

SOUTHERN DISTRICT OF MISSISSIPPI
FILED
JAN 14 2026
ARTHUR JOHNSTON
BY DEPUTY

UNITED STATES DISTRICT COURT
SOUTHERN DISTRICT OF MISSISSIPPI

ALFONSO MENDOZA PEREZ,

A# 

Petitioner/Plaintiff,

v.

RAFAEL VERGARA, Warden,
Adams County Correctional Center,
TODD LYONS, Acting Director, Immigration
and Customs Enforcement, **KRISTI NOEM,**
Secretary of United States Department of
Homeland Security, **MELISSA HARPER,**
Immigration and Customs Enforcement,
New Orleans Field Office Director,
PAMELA BONDI, United States Attorney General,

Respondents/Defendants

Civil Action No. *5:26-cv-10-DCB-BWR*

**ORAL ARGUMENT
REQUESTED**

**PETITION FOR WRIT OF
HABEAS CORPUS UNDER 28
U.S.C. § 2241 AND COMPLAINT
FOR INJUNCTIVE AND
DECLARATORY RELIEF**

INTRODUCTION

1. Alfonso Mendoza Perez is a thirty-four year old native and citizen of Mexico who entered the United States without inspection in 2009, at the age of eighteen. *See Mexican Passport as Exhibit A.* Mr. Mendoza Perez was detained by Florida Fish and Wildlife on or about November 25, 2025 while fishing. Florida Fish and Wildlife officers then called ICE who detained Mr. Mendoza Perez. Mr. Mendoza Perez, through prior counsel, requested a bond hearing at the Krome Service Processing Center in Miami, Florida. At that hearing, on December 9, 2025, the immigration judge advised that she did not have jurisdiction to grand bond because the Petitioner was an applicant for admission pursuant to the Board of Immigration Appeal's decision in *Matter of Yajure Hurtado*, 29 I&N Dec. 216 (BIA 2025).

At that time, prior counsel withdrew the request for bond. *See EOIR Automated System Bond Information as Exhibit B.*

2. Mr. Mendoza Perez is the father to five US Citizen children ranging in ages from 4 months old to 14 years old. *See Children's Birth Certificates as Exhibit C.* He is married and his wife is a DACA beneficiary. *See Marriage Documentation as Exhibit D.* He also has an I-589 Application for Asylum and Withholding of Removal pending before USCIS. *See USCIS I-589 Receipt as Exhibit E.*
3. Mr. Mendoza Perez was detained by ICE in Florida on or about November 25, 2025 in Florida. He was recently transferred to the Adams County Correctional Center where he remains in ICE custody. *See ICE Locator Printout as Exhibit F.*
4. The Immigration Judge erroneously determined that the Petitioner is subject to mandatory detention as an applicant for admission and that she lacked authority to redetermine Mr. Mendoza Perez's custody status.

JURISDICTION

5. This Court has subject matter jurisdiction under 28 U.S.C. § 2241 (habeas corpus), 28 U.S.C. § 1331 (federal question), and Article 1, §9, cl 2 of the United States Constitution (Suspension Clause).
6. This Court may grant relief under the habeas corpus statutes, 28 U.S.C. § *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 because the Petitioner is detained at the Adams County Correctional Center located at 20 Hobo Fork Rd, Natchez, MS 39120 which is within this District.

8. Venue is also properly in this Court pursuant to 28 U.S.C. § 1391(e) because the Respondents are employees, officers, and agents of the United States and the detention which gave rise to this claim is ongoing in the district.

REQUIREMENTS OF 28 U.S.C. § 2243

9. The Court must grant the petition for writ of habeas corpus or issue an order to show cause to the respondents “forthwith,” unless the petitioner is not entitled to relief. 28 U.S.C. § 2243. If an order to show cause 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.* (emphasis added).
10. The Court should grant the petition for writ of habeas corpus “forthwith,” as the legal issues have already been resolved many times in this jurisdiction. Additionally, the legal issues have also been addressed in the Central District of California which certified a nationwide class related to the exact issue at hand. *See Maldonado Bautista v. Santacruz*, No. 5:25-CV-01873-SSS-BFM.
11. Habeas corpus is “perhaps the most important writ known to the constitutional law . . . affording as it does a *swift* and imperative remedy in all cases of illegal restraint or confinement.” *Fay v. Noia*, 372 U.S. 391, 400 (1963) (emphasis added). “The application for the writ usurps the attention and displaces the calendar of the judge or justice who entertains it and receives prompt action from him within the four corners of the application.” *Yong v. I.N.S.*, 208 F.3d 1116, 1120 (9th Cir. 2000) (citation omitted).

