THE HONORABLE DAVID G. ESTUDILLO
THE HONORABLE GRADY J. LEUPOLD

UNITED STATES DISTRICT COURT
WESTERN DISTRICT OF WASHINGTON
AT SEATTLE

PHUNG THI THANH VO, Petitioner, vs. PAMELA BONDI, Attorney General of the United States; KRISTI NOEM, Secretary, United States Department of Homeland Security; CAMMILLA WAMSLEY, Seattle Field Office Director, United States Citizenship and Immigration Services; BRUCE SCOTT, Warden of Immigration Detention Facility; and the United States Immigration and Customs Enforcement, Respondents.	No. CV25-2244-DGE-GJL **AMENDED PETITION FOR WRIT OF HABEAS CORPUS UNDER 28 U.S.C. § 2241 AND REQUEST FOR INJUNCTIVE RELIEF**

Pursuant to Rule 15, Federal Rules of Civil Procedure, Phung Vo files this amended petition. The only changes from the original petition are the addition of a new Part IX beginning on page 15 (with a renumbering of the parts thereafter) and a new Ground for Relief Three (with a renumbering of the grounds thereafter).

PRELIMINARY MATTERS

Under 28 U.S.C. § 2243, the Court must grant a petition for writ of habeas corpus or issue an order to show cause (OSC) to the Respondents "forthwith," unless the Petitioner is not entitled to relief. If an OSC is issued, the Court must require Respondents to file a return "within three days unless for good cause additional time, not exceeding twenty days, is allowed." *Id.*

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Petitioner recognizes that the term "forthwith" includes some flexibility. Petitioner suggests that the Court order Respondents to file a return within five days, and order Petitioner to file a reply within five days thereafter.

Furthermore, Petitioner asks this Court to order Respondents not to remove Petitioner from this district while this case is pending, both "[b]ecause transfer of Petitioner to another district could interfere with his access to counsel and ability to participate in the proceedings," *Tran v. Bondi, et. al.*, No. CV25-cv-01897-JLR-BAT, Dkt. 6, at 3 (Oct. 7, 2025) (*sua sponte* issuing such an order in a § 2241 case involving an ICE detainee), and "under the Court's inherent power to preserve its ability to hear the case." *Alves v. U.S. Dep't of Just.*, No. EP-25-CV-306-KC, 2025 WL 2629763, at *5 (W.D. Tex. Sept. 12, 2025) (same). *See also M.M.*, No. CV-25-02074-TMC, 2025 WL 3053023, at *1 (W.D. Wash. Oct. 31, 2025) (same).[1]

RECITATIONS TO SUBSTANTIALLY CONFORM TO AO 242

Personal Information

1. (a) Full name: Phung Thi Thanh Vo

(b) Other names used: None.

2. Place of confinement:

(a) Northwest Immigration Processing Center (NWIPC)

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[1] For just a few examples of other courts issuing such an order in § 2241 cases involving ICE detainees within the past few months (or reflecting the court had previously issued such an order), *see, e.g.*, *Bustos v. Raycraft*, No. 25-13202, 2025 WL 3022294, at *2 (E.D. Mich. Oct. 29, 2025); *Ferro v. Hyde*, No. 2:25-CV-00513-SDN, 2025 WL 3003708, at *1 (D. Me. Oct. 27, 2025) (order was issued same day as petition was filed); *Lopez Pop v. Noem*, No. 5:25-CV-02589-SSS-SSC, 2025 WL 3050095, at *7 (C.D. Cal. Oct. 3, 2025); *Singh v. Delaney Hall*, No. CV 25-16018 (GC), 2025 WL 2772644, at *1 (D.N.J. Sept. 29, 2025); *Hom v. Ceja*, No. 25-CV-2221-WJM-TPO, 2025 WL 2801449, at *2 (D. Colo. Sept. 17, 2025).

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(b) 1623 East J Street, Tacoma, Washington 98241-1615, pursuant to a contractual arrangement with my custodian, the Immigration and Customs Enforcement Field Office Director at Seattle, Washington.

(c) Case number or numbers [ICE file number, if known]: My A# is [redacted].

3. I am currently being held on orders by federal authorities: United States Immigration and Customs Enforcement.

4. I am currently being held on an immigration charge.

Decision or Action You Are Challenging

5. What are you challenging in this petition: immigration detention.

6. Provide more information about the decision or action you are challenging:

(a) Name and location of the agency or court: United States Immigration and Customs Enforcement

(b) Docket number, case number, or opinion number: My A# is [redacted]

(c) Decision or action you are challenging: I was originally ordered removed on December 14, 2017. I was detained by ICE for approximately five months in 2016-17, prior to my final order of removal. I received my final order of removal on December 14, 2017. After my final order of removal, I was detained for approximately five months (from approximately June, 2018 to approximately October, 2018) and was released on an order of supervision in approximately October, 2018. I was re-detained on approximately April 23, 2025. I have been detained in ICE custody for approximately eleven and one-half months following my final removal order.

Your Earlier Challenges of the Decision or Action

7–9. First, second, and third appeals: None

10. Motion under 28 U.S.C. § 2255: N/A

11. Appeals of immigration proceedings:

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Does this case concern immigration proceedings? Yes

(a) Date you were taken into immigration custody:

(b) Date of the removal or reinstatement order:

(c) Did you file an appeal with the Board of Immigration Appeals? No.

(d) Did you appeal the decision to the United States Court of Appeals? No.

12. Other appeals:

Other than the appeals listed above, have you filed any other petition, application, or motion about the issues raised in this petition? No.

Grounds for Your Challenge in This Petition

I. Introduction

Ms. Vo is presently detained at the Northwest ICE Processing Center (NWIPC). She has been held in immigration custody for approximately eleven months. Removal to Vietnam is not reasonably foreseeable. Her continued detention is therefore in violation of *Zadvydas v. Davis*, 533 U.S. 678, 689 (2001). She seeks (a) release; (b) an order preventing her re-detention unless the government establishes by clear and convincing evidence at a hearing before a neutral decisionmaker that she is a flight risk or a danger to the community, based on changed circumstances after her most recent release by ICE; (c) an order preventing removal to a third country without notice and meaningful opportunity to respond in compliance with the statute and due process in reopened removal proceedings; and (d) an order barring removal to any third country pursuant to Respondents' punitive removal policy.

