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**UNITED STATES DISTRICT COURT
SOUTHERN DISTRICT OF CALIFORNIA**

EKA PHANTSULAIA,

Petitioner,

v.

GREGORY J. ARCHAMBEAULT; et al.,

Respondents.

Case No.: 25-cv-2269-JES-DDL

**RESPONDENTS' RETURN TO
HABEAS PETITION**

I. INTRODUCTION

This Court should deny Petitioner's habeas petition for four reasons. First, this Court does not have jurisdiction to hear Petitioner's claims because she is not in custody in this district. Second, Petitioner requests that this Court find her detention unlawful and order her release from Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) custody. But as Petitioner's claims stem from the Department of Homeland Security's (DHS) decision to detain Petitioner pending removal proceedings, jurisdiction over her claims is barred under 8 U.S.C. § 1252. Third, Petitioner's Administrative Procedure Act (APA) claim is not properly sought through a habeas petition. And finally, Petitioner's claims fail on the merits. Respondents respectfully request that the Court deny Petitioner's requests for relief.

II. FACTUAL BACKGROUND

Petitioner is a native and citizen of [REDACTED] ECF No. 1 at ¶ 1. In January 2025, Petitioner arrived at the San Ysidro Port of Entry and applied for admission to the United States from Mexico. *Id.* at ¶ 15. Petitioner did not possess legal documentation to be in or enter the United States. Pet. Ex. A, ECF No. 1 at 19 (Form I-213). Petitioner was determined to be inadmissible under 8 U.S.C. § 1182(a)(7)(A)(i)(I) as an immigrant not in possession of a valid entry document. *Id.* at 20. Petitioner was also subject to the January 20, 2025 Presidential Proclamation 10888, *Guaranteeing the States Protection Against Invasion*, 90 Fed. Reg. 8,333, 8,334 (Jan. 20, 2025), and was therefore detained and processed for expedited removal under 8 U.S.C. § 1182(f). *Id.*; *see also* Declaration of Jorge E. Hernandez (“Hernandez Decl.”) ¶ 6. She was issued a Notice and Order of Expedited Removal under section 235(b)(1) of the Immigration and Nationality Act (INA), 8 U.S.C. § 1225(b)(1). *Id.*; *see also* Pet. Ex. B, ECF No. 1 at 23 (Form I-860). She was detained in ICE custody under 8 U.S.C. § 1225(b)(1). Hernandez Decl. ¶ 8.

Petitioner expressed fear she would be tortured if returned to her country of origin. Hernandez Decl. ¶ 9. On March 4, 2025, she was referred to an asylum officer with U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services for assessment under the Convention Against Torture. Ex. 1 (Convention Against Torture Assessment Notice). The interview with the asylum officer resulted in a positive determination. Hernandez Decl. ¶ 9. On August 29, 2025, Petitioner was issued a Notice to Appear, charging Petitioner as an arriving alien inadmissible under 8 U.S.C. § 1182(a)(7)(A)(i)(I), as an immigrant not in possession of a valid entry document. Hernandez Decl. ¶ 10; *see also* Ex. 2 (Notice to Appear). The filing of the Notice to Appear commenced full removal proceedings under 8 U.S.C. § 1229a, section 240 of the INA, also known as “240 proceedings.” Hernandez Decl. ¶ 11. Within her 240 proceedings, Petitioner has the opportunity to apply for relief from removal before an immigration judge, including asylum under 8 U.S.C. § 1158, withholding of removal under 8 U.S.C. § 1231(b)(3), and relief under the Convention

1 Against Torture. Hernandez Decl. ¶ 11. Petitioner's 240 proceedings remain ongoing.
2 Petitioner appeared before an immigration judge on September 11 and October 9, 2025,
3 for master calendar hearings. Hernandez Decl. ¶ 12; *see also* Ex. 3 (Record of Master
4 Calendar dated Sept. 11, 2025). Her next hearing in front of the immigration judge is
5 scheduled on November 14, 2025. Hernandez Decl. ¶ 12. While Petitioner's removal
6 proceedings remain ongoing, she continues to be detained under 8 U.S.C.
7 § 1225(b)(1)(B)(ii). *See Matter of M.S.*, 27 I&N Dec. 509 (A.G. 2019); *see also*
8 Hernandez Decl. ¶ 13. Petitioner is in custody at the San Luis Detention Center in San
9 Luis, Arizona. Hernandez Decl. ¶ 14. She has been in custody at the San Luis Detention
10 Center since April 24, 2025. Hernandez Decl. ¶ 14.

