



Written by [Luis Miguel](#) on August 31, 2021

Illegal Alien Given Life Sentence for Mollie Tibbetts Murder

Three years after the disappearance of University of Iowa student Mollie Tibbetts, the illegal alien suspected of murdering her was [sentenced to life in prison](#) without parole.

Cristhian Bahena Rivera was convicted for first-degree murder in Iowa, which does not have the death penalty. Thus, Judge Joel Yates' sentence was mandatory given the gravity of the crime.

Bahena Rivera, 27, was a farmhand who testified to coming to the country illegally from Mexico as a teenager. He has been jailed since his arrest in 2018.



AP Images
Cristhian Bahena Rivera

Yates rejected claims from the defense that others were responsible for the crime. "Mr. Bahena Rivera, you and you alone forever changed the lives of those who loved Mollie Tibbetts," the judge said.

The Mollie Tibbetts case received widespread media attention as it shed light on the subject of illegal immigration in America.

Tibbetts' mother, Laura Calderwood, addressed Bahena Rivera in a victim impact statement she read before the court:

"Mollie was a young woman who simply wanted to go for a quiet run on the evening of July 18 and you chose to violently and sadistically end that life."

The Associated Press [reported](#):

Calderwood recalled being told by tearful investigators that her 20-year-old daughter's body had been found, and racing to inform relatives before they learned the news from the media. The hardest conversation was with Mollie's grandmother, who was in disbelief that someone "could harm such a beautiful, vibrant young woman so full of promise," she said.

She said the killing caused Hispanic workers to flee the area in fear, prevented Mollie's boyfriend from being able to give her the engagement ring he had purchased, and meant her father would never walk his only daughter down the aisle.

"Because of your actions Mr. Rivera, I will never get to see my daughter become a mother," Calderwood said.

Tibbetts disappeared while going for an evening run out on a rural road outside Brookly, Iowa, on July 18, 2018. When the 20-year-old did not show up to work at a local daycare center the next day, family and coworkers feared something was wrong.

For weeks, hundreds of volunteers and law enforcement officers searched for Tibbetts without success.



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Investigators zeroed in on Bahena Rivera, who worked at a nearby farm under an alias, following the discovery of a homeowner's video surveillance footage that appeared to show the illegal alien's Chevy Malibu repeatedly drive by Tibbetts while she ran.

Following an interrogation process, Bahena Rivera led police to a cornfield where he admitted to burying Tibbetts' body. An autopsy showed she had been stabbed several times. Her blood was found in the trunk of his car.

Bahena Rivera's lawyer argued that his confession was false and coerced. During trial, he gave a different account than he had originally told police, claiming two masked men held him at gunpoint and kidnapped him from his trailer and forced him to drive while they attacked Tibbetts. They then supposedly instructed him where to hide the body, threatening to kill his ex-girlfriend and young daughter if he told anyone.

The defense also attempted to throw suspicion onto other individuals, such as Tibbetts' boyfriend and a sheriff's deputy who lives near where the body was found. Prosecutors called Bahena Rivera's story a work of fiction. A 12-member jury unanimously found him guilty.

Soon after, two individuals came forward to tell police that a 21-year-old man with a history of violence had confessed to them that he had killed Tibbetts. Then, a woman told police she had been kidnapped after meeting an alleged sex trafficker at a Brooklyn gas station weeks before Tibbetts disappeared.

Yates postponed a July sentencing to allow the defense time to investigate. The judge ultimately determined that the new information was unreliable. Without any reason to overturn the verdict, Yates denied Bahena River's motion for a new trial this month.

The defense has indicated it plans to appeal.

The Mollie Tibbetts case has led to debate over immigration in America and the danger to U.S. citizens posed by illegal aliens. The sentencing of Bahena Rivera comes as [over a hundred thousand](#) illegal migrants are crossing the southern border each month since Joe Biden entered the Oval Office in January.



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