

**United States District Court  
Western District of Texas  
San Antonio Division**

Emmanuel De Jesus Sandoval-Salinas,  
Petitioner,

v.

No. 5:25-cv-01624-JKP

Miguel Vergara, Field Office Director of  
Immigration and Customs Enforcement,  
Enforcement and Removal Operations San  
Antonio Field Office, *et al.*,  
Respondents.

**Federal<sup>1</sup> Respondents' Response to Petition of Writ for Habeas Corpus**

Respondents submit this timely response to Petitioner's petition for a writ of habeas corpus [ECF No. 1] and motion for temporary restraining order ("TRO") [ECF No. 2]. ECF No. 5. Petitioner alleges ICE's detention violates the Fifth Amendment's Due Process Clause, the Administrative Procedure Act<sup>2</sup>, and the Immigration and Nationality Act. ECF No. 1 at 7-8.

Despite being granted relief from removal, referred to as withholding of removal ("WHO") under Immigration and Nationality Act § 241(b)(3), 8 U.S.C. § 1231(b)(3), such relief extends only to the country where Petitioner was found to have a reasonable fear of being persecuted: Nicaragua. *See* 8 C.F.R. §§ 208.16–208.17, 1208.16; 1208.17; 208.31(a); 1208.31(a); 8 U.S.C.

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<sup>1</sup> The named warden in this action is not a federal employee. The Department of Justice does not represent him in this action.

<sup>2</sup> Petitioner did not pay the filing fee for non-habeas claims. *See Ndudzi v. Castro*, No. SA–20–CV–0492–JKP, 2020 WL 3317107 at \*2 (W.D. Tex. June 18, 2020) (citing 28 U.S.C. § 1914(a)). “When a filing contains both habeas and on-habeas claims, ‘the district court should separate the claims and decide the [non-habeas] claims’ separately from the habeas ones given the differences between the two types of claims. *Id.* (collecting cases and further noting the “vast procedural differences between the two types of actions”). Given the differences, the Court should either sever the non-habeas claims or dismiss them altogether without prejudice if severance is not warranted. *Id.* at \*3.

§ 1231(b)(3)(A). In other words, nothing prevents DHS from removing Petitioner to a third country if such a country is willing to accept him. *See e.g., Guzman Chavez v. Johnson*, 594 U.S. at 531–32, 535–36 (2021); 8 U.S.C. § 1231(b)(1)(c)(iv); 8 C.F.R. §§ 208.16(f); 1208.16(f); 208.17(b)(2); 1208.17(b)(2). There are numerous removal options for ICE to consider under this statute, including any country willing to accept the alien. *Guzman Chavez*, 594 at 536–37; 8 U.S.C. § 1231(b)(2). ICE can remove Petitioner to a third country and is actively seeking third country acceptance. Exh. A (C. Pena declaration).

Petitioner argues his continued detention is contrary to the Immigration and Nationality Act, the pertinent regulations, and the Administrative Procedure Act (“APA”). He further claims ICE is violating his substantive and procedural rights under the Constitution’s Fifth Amendments. *See e.g.*, ECF No. 1 at 8. Finally, he argues he argues no removable is foreseeable. *Id.* at 7. Notably, however, he does not proffer an acceptable third country that would be suitable, nor does he outline any efforts to seek permission to live in any acceptable third countries. *Id.*

These arguments are insufficient reason to believe that removal is unlikely in the foreseeable future, which means the burden of proof does not shift to ICE to show the likelihood of removal. *See Andrade v. Gonzales*, 459 F.3d 538, 543–44 (5th Cir. 2006); *Gonzalez v. Gills*, No. 20-60547, 2022 WL 1056099 at 1 (5th Cir. Apr. 8, 2022). Even if the burden has so shifted, Respondents can show that removal to a third country is, in fact, likely in the reasonably foreseeable future. For these reasons, the Court should deny this habeas petition. Petitioner’s motion for a temporary restraining order similarly should be denied.

#### **I. Removal Efforts**

On February 28, 2023, an immigration judge ordered Petitioner removed from the United States and granted withholding of removal under the Convention Against Torture to Nicaragua.