PARTIES

12. Petitioner Alfonso Mendoza Perez is a citizen of Mexico who has been in immigration detention since on or about November 25, 2025. After Petitioner was arrested in Stuart,

Florida, ICE did not set bond, and Petitioner requested review of his custody by an immigration judge. At a hearing at the Krome Immigration Court, the immigration judge that she lacked jurisdiction to hear the bond redetermination request because Mr. Mendoza Perez entered without inspection. Prior counsel then withdrew the request for bond. The Petitioner has resided in the United States since 2009.

13. Respondent Rafael Vergara is employed as the Warden of the Adams County Correctional Facility where the Petitioner is detained. He has immediate physical custody of the Petitioner. He is sued in his official capacity.
14. Respondent Mellissa Harper is the Director of the New Orleans Field Office of ICE's Enforcement and Removal Operations division ("ERO"). As such, the New Orleans Field Office Director is Petitioner's immediate custodian and is responsible for Petitioner's detention and removal. She is named in her official capacity.
15. Respondent Todd Lyons is sued in his official capacity as Acting Director of Immigration and Customs Enforcement ("ICE"). As the Acting Director of ICE, Mr. Lyons is responsible for the administration and enforcement of the policies and procedures for ICE's detention of Petitioner at Adams County Correctional Center ("Adams").
16. Respondent Pamela Bondi is the Attorney General of the United States. She is responsible for the Department of Justice, of which the Executive Office for Immigration Review ("EOIR") and the immigration court system it operates is a component agency. She is sued in her official capacity.
17. Respondent Kristi Noem is the Secretary of the Department of Homeland Security ("DHS"). She is responsible for the implementation and enforcement of the Immigration and Nationality Act ("INA"), and oversees ICE, which is responsible for Petitioner's

detention. Ms. Noem has ultimate custodial authority over Petitioner and is sued in her official capacity.

CLAIM FOR RELIEF

Violation of the INA:

18. Petitioner repeats, re-alleges, and incorporates by reference each and every allegation in the preceding paragraphs as if fully set forth herein.
19. The Immigration and Nationality Act (INA) prescribes three basic forms of detention for the vast majority of noncitizens in removal proceedings.
20. First, 8 U.S.C. § 1226 authorizes the detention of noncitizens in standard removal proceedings before an IJ. *See* 8 U.S.C. § 1229a. Individuals in § 1226(a) detention are generally entitled to a bond hearing at the outset of their detention, see 8 C.F.R. §§ 1003.19(a), 1236.1(d), while noncitizens who have been arrested, charged with, or convicted of certain crimes are subject to mandatory detention until their removal proceedings are concluded, see 8 U.S.C. § 1226(c).
21. Second, the INA provides for mandatory detention of noncitizens subject to expedited removal under 8 U.S.C. § 1225(b)(1) and for other recent arrivals “seeking admission” referred to under § 1225(b)(2).
22. Last, the INA also provides for detention of noncitizens who have received a final order of removal from the United States, including individuals in withholding-only proceedings, see 8 U.S.C. § 1231(a)–(b).
23. This case concerns the detention provisions at § 1226(a) and § 1225(b)(2).
24. The detention provisions at § 1226(a) and § 1225(b)(2) were enacted as part of the Illegal Immigration Reform and Immigrant Responsibility Act (IIRIRA) of 1996, Pub. L. No. 104-208, Div. C, §§ 302–03, 110 Stat. 3009-546, 3009–582 to 3009–583, 3009–585. Section

1226 was most recently amended earlier this year by the Laken Riley Act, Pub. L. No. 119-1, 139 Stat. 3 (2025).