Ms. Vo was originally detained by ICE for approximately five months in 2016-17, prior to her final order of removal. After her final order of removal (December 14, 2017), she was detained for approximately five months (from approximately June, 2018 to approximately October, 2018) and was released. On approximately April 23, 2025, she was re-detained without any determination by the government that she had become

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a flight risk or a danger to the community. By the time this matter is heard, she will have been detained at over seven additional months, for a total of over twelve months.

II. Jurisdiction and Venue

This case arises under the Constitution of the United States, the Immigration and Nationality Act ("INA"), 8 U.S.C. § 1101, *et seq.*, and the Administrative Procedures Act ("APA"), 5 U.S.C. §§ 500–596, 701–706.

This Court has subject matter jurisdiction under 28 U.S.C. § 2241, *et seq.* (habeas corpus), 28 U.S.C. § 1331 (federal question), 28 U.S.C. § 1346 (United States as Respondent), and 28 U.S.C. § 1651 (All Writs Act). Respondents have waived sovereign immunity for purposes of this suit. 5 U.S.C. §§ 702, 706.

The Court may grant relief under the habeas corpus statutes, 28 U.S.C. § 2241, *et seq.*; the Declaratory Judgment Act, 28 U.S.C. § 2201, *et seq.*; the All Writs Act, 28 U.S.C. § 1651; the Due Process Clause of the Fifth Amendment; and the Court's inherent equitable powers.

Venue is proper in this district under 28 U.S.C. § 1391(e)(1) because Respondents are agencies or officers of agencies of the United States; Respondents Wamsley and Scott reside in this district; and Petitioner is detained in this district. Venue is further proper under 28 U.S.C. § 1391(b)(2) because a substantial part of the events or omissions giving rise to Petitioner's claims occurred in this district.

Because Petitioner is seeking relief related only to her custody status, which is not inconsistent with an order of removal, exhaustion of administrative remedies, if any, is not required.

III. Requirements of 28 U.S.C. §§ 2241, 2243

As addressed above on p. 1, 28 U.S.C. § 2243 sets forth time constraints for an OSC. Petitioner is "in custody" for the purpose of § 2241 because she has been detained by Respondent ICE in Tacoma, Washington, since approximately April 23, 2025.

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IV. Parties

Ms. Vo was born when her parents, citizens of Vietnam, were in a refugee camp in Indonesia. She has a final order of removal with Vietnam the country designated for removal. Petitioner is detained in the control and custody of Respondents at NWIPC. As such, Petitioner is a resident of Tacoma, Washington.

Respondent Pamela Bondi is the Attorney General of the United States. In this capacity, Respondent Bondi is the legal custodian of Petitioner. Respondent Bondi is sued in her official capacity.

Respondent Kristi Noem is the Secretary of the Department of Homeland Security ("DHS"). In this capacity, Respondent Noem is the legal custodian of Petitioner. Respondent Noem is sued in her official capacity.

Respondent Cammilla Wamsley is the Field Office Director for ICE Enforcement and Removal Operations ("ERO") in Seattle, Washington. As the ERO Seattle Field Office Director, she is Petitioner's immediate custodian, responsible for her detention at NWIPC and is the person with the authority to authorize detention or release. Respondent Wamsley is sued in her official capacity.

Respondent Bruce Scott is the Warden of the NWIPC, oversees the day-to-day functioning of the NWIPC, and has immediate physical custody of Petitioner pursuant to a contract with ICE to detain noncitizens. Mr. Scott is sued in his official capacity as the Warden of a federal detention facility. *See Juarez v. Asher*, No. C20-700, 2021 WL 1946222, at *3–5 (W.D. Wash. May 14, 2021).

Respondent United States Immigration and Customs Enforcement (hereinafter ICE) is the federal executive agency responsible for the enforcement of immigration laws, including the arrest, detention, and removal of noncitizens. Respondent ICE is a legal custodian of Petitioner.

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V. Background

Ms. Vo was born to Vietnamese refugees in a refugee camp in Indonesia on approximately [redacted]. She emigrated with her parents as refugees in 1980. She is a lawful permanent resident. She has various convictions, including larceny, petty theft, and possession of drug paraphernalia.

VI. Facts Pertaining to Petitioner's Continued Detention

Following the Vietnam War, the North Vietnamese government established the Socialist Republic of Vietnam—the official nation-state of Vietnam to this day. Many people from the prior nation-state—the former Republic of Vietnam—fled the newly formed nation-state and sought refuge in the United States. *See Trinh v. Homan*, 466 F. Supp. 3d 1077, 1083 (C.D. Cal. 2020) (summarizing history). For the next three decades, the Socialist Republic of Vietnam [*hereinafter* Vietnam] refused to repatriate people who had left Vietnam for the United States. *See id.*

In 2008, the United States and Vietnam reached a diplomatic agreement under which Vietnam agreed to begin considering some repatriation requests. Under the agreement, Vietnam agreed to consider repatriation requests for Vietnamese immigrants who arrived in the United States after July 12, 1995 (the date on which diplomatic relations between the two countries were established). *See id.* But the agreement also specifically provided that Vietnamese citizens who arrived in the United States before that date were not subject to return to Vietnam. Following this agreement, Vietnam maintained its policy that pre-1995 Vietnamese immigrants could not be repatriated. *See id.* ICE, in turn, adopted a policy recognizing that removal of pre-1995 Vietnamese immigrants was unlikely due to Vietnam's policy, and held such immigrants no longer than 90 days following a removal order before releasing them because removal was not reasonably foreseeable. *See id.*