11 On September 2, 2025, Petitioner commenced this case, seeking to have this
12 Court order her release from ICE custody. *See generally* ECF No. 1. Subsequently, the
13 Court issued an order requiring Respondents to file a response to Petitioner's habeas
14 petition. ECF No. 4.

15 III. ARGUMENT

16 A. This Court does not have jurisdiction over Phantsulaia's Petition.

17 The Court does not have jurisdiction over the Petition because Phantsulaia failed
18 to file in the district where she is confined. Petitioner was in custody in the District of
19 Arizona when she filed her petition, and she remains confined in that district. Therefore,
20 the Court should dismiss the Petition for lack of jurisdiction.

21 The federal habeas statute, 28 U.S.C. § 2241, provides that:

22 Writs of habeas corpus may be granted by the Supreme Court, any justice
23 thereof, the district courts and any circuit judge within their respective
24 jurisdictions. The order of a circuit judge shall be entered in the records of
25 the district court of the district wherein the restraint complained of is had.

26 The Supreme Court in *Rumsfeld v. Padilla* observed that, under § 2241, "[d]istrict
27 courts are limited to granting habeas relief 'within their respective jurisdictions.'" 542 U.S. at 426, 442 (2004) (quoting 28 U.S.C. § 2241(a)). The Court explained that a
28

1 “core challenge[]” habeas petitions challenge “present physical confinement.” *Id.* at
2 435. The Court further explained that “[t]he plain language of the habeas statute thus
3 confirms the general rule that for core habeas petitions challenging present physical
4 confinement, jurisdiction lies in only one district: the district of confinement.” *Id.* at
5 443. The Court stated succinctly, “[w]henever a § 2241 habeas petitioner seeks to
6 challenge [her] present physical custody within the United States, [she] should name
7 [her] warden as respondent and file the petition in the district of confinement.” *Id.* at
8 447. The Ninth Circuit in *Doe v. Garland* affirmed the application of the district of
9 confinement rule to a § 2241 petition filed by an immigrant detainee, holding that the
10 district court erred in exercising jurisdiction over the petition when the petitioner failed
11 to file in the district of confinement. 109 F.4th 1188, 1199 (9th Cir. 2024).

12 As an initial matter, the text of Phantsulaia’s Petition indicates that her Petition
13 is a core challenge because it is an attack on her present physical confinement at San
14 Luis Detention Center. Petitioner requests the Court “[g]rant a writ of habeas corpus
15 ordering Respondents to immediately release Petitioner from custody[.]” Pet. at 13
16 (Prayer for Relief). Petitioner’s request for a bond hearing does not change the character
17 of her petition from a core challenge. The Ninth Circuit in *Garland* confronted this issue
18 and held that a petition that requested “a writ of habeas corpus and release order from
19 the district court unless Respondents provide him a bond hearing before an immigration
20 judge” was still a core habeas petition. *Garland*, 109 F.4th at 1194. The same is true
21 here.

22 Since Phantsulaia’s Petition is a core habeas petition, the district court with
23 jurisdiction over the petition is the district of confinement. *Padilla*, 542 U.S. at 447.
24 Here, Petitioner is in custody at the San Luis Detention Center in San Luis, Arizona,
25 which is in the District of Arizona. Petitioner has been detained at the San Luis
26 Detention Center since April 24, 2025. Hernandez Decl. ¶ 14. Although Petitioner
27 claims that San Luis Detention Center is “under the joint supervision of Enforcement
28 and Removal Operations (ERO) of the San Diego Field Office and/or the Calexico Sub

1 Field Office,” Pet. ¶ 1, the statutory provisions governing habeas petition jurisdiction
2 and Supreme Court precedent are clear. The district court in the district of confinement
3 has jurisdiction over the Petition. Thus, the Court lacks jurisdiction over the Petition.

