

THE BALTIMORE BANNER

# Rejected at her door, ICE nabs a Maryland woman in her car after smashing her window

John-John Williams IV

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## The arrest was captured on camera by her daughter

That Monday started off like any other day for Karen Cruz Berrios.

The 18-year-old and her mother — Elsy Noemi Berrios, 52 — planned to ride to work together, which happened daily in the month of March. Cruz Berrios recently started as a seamstress where her mom had worked for the past five years.

But March 31 was different for Cruz Berrios.

Their car on a street in Westminster was suddenly surrounded by ICE agents, with at least one wearing a face covering. The agents didn't present a warrant, according to Cruz Berrios. They shouted orders at the mother to get out of the car.

## **ICE agents break window to arrest Maryland woman**

The confrontation came amid ramped-up efforts by the Trump administration to crack down on undocumented immigrants, citing some of their involvement in violent crime as the reasons for deportation. Critics have called these efforts a misguided policy that unfairly targets non-white immigrants.

[Reuters reported](#) that the Trump administration also plans to fine migrants under deportation orders up to \$998 a day if they fail to leave the United States and to seize their property if they do not pay. The stepped-up enforcement has also led to tragic errors. In Maryland, a Beltsville man was [mistakenly deported](#) to El Salvador last month, a case now before the U.S. Supreme Court seeking to return him to the U.S..

During the ICE confrontation in Westminster, Cruz Berrios said in an interview this week that she immediately knew who the agents were. The officers shouted at them through the locked doors.

The mother and daughter believed the agents had been after her undocumented mother. That's because ICE officers previously came to the family's Westminster home twice but were denied entry each time.

"They didn't have a warrant. They knew their rights. ICE went away," said Halle Blitzstein, the mother's Baltimore-based attorney.

The most recent incident was caught on video by Cruz Berrios on her cellphone. During the two-minute ordeal, which begins with the mother and daughter in a parked

car, it shows ICE agents trying to convince Berrios to get out of the car.

After they didn't, an officer broke her car window, unlocked the door, and removed the mother from the vehicle.

"I don't need to show you the order," an officer said in Spanish. Most of the video includes the officer speaking in Spanish, but the voice was barely audible in the video because the car window was partially rolled up.

"I'm not going to give you the order, it's in the car," the officer said just before the mother was taken from the car.

"No!" the daughter screamed. "You guys cannot take her just because you want to."

"Tranquilo, mama," the mother said, instructing her daughter in Spanish to calm down while using a term of endearment.

"Don't grab her like that!" the daughter continued as her mother is placed into handcuffs. "Mommy, no. Mommy."

In an interview this week, Cruz Berrios said she was scared throughout the ordeal.

"I was nervous. There were a lot of emotions going through my head. I did not expect anything to happen like that," she said. Her mother, who is originally from El Salvador and seeking asylum, is currently being held at

the Moshannon Valley Processing Center in Pennsylvania.

“I didn’t know they could do something like that — especially when you hadn’t done anything,” her daughter said.

The government said that Berrios’ apprehension was driven in part because she is an associate of the violent gang MS-13, which has Salvadoran roots.

“Americans can rest assured that she is off our streets and locked up. I hope the media will stop doing the bidding of these gangs that murder, maim, rape, and terrorize Americans, while ignoring the innocent victims,” DHS Assistant Secretary Tricia McLaughlin wrote in an email. McLaughlin did not respond to a request for details of Berrios’ alleged gang behavior.

Cruz Berrios and her mother’s attorney vehemently deny that Berrios has a connection to gang membership.

“No, it’s false. My mother, she works really hard since she was really little, and she never had anything to do with gangs or anything like that,” Cruz Berrios said during a recent interview on CNN, adding that her mother came to the U.S. in part to flee gang activity.

Berrios entered the U.S. in 2017 and has been living in Westminster with her 24-year-old son, and daughter, Cruz Berrios.

Berrios had been granted the ability to work while her asylum case is pending.

Cruz Berrios touts the hard work her mother has done to support her and her three older siblings.

“She was working hard to give us everything she could. That makes her a great mom,” Cruz Berrios said.

The two have spoken often, including as recently as Tuesday morning.

“She was saying she was good. She asked: ‘How was I doing?’ Things like that. She has been praying with the women there,” Cruz Berrios added.

Berrios has a bond hearing in a New Jersey immigration court on April 14. The government has not yet filed any official documents regarding her arrest.

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