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In 2017, ICE again negotiated with Vietnamese officials in hopes of amending the 2008 agreement. Negotiations did not result in any formal amendment to the agreement, but "Vietnamese officials verbally committed to begin considering ICE travel document requests for pre-1995 Vietnamese immigrants on a case-by-case basis, without explicitly committing to accept any of them." *Id.* ICE, in turn, began detaining Vietnamese immigrants who had been ordered removed for more than 90 days in hopes of effectuating their removal, and of re-detaining others who had previously been released. *Id.* at 1083–84. But following a class action lawsuit regarding this new practice, ICE met with Vietnamese officials again in 2018. After this meeting, "ICE conceded that, despite Vietnam's verbal commitment to consider travel document requests for pre-1995 immigrants, in general, the removal of these individuals was still not significantly likely." *Id.* at 1084. ICE returned to its practice of releasing pre-1995 Vietnamese immigrants who had been ordered removed within 90 days of their removal order. *Id.*

In 2020, ICE and Vietnamese officials reached a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU). *See* Ex. A. The MOU specifically concerned pre-1995 Vietnamese immigrants to the United States and aimed to facilitate their repatriation to Vietnam if ordered removed. The MOU has been made public via a Freedom of Information Act request, but only in a heavily redacted form. *See id.*; *Nguyen v. Scott, et. al.*, CV25-01398-TMC, Order Granting Preliminary Injunction at Dkt. 45, at 11 (W.D. Wash. Aug. 21, 2025) (summarizing history).

The government has yet to disclose the entirety of the MOU. But the MOU includes four mandatory criteria for a person to be eligible for repatriation to Vietnam. It is required that the person:

1. Has Vietnamese citizenship and does not have citizenship of any other country at the same time;

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2. Has violated U.S. law and has been ordered removed by a U.S. competent authority (and, if sentenced to a prison term, the individual must have completed any term of imprisonment before removal or a U.S. competent authority must have ordered a reduction in the sentence or the individual's release from prison);
3. Resided in Viet Nam prior to arriving to the United State and currently has no right to reside in any other country or territory;
4. [redacted]

Ex. A at § 4 (pp. 2–3). The fourth mandatory criteria for a person to be eligible for repatriation to Vietnam is unpublished and unknown to Ms. Vo or undersigned counsel.

Furthermore, two additional sections of the MOU—sections 5 and 6—are either mostly or entirely redacted. *See* Ex. A at §§ 5, 6 (p. 3). However, later portions of the MOU suggest that these sections pertain to discretionary factors that Vietnamese and American officials are to consider in resolving disputes about a person's eligibility for repatriation, including "humanitarian and family unity" factors. Ex. A at § 8, ¶ 6 (pp. 4–5). Because of these redactions, the discretionary factors utilized for determining whether someone can be repatriated to Vietnam are also unknown to Ms. Vo and undersigned counsel.

An experienced attorney with familiarity with Vietnam's repatriation process and requirements affirms that, while Vietnam has issued more travel documents than it did previously for people ordered removed from the United States, it is still not "significantly likely" that such documents will be issued for pre-1995 immigrants to the United States. *See* Ex. B (Declaration of Tin Thanh Nguyen, previously prepared for *Nguyen v. Scott*, CV25-01398-TMC) at 2–3. In the attorney's experience, whether or not Vietnam is willing to issue such documents depend on factors including "whether the individual has any family remaining in Vietnam, whether their Vietnamese identity can be verified, their criminal records, and the manner in which they left Vietnam and came to the United States, among other factors." *Id.* at 3.

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On June 9, 2025, ICE abruptly changed its practice of limiting post-removal order detention of pre-1995 Vietnamese immigrants. As one ICE attorney explained, ICE "rescinded its policy of generally finding that pre-1995 Vietnamese immigrants are not likely to be removed in the reasonably foreseeable future and generally releasing them within 90 [sic] of the entry of their final orders of removal." Ex. C (Email notification from Julian Kurz).

Although the 2020 MOU indicates that Vietnamese officials intend to issue travel documents for eligible people within 30 days, *see* Ex. A at § 8 (p.4), this intended timeline only applies once Vietnamese officials have confirmed a person's eligibility for repatriation. *Id.* In practice, however, it has taken many months before pre-1995 Vietnamese immigrants even receive an answer from Vietnam about whether or not travel documents can be issued. *See* Ex. B at 3.

The government arrested Ms. Vo on approximately April 23, 2025, and has held her in custody since that date. The government made no known efforts to seek travel documents from Vietnam prior to arresting her. Furthermore, the government waited until approximately September before providing Ms. Vo with the required forms to apply for travel documents while holding her in custody. And although Ms. Vo promptly filled out and returned these forms to ICE, she has received no updates regarding the status of the application to Vietnamese officials or any decision on that application.

Ms. Vo and counsel are aware of no approval from Vietnamese officials or confirmation that Vietnamese officials will issue travel documents for her. And because the government has not disclosed full eligibility criteria for repatriation of pre-1995 Vietnamese immigrants, Ms. Vo and counsel are not even aware of whether she would be eligible if and when an application is made to or decided by Vietnamese officials. In fact, given that Ms. Vo has never lived in Vietnam, it would seem she is ineligible

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under the MOU's third criterion, residence in Vietnam prior to arriving in the United States. Ex. A, p. 3, ¶ 3. Yet, the government has kept Ms. Vo in detention with no meaningful opportunity to challenge her detention or seek conditions of release.

VII. The Legal Framework Regarding Indefinite Detention Pending Removal.

Under 8 U.S.C. § 1231, detention of noncitizens who have been ordered removed is mandatory during the so-called 90-day "removal period." 8 U.S.C. § 1231(a)(l)(A). This period begins on the "date the order of removal becomes administratively final." 8 U.S.C. § 1231(a)(l)(B)(i). But the *Zadvydas* Court believed that a "serious constitutional threat" was posed by the indefinite detention of noncitizens who had been admitted to the country under the Fifth Amendment's Due Process Clause. 533 U.S. at 699. The Court therefore interpreted 8 U.S.C. 1231(a)(6) to permit only detention related to the statute's "basic purpose [of] effectuating [a non-citizen]'s removal[.]" *Id.* at 696-699.