4 **B. Petitioner’s claims and requested relief are barred by 8 U.S.C. § 1252.**

5 Further, the Court lacks jurisdiction to hear Petitioner’s claims, which stem from
6 DHS’s decision to detain Petitioner pending removal proceedings. *See Ass’n of Am.*
7 *Med. Coll.*, 217 F.3d at 778–79; *Finley*, 490 U.S. at 547–48. Petitioner brings her habeas
8 action under 28 U.S.C. § 2241, but jurisdiction over her claims is barred under 8 U.S.C.
9 § 1252(b)(9), § 1252(e), and § 1252(g).

10 In general, courts lack jurisdiction to review a decision to commence or
11 adjudicate removal proceedings or execute removal orders. *See* 8 U.S.C. § 1252(g)
12 (“[N]o court shall have jurisdiction to hear any cause or claim by or on behalf of any
13 alien arising from the decision or action by the Attorney General to commence
14 proceedings, adjudicate cases, or execute removal orders.”); *Limpin v. United States*,
15 828 Fed. App’x 429 (9th Cir. 2020) (holding district court properly dismissed under
16 8 U.S.C. § 1252(g) “because claims stemming from the decision to arrest and detain an
17 alien at the commencement of removal proceedings are not within any court’s
18 jurisdiction”). In other words, § 1252(g) removes district court jurisdiction over “three
19 discrete actions that the Attorney may take: her ‘decision or action’ to ‘commence
20 proceedings, adjudicate cases, or execute removal orders.’” *Reno v. Am.-Arab*
21 *Anti-Discrimination Comm.*, 525 U.S. 471, 483 (1999) (emphasis removed).
22 Petitioner’s claims necessarily arise “from the decision or action by the Attorney
23 General to commence proceedings [and] adjudicate cases,” over which Congress has
24 explicitly foreclosed district court jurisdiction. 8 U.S.C. § 1252(g).

25 Section 1252(g) also bars district courts from hearing challenges to the *method*
26 by which the government chooses to commence removal proceedings, including the
27 decision to detain a noncitizen pending removal. *See Alvarez v. ICE*, 818 F.3d 1194,
28 1203 (11th Cir. 2016) (“By its plain terms, [§ 1252(g)] bars us from questioning ICE’s

1 discretionary decisions to commence removal” and also to review “ICE’s decision to
2 take [the plaintiff] into custody to detain him during removal proceedings.”).

3 Other courts have held, “[f]or the purposes of § 1252, the Attorney General
4 commences proceedings against an alien when the alien is issued a Notice to Appear
5 before an immigration court.” *Herrera-Correra v. United States*,
6 No. 08-2941 DSF (JCx), 2008 WL 11336833, at *3 (C.D. Cal. Sept. 11, 2008). “The
7 Attorney General may arrest the alien against whom proceedings are commenced and
8 detain that individual until the conclusion of those proceedings.” *Id.* at *3. “Thus, an
9 alien’s detention throughout this process arises from the Attorney General’s decision to
10 commence proceedings” and review of claims arising from such detention is barred
11 under § 1252(g). *Id.* (citing *Sissoko v. Rocha*, 509 F.3d 947, 949 (9th Cir. 2007)); *Wang*
12 *v. United States*, No. CV 10-0389 SVW (RCX), 2010 WL 11463156, at *6 (C.D. Cal.
13 Aug. 18, 2010); 8 U.S.C. § 1252(g).

14 Moreover, under 8 U.S.C. § 1252(b)(9), “[j]udicial review of all questions of law
15 and fact . . . arising from any action taken or proceeding brought to remove an alien
16 from the United States under this subchapter shall be available only in judicial review
17 of a final order under this section.” Further, judicial review of a final order is available
18 only through “a petition for review filed with an appropriate court of appeals.”
19 8 U.S.C. § 1252(a)(5). The Supreme Court has made clear that § 1252(b)(9) is “the
20 unmistakable ‘zipper’ clause,” channeling “judicial review of all” “decisions and
21 actions leading up to or consequent upon final orders of deportation,” including
22 “non-final order[s],” into proceedings before a court of appeals. *Reno*, 525 U.S. at 483,
23 485; see *J.E.F.M. v. Lynch*, 837 F.3d 1026, 1031 (9th Cir. 2016) (noting § 1252(b)(9)
24 is “breathtaking in scope and vise-like in grip and therefore swallows up virtually all
25 claims that are tied to removal proceedings”). “Taken together, § 1252(a)(5) and
26 § 1252(b)(9) mean that *any* issue—whether legal or factual—arising from *any* removal-
27 related activity can be reviewed *only* through the [petition for review] PFR process.”
28 *J.E.F.M.*, 837 F.3d at 1031; see *id.* at 1035 (“[Sections] 1252(a)(5) and [(b)(9)] channel

1 review of all claims, including policies-and-practices challenges . . . whenever they
2 ‘arise from’ removal proceedings.”).

