# Undocumented Venezuelan Migrant Pleads Not Guilty to Charges in Nursing Student's Death



Jose Ibarra, a 26-year-old undocumented migrant from Venezuela, pleaded not guilty on Friday to charges related to the February 2024 death of Laken Riley, a 22-year-old nursing student. The hearing took place in Athens-Clarke County Superior Court, Georgia, presided over by Judge H. Patrick Haggard. Ibarra faces a 10-count indictment, including murder, aggravated assault, and kidnapping.

Riley, a student at Augusta University College of Nursing, was found dead on February 22 near running trails after not returning from a morning run. According to the indictment, Ibarra allegedly inflicted blunt force trauma to her head, asphyxiated her, and attempted to rape her. Ibarra has been held without bond since his arrest the day after Riley's body was discovered.

The case has garnered national attention, especially concerning U.S. immigration policies. Prominent Republicans, including former President Donald Trump and Georgia Governor Brian Kemp, have referenced Riley’s death in discussions about border control. Georgia recently passed a bill requiring jailers to check the immigration status of detainees, a measure Kemp attributed to Riley's case.

Ibarra's trial is expected to begin in the fall of 2024.