

UNITED STATES DISTRICT COURT  
WESTERN DISTRICT OF TEXAS  
SAN ANTONIO DIVISION

Maria Jose Mendoza Petit,

*Petitioner,*

-v-

Todd M. Lyons, Acting Director of US ICE;  
Miguel Vergara, San Antonio Field Office  
Director, US Immigration and Customs  
Enforcement; Daren K. Margolin, Director of  
the Executive Office for Immigration Review;  
Warden, Dilley Immigration Processing  
Center,

*Respondents.*

Case No: 5:25-cv-1840

**Petition for Writ of Habeas Corpus  
Under 28 U.S.C. § 2241**

**INTRODUCTION**

Petitioner Maria Jose Mendoza Petit is an asylum seeker from Venezuela who was unlawfully detained by Respondents on October 15, 2025, and is being held subject to mandatory detention without bond. Respondents detained her without justification or warrant for her arrest. Without intervention by this Court, Petitioner will be subject to indefinite detention without the possibility of release on bond. For these reasons, she prays that this Court will grant her release from her unlawful detention.

**JURISDICTION**

1. This action arises under the Constitution of the United States and the Immigration and Nationality Act (INA), 8 U.S.C. § 1101 et seq.
2. This Court has subject matter jurisdiction under 28 U.S.C. § 2241 (habeas corpus), 28 U.S.C. § 1331 (federal question), and Article I, § 9, cl. 2 of the United States Constitution (Suspension Clause).
3. This Court has jurisdiction over the claims asserted in this action pursuant to 28 U.S.C. § 1331, 28 U.S.C. § 1361, and 28 U.S.C. § 1651 because Petitioner asks this Court to compel Respondents, officers of the United States, to perform their duties owed under 8 U.S.C. § 1226(a).
4. The jurisdiction of this Court is also invoked pursuant to 28 U.S.C. §§ 2201-02 which authorizes the issuance of declaratory judgments.
5. Petitioner seeks costs and fees pursuant to the Equal Access to Justice Act, 5 U.S.C. § 504 and 28 U.S.C. § 2412(2) et seq.
6. This 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., and the All Writs Act, 28 U.S.C. § 1651.

**VENUE**



7. Venue is proper in this District because Petitioner is detained at the Dilley Immigration Processing Center located at 300 El Rancho Wy, Dilley, TX 78017, which is within the jurisdiction of this District.
8. Venue is proper in this District because Respondents are officers, employees, or agencies of the United States and a substantial part of the events or omissions giving rise to Petitioner's claims occurred in this District.

**PARTIES**

9. Petitioner is an applicant for asylum who is being detained at the Dilley Immigration Processing Center located at 300 El Rancho Wy, Dilley, TX 78017. She was assigned alien number A [REDACTED] Petitioner is under the direct control and in the custody of Respondents and their agents.
10. Respondent Todd M. Lyons is the Acting Director of US ICE. Respondent is the legal custodian of Petitioner and has the direct authority to release Petitioner. Todd M. Lyons is sued in his official capacity.
11. Respondent Miguel Vergara is the San Antonio Field Office Director of US Immigration and Customs Enforcement. Respondent is the legal custodian of Petitioner and has the direct authority to release Petitioner. Miguel Vergara is sued in his official capacity.
12. Respondent Daren K. Margolin is the Acting Director of the Executive Office for Immigration Review (EOIR). He has the legal authority to order an immigration judge to provide Petitioner a fair and impartial bond hearing. He is sued in his official capacity.

13. The Warden of the Dilley Immigration Processing Center is sued as the direct custodian of Petitioner. The Warden's name is not publicly listed on any materials that were available at the time of filing. The Warden is sued in his or her official capacity.

**STATEMENT OF FACTS**

14. Petitioner came to the United States seeking asylum. She entered the United States without inspection or admission on October 2, 2022, and was assigned alien number A  See Exhibit A.
15. Petitioner's immigration proceedings take place within the immigration courts administered by EOIR. Petitioner's application for asylum was pending with US Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS) since prior to her detention on October 15, 2025. She is permitted to remain in the United States until a final determination has been made on her application.
16. Following Petitioner's entry to the United States she was released on parole. *Id.* She applied for asylum with USCIS on July 6, 2023. See Exhibit B. As an applicant for asylum, USCIS instructed her that she "may remain in the U.S. until your asylum application is decided." *Id.* Her case was assigned tracking number  *Id.* Her case remains pending with USCIS today. See Exhibit C.
17. Petitioner was detained by US Immigration and Customs Enforcement officers on or around October 15, 2025. At the time of her detention she was attending a mandatory appointment with an ICE officer. She was not provided any reason for her detention or warrant for her arrest.
18. Despite her pending application for asylum and permission to remain in the U.S., Petitioner was placed into removal proceedings following her detention.

19. Petitioner continues to be unlawfully detained by Respondents. *See* Exhibit D.

**CLAIM FOR RELIEF**

**Violation of Fifth Amendment Right to Due Process**

20. The above paragraphs are realleged and incorporated herein.
21. The Department of Homeland Security is detaining Petitioner under “mandatory detention” authority reserved for aliens who are in the process of entering the United States, 8 U.S.C. § 1225.
22. Respondents have determined that Petitioner is ineligible for bond and must be detained due to a recent change in policy, despite having resided freely in the United States for more than one year.
23. The Executive Office for Immigration Review issued a precedential decision holding that immigration judges unequivocally have no jurisdiction to entertain granting bond in Petitioner’s exact circumstances, *Matter of Yajure Hurtado*, 29 I&N Dec. 216 (BIA 2025). This decision is contrary to the previous interpretation of the relevant statutes which has persisted for more than two decades and through various administrations.
24. Petitioner was not arriving in the United States at the time of her detention; she had been in the United States for more than three years. Her detention is unlawful because she is being subjected to mandatory detention provisions which did not apply to her at the time of her detention.
25. Petitioner should be eligible for immigration bond under 8 U.S.C. § 1226(a) and release from detention because she is not properly subject to mandatory detention.
26. The unlawful detention of Petitioner is a violation of her rights under the Fifth Amendment of the US Constitution.

**PRAYER FOR RELIEF**

Petitioner respectfully asks that the Court:

- A. Assume jurisdiction over this matter;
- B. Issue an Order to Show Cause ordering Respondents to show cause why this Petition should not be granted within three days;
- C. Issue a Temporary Restraining Order that Respondents not transfer Petitioner from the Western District of Texas;
- D. Order that Respondents not remove Petitioner from the United States until this matter has concluded;
- E. Order that Respondents immediately release Petitioner from detention under the same conditions of release that she had prior to her unlawful detention on October 15, 2025;
- F. Award Petitioner attorney's fees and costs under the Equal Access to Justice Act, and on any other basis justified under law; and
- G. Grant any further relief this Court deems just and proper.

**VERIFICATION**

On Petitioner's behalf, I, Joseph Krebs Muller, verify that the factual statements made in the foregoing Petition for Writ of Habeas Corpus are true and correct to the best of my knowledge.

Respectfully submitted,

/s/ Joseph Krebs Muller

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