3 Critically, “1252(b)(9) is a judicial channeling provision, not a claim-barring
4 one.” *Aguilar v. ICE*, 510 F.3d 1, 11 (1st Cir. 2007). Indeed, 8 U.S.C. § 1252(a)(2)(D)
5 provides that “[n]othing . . . in any other provision of this chapter . . . shall be construed
6 as precluding review of constitutional claims or questions of law raised upon a petition
7 for review filed with an appropriate court of appeals in accordance with this section.”
8 *See also Ajlani v. Chertoff*, 545 F.3d 229, 235 (2d Cir. 2008) (“[J]urisdiction to review
9 such claims is vested exclusively in the courts of appeals[.]”). The petition-for-review
10 process before the court of appeals ensures that aliens have a proper forum for claims
11 arising from their immigration proceedings and “receive their day in court.” *J.E.F.M.*,
12 837 F.3d at 1031–32 (internal quotations omitted); *see also Rosario v. Holder*,
13 627 F.3d 58, 61 (2d Cir. 2010) (“The REAL ID Act of 2005 amended the [INA] to
14 obviate . . . Suspension Clause concerns” by permitting judicial review of
15 “nondiscretionary” determinations by the Board of Immigration Appeals and “all
16 constitutional claims or questions of law”). These provisions divest district courts of
17 jurisdiction to review both direct and indirect challenges to removal orders, including
18 decisions to detain for purposes of removal or for proceedings. *See Jennings v.*
19 *Rodriguez*, 583 U.S. 281, 294–95 (2018) (stating section 1252(b)(9) includes challenges
20 to the “decision to detain [an alien] in the first place or to seek removal”).

21 Here, Petitioner’s claims stem from her detention during removal proceedings.
22 But that detention arises from DHS’s decision to commence such proceedings against
23 her. *See, e.g., Valecia-Meja v. United States*, No. 08-2943 CAS (PJWz), 2008 WL
24 4286979, at *4 (C.D. Cal. Sept. 15, 2008) (“The decision to detain plaintiff until his
25 hearing before the Immigration Judge arose from this decision to commence
26 proceedings.”); *Wang*, 2010 WL 11463156, at *6; *Tazu v. Att’y Gen. U.S.*, 975 F.3d
27 292, 298–99 (3d Cir. 2020) (holding that 8 U.S.C. § 1252(g) and (b)(9) deprive district
28 court of jurisdiction to review action to execute removal order).

1 Thus, as Petitioner's claims arise from the decision to commence proceedings,
2 this Court lacks jurisdiction under 8 U.S.C. § 1252.

3 **C. Petitioner's APA claim is improper under habeas jurisdiction.**

4 Notwithstanding the lack of jurisdiction, the APA does not provide an avenue for
5 relief in this case.

6 The APA places limits on when agency action is subject to judicial review.
7 "Agency action made reviewable by statute and final agency action for which there is
8 no other adequate remedy in a court are subject to judicial review." 5 U.S.C. § 704;
9 *Navajo Nation v. Dep't of the Interior*, 876 F.3d 1144, 1171 (9th Cir. 2017). Reviewable
10 "agency action" is defined to include "the whole or a part of an agency rule, order,
11 license, sanction, relief, or the equivalent or denial thereof, or failure to act." 5 U.S.C.
12 § 551(13). "While this definition is 'expansive,' federal courts 'have long recognized
13 that the term [agency action] is not so all-encompassing as to authorize . . . judicial
14 review over everything done by an administrative agency.'" *Wild Fish Conservancy v.*
15 *Jewell*, 730 F.3d 791, 800–01 (9th Cir. 2013) (quoting *Fund for Animals, Inc. v. U.S.*
16 *Bureau of Land Management*, 460 F.3d 13, 19 (D.C. Cir. 2006)).