Exh. A at ¶ 9. On March 3, 2023, ICE issued Petitioner an order of supervision. Exh. A at ¶ 10. On December 3, 2025, ICE requested Mexico accept Petitioner. Exh. A at ¶ 13.<sup>3</sup>

## **II. Detention Is Lawful Under 8 U.S.C. § 1231(a)(6).**

Petitioner’s detention is lawful. The authority to detain aliens after the entry of a final order of removal is set forth in 8 U.S.C. § 1231(a). That statute affords ICE a 90-day mandatory detention period within which to remove the alien from the United States following the entry of the final order. 8 U.S.C. § 1231(a)(2). The 90-day removal period begins on the latest of three dates: the date (1) the order becomes “administratively final,” (2) a court issues a final order in a stay of removal, or (3) the alien is released from non-immigration custody. 8 U.S.C. § 1231(a)(1)(B).

Not all removals can be accomplished in 90 days, and certain aliens may be detained beyond the 90-day removal period. *See Zadvydas*, 533 U.S. at 701. Under §1231, the removal period can be extended in a least three circumstances. *See Glushchenko v. U.S. Dep’t of Homeland Sec.*, 566 F.Supp.3d 693, 703 (W.D. Tex. 2021). Extension is warranted, for example, if the alien presents a flight risk or other risk to the community. *Id.*; *see also* 8 U.S.C. § 1231(a)(1)(C); (a)(6). An alien may be held in confinement until there is “no significant likelihood of removal in a reasonably foreseeable future.” *Zadvydas*, at 533 U.S. at 680.

## **III. Petitioner’s Substantive Due Process Claim under *Zadvydas* is Premature.**

Petitioner’s reliance on *Zadvydas* is premature because he has been detained less than six months. To state a claim for relief under *Zadvydas*, Petitioner must show that: (1) he is in DHS custody; (2) he has a final order of removal; (3) he has been detained in *post*-removal-order detention for six months or longer; and (4) there is no significant likelihood of removal in the reasonably foreseeable future. *Zadvydas*, 533 U.S. at 700. Petitioner does not and cannot make this

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<sup>3</sup> Petitioner may be a class member in *D.V.D. v. Dep’t. of Homeland Sec.*, No. 25-10676, 2025 WL 1142968 (D. Mass. Apr. 18, 2025) (Challenging 3<sup>rd</sup> Country Removal Procedures). Respondents are obtaining further information.

showing, as he has been detained less than six months in post-order custody. ECF No. 1 ¶¶ 1, 18 (Petitioner detained on November 25, 2025); *Chance v. Napolitano*, 453 F. App'x 535, 2011 WL 6260210 at \*1 (5th Cir. Dec. 15, 2011); *Agyei-Kodie v. Holder*, 418 F. App'x 317, 2011 WL 891071 at \*1 (5th Cir. Mar. 15, 2011); *Gutierrez-Soto v. Sessions*, 317 F.Supp.3d 917, 929 n.33 (W.D. Tex. 2018); *Kasangaki v. Barr*, 2019 WL 13221026 at \*3 (W.D. Tex. July 31, 2019); *Linares v. Collins*, 1:25-CV-00584-RP-DH, ECF No. 14 at 7–16 (W.D. Tex. Aug. 12, 2025).

**A. There is No Good Reason to Believe that Removal is Unlikely in the Reasonably Foreseeable Future.**

Petitioner cannot show “good reason” to believe that removal to a third country is unlikely in the reasonably foreseeable future. In *Zadvydas*, the U.S. Supreme Court held that § 1231(a)(6) “read in light of the Constitution’s demands, limits an alien’s post-removal-period detention to a period reasonably necessary to bring about that alien’s removal from the United States” but “does not permit indefinite detention.” 533 U.S. at 689. “[O]nce removal is no longer reasonably foreseeable, continued detention is no longer authorized by the statute.” *Id.* at 699. The Court designated six months as a presumptively reasonable period of post-order detention but made clear that the presumption “does not mean that every alien not removed must be released after six months.” *Id.* at 701.