The Court further held that the presumptive period during which the detention is reasonably necessary to effectuate a non-citizen's removal is six months; after that, the non-citizen is eligible for conditional release if he can demonstrate that there is "no significant likelihood of removal in the reasonably foreseeable future." *Id* at 701. After the "presumptively reasonable" period of six months' detention, when the noncitizen can "provide[] good reason to believe that there is no significant likelihood of removal in the reasonably foreseeable future," then "the Government must respond with evidence sufficient to rebut that showing." *Id.*

The issue is not whether Respondents have been able to remove some individuals to a given country. Rather, the court must make an individualized analysis as to a particular detainee. *See Nguyen v. Scott*, -- F.Supp.3d --, 2025 WL 2419288, *17 (W.D. Wash. Aug. 21, 2025 (stating increased numbers in total number of removals to

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Vietnam, including those who entered pre-1995, fails to rebut the evidence presented by Petitioner that "his individual circumstances make removal unlikely.").

VIII. The Law Pertaining to a Noncitizen's Procedural Due Process Right Not to Be Re-detained Absent a Hearing Establishing that the Individual Is Either a Flight Risk or a Danger to the Community.

Procedural due process requires notice and an opportunity to be heard. *Mathews v. Eldridge*, 424 U.S. 319, 333–34 (1976). To state a claim for a violation of procedural due process rights, a petitioner must establish (1) a protected property or liberty interest, and (2) a denial of adequate procedural protections. *ASSE Int'l, Inc. v. Kerry*, 803 F.3d 1059, 1073 (9th Cir. 2015). The Court must also consider "the Government's interest, including the function involved and the fiscal and administrative burdens that the additional or substitute procedural requirement would entail." *Rodriguez Diaz v. Garland*, 53 F.4th 1189, 1207 (9th Cir. 2022) (quoting *Mathews*, 424 U.S. at 335).

Petitioner's interest in not being detained is "the most elemental of liberty interests[.]" *E.A. T.-B. v. Wamsley*, No. CV25-1192-KKE, 2025 WL 2402130, at *3, *9 (quoting *Hamdi v. Rumsfeld*, 542 U.S. 507, 529 (2004)) (granting petition and ordering immediate release with no re-detention absent "an immigration court hearing . . . held (with adequate notice) to determine whether detention is appropriate."). *See also e.g., Ledesma Gonzalez v. Bostock*, No. 2:25-CV-01404-JNW-GJL, 2025 WL 2841574, at *8 (W.D. Wash. Oct. 7, 2025) (finding detainee has liberty interest).

Where there is a liberty interest, determining what procedures are due generally requires examining the factors set forth in *Mathews*:

> First, the private interest that will be affected by the official action; second, the risk of an erroneous deprivation of such interest through the procedures used, and the probable value, if any, of additional or substitute procedural safeguards; and finally, the Government's interest, including the function involved and the fiscal and administrative burdens that the additional or substitute procedural requirement would entail.

E.A. T.-B., 2025 WL 2402130, at *3 (quoting *Mathews*, 424 U.S. at 335).

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Given that the liberty interest here is "the most elemental," numerous courts have found that this first factor weighs heavily in a petitioner's favor. *See Ledesma Gonzalez*, 2025 WL 2841574, at *7 (this factor "must be accorded significant weight"). Petitioner's status as a non-citizen does not negate that interest. "While the temporary detention of noncitizens may sometimes be justified by concerns about public safety or flight risk, the government's discretion to incarcerate noncitizens is always constrained by the requirements of due process[.]" *E.A. T.-B.*, 2025 WL 2402130, at *3 (quoting *Hernandez v. Sessions*, 872 F.3d 976, 981 (9th Cir. 2017)).

The second factor, risk of an erroneous deprivation of liberty, also weighs in a petitioner's favor. A detainee's release to the community on an OREC reflected ICE's determination that Petitioner was neither a flight risk nor a danger to the community. *See, e.g.*, *Ledesma Gonzalez*, 2025 WL 2841574, at *8 (when ICE released Petitioner, "it did so after determining—as required by regulation—that 'such release would not pose a danger to property or persons, and that the alien is likely to appear for any future proceeding.'. . . By issuing the OREC, ICE necessarily found that [Petitioner] was neither a flight risk nor a danger to the community.") (quoting 8 C.F.R. § 236.1(c)(8)); *Barrenechea v. Albarran*, No. 25-CV-07883-VC, 2025 WL 2717279, at *1 (N.D. Cal. Sept. 22, 2025) ("ICE's release of Barrenechea on his own recognizance in 2020 can only be understood as reflecting a determination that he did not pose a flight risk or danger to the community").

The final factor, the government's interest in detaining a petitioner without providing a pre-deprivation hearing, also weighs in a petitioner's favor. "[T]he government's interest in detaining petitioner without a hearing is low." *Carballo*, 2025 WL 2381464, *8 (cleaned up). "In immigration court, custody hearings are routine and impose a minimal cost." *Id.* (cleaned up).

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As stated in *E.A. T.-B.*, 2025 WL 2402130, at *5, "although it would have required the expenditure of finite resources (money and time) to provide Petitioner notice and hearing on ATD violations before arresting and re-detaining him, those costs are far outweighed by the risk of erroneous deprivation of the liberty interest at issue."