17 Here, it is not altogether clear what final agency action Petitioner seeks review
18 over. And importantly, habeas relief is available to challenge only the legality or
19 duration of confinement. *Pinson*, 69 F.4th at 1067; *see also Flores-Miramontes*, 212
20 F.3d at 1140 ("For purposes of immigration law, at least, 'judicial review' refers to
21 petitions for review of agency actions, which are governed by the Administrative
22 Procedure Act, while habeas corpus refers to habeas petitions brought directly in district
23 court to challenge illegal confinement.").

24 The Court should therefore reject Petitioner's APA claim because it is beyond
25 the scope of habeas jurisdiction.

26 **D. Petitioner is lawfully detained.**

27 Even assuming the Court has jurisdiction over her petition, which the Court does
28 not, Petitioner has not stated a statutory violation or a Fifth Amendment due process

1 violation. Petitioner is subject to mandatory detention under 8 U.S.C. § 1225(b)(1).

2 “To determine whether Congress has authorized [a petitioner’s] detention, we
3 must first identify the statutory provision that purports to confer such authority on the
4 Attorney General.” *Prieto-Romero v. Clark*, 534 F.3d 1053, 1057 (9th Cir. 2008).
5 Section 1225 applies to “applicants for admission,” who are defined as “alien[s] present
6 in the United States who [have] not been admitted” or “who arrive[] in the United
7 States.” 8 U.S.C. § 1225(a)(1). Applicants for admission “fall into one of two
8 categories, those covered by § 1225(b)(1) and those covered by § 1225(b)(2).”
9 *Jennings*, 583 U.S. at 287. Section 1225(b)(1) applies to arriving aliens and “certain
10 other” aliens “initially determined to be inadmissible due to fraud, misrepresentation,
11 or lack of valid document.” *Id.*; 8 U.S.C. § 1225(b)(1)(A)(i), (iii). Though not relevant
12 here, § 1225(b)(2) is “broader” and “serves as a catchall provision.” *Jennings*,
13 583 U.S. at 287. In this statutory scheme, DHS has the sole discretionary authority to
14 temporarily release on parole “any alien applying for admission to the United States”
15 on a “case-by-case basis for urgent humanitarian reasons or significant public benefit.”
16 *Id.* § 1182(d)(5)(A); *see Biden v. Texas*, 597 U.S. 785, 806 (2022).

17 In *Jennings*, the Supreme Court evaluated the proper interpretation of
18 8 U.S.C. § 1225(b) and stated that “[r]ead most naturally, §§ 1225(b)(1) and (b)(2) []
19 mandate detention of applicants for admission until certain proceedings have
20 concluded.” 583 U.S. at 297. The Court noted that neither § 1225(b)(1) nor § 1225(b)(2)
21 “impose[] any limit on the length of detention” and “neither § 1225(b)(1) nor
22 § 1225(b)(2) say[] anything whatsoever about bond hearings.” *Id.* The Court added that
23 the sole means of release for noncitizens detained under §§ 1225(b)(1) or (b)(2) prior
24 to removal from the United States is temporary parole at the discretion of the Attorney
25 General under 8 U.S.C. § 1182(d)(5). *Id.* at 300. The Court observed that because aliens
26 held under § 1225(b) may be paroled for “urgent humanitarian reasons or significant
27 public benefit,” “[t]hat express exception to detention implies that there are no *other*
28 circumstances under which aliens detained under 1225(b) may be released.” *Id.*

(citations and internal quotation omitted) (emphasis in the original). Courts thus may not validly draw additional procedural limitations “out of thin air.” *Id.* at 312. The Supreme Court concluded: “In sum, §§ 1225(b)(1) and (b)(2) mandate detention of [noncitizens] throughout the completion of applicable proceedings.” *Id.* at 302.