Once the alien establishes that he has been in post-order custody for more than six months at the time the habeas petition is filed, the alien must provide a “good reason” to believe that there is no significant likelihood of removal in the reasonably foreseeable future. *See Andrade v. Gonzales*, 459 F.3d 538, 543–44 (5th Cir. 2006); *Gonzalez v. Gills*, No. 20–60547, 2022 WL 1056099 at \*1 (5th Cir. Apr. 8, 2022). Unless the alien establishes the requisite “good reason,” the burden will not shift to the government to prove otherwise. *Id.*

The “reasonably foreseeable future” is not a static concept; it is fluid and country-specific, depending in large part on country conditions and diplomatic relations. *Ali v. Johnson*, No. 3:21–CV–00050–M, 2021 WL 4897659 at \*3 (N.D. Tex. Sept. 24, 2021). Additionally, a lack of visible progress in the removal process does not satisfy the petitioner’s burden of showing that there is no significant likelihood of removal. *Id.* at \*2 (collecting cases); *see also Idowu v. Ridge*, No. 3:03–CV–1293–R, 2003 WL 21805198, at \*4 (N.D. Tex. Aug. 4, 2003). Conclusory allegations are also insufficient to meet the alien’s burden of proof. *Nagib v. Gonzales*, No. 3:06–CV–0294–G, 2006 WL 1499682, at \*3 (N.D. Tex. May 31, 2006) (citing *Gonzalez v. Bureau of Immigration and Customs Enforcement*, No. 1:03–CV–178–C, 2004 WL 839654 (N.D. Tex. Apr. 20, 2004)). One court explained:

To carry his burden, [the] petitioner must present something beyond speculation and conjecture. To shift the burden to the government, [the] petitioner must demonstrate that “the circumstances of his status” or the existence of “particular individual barriers to his repatriation” to his country of origin are such that there is no significant likelihood of removal in the reasonably foreseeable future.

*Idowu*, 2003 WL 21805198, at \*4 (citation omitted).

Petitioner’s substantive due process claim is not ripe because he has not been detained ‘post-order’ for more than six months. *Compare* Exh. A at 1 with ECF No. 1 ¶¶ 1,18 (noting recent detention on November 25, 2025). Therefore, he cannot provide a “good reason” to believe that there is no significant likelihood of removal in the reasonably foreseeable future. *See Andrade v. Gonzales*, 459 F.3d 538, 543–44 (5th Cir. 2006); *Gonzalez v. Gills*, No. 20–60547, 2022 WL 1056099 at \*1 (5th Cir. Apr. 8, 2022). As such, he has been detained less than 90 days in post-order custody.

Petitioner is subject to a final order of removal, but he, nonetheless, urges this Court to order that his continued detention pending removal is contrary to his substantive and procedural

rights under the Fifth Amendment. Petitioner is aware ICE is attempting to remove him to a third country. Petitioner fails to allege any reason, much less a “good reason,” to believe that there is no significant likelihood of removal in the foreseeable future. These claims are wholly insufficient under *Zadvydas. Andrade*, 459 F.3d at 543–44; *Boroky v. Holder*, No. 3:14-CV-2040-L-BK, 2014 WL 6809180, at \*3 (N.D. Tex. Dec. 3, 2014); *see also Thanh v. Johnson*, No. EP-15-CV-403-PRM, 2016 WL 5171779, at \*4 (W.D. Tex. Mar. 11, 2016) (denying habeas relief where government was taking affirmative steps to obtain Vietnamese travel documents). The burden of proof, therefore, does not shift to Respondents to prove that removal is likely.

Even if the burden did shift to ICE in this analysis, ICE could show that removal is likely in the foreseeable future. ICE is pending a response from Mexico. *See* Exh. A (Pena Declaration). As such, removal is likely in the reasonably foreseeable future, and his continued detention is lawful. Petitioner’s substantive due process claim fails and should be denied.

**VI. ICE Has Afforded Petitioner Procedural Due Process.**

Petitioner cannot show a procedural due process violation here. To establish a procedural due process violation, Petitioner must show that he was deprived of liberty without adequate safeguards. *See Mathews v. Eldridge*, 424 U.S. 319, 332 (1976); *Daniels v. Williams*, 474 U.S. 327, 331 (1986).

