

UNITED STATES DISTRICT COURT
WESTERN DISTRICT OF TEXAS
EL PASO DIVISION

Estuardo LOPEZ-LUCAS,

()

Petitioner,

v.

Mary De ANDA-YBARRA, Field Office
Director of Enforcement and Removal
Operations, El Paso Field Office, Immigration
and Customs Enforcement; Kristi NOEM,
Secretary, U.S. Department of Homeland
Security; U.S. DEPARTMENT OF
HOMELAND SECURITY; Pamela BONDI,
U.S. Attorney General; EXECUTIVE OFFICE
FOR IMMIGRATION REVIEW; Warden of
ERO El Paso East Montana Detention Facility,

Respondents.

Case No. 3:26-cv-163

**PETITION FOR WRIT OF
HABEAS CORPUS**

INTRODUCTION

1. Petitioner, Estuardo Lopez Lucas, is a native and citizen of Guatemala who entered the United States around 2012 and has resided in the United States continuously since that time. ICE agents detained Mr. Lopez Lucas on his way to work in Takoma Park, Maryland. Although Mr. Lopez Lucas has three U.S. citizen children, has never been arrested, and despite his arrival to the United States over ten (10) years ago, DHS and the Executive Office for Immigration Review (EOIR) have concluded that he is subject to mandatory immigration detention because he should be deemed to be “seeking admission” to the United States.

2. Mr. Lopez Lucas is in the physical custody of Respondents at the Ero El Paso East Montana Detention Facility. He now faces unlawful detention because the Department of Homeland Security (DHS) and the Executive Office of Immigration Review (EOIR) have concluded Petitioner is subject to mandatory detention.

3. Mr. Lopez Lucas is charged with, inter alia, having entered the United States without admission or inspection. *See* 8 U.S.C. § 1182(a)(6)(A)(i).

4. DHS denied Mr. Lopez Lucas release from immigration custody, consistent with a new DHS policy issued on July 8, 2025, instructing all Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) employees to consider anyone inadmissible under § 1182(a)(6)(A)(i)—i.e., those who entered the United States without admission or inspection—to be subject to detention under 8 U.S.C. § 1225(b)(2)(A) and therefore ineligible to be released on bond.

5. Similarly, on September 5, 2025, the Board of Immigration Appeals (BIA or Board) issued a precedent decision, binding on all immigration judges, holding that an immigration judge has no authority to consider bond requests for any person who entered the United States without admission. *See Matter of Yajure Hurtado*, 29 I. & N. Dec. 216 (BIA 2025).

The Board determined that such individuals are subject to detention under 8 U.S.C.

§ 1225(b)(2)(A) and therefore ineligible to be released on bond.

6. Mr. Lopez Lucas's detention on this basis violates the plain language of the Immigration and Nationality Act. Section 1225(b)(2)(A) does not apply to individuals like Mr. Lopez Lucas who previously entered and are now residing in the United States. Instead, such individuals are subject to a different statute, § 1226(a), that allows for release on conditional parole or bond. That statute expressly applies to people who, like Mr. Lopez Lucas, are charged as inadmissible for having entered the United States without inspection.

7. Respondents' new legal interpretation is plainly contrary to the statutory framework and contrary to decades of agency practice applying § 1226(a) to people like Mr. Lopez Lucas.

8. DHS and EOIR's position in this case is pursuant to a new policy shift, changing the government's decades-long practice. Respondents' insistence that Mr. Lopez Lucas is subject to mandatory detention is not only a significant shift from past practice but is contrary to the plain language of the INA and is also in violation of Mr. Lopez Lucas's Constitutional rights.

9. Additionally, on November 25, 2025, a district court in the Central District of California certified a nationwide class under Rule 23(b)(2). *Maldonado Bautista v. Santacruz, Jr.*, No. 5:25-CV-1873, 2025 WL 3288403, at *9 (C.D. Cal. Nov. 25, 2025) (certifying a class including "[a]ll noncitizens in the United States without lawful status who (1) have entered or will enter the United States without inspection; (2) were not or will not be apprehended upon arrival; and (3) are not or will not be subject to detention under 8 U.S.C. § 1226(c), § 1225(b)(1), or § 1231 at the time the Department of Homeland Security makes an initial custody determination"). The Petitioner is a member of this class.

