but overstayed her authorized period of admission. The agency said Carriel Calero entered legally on February 8, 2025, but overstayed her period of admission.



From left: Julianna Mía Carriel Calero poses at graduation with mother, Grace Stephanie Calero Cabanilla, who, following a crash in Poinciana, Florid... | Jonathan Bravo,
The women were transported by ambulance to HCA Florida Poinciana Hospital after the crash.

Bravo said Calero Cabanilla and her daughter were placed in separate rooms after arriving at the hospital. He said that a Polk County sheriff's deputy began questioning Calero Cabanilla about her immigration status shortly after she arrived, while she was wearing a neck brace and had been given medication.

"She was in bed with a neck brace, trying to receive the proper medical attention that she needs," Bravo said.

HCA Florida Poinciana Hospital told *Newsweek* in a statement its "focus and priority always is taking care of every patient that comes through our emergency room doors regardless of immigration status" and that its employees are dedicated to providing "compassionate care to every patient."

"Like all hospitals, we are required to comply with laws and regulations that govern interactions with verified members of law enforcement when they enter our hospital," a spokesperson said. "At all times and no matter the situation, we do not deviate from our goal of providing the medical care our patients need and deserve."

"As part of a crash investigation on Thursday, deputies went to the local hospital to speak with the occupants of one of the vehicles," a spokesperson for the Polk County Sheriff's Office told *Newsweek*. "As the deputies were obtaining information from those involved, it was discovered that the driver is in the United States illegally from Ecuador after overstaying an expired visa by several years."

The sheriff's office said deputies subsequently determined that the driver's adult daughter, who was also involved in the crash, had overstayed a visa.

"ICE issued detainers for both women, and after the women were discharged from the hospital, they were taken into custody and transported to the Polk County Jail," the spokesperson added.

ICE separately confirmed to *Newsweek* that detainers were lodged against both women following the crash.

"ICE lodged detainers for Grace Stephanie Calero Cabanilla and Julianna Mía Carriel Calero, illegal aliens from Ecuador, after they were arrested by the Polk County Sheriff's Office following a traffic accident," an agency spokesperson said.

Bravo said Calero Cabanilla has a pending asylum application and work authorization and that Carriel Calero was included in her mother's asylum case.

"My cousin was legally working," Bravo said. "She applied for asylum; they provided her with a work permit, with a Social Security number."

Bravo also said Carriel Calero's visa document was valid through 2030.

Arrest affidavits reviewed by *Newsweek* say that deputies responding to the crash identified immigration holds for both women and contacted ICE Officer Joel Jean, who confirmed civil immigration warrants. The documents say that both women had no criminal history and were taken into custody and transported to the Polk County Sheriff's Office Processing Center.

A spokesperson for the Polk County Sheriff's Office said the agency could not provide the crash report because [Florida law exempts](#) such reports from public release for the first 60 days following a crash. When asked whether the other driver involved in the crash had been cited, arrested or charged, the Sheriff's Office declined to comment.

The case comes as the Trump administration has expanded immigration enforcement and sought to increase cooperation between federal authorities and state and local law enforcement agencies under its mass deportation policy. Through programs such as Section 287(g) of the Immigration and Nationality Act, certain state and local officers, after receiving federal training and authorization, can perform specified immigration enforcement functions under ICE supervision, including identifying people who may be subject to removal proceedings and coordinating their transfer into federal custody. The administration has also expanded immigration enforcement beyond traditional criminal-enforcement priorities, with visa overstays and other immigration-status violations increasingly subject to federal scrutiny and enforcement.

Calero Cabanilla's affidavit states that a Law Enforcement Support Center verification found she was "not legally in the USA, subject to removal, has an open case for removal proceedings." Both affidavits conclude that "upon the conclusion of my investigation, no further action was taken."

Neither affidavit alleges that either woman committed a crime related to the crash.

Bravo said Calero Cabanilla suffered injuries to her neck, back, arm, legs and knees and was still in pain when officers took her into custody.

"As they took out my cousin, she was screaming that her arm was hurting," he said.

Bravo also alleged that Carriel Calero suffered multiple seizures at the hospital and had initially been expected to remain there for further treatment.

He further alleged that officers removed Carriel Calero from the hospital early the following morning while she was still wearing a hospital gown and that family members recorded portions of the encounter.

Video of the incident shows law enforcement officers physically separating and detaining the two women inside the hospital room. At the start of the clip, Carriel Calero sits on a gurney wearing a blue hospital gown, clinging tightly around the waist of her mother, who is dressed in a light blue button-down shirt and jeans. Multiple officers surround the bed and forcibly pull the women apart as Carriel Calero, screams in distress.

Two officers hold Carriel Calero, down on the gurney while another officer pulls her mother off the bed, holding her by the arms. As she is pulled away, she cries out and asks to see documentation. The camera then follows into the hallway, recording her as she is escorted down the corridor by officers with her hands secured behind her back.

In another video recorded by family members, relatives confront a Polk County Sheriff's deputy in the hospital hallway as Calero Cabanilla, is led away in handcuffs. The person recording and other family members demand to see an arrest warrant or legal documentation authorizing the detainment, asking repeatedly, "Where's the paper?" and "Where's the arrest warrant, sir?"

The deputy responds that they "don't have to show it to you, sir." The family member recording challenges the deputy further, stating that Calero Cabanilla "almost died in that accident," accusing the initial officer of questioning her while she was in shock without identifying himself as working with ICE, and noting that Carriel Calero suffers from anxiety attacks.

Bravo said the women were initially held in Polk County and that they had later been transferred to Pinellas County.

He also said relatives attempted to provide Carriel Calero with prescribed psychiatric medication while she was in custody but were told it would not be accepted. It was not immediately clear whether she subsequently received the medication or other medical treatment.

Bravo said Calero Cabanilla worked in marketing and that Carriel Calero had planned to complete credits required for her high school diploma before the crash.

He said Calero Cabanilla is divorced, Carriel Calero is her only child, and both women are from Guayaquil.

The family is raising money for legal representation and medical expenses on GoFundMe. Bravo said they had not yet retained an attorney and that neither woman currently had an immigration hearing scheduled, though Calero Cabanilla had been awaiting a hearing in her asylum case.

"We just want the truth to be out there," Bravo said. "We want justice for them."

"As a family, we're distraught, we feel so unsafe in this country now. We feel so unsafe that even in the hospitals, you know, where you're supposed to feel safe."

ICE said both women would remain in custody pending removal proceedings.

Contact Newsweek editors on this story: [Matthew Cannon](#) and [James Debens](#)