The holding that a released detainee was entitled to a pre-deprivation hearing comes not from *Ledesma Gonzalez* and *E.A. T.-B.* alone—dozens of other courts have reached this conclusion as well. *See, e.g.*, *Pinchi v. Noem*, — F. Supp. 3d ——, No. 5:25-cv-05632-PCP, 2025 WL 2084921, at *5 (N.D. Cal. July 24, 2025) ("Providing [petitioner] with the procedural safeguard of a pre-detention hearing will have significant value in helping ensure that any future detention has a lawful basis."); *Doe v. Becerra*, 787 F. Supp. 3d 1083, 1094 (E.D. Cal. 2025) ("[G]iven that Petitioner was previously found to not be a danger or risk of flight and the unresolved questions about the timing and reliability of the new information, the risk of erroneous deprivation remains high."); *Valdez v. Joyce*, 25 Civ. 4627 (GBD), 2025 WL 1707737, at *4 (S.D.N.Y. June 18, 2025) ("Petitioner's re-detention without any change in circumstances or procedure establishes a high risk of erroneous deprivation of his protected liberty interest.").

In any hearing held by the government to try to justify re-detention, the government bears the burden to establish flight risk or danger by clear and convincing evidence. *See Sanchez-Rivera v. Matuszewski*, No. 22-CV-1357-MMA (JLB), 2023 WL 139801, at *7 n.9 (S.D. Cal. Jan. 9, 2023) (noting that "an overwhelming majority of courts" have so held). For cases in this district, *See, e.g., Odimara v. Bostock*, No. 2:24-CV-01412-MJP-TLF, 2025 WL 1490395, at *10 (W.D. Wash. Mar. 27, 2025), *report and recommendation adopted*, No. C24-1412 MJP, 2025 WL 1489705 (W.D. Wash. May 23, 2025) (citing cases).

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In addition, the government should be required to meet its burden based on changed circumstances subsequent to a petitioner's previous release by ICE. *See Duong v. Kaiser*, No. 25-CV-07598-JST, 2025 WL 2689266, at *10 (N.D. Cal. Sept. 19, 2025) (holding that any re-detention first required a hearing "whether a material change of circumstances justifies [petitioner's] re-detention").

IX. The Law Pertaining to a Noncitizen's Regulatory Right Not to Be Re-detained Absent Notice, an Opportunity to Be Heard, and Findings That the Regulatory Standards for Re-detention Have Been Met.

The revocation of a noncitizen's release is governed by 8 C.F.R. § 241.13(i), which authorizes ICE to revoke a noncitizen's release under § 1231 for purposes of removal or for violation of conditions of release. The government may revoke a noncitizen's release and return them to ICE custody due to failure to comply with any of the conditions of release, 8 C.F.R. § 241.13(i)(1), or if, "on account of changed circumstances, the [Immigration] Service determines that there is a significant likelihood that the [noncitizen] may be removed in the reasonably foreseeable future," *id.* § 241.13(i)(2).

Such revocation of release, even if justified by one of the reasons recognized by regulation, requires notice and an opportunity for the noncitizen to be heard. Upon a determination by the government (namely ICE) to re-detain a person previously released following a removal order:

> the alien will be notified of the reasons for revocation of his or her release. [ICE] will conduct an initial informal interview promptly after his or her return to [ICE] custody to afford the alien an opportunity to respond to the reasons for revocation stated in the notification. The [noncitizen] may submit any evidence or information that he or she believes shows there is no significant likelihood he or she be removed in the reasonably foreseeable future, or that he or she has not violated the order of supervision. The revocation custody review will include an evaluation of any contested facts relevant to the revocation and a determination whether the facts as determined warrant revocation and further denial of release.

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Id. § 241.13(i)(3).

ICE's decision to re-detain also cannot be arbitrary, but instead is governed by the factors laid out in 8 C.F.R. § 241.13(f), including:

> the history of the [noncitizen's] efforts to comply with the order of removal, the history of [ICE's] efforts to remove [noncitizens] to the country in question or to third countries, including the ongoing nature of [ICE's] efforts to remove [the noncitizen] and the [noncitizen's] assistance with those efforts, the reasonably foreseeable results of those efforts, and the views of the Department of State regarding the prospects for removal of [noncitizens] to the country or countries in question.

Id. See also Phan v. Beccerra, No. 2:25-CV-01757-DC-JDP, 2025 WL 1993735, at *3 (E.D. Cal. July 16, 2025). While courts do not make these determinations in the first instance, they may review them for compliance with the regulation. *See id.*; *Nguyen v. Hyde*, No. 25-cv-11470-MJJ, 2025 WL 1725791, at *3 (D. Mass. June 20, 2025) (citing *Kong v. United States*, 62 F.4th 608, 620 (1st Cir. 2023)).

X. The Legal Framework for Third-Country Removals

The immigration laws delineate the proper procedures by which a country may be designated for removal. *See* 8 U.S.C. § 1231(b). These procedures move in incremental steps.

First, an individual with a removal order may designate the country to which they want to be removed, and the government *shall* remove the individual to that country. 8 U.S.C. § 1231(b)(2)(A). The government may disregard that designation if (1) the individual fails to designate a country promptly; (2) the government of that country does not inform the U.S. government finally, within 30 days after the date the U.S. government first inquires, whether the government will accept the individual into that country; (3) the government of the country is not willing to accept the individual into the country; or (4) the government decides that removing the individual to that country is prejudicial to the United States. 8 U.S.C. § 1231(b)(2)(C).

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Second, if the individual is not removed to the country they designated under § 1231(b)(2)(A), the government shall remove the individual to the country of which the individual is a "subject, national, or citizen" unless the government of that country does not inform the U.S. government or the individual within 30 days after first inquiry or within another reasonable period of time whether the government will accept the individual into the country or the country is not willing to accept the individual into the country. 8 U.S.C. § 1231(b)(2)(D).

Third, if the individual is not removed to either the country of their designation or the country of which they are a subject, national, or citizen, then the government shall remove them to any of the following options: (1) the country from which the individual was admitted to the United States; (2) the country in which is located the foreign port from which the individual left for the United States or for a foreign territory contiguous to the United States; (3) the country in which the individual resided before the individual entered the United States and from which the individual entered the United States; (4) the country in which the individual was born; or (5) the country in which the individual's birthplace is located when the individual was ordered removed. 8 U.S.C. § 1231(b)(2)(E). *Only* "[i]f impracticable, inadvisable, or impossible" to remove the individual to any of these countries may the government remove the individual to "another country whose government will accept [them] into that country." 8 U.S.C. § 1231(b)(2)(E)(vii).