25. Following the enactment of the IIRIRA, EOIR drafted new regulations explaining that, in general, people who entered the country without inspection were not considered detained under § 1225 and that they were instead detained under § 1226(a). See *Inspection and Expedited Removal of Aliens; Detention and Removal of Aliens; Conduct of Removal Proceedings; Asylum Procedures*, 62 Fed. Reg. 10312, 10323 (Mar. 6, 1997) (“Despite being applicants for admission, aliens who are present without having been admitted or paroled (formerly referred to as aliens who entered without inspection) will be eligible for bond and bond redetermination”).
26. Thus, in the decades that followed, most people who entered without inspection and were thereafter arrested and placed in standard removal proceedings were considered for release on bond and also received bond hearings before an IJ, unless their criminal history rendered them ineligible. That practice was consistent with many more decades of prior practice, in which noncitizens who had entered the United States, even if without inspection, were entitled to a custody hearing before an IJ or other hearing officer. In contrast, those who were stopped at the border were only entitled to release on parole. See 8 U.S.C. § 1252(a) (1994); see also H.R. Rep. No. 104-469, pt. 1, at 229 (1996) (noting that § 1226(a) simply “restates” the detention authority previously found at § 1252(a)).
27. On July 8, 2025, ICE, “in coordination with the Department of Justice (DOJ),” announced a corresponding policy that rejected the well-established understanding of the statutory and regulatory framework and reversed decades of practice. The new policy, entitled “Interim Guidance Regarding Detention Authority for Applicants for Admission,” claims that all

persons who entered the United States without inspection shall now be deemed subject to mandatory detention under § 1225(b)(2)(A). *Id.* The policy applies regardless of when a person is apprehended, and affects those who have resided in the United States for months, years, and even decades.

28. Nationwide, pursuant to its July 8, 2025, policy, DHS is now asserting that all persons who entered without inspection are subject to mandatory detention under 8 U.S.C. § 1225(b)(2)(A).
29. On September 5, 2025, the Board of Immigration Appeals (BIA), issued a decision in *Matter of Yajure Hurtado*, 29 I&N Dec. 216 (BIA 2025) holding that all noncitizens who entered the United States without admission or parole are considered applicants for admission, and are therefore ineligible for bond hearings under 8 U.S.C. § 1225(b)(2)(A).
30. DHS's and DOJ's interpretation defies the INA. The plain text of the statutory provisions demonstrates that § 1226(a), not § 1225(b), applies to people like Plaintiffs. Section 1226(a) applies by default to all persons "pending a decision on whether the [noncitizen] is to be removed from the United States." These removal hearings are held under § 1229a, to "decid[e] the inadmissibility or deportability of a[] [noncitizen]."
31. By contrast, § 1225(b) applies to people arriving at U.S. ports of entry or who very recently entered the United States. The statute's entire framework is premised on inspections at the border of people who are "seeking admission" to the United States. 8 U.S.C. § 1225(b)(2)(A); see also *Diaz Martinez*, 2025 WL 2084238, at *8 ("[O]ur immigration laws have long made a distinction between those [noncitizens] who have come to our shores seeking admission . . . and those who are within the United States after an entry, irrespective of its legality." (quoting *Leng May Ma v. Barber*, 357 U.S. 185, 187 (1958))).

Indeed, the Supreme Court has explained that this mandatory detention scheme applies “at the Nation’s borders and ports of entry, where the Government must determine whether a[] [noncitizen] seeking to enter the country is admissible.” *Jennings v. Rodriguez*, 583 U.S. 281, 287 (2018).

32. Accordingly, the mandatory detention provision of § 1225(b)(2) does not apply to people like Mr. Mendoza Perez, who have already entered and were residing in the United States at the time they were apprehended.
33. In *Maldonado Bautista*, the Court has already certified a nationwide class of individuals exactly like Mr. Mendoza Perez. That Court held that those individuals are entitled to consideration for release on bond under 8 U.S.C. § 1226(a). The Court further held that the Respondents are violating the INA in applying the mandatory detention statutes to people like Mr. Mendoza Perez.
34. By denying Petitioner a bond hearing under § 1226(a) and asserting that he is subject to mandatory detention under § 1225(b)(2), Respondents violate Petitioner’s statutory rights under the INA and the Court’s judgment in *Maldonado Bautista*.

PRAYER FOR RELIEF


WHEREFORE, Petitioner prays that this Court grant the following relief:

- a. Assume jurisdiction over this matter;
- b. Issue a writ of habeas corpus requiring that within one day, Respondents release Petitioner;
- c. Alternatively, issue an Order to Show Cause ordering Respondents to show cause why this Petition should not be granted within three days;

- d. Alternatively, issue a writ of habeas corpus requiring Respondents to release Petitioner unless they provide a bond hearing under 8 U.S.C. § 1226(a) within seven days;
- e. Award Petitioner attorney's fees and costs under the Equal Access to Justice Act (EAJA), as amended, 28 U.S.C. § 2412, and on any other basis justified under law; and
- f. Grant any other and further relief that this Court deems just and proper.

I affirm, under penalty of perjury, that the foregoing is true and correct.

Respectfully submitted this the 12th day of January, 2026.



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