



**KATHERINE FERNANDEZ
RUNDLE
STATE ATTORNEY**



**ELEVENTH JUDICIAL CIRCUIT
IN AND FOR MIAMI-DADE COUNTY**

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

**Daughter Charged with Kidnapping & Financial Exploitation
of 88-Year-Old Mother**

Miami (December 9, 2022) - State Attorney Katherine Fernandez Rundle and Miami-Dade Police Department Director Alfredo Ramirez announce the arrest of 51-year-old Catherine Areu Jones (A/K/A Catherine Areu) for the kidnapping and financial exploitation of her then-88-year-old mother. Areu Jones had been sought by the State Attorney's Office Elder Exploitation Task Force and the Miami-Dade Police Department since the arrest warrant's signing on June 28, 2022 but appears to have relocated numerous times, including to Mexico, to allegedly avoid arrest. Areu Jones is being charged with:

- 1 count Exploitation of the Elderly 1st Degree Felony
- 1 count - Organized Scheme to Defraud – 1st Degree Felony
- 1 count – Conspiracy to Commit Organized Scheme to Defraud – 2nd Degree Felony
- 1 count -Kidnapping – 1st Degree Felony
- 2 counts -False Imprisonment– 3rd Degree Felony
- 1 count – Fraudulent Use of Personal Identification – 1st Degree Felony

“Every incident of alleged elder exploitation or abuse touches our heart and never fails to shock us. It seems particularly harder to understand when the alleged perpetrator of the exploitation is a daughter, or a son or another blood relative,” said State Attorney Katherine Fernandez Rundle. “Too often, these abuses occur behind closed doors, out of the public’s eye. We, here in Miami-Dade County, utilizing all the resources of my State Attorney’s Office Elder Exploitation Task Force and the Miami-Dade Police Department, will not allow these transgressions to go unnoticed and unpunished. Not in our community.”

Areu Jones allegedly used a revoked Power of Attorney to twice involuntarily place her mother in assisted living and memory care facilities in an attempt to gain control over her mother’s financial assets. In the first instance, Areu Jones tricked her mother into believing that she was going on an ice cream outing with her granddaughters. When she was locked into an assisted living facility instead, the mother was able to call someone she knew for help before Areu Jones instructed the facility to stop her from using the phone or receiving visitors. In the second incident, Areu Jones and a co-conspirator allegedly dragged the victim from her home and took her to another facility. Neighbors who saw the victim’s shoe in her driveway and the front door of the victim’s home left open contacted the police. In both incidents, investigations and interventions by the Department of

Daughter Charged with Kidnapping & Financial Exploitation

Page 2

Children and Families (DCF) adult protections investigators and medical doctors found those claims to be untrue which led to the victim's release from each facility.

The original investigation into this matter began with DCF receiving reports indicating that the victim was allegedly being exploited by Areu Jones in 2019. This report initially focused on the use of a quitclaim deed to turn title of the victim's home over entirely to Areu Jones. The victim denied ever signing the document. Subsequently, Areu Jones allegedly made complaints to DCF that various individuals were neglecting or exploiting the victim, whom she allegedly said had organic brain damage or dementia, rendering the victim unable to adequately care for herself.

The investigative review of the victim's financial affairs showed a total loss of over \$224,000 including the missing disbursement of the proceeds of a reverse mortgage on the victim's home (voluntarily undertaken by the victim) in which all the money appeared to go into accounts controlled by Areu Jones. Additionally, credit cards were allegedly opened in the victim's name and utilized by Areu Jones. The victim's bank accounts also noted numerous withdrawals which were allegedly utilized by Areu Jones. The investigation into this matter remains ongoing.

Miami-Dade Police Department Director Alfredo Ramirez stated that "It is heartbreaking to see one of our most vulnerable victims abused physically, psychologically or financially. Our elderly community paves the path of the future, to ensure we can enjoy our present. It is our responsibility as a community to show appreciation for their dedicated efforts of ensuring that we have what we have today. We must continue to work together, as the elderly community depends on us to protect them.", said Director Alfredo Ramirez.

For media interviews with State Attorney Katherine Fernandez Rundle, please call 305-547-0535 to check her afternoon availability.

#####