Notwithstanding any of these procedures, the statute prohibits removal to a third country where a person may be persecuted or tortured, a form of protection known as withholding of removal. *See* 8 U.S.C. § 1231(b)(3)(A). The government "may not remove [a noncitizen] to a country if the Attorney General decides that the [noncitizen's] life or freedom would be threatened in that country because of the [noncitizen's] race, religion, nationality, membership in a particular social group, or

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political opinion." *Id.*; *see also* 8 C.F.R. §§ 208.16, 1208.16. Withholding of removal is a mandatory protection.

Similarly, Congress codified protections enshrined in the Convention Against Torture (CAT) prohibiting the government from removing a person to a country where they would be tortured. *See* Foreign Affairs Reform and Restructuring Act of 1998 (''FARRA''), Public Law 105–277, div. G, sec. 2242, 112 Stat. 2681, 2631–822 (8 U.S.C. § 1231 note) ("It shall be the policy of the United States not to expel, extradite, or otherwise effect the involuntary return of any person to a country in which there are substantial grounds for believing the person would be in danger of being subjected to torture, regardless of whether the person is physically present in the United States."); 28 C.F.R. § 200.1; §§ 208.16–208.18, 1208.16–1208.18. CAT protection is also mandatory.

To comport with the requirements of due process, the government must provide notice of the third-country removal and an opportunity to respond. Due process requires "written notice of the country being designated" and "the statutory basis for the designation, i.e., the applicable subsection of § 1231(b)(2)." *Aden v. Nielsen*, 409 F. Supp. 3d 998, 1019 (W.D. Wash. 2019); *see also D.V.D. v. U.S. Dep't of Homeland Sec.*, No. 25-CV-10676-BEM, 2025 WL 1453640, at *1 (D. Mass. May 21, 2025) ("All removals to third countries, *i.e.*, removal to a country other than the country or countries designated during immigration proceedings as the country of removal on the non-citizen's order of removal, must be preceded by written notice to both the non-citizen and the non-citizen's counsel in a language the non-citizen can understand." (citation omitted)); *Andriasian v. INS*, 180 F.3d 1033, 1041 (9th Cir. 1999) (due process requires notice to the noncitizen of the right to apply for asylum and withholding to the country where they will be removed). The government must be able to show evidence that the third country will accept the individual into that country. *See Himri v. Ashcroft,*

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378 F.3d 932, 939 (9th Cir. 2004), *as amended (Aug. 24, 2004), amended sub nom. El Himri v. Ashcroft*, No. 03-71152, 2004 WL 1879255 (9th Cir. Aug. 24, 2004) ("at the time the government proposes a country of removal pursuant to § 1231(b)(2)(E)(vii), the government must be able to show that the proposed country *will* accept the [individual]").

Due process also demands that the government "ask the noncitizen whether he or she fears persecution or harm upon removal to the designated country and memorialize in writing the noncitizen's response. This requirement ensures DHS will obtain the necessary information from the noncitizen to comply with § (b)(3) and avoids [a dispute about what the officer and noncitizen said]." *Aden*, 409 F. Supp. 3d at 1019; *cf. D.V.D.*, 2025 WL 1453640, at *1 ("Following notice, the individual must be given a meaningful opportunity, and a minimum of ten days, to raise a fear-based claim for CAT protection prior to removal.") (emphasis omitted).

If the noncitizen claims fear, measures must be taken to ensure that the noncitizen can seek asylum, withholding, and relief under CAT before an immigration judge in reopened removal proceedings. *Cf. D.V.D.*, 2025 WL 1453640, at *1 (requiring the government to move to reopen the noncitizen's immigration proceedings if the individual demonstrates "reasonable fear" and to provide "a meaningful opportunity, and a minimum of fifteen days, for the non-citizen to seek reopening of their immigration proceedings" if the noncitizen is found to not have demonstrated "reasonable fear"); *Aden*, 409 F. Supp. 3d at 1019 (requiring notice and time for a respondent to file a motion to reopen and seek relief).

Finally, notice of the country to which the noncitizen will be removed must not be "last minute" because that would deprive an individual of a meaningful opportunity to apply for fear-based protection from removal. *Andriasian*, 180 F.3d at 1041. They

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must have time to prepare and present relevant arguments and evidence and to seek reopening of their removal case.

XI. Facts Pertaining to Punitive Banishment to Third Countries

Since January 2025, Respondents have developed and implemented a policy and practice of removing individuals to third countries, without first following the procedures in the INA for designation and removal to a third country and without providing fair notice and an opportunity to contest the removal in immigration court.

Respondents reportedly have negotiated with at least 58 countries to accept deportees from other nations. On June 25, 2025, the *New York Times* reported that seven countries—Costa Rica, El Salvador, Guatemala, Kosovo, Mexico, Panama, and Rwanda—had agreed to accept deportees who are not their own citizens.[2] Since then, ICE has carried out highly publicized third-country deportations to South Sudan and Eswatini. It also attempted—and completed—an "end-run" around the protections of the Convention Against Torture by deporting a group of migrants to Ghana, which sent them on to their countries of citizenship despite fears of persecution.

Punishment and deterrence appear to be the point of the Administration's third-country removal scheme. The Administration has reportedly negotiated with countries to have deportees imprisoned in prisons, camps, or other facilities. The government paid El Salvador about $5 million to arbitrarily and indefinitely imprison more than 200 deported Venezuelans in a maximum-security prison notorious for gross human rights abuses, known as CECOT. In February, Panama and Costa Rica took in hundreds of deportees from countries in Africa and Central Asia and imprisoned them in hotels, a jungle camp, and a detention center. On July 4, 2025, ICE deported eight men, including one pre-1995 Vietnamese refugee, to South Sudan. The men have been

[2] Edward Wong, et al., *Inside the Global Deal-Making Behind Trump's Mass Deportations*, N.Y. Times (June 25, 2025), https://www.nytimes.com/2025/06/25/us/politics/trump-immigrants-deportations.html [https://perma.cc/64G9-XYGB].

