



A teenage American citizen has been in immigration custody for almost a month. Here's why

A Dallas-born 18-year-old and rising high school senior set off on a road trip to a college soccer scouting event. But he never made it to the tryouts.

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SALT LAKE CITY — It started off with soccer tryouts.

Francisco Erwin Galicia, an 18-year-old U.S. citizen and rising high school senior in Edinburg, Texas, set off on a road trip last month to a college soccer scouting event with his brother and a group of friends, the [Dallas Morning News](#) reported.

But Galicia never made it to the tryouts. At 8 p.m. on June 27, his car was stopped at a Border Patrol checkpoint in Falfurrias, a town in South Texas around 65 miles north of Galicia's hometown, according to [The Washington Post](#).

When asked for his papers, Galicia, who was born in Dallas in 2000, presented the agents with his Social Security card, a wallet-sized Texas birth certificate, and his Texas ID, according to the Post.

But, suspecting his documents were forged, U.S. Customs and Border Patrol detained him anyway, [Slate](#) reported.

"He's been here all his life," Claudia Galan, Galicia's attorney, told the Post, but "when Border Patrol checked his documents, they just didn't believe they were real. They kept telling him they were fake."

Galicia was taken to a facility run by U.S. Customs and Border Patrol, where he waited for weeks as authorities tried to confirm his citizenship status. Over the weekend, he was transferred to a U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement to begin removal proceedings, according to the Post.

As of Tuesday, Galicia was still being held in the South Texas Detention Facility in Pearsall, Texas — nearly a month after he was first detained, the Post reported.

"He's going on a full month of being wrongfully detained," Galan told the Morning News. "He's a U.S. citizen and he needs to be released now."

Galicia is one of hundreds of American citizens who have been mistakenly targeted by immigration authorities in recent years, according to the Post.

An April 2018 investigation by The Los Angeles Times found that ICE has released more than 1,480 from custody since 2012 after investigating their citizenship claims. The Cato Institute has estimated that between 2006 and 2017, in Texas alone, ICE has mistakenly placed detainees (requests for local jails to hold a person in custody for ICE to pick up) on hundreds of U.S. citizens.

Marlon, Galicia's 17-year old brother, was traveling in the car with him. Marlon was born in Mexico and does not have legal status in the United States. Marlon was deported voluntarily after two days in detention, the Post reported.

“We were going to do something good for our futures. I didn’t imagine this could happen and now I’m so sad that I’m not with my family,” Marlon told the Morning News from Reynosa, Mexico, where he is staying with his grandmother.

The delays in Galicia’s case appear to be rooted in a paperwork mix-up. Galicia’s mother, Sanjuana, who is not a citizen, took out a U.S. tourist visa in her son’s name, which falsely stated he was born in Mexico.

She told the Post she took out the visa for her son because she believed it was the only way for him to travel across the border to see family, and was unable to get him a U.S. passport because when Galicia was born, she identified herself by a different name on his birth certificate, she said.

“I need my son back,” she told the Morning News. “I just want to prove to them that he is a citizen. He’s not a criminal or anything bad. He’s a good kid.”

But Galan told the Post even after explaining Sanjuana’s error and providing additional paperwork proving that Galicia is a U.S. citizen, Galicia has remained in detention.

Galicia’s story has prompted an outcry from some elected officials, including Rep. Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez.

“CPB is detaining *American citizens,*” she tweeted. “How would you feel trapped in a border camp, where guards wear face masks because the human odor is so strong? When we allow the rights of some to be violated, the rights of all are not far behind.”

Galan was traveling to the South Texas Detention Facility Tuesday in an effort to free him from custody and help him avoid being deported.

“All of the abuse he has gone through pains me,” Sanjuana told the Post in Spanish. “I can’t sleep thinking that they are going to harm him because they think he is lying about his citizenship.”