As to the Fifth Amendment, the only due process rights Petitioner has are those rights statutorily afforded by Congress. *See Dep’t of Homeland Sec. v. Thuraissigiam*, 591 U.S. 103, 139 (collecting cases); 8 U.S.C. § 1225(b)(1)(B)(iii)(IV); *Landon v. Plasencia*, 459 U.S. 21, 32 (1982) (“This Court has long held that an alien seeking initial admission to the United States requests a privilege and has no constitutional rights regarding [her] application, for the power to admit or exclude aliens is a sovereign prerogative.”) (citations omitted); *see generally I.N.S. v. Lopez-Mendoza*, 468 U.S. 1032, 1038 (1984) (“Consistent with the civil nature of the proceeding, various protections that apply in the context of a criminal trial do not apply in a deportation hearing.”). In *Thuraissigiam*, the Supreme Court addressed the due process rights of inadmissible arriving noncitizens and stated that such individuals have no due process rights “other than those afforded by statute.” *Thuraissigiam*, 591 U.S. at 107; *id.* at 140 (“[A]n alien in respondent’s position has only those rights regarding admission that Congress has provided by statute.”). The Supreme Court noted that its determination was supported by “more than a century of precedent.” *Id.* at 138 (citing *Nishimura Ekiu v. United States*, 142 U.S. 651, 660 (1892); *U.S. ex rel. Knauff v. Shaughnessy*, 338 U.S. 537, 544 (1950); *Shaughnessy v. United States ex rel. Mezei*, 345 U.S. 206, 212 (1953); *Landon*, 459 U.S. at 32); *Rauda v. Jennings*, 8 F.4th 1050, 1058 (9th Cir. 2021) (“Congress has already balanced the amount of due process available to petitioners with the executive’s prerogative to remove individuals, and we decline to expand judicial review beyond the parameters set by Congress.”); *Mendoza-Linares v. Garland*, No. 21-cv-1169-BEN (AHG), 2024 WL 3316306, at *2 (S.D. Cal. June 10, 2024) (“[T]he Court finds that Petitioner has no Fifth Amendment right to a bond hearing pending his removal proceedings. The only due process due an alien

1 seeking admission to the United States is ‘those rights regarding admission that
2 Congress has provided by statute.’” (quoting *Thuraissigiam*, 591 U.S. at 140)); *Zelaya-*
3 *Gonzalez v. Matuszewski*, No. 23-CV-151 JLS (KSC), 2023 WL 3103811, at *4 (S.D.
4 Cal. Apr. 25, 2023) (“Binding Ninth Circuit and Supreme Court precedents are clear
5 that Petitioner lacks any rights beyond those conferred by statute, and no statute entitles
6 Petitioner to a bond hearing.”).

7 Here, Petitioner’s removal proceedings are ongoing, and thus, she continues to
8 be subject to mandatory detention under 8 U.S.C. § 1225(b)(1)(B)(ii). Petitioner
9 concedes this point in her Petition where she states that the statute governing regular
10 removal proceedings “provides that she be detained for further consideration of the
11 application for asylum.” ECF No. 1 at ¶ 38. As the statutory authority Petitioner is
12 detained under does not afford her a right to a determination by this Court as to whether
13 her release is warranted nor a right to a bond hearing before an immigration judge, the
14 Court should reject her claim that her detention violates the Fifth Amendment’s Due
15 Process Clause and deny her requested relief. *See Thuraissigiam*, 591 U.S. at 107, 140;
16 *Mezei*, 345 U.S. at 212; *Guerrier v. Garland*, 18 F. 4th 304, 310 (9th Cir. 2021).

17 Accordingly, as Petitioner is detained pursuant to 8 U.S.C. § 1225(b)(1)(B)(ii),
18 Petitioner’s claims fail on the merits.

19 IV. CONCLUSION

20 For the foregoing reasons, Respondents respectfully request that the Court deny
21 the Petition and dismiss this action.

22 DATED: October 10, 2025

Respectfully submitted,

23 ADAM GORDON
24 United States Attorney

25 s/ Kelly A. Reis
26 KELLY A. REIS
27 Assistant United States Attorney
28 Attorneys for Respondents

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7 Attorneys for Respondents

8 **UNITED STATES DISTRICT COURT**
9 **SOUTHERN DISTRICT OF CALIFORNIA**

10 EKA PHANTSULAIA,

11 Petitioner,

12 v.