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detained incommunicado ever since. On July 15, 2025, ICE deported five men to the tiny African nation of Eswatini, including one man from Vietnam, where they are reportedly being held in solitary confinement.

The Administration has hand-selected countries known for human rights abuses and instability for these third-country deportation agreements to frighten people in the United States into self-deporting or to accept removal to their home countries. Indeed, conditions in South Sudan are so extreme that the U.S. State Department website warns Americans not to travel there, and if they do, to prepare their will, make funeral arrangements, and appoint a hostage-taker negotiator first.

On July 9, 2025, ICE issued a new memo (Ex. D) to staff instructing that, when seeking to remove an individual to a country not designated on that person's removal order, ICE may deport that person without any procedures for notice or an opportunity to be heard if the State Department confirms that it has received diplomatic assurances that individuals will not be persecuted or tortured. If no diplomatic assurances are received, the ICE memo instructs officers to serve on the individual a Notice of Removal that includes the intended country of removal. It instructs officers <u>not</u> to ask whether the individual is afraid of removal to that country. It states that officers should "generally wait at least 24 hours following service of the Notice of Removal before effectuating removal" but that "[i]n exigent circumstances, [ICE] may execute a removal order six (6) or more hours after service of the Notice of Removal as long as the [noncitizen] is provided reasonable means and opportunity to speak with an attorney prior to removal."

The memo further instructs that if the noncitizen "<u>does not</u> affirmatively state a fear of persecution or torture if removed to the country of removal listed on the Notice of Removal within 24 hours, [ICE] may proceed with removal to the country identified on the notice." If the noncitizen "<u>does affirmatively state</u> a fear if removed to the

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country of removal," then ICE will refer the case to U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services ("USCIS") for a screening for eligibility for withholding of removal and protection under the Convention Against Torture. "USCIS will generally screen within 24 hours." If USCIS determines that the noncitizen does not meet the standard, the individual will be removed. If USCIS determines that the noncitizen has met the standard, then the policy directs ICE to either move to reopen removal proceedings "for the sole purpose of determining eligibility for [withholding of removal protection] and CAT" or designate another country for removal.

The eight men who were ultimately deported to South Sudan all claimed fear of removal to South Sudan. None of those men were provided a fear screening by a USCIS officer or otherwise, despite the fact that they were held by ICE for six weeks on a U.S. military base in Djibouti before their final removal to South Sudan.

XII. The Law Governing Punitive Removal Practices

It is bedrock law that the U.S. government may not impose or inflict an infamous punishment for violations of civil immigration law. In 1896, the U.S. Supreme Court ruled that while deportation itself was not a punishment, the government could not attach punitive conditions to deportation—in that case, imprisonment at hard labor—absent a criminal charge, trial in a court of law, and the protections of the Fifth, Sixth, and Eighth Amendments. *Wong Wing v. United States*, 163 U.S. 228, 237 (1896).

Importantly, the Court drew a distinction between deportation, which the Court reasoned is "not a 'banishment,' in the sense in which that word is often applied to the expulsion of a citizen from his country by way of punishment," and government actions aimed at punishment, such as imprisonment at hard labor in addition to deportation. *Id.* at 236. The Court explained that deportation "is but a method of enforcing the return to his own country of [a non-citizen] who has not complied with the conditions upon the performance of which the government of the nation, acting within its constitutional

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authority and through the proper departments, has determined that his continuing to reside here shall depend." *Id.* (quoting *Fong Yue Ting v. United States*, 149 U.S. 730 (1893)). But the Court admonished that the government may not "declare unlawful residence within the country to be an infamous crime, punishable by deprivation of liberty and property . . . unless provision were made that the fact of guilt should first be established by a judicial trial." *Id.* at 237.

Deportation of individuals to third countries to be imprisoned or harmed is unquestionably punishment.

Grounds for Relief

Ground One: Petitioner's Continued Detention in Immigration Custody Violates the Due Process Clause of the Fifth Amendment to the U.S. Constitution Because There Is No Significant Likelihood that Petitioner Will Be Removed in the Reasonably Foreseeable Future.

The allegations in the above paragraphs are realleged and incorporated herein.

Because Petitioner's removal order became final on December 14, 2017, the removal period has long since expired and detention is no longer required under 8 U.S.C. § 1231. In addition, the presumptively reasonable period of six months has passed, because she was detained for approximately five months earlier and has, of this filing, been in custody over six and one-half months since her most recent retention.

There is "good reason to believe that there is no significant likelihood of removal in the reasonably foreseeable future[.]" *Zadvydas*, 533 U.S. at 701. As set forth in Part VI, she does not appear to qualify for removal to Vietnam under the publicly available portions of MOU, and even for those detainees who left Vietnam prior to 1995, but who do appear to qualify under those portions, removal is rarely occurring.

Therefore, the burden shifts to the government to rebut that showing. The government cannot meet that burden under the facts of this case. *See Nguyen v. Scott*, No. 2:25-CV-01398, 2025 WL 2419288, at *28–29 (W.D. Wash. Aug. 21, 2025)

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(granting preliminary injunction requiring release under *Zadvydas*); *Tang*, 2025 WL 2637750, at *6 (same).

Ground Two: Procedural due process

The allegations in the above paragraphs are realleged and incorporated herein.

Petitioner has a liberty interest in not being re-detained. Applying the three-factor test of *Mathews*, that interest is high. The risk of any erroneous deprivation is also high, because ICE's previous release of her necessarily reflected a conclusion that she was not a flight risk or a danger to the community. Here, as in *Ledesma Gonzalez*, "ICE revoked that release without any reassessment of those factors." 2025 WL 2841574, at *8.