10. The California court previously granted petitioners partial summary judgment and then “extend[ed] the same declaratory relief granted to Petitioners to the Bond Eligible Class as a whole.” *Id.*; *Maldonado Bautista v. Santacruz, Jr.*, No. 5:25-CV-1873, 2025 WL 3289861, at *11 (C.D. Cal. Nov. 20, 2025)

11. This Court should therefore intervene and grant Mr. Lopez Lucas’s petition for writs of habeas corpus and order his release from immigration custody. *Martinez v. Noem*, 2025 WL 3471575, at *6 (W.D. Tex. Nov. 26, 2025) (“Respondents do not assert any other basis for detaining Petitioner. . . . Absent an assertion by Respondents that they are detaining Petitioner under § 1226, the Court has no need to consider whether § 1226 is a valid basis for Petitioner’s current detention.”). Alternatively, the Court should require EOIR to conduct a bond hearing under 8 U.S.C. § 1226(a) at which 8 U.S.C. § 1225(b)(2) cannot be applied and DHS bears the burden of proof that continued detention is required.

JURISDICTION

12. Mr. Lopez Lucas is in the physical custody of Respondents. Mr. Lopez Lucas is detained at the ERO El Paso East Montana Detention Facility in El Paso, TX.

13. This Court has jurisdiction under 28 U.S.C. § 2241(c)(5) (habeas corpus), 28 U.S.C. § 1331 (federal question), and Article I, section 9, clause 2 of the United States Constitution (the Suspension Clause).

14. This Court may grant relief pursuant to 28 U.S.C. § 2241, the Declaratory Judgment Act, 28 U.S.C. § 2201 *et seq.*, and the All Writs Act, 28 U.S.C. § 1651.

VENUE

15. Venue lies in the United States District Court for the Western District of Texas, the judicial district in which Mr. Lopez Lucas currently is detained. *Braden v. 30th Judicial*

Circuit Court of Kentucky, 410 U.S. 484, 493- 500 (1973); *see, also, Rumsfeld v. Padila*, 542 U.S. 426, 442-447 (2004).

16. Venue is also properly in this Court pursuant to 28 U.S.C. § 1391(e) because Respondents are employees, officers, and agencies of the United States, and because a substantial part of the events or omissions giving rise to the claims occurred in the Western District of Texas.

REQUIREMENTS OF 28 U.S.C. § 2243

17. The Court must grant the petition for writ of habeas corpus or order Respondents to show cause “forthwith,” unless the petitioner is not entitled to relief. 28 U.S.C. § 2243. If an order to show cause is issued, Respondents must file a return “within three days unless for good cause additional time, not exceeding twenty days, is allowed.” *Id.*

18. 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). This time limit “is subordinate to the Court’s discretionary authority to set deadlines under Rule 4[.]” *See Diaz-Ortega v. Lund*, 2019 U.S. Dist. LEXIS 250454 (W.D. La. June 28, 2019) (marks and citation omitted). A period of 3 days—or any time less than 60 days—is necessary in a habeas petition to prevent ongoing unlawful detention and ensure prompt judicial review of liberty interests that demand immediate attention.

PARTIES

19. Mr. Lopez Lucas is a citizen of Guatemala who has been in immigration detention since around August 18, 2025. EOIR's and DHS' position is that Mr. Lopez Lucas is subject to mandatory detention pursuant to the Board's decision in *Matter of Yajure Hurtado*, 29 I. & N. Dec. 216 (BIA 2025).

20. Respondent Mary De Anda-Ybarra is the Director of the El Paso Field Office of ICE's Enforcement and Removal Operations division. As such, she is Mr. Lopez Lucas's immediate custodian and is responsible for Mr. Lopez Lucas's detention and removal. She is named in his official capacity.

21. Respondent Kristi Noem is the Secretary of the Department of Homeland Security. 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. Secretary Noem has ultimate custodial authority over Mr. Lopez Lucas and is sued in her official capacity.

22. Respondent Department of Homeland Security (DHS) is the federal agency responsible for implementing and enforcing the INA, including the detention and removal of noncitizens.

23. 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 and the immigration court system it operates is a component agency. She is sued in her official capacity.

24. Respondent Executive Office for Immigration Review (EOIR) is the federal agency responsible for implementing and enforcing the INA in removal proceedings, including for custody redeterminations in bond hearings.

25. Respondent Warden of Ero El Paso East Montana Detention Facility where Mr. Lopez Lucas is detained is the chief administrator of the detention facility. The warden has immediate physical custody of Mr. Lopez Lucas. The warden is sued in his official capacity.

EXHAUSTION

26. The failure to exhaust administrative remedies does not bar Mr. Lopez Lucas's claims unless "Congress specifically mandates" exhaustion. *Miranda v. Garland*, 34 F.4th 338, 351 (4th Cir. 2022) (1993) (quoting *McCarthy v. Madigan*, 503 U.S. 140, 144 (1992)).

27. Moreover, because Mr. Lopez Lucas's continued detention violates his right to due process—a constitutional right—administrative exhaustion is excused. *See Guitard v. U.S. Sec'y of the Navy*, 967 F.2d 737, 741 (2d Cir. 1992) ("Exhaustion of administrative remedies may not be required when . . . a plaintiff has raised a 'substantial constitutional question.'").