The Fifth Circuit finds no procedural due process violation where the constitutional minima of due process is otherwise met. *Murphy v. Collins*, 26 F.3d 541, 543 (5th Cir. 1994). Even if the Court were to find a procedural due process violation here, the remedy is substitute process. *Mohammad v. Lynch*, No. EP-16-CV-28-PRM, 2016 WL 8674354, at \*6 n.6 (W.D. Tex. May 24, 2016) (finding no merit to petitioner's procedural due process claim where the evidence demonstrated that the review had already occurred, thereby redressing any delay in the provision

of the 90-day and 180-day custody reviews). Even in the criminal context, failure to comply with statutory or regulatory time limits does not mandate release of a person who should otherwise be detained. *U.S. v. Montalvo-Murillo*, 495 U.S. 711, 722 (1990).

ICE nonetheless conducts post-order custody reviews of an alien’s detention as required by regulation for aliens detained under § 1231.<sup>4</sup> Once the 90-day removal period concludes in this case, ICE will perform a post-order custody review (“POCR”) under 8 C.F.R. § 241.4 to determine whether Petitioner should remain detained or whether he should be released in the exercise of discretion under an Order of Supervision. At or around the 180-day mark, Petitioner will receive another POCR if he remains detained, wherein ICE will determine whether he should remain detained. *See* 8 C.F.R. § 241.13. POCRs are set to occur at the 270-day and the one-year marks, as well. *Id.*

The POCR process addresses constitutional concerns that were identified in *Zadvydas*, providing safeguards and allowing the alien notice and opportunity to be heard regarding continued detention pending removal. *See, e.g.*, 8 C.F.R. § 241.13. Courts have found that these regulatory deadlines are not firm, so long as the review itself has occurred. *See Mohammad v. Lynch*, No. EP-16-CV-28-PRM, 2016 WL 8674354 at \*6 n. 6 (W.D. Tex. May 24, 2016). Even if Petitioner had alleged such a violation, the remedy is not immediate release from custody, but an opportunity for the government to provide substitute process. *Virani v. Huron*, No. SA-19-CV-00499-ESC, 2020

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<sup>4</sup> The Fifth Circuit has not provided guidance to lower courts, post-*Arteaga-Martinez*, on the appropriate standard for reviewing a procedural due process claim alleged by an alien detained under § 1231. The Fourth Circuit, post-*Arteaga-Martinez*, used the *Zadvydas* framework to analyze a post-order-custody alien’s due process claims. *See Linares v. Collins*, 1:25-CV-00584-RP-DH, ECF No. 14 at 10–14 (W.D. Tex. Aug. 12, 2025) (discussing *Johnson v. Arteaga-Martinez*, 596 U.S. 573 (2022) and *Castaneda v. Perry*, 95 F.4th 750, 760 (4th Cir. 2024)).

WL 1333172 at \*12 (W.D. Tex. Mar. 23, 2020). As such, Petitioner's procedural due process claim, like his substantive one, should be denied.

**V. Petitioner's Motion for TRO should be Denied.**

As outlined above, Petitioner does not and should not prevail on the merits of his claims. Even the remaining factors to determine whether the extraordinary grant of a temporary restraining order should be granted weigh in the government's favor here. With respect to the balancing of the equities and public interest, it cannot be disputed that (1) Petitioner is subject to a final order of removal that allows ICE to remove Petitioner to *any* third country, except for Nicaragua; and (2) both the government and the public at large have a strong interest in the enforcement of the immigration laws. Moreover, prohibiting ICE from executing a lawful final order of removal does not maintain the status quo as contemplated by a TRO, rather it gives Petitioner a new relief from removal not granted by the immigration judge and morphs the removal order (except to Nicaragua) to relief from removal to *all* countries. The Court should therefore deny the TRO and dismiss the case in its entirety.

**VI. Conclusion**

Petitioner is lawfully detained by statute until his removal, and his detention comports with the limited due process he is owed as an applicant for admission subject to a final order of removal. This Court should deny the petition and the motion for a TRO.

Respectfully submitted,

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