Finally, the cost to the government of providing a hearing is low, and significantly outweighed by the other factors.

Ground Three: Failure to Comply With Regulations

The allegations in the above paragraphs are realleged and incorporated herein.

Respondents have not complied with their obligations under 8 C.F.R. § 241.13 and therefore Petitioner is entitled to release. On information and belief,

a) Respondents did not make a determination either that, on account of changed circumstances, there was a significant likelihood that Petitioner would be removed in the reasonably foreseeable future or that Petitioner violated the conditions of release;

b) to the extent that Respondents made such a determination, they lacked an adequate basis to do so and did not properly consider the factors specified in the regulations;

c) Respondents did not timely notify Petitioner in writing of the reasons for revocation in a manner that he could reasonably respond to;

d) Respondents did not conduct the required initial informal interview;

e) Respondents did not afford Petitioner an opportunity to respond; and

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f) Respondents did not advise Petitioner of the right to request a review of the detention and did not comply with the requirements for such review.

Ground Four: Violation of the Fifth Amendment, 8 U.S.C. § 1231, Convention Against Torture, Implementing Regulations, and the Administrative Procedure Act

The allegations in the above paragraphs are realleged and incorporated herein.

The Fifth Amendment, the INA, the CAT, and implementing regulations mandate meaningful notice and opportunity to respond to any attempt to remove Petitioner to a third country in reopened removal proceedings. They also require an opportunity for Petitioner to make a fear-based claim against removal to a third country in reopened removal proceedings. Respondents' policy for third-country removals violates all of these laws because it directs ICE agents to remove individuals to third countries without any notice or process *at all* where diplomatic assurances are received and, where no diplomatic assurances are received, to provide flagrantly insufficient notice (6–24 hours) and opportunity to respond, in violation of the statute, regulations, and Fifth Amendment.

Prior to any third-country removal, Petitioner must be provided with constitutionally and statutorily compliant notice and an opportunity to respond and contest that removal if she has a fear of persecution or torture in that country in reopened removal proceedings. *See Nguyen*, 2025 WL 2419288, at *29 (granting preliminary injunction against "removing Petitioner to a country other than [home country] without notice and a meaningful opportunity to be heard in reopened removal proceedings with a hearing before an immigration judge").

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Ground Five: Punitive Third-Country Banishment; Violation of Fifth and Eighth Amendments

The allegations in the above paragraphs are realleged and incorporated herein.

Under the Fifth Amendment to the U.S. Constitution, no person shall "be held to answer for a capital, or otherwise infamous crime, unless on a presentment or indictment of a Grand Jury;" "be subject for the same offence to be twice put in jeopardy of life or limb;" or "be deprived of life, liberty, or property, without due process of law."

The Eighth Amendment provides that no "cruel and unusual punishments" may be inflicted.

The U.S. Supreme Court long ago held that the government may not inflict upon individuals an "infamous punishment" in addition to deportation as a penalty for an immigration violation, absent criminal charges, a judicial trial, and attendant constitutional protections. *Wong Wing*, 163 U.S. at 236–38.

Petitioner was convicted and completed any sentences for her criminal convictions years ago. Her convictions arguably made her removable from the United States, but the convictions do not authorize the government to inflict, as a matter of executive policy and discretion, additional punishment on her. Respondents' third-country removal program is punitive in nature and execution.

The government has arranged for third countries to receive deportees and imprison them on arrival, possibly indefinitely and often in abhorrent conditions. It has selected countries notorious for human rights abuses and instability for third-country removal arrangements. It has targeted individuals with criminal convictions for third-country removals where they will be imprisoned and harmed and publicly broadcast those removals to demonize and dehumanize the individuals subjected to these practices and strike fear in the immigrant community to send a message of retribution and deterrence.

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Respondents' third-country removal program is more than a publicity stunt. The hundreds of individuals who have already been subjected to it have been banished in foreign prisons upon arrival without charge and often without communication with the outside world, including their families and lawyers. Respondents may not subject Petitioner to its third-country removal program designed to impose a severe punishment on its subjects. Such conduct "shocks the conscience" under Fifth Amendment substantive due process, is cruel and unusual punishment, and may not be imposed without charge and a judicial trial.

Respondents may not seek to remove Petitioner to a third country under their punitive banishment policy and practices. *See Nguyen*, 2025 WL 2419288, at *29 (granting preliminary injunction against "removing Petitioner to any country where he is likely to face imprisonment upon arrival").

Prayer for Relief

Petitioner respectfully requests that this Court:

(a) Assume jurisdiction over this action;

(b) Issue an Order directing Respondents to show cause why this Petition should not be granted within five days;

(c) Order Respondents to immediately release Petitioner from custody;

(d) Order that Respondents may not re-detain Petitioner without first holding a hearing before a neutral decisionmaker at which the government bears the burden of establishing flight risk or danger to the community by clear and convincing evidence based on changed circumstances since Petitioner was previously released;

(e) Order that Respondents may not remove or seek to remove Petitioner to a third country without notice and meaningful opportunity to respond in compliance with the statute and due process in reopened removal proceedings;

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(f) Order that Respondents may not remove Petitioner to any third country because Respondents' third-country removal program seeks to impose unconstitutional punishment on its subjects, including imprisonment and other forms of harm; and

(g) Order all other relief that the Court deems just and proper.

Verification Pursuant to LCR 100(e)

Counsel verifies that this petition is authorized by Petitioner. It does not personally bear Petitioner's signature because of the significant difficulty for counsel in meeting with Petitioner in person and because mailing the petition to Petitioner and having it mailed back would cause delay that would only extend the period of her unlawful detention. Counsel knows the facts asserted above or alleges them on information and belief, based on information obtained from the government and/or Petitioner.

DATED this 17th day of November, 2025.

Respectfully submitted,

s/ *Alan Zarky*
Staff Attorney
Attorney for Phung Thi Thanh Vo

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