28. Although the Court may impose exhaustion requirements as a prudential matter, it should not do so in this case because further administrative exhaustion would be futile. Critically, as part of the recent policy shift, the Board of Immigration Appeals issued *Matter of Yajure Hurtado*, 29 I. & N. Dec. 216 (BIA 2025), concluding that noncitizens who entered the United States without inspection at any point are forever after considered to be "arriving aliens" who are "seeking admission" and thus subject to mandatory detention under 8 U.S.C. § 1225(b)(2)(A). Even though, as discussed below, this decision is legally erroneous, all immigration judges—including Appellate Immigration Judges at the Board of Immigration

Appeals—are obligated to apply published Board precedent, and thus the result of any attempted bond request is foreclosed. 8 C.F.R. § 103.10(b).

LEGAL FRAMEWORK

29. The INA prescribes three basic forms of detention for the vast majority of noncitizens in removal proceedings.

30. 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, *see* 8 U.S.C. § 1226(c).

31. 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).

32. Last, the INA also provides for detention of noncitizens who have been ordered removed, including individuals in withholding-only proceedings, *see* 8 U.S.C. § 1231(a)–(b).

33. This case concerns the detention provisions at §§ 1226(a) and 1225(b)(2).

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

35. Thus, in the decades that followed, most people who entered without inspection and were placed in standard removal proceedings received bond hearings, unless their criminal

history rendered them ineligible pursuant to 8 U.S.C. § 1226(c). That practice was consistent with many more decades of prior practice, in which noncitizens who were not deemed “arriving” were entitled to a custody hearing before an IJ or other hearing officer. *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)).

36. On July 8, 2025, ICE, “in coordination with” DOJ, announced a new policy that rejected well-established understanding of the statutory framework and reversed decades of practice.

37. The new policy, entitled “Interim Guidance Regarding Detention Authority for Applicants for Admission,”¹ claims that all persons who entered the United States without inspection shall now be subject to mandatory detention provision under § 1225(b)(2)(A). 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.

38. On September 5, 2025, the BIA adopted this same position in a published decision. *See Matter of Yajure Hurtado*, 29 I.&N. Dec. 216 (BIA 2025). There, the Board held that all noncitizens who entered the United States without admission or parole are subject to detention under § 1225(b)(2)(A) and are ineligible for IJ bond hearings.

39. Since Respondents adopted their new policies, dozens of federal courts have rejected their new interpretation of the INA’s detention authorities. Courts have likewise rejected *Matter of Yajure Hurtado*, which adopts the same reading of the statute as ICE. *Rodriguez Vazquez v. Bostock*, 779 F. Supp. 3d 1239 (W.D. Wash. 2025). Subsequently, court after court has adopted the same reading of the INA’s detention authorities and rejected ICE and EOIR’s

¹ Available at <https://www.aila.org/library/ice-memo-interim-guidance-regarding-detention-authority-for-applications-for-admission>.

new interpretation. *See, e.g., Gomes v. Hyde*, No. 1:25-CV-11571-JEK, 2025 WL 1869299 (D. Mass. July 7, 2025); *Diaz Martinez v. Hyde*, No. CV 25-11613-BEM, --- F. Supp. 3d ----, 2025 WL 2084238 (D. Mass. July 24, 2025); *Rosado v. Figueroa*, No. CV 25-02157 PHX DLR (CDB), 2025 WL 2337099 (D. Ariz. Aug. 11, 2025), *report and recommendation adopted*, No. CV-25-02157-PHX-DLR (CDB), 2025 WL 2349133 (D. Ariz. Aug. 13, 2025); *Lopez Benitez v. Francis*, No. 25 CIV. 5937 (DEH), 2025 WL 2371588, at *1 (S.D.N.Y. Aug. 13, 2025); *Maldonado v. Olson*, No. 0:25-cv-03142-SRN-SGE, 2025 WL 2374411 (D. Minn. Aug. 15, 2025); *Arrazola-Gonzalez v. Noem*, No. 5:25-cv-01789-ODW (DFMx), 2025 WL 2379285 (C.D. Cal. Aug. 15, 2025); *Romero v. Hyde*, No. 25-11631-BEM, 2025 WL 2403827 (D. Mass. Aug. 19, 2025); *Leal-Hernandez v. Noem*, No. 1:25-cv-02428-JRR, 2025 WL 2430025 (D. Md. Aug. 24, 2025); *Kostak v. Trump*, No. 3:25-cv-01093-JE-KDM, 2025 WL 2472136 (W.D. La. Aug. 27, 2025); *Jose J.O.E. v. Bondi*, No. 25-CV-3051 (ECT/DJF), --- F. Supp. 3d ----, 2025 WL 2466670, at *8 (D. Minn. Aug. 27, 2025) *Lopez-Campos v. Raycraft*, No. 2:25-cv-12486-BRM-EAS, 2025 WL 2496379 (E.D. Mich. Aug. 29, 2025); *Vasquez Garcia v. Noem*, No. 25-cv-02180-DMS-MM, 2025 WL 2549431 (S.D. Cal. Sept. 3, 2025); *Zaragoza Mosqueda v. Noem*, No. 5:25-CV-02304 CAS (BFM), 2025 WL 2591530 (C.D. Cal. Sept. 8, 2025); *Pizarro Reyes v. Raycraft*, No. 25-CV-12546, 2025 WL 2609425 (E.D. Mich. Sept. 9, 2025); *see also, e.g., Palma Perez v. Berg*, No. 8:25CV494, 2025 WL 2531566 at *2 (D. Neb. Sept. 3, 2025) (noting that “[t]he Court tends to agree” that § 1226(a) and not § 1225(b)(2) authorizes detention); *Jacinto v. Trump*, No. 4:25-cv-03161-JFB-RCC, 2025 WL 2402271 at *3 (D. Neb. Aug. 19, 2025) (same); *Anicasio v. Kramer*, No. 4:25-cv-03158-JFB-RCC, 2025 WL 2374224 at *2 (D. Neb. Aug. 14, 2025) (same).

