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

13 ESTEBAN RIVERO,

14 Petitioner,

15 v.

16 KRISTI NOEM, Secretary of the
17 Department of Homeland Security,
18 PAMELA JO BONDI, Attorney General,
19 TODD M. LYONS, Acting Director,
20 Immigration and Customs Enforcement,
21 JESUS ROCHA, Acting Field Office
22 Director, San Diego Field Office,
23 CHRISTOPHER LAROSE, Warden at
24 Otay Mesa Detention Center,

25 Respondents.

26 CIVIL CASE NO.: '26CV0148 BJC JLB

27 **Notice of Motion**
28 **and**
Memorandum of Law
in Support of
Temporary Restraining Order

1 “sliding scale”: “if a plaintiff can only show that there are ‘serious questions
2 going to the merits—a lesser showing than likelihood of success on the merits—
3 then a preliminary injunction may still issue if the balance of hardships tips
4 *sharply* in the plaintiff’s favor, and the other two *Winter* factors are satisfied.”
5 *Immigrant Defenders Law Center v. Noem*, 145 F.4th 972, 986 (9th Cir. 2025)
6 (internal quotation marks omitted). Under this approach, the four *Winter* elements
7 are “balanced, so that a stronger showing of one element may offset a weaker
8 showing of another.” *All. for the Wild Rockies v. Cottrell*, 632 F.3d 1127, 1131
9 (9th Cir. 2011). A TRO may be granted where there are “‘serious questions going
10 to the merits’ and a hardship balance. . . tips sharply toward the plaintiff,” and so
11 long as the other *Winter* factors are met. *Id.* at 1132.

12 The *Winter* factors weigh in favor of granting a TRO as to all claims set out
13 in the Habeas Petition. *See Winter*, 555 U.S. at 20.

14 Here, this Court should issue a temporary restraining order because his
15 unlawful immigration detention has caused, and will continue to cause,
16 “immediate and irreparable injury . . . or damage.” Fed. R. Civ. P. 65(b). This
17 Court should therefore order Petitioner’s release.

18 **I. Petitioner is likely to succeed on the merits.**

19 Petitioner is likely to succeed on the merits as to all claims. The Fifth
20 Amendment’s Due Process Clause forbids the Government to “depriv[e]” any
21 “person ... of ... liberty ... without due process of law.” *Zadvydas*, 533 U.S. at 690.
22 Due process requires that “a person in jeopardy of a serious loss [be given] notice
23 of the case against him and the opportunity to meet it.” *Mathews v. Eldridge*, 424
24 U.S. 319, 348 (1976) (quoting *Joint Anti-Fascist Comm. v. McGrath*, 341 U.S.
25 123, 171-72 (Frankfurter, J., concurring). Petitioner’s detention in immigration
26 custody and removal to a third country violates due process.

27 First, ICE failed to follow its own regulations requiring changed
28 circumstances before Petitioner’s re-detention, as well as its procedural

1 regulations requiring it to notify him of those circumstances and allow him an
2 opportunity to contest them. This was a violation of both the regulations and due
3 process and requires his release. *See, e.g., See Phan v. Noem*, 2025 WL 2898977,
4 No. 25-CV-2422-RBM-MSB, *3–*5 (S.D. Cal. Oct. 10, 2025) (explaining this
5 regulatory framework and granting a habeas petition for ICE’s failure to follow
6 these regulations for a refugee of Vietnam who entered the United States before
7 1995); *Rokhfirooz*, No. 25-CV-2053-RSH-VET, 2025 WL 2646165 at *2 (same).

8 Second, Respondents also cannot remove Petitioner to a third country
9 without providing notice and a sufficient opportunity to be heard before an
10 immigration judge. Their current policy allowing third-country removal
11 “contravenes Ninth Circuit law.” *Nguyen v. Scott*, No. 25-CV-1398, 2025 WL
12 2419288, *19 (W.D. Wash. Aug. 21, 2025) (explaining how the July 9, 2025 ICE
13 memo contravenes Ninth Circuit law on the process due to noncitizens in detail);
14 *see also Van Tran v. Noem*, 2025 WL 2770623, No 25-cv-2334-JES-MSB (S.D.
15 Cal. Sept. 29, 2025) (granting temporary restraining order preventing a
16 noncitizen’s deportation to a third country pending litigation in light of due
17 process problems); *Nguyen Tran v. Noem*, No. 25-cv-2391-BTM-BLM, ECF No.
18 6 (S.D. Cal. Sept. 18, 2025) (same).

19 **II. Petitioner will suffer irreparable harm absent injunctive relief.**

20 Petitioner also meets the second factor, irreparable harm. “It is well
21 established that the deprivation of constitutional rights ‘unquestionably constitutes
22 irreparable injury.’” *Melendres v. Arpaio*, 695 F.3d 990, 1002 (9th Cir. 2012)
23 (quoting *Elrod v. Burns*, 427 U.S. 347, 373 (1976)). Where the “alleged
24 deprivation of a constitutional right is involved, most courts hold that no further
25 showing of irreparable injury is necessary.” *Warsoldier v. Woodford*, 418 F.3d
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1 989, 1001-02 (9th Cir. 2005) (quoting 11A Charles Alan Wright et al., *Federal*
2 *Practice and Procedure*, § 2948.1 (2d ed. 2004)).

3 “Unlawful detention” itself “constitutes ‘extreme or very serious damage,
4 and that damage is not compensable in damages.’” *Hernandez v. Sessions*, 872
5 F.3d 976, 999 (9th Cir. 2017).

6 Third-country deportations pose that risk and more. Recent third-country
7 deportees have been held, indefinitely and without charge, in hazardous foreign
8 prisons. See Edward Wong et al, *Inside the Global Deal-Making Behind Trump’s*
9 *Mass Deportations*, N.Y. Times, June 25, 2025. They have been subjected to
10 solitary confinement. Gerald Imray, *3 Deported by US held in African Prison*
11 *Despite Completing Sentences, Lawyers Say*, PBS (Sept. 2, 2025). They have
12 been removed to countries so unstable that the U.S. government recommends
13 making a will and appointing a hostage negotiator before traveling to them. See
14 Wong, *supra*. These and other threats to Petitioner’s health and life independently
15 constitute irreparable harm.

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1 **III. The balance of hardships and the public interest weigh heavily in**
2 **Petitioner’s favor.**

3 Third, and finally, when the government is a party, as it is here, “the
4 balance of equities and public interest factors merge.” *Pimental-Estrada v. Barr*,
5 464 F. Supp. 3d 1225, 1237 (W.D. Wash 2020) (citing *Drakes Bay Osyter v.*
6 *Jewell*, 747 F.3d 1073, 1092 (9th Cir. 2014). The risk of harm to Petitioner far
7 outweighs the government’s interest in illegally detaining him, fir it is “always in
8 the public interest to prevent the violation of a party’s constitutional rights.”
9 *Melendres*, 695 F.3d at 1002.

10 **CONCLUSION**

11 For all these reasons, this Court should grant this motion for a temporary
12 restraining order and order immediate release.

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14 Respectfully submitted,

15 Dated: January 8, 2026

s/ Zandra L. Lopez

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PROOF OF SERVICE

I, the undersigned, will cause the attached motion to be emailed to the U.S. Attorney’s Office for the Southern District of California at USACAS.Habeas2241@usdoj.gov when I receive the court-stamped copy.

Dated: January 8, 2026

s/ Zandra L. Lopez

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