13 GREGORY J. ARCHAMBEAULT; et al.,

14 Respondents.
15
16

Case No. 25-cv-2269-JES-DDL


**DECLARATION OF JORGE E.
HERNANDEZ**

17 I, Jorge E. Hernandez, pursuant to 28 U.S.C. § 1746, hereby declare under
18 penalty of perjury that the following statements are true and correct, to the best of my
19 knowledge, information, and belief:

20 1. I am currently employed by the U.S. Department of Homeland Security
21 (DHS), U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE), Enforcement and Removal
22 Operations (ERO), as a Deportation Officer (DO) assigned to the Calexico suboffice of
23 the ICE ERO San Diego Field Office.

24 2. I have been employed by the Department of Homeland Security as a law
25 enforcement officer since May of 2007 and have been serving as a Deportation Officer
26 since September of 2016. I currently remain in that position. As a DO, my
27 responsibilities include case management of individuals detained by ICE at the San Luis
28 Detention Center in San Luis, Arizona.

1 3. This declaration is based upon my personal knowledge and experience as
2 a law enforcement officer and information provided to me in my official capacity as a
3 DO for the Calexico suboffice of the ICE ERO San Diego Field Office, as well as my
4 review of government databases and documentation relating to Petitioner Eka
5 Phantsulaia (Petitioner).

6 4. Petitioner is a citizen and national of  In January 2025, Petitioner
7 arrived at the San Ysidro Port of Entry and applied for admission to the United States
8 from Mexico. Petitioner did not possess legal documentation to be in or enter the United
9 States.

10 5. Petitioner was determined to be inadmissible under 8 U.S.C.
11 § 1182(a)(7)(A)(i)(I) as an immigrant not in possession of a valid entry document.

12 6. Petitioner was also subject to the January 20, 2025, Presidential
13 Proclamation 10888, *Guaranteeing the States Protection Against Invasion*, 90 Fed. Reg.
14 8,333, 8,334 (Jan. 20, 2025), and was therefore detained and processed for expedited
15 removal under 8 U.S.C. § 1182(f).

16 7. Petitioner was issued a Notice and Order of Expedited Removal under
17 section 235(b)(1) of the Immigration and Nationality Act (INA), 8 U.S.C. § 1225(b)(1).

18 8. Petitioner was detained in ICE custody under 8 U.S.C. § 1225(b)(1).

19 9. Petitioner expressed fear she would be tortured if returned to her country
20 of origin. On March 4, 2025, she was referred to an asylum officer with U.S. Citizenship
21 and Immigration Services for assessment under the Convention Against Torture. The
22 interview with the asylum officer resulted in a positive determination.

23 10. On August 29, 2025, Petitioner was issued a Notice to Appear, charging
24 Petitioner as an arriving alien inadmissible under 8 U.S.C. § 1182(a)(7)(A)(i)(I), as an
25 immigrant not in possession of a valid entry document.

26 11. The filing of the Notice to Appear commenced full removal proceedings
27 under 8 U.S.C. § 1229a, section 240 of the Immigration and Nationality Act (INA), also
28 known as “240 proceedings.” Within her 240 proceedings, Petitioner has the

1 opportunity to apply for relief from removal before an immigration judge, including
2 asylum under 8 U.S.C. § 1158, withholding of removal under 8 U.S.C. § 1231(b)(3),
3 and relief under the Convention Against Torture.

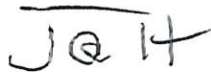
4 12. Petitioner appeared before an immigration judge on September 11 and
5 October 9, 2025, for master calendar hearings. Her next hearing in front of the
6 immigration judge is scheduled on November 14, 2025.

7 13. While Petitioner's removal proceedings remain ongoing, she continues to
8 be detained under 8 U.S.C. § 1225(b)(1)(B)(ii). *See Matter of M.S.*, 27 I&N Dec. 509
9 (A.G. 2019).

10 14. Petitioner is currently in custody at the San Luis Detention Center in San
11 Luis, Arizona. She has been in custody at the San Luis Detention Center since April 24,
12 2025.

13 I declare under penalty of perjury of the laws of the United States of America that
14 the foregoing is true and correct.

15 Executed this 9th day of October 2025.

16
17 

18 _____
19 Jorge E. Hernandez
20 Deportation Officer
21 San Diego Field Office
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