40. Additionally, on November 25, 2025, a district court in the Central District of California certified a nationwide class under Rule 23(b)(2). *Maldonado Bautista v. Santacruz, Jr.*, No. 5:25-CV-1873, 2025 WL 3288403, at *9 (C.D. Cal. Nov. 25, 2025) (certifying a class including “[a]ll noncitizens in the United States without lawful status who (1) have entered or will enter the United States without inspection; (2) were not or will not be apprehended upon arrival; and (3) are not or will not be subject to detention under 8 U.S.C. § 1226(c), § 1225(b)(1), or § 1231 at the time the Department of Homeland Security makes an initial custody determination”). The Petitioner is a member of this class.

41. The California court previously granted petitioners partial summary judgment and then “extend[ed] the same declaratory relief granted to Petitioners to the Bond Eligible Class as a whole.” *Id.*; *Maldonado Bautista v. Santacruz, Jr.*, No. 5:25-CV-1873, 2025 WL 3289861, at *11 (C.D. Cal. Nov. 20, 2025).

42. Courts across the country have uniformly rejected DHS’s and EOIR’s new interpretation because it defies the INA. As the *Rodriguez Vazquez* court and others have explained, the plain text of the statutory provisions demonstrates that § 1226(a), not § 1225(b), applies to people like Petitioner.

43. 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].”

44. The text of § 1226 also explicitly applies to people charged as being inadmissible, including those who entered without inspection. *See* 8 U.S.C. § 1226(c)(1)(E). Subparagraph (E)’s reference to such people makes clear that, by default, such people are afforded a bond hearing under subsection (a). As the *Rodriguez Vazquez* court explained, “[w]hen Congress

creates ‘specific exceptions’ to a statute’s applicability, it ‘proves’ that absent those exceptions, the statute generally applies.” *Rodriguez Vazquez*, 779 F. Supp. 3d at 1257 (citing *Shady Grove Orthopedic Assocs., P.A. v. Allstate Ins. Co.*, 559 U.S. 393, 400 (2010)); *see also Gomes*, 2025 WL 1869299, at *7.

45. Section 1226 therefore leaves no doubt that it applies to people who face charges of being inadmissible to the United States, including those who are present without admission or parole.

46. By contrast, § 1225(b) applies to people arriving at U.S. ports of entry or who 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). 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).

47. Accordingly, the mandatory detention provision of § 1225(b)(2)(A) does not apply to people like Mr. Lopez Lucas, who have already entered and were residing in the United States at the time they were apprehended.

FACTS

48. Mr. Lopez Lucas has resided in the United States since 2012 and when he was not detained lived in Hyattsville, MD.

49. On or about August 18, 2025, Mr. Lopez Lucas was arrested on his way to work in his boss’ truck around a checkpoint in Takoma Park, Maryland. His vehicle was stopped and

he was subsequently taken into custody. Mr. Lopez Lucas was subsequently taken to the Ero El Paso East Montana Detention Facility, where he is currently detained.

50. DHS placed Mr. Lopez Lucas in removal proceedings pursuant to 8 U.S.C. § 1229a. ICE has charged Petitioner with, *inter alia*, being inadmissible under 8 U.S.C. § 1182(a)(6)(A)(i) as someone who entered the United States without inspection.

51. Mr. Lopez Lucas has resided continuously in the United States since 2012. He lives with his wife and their three United States citizen children and two stepchildren. He is currently employed in home remodeling and has consistently filed his taxes. Mr. Lopez Lucas works diligently to provide for and support his family. He has never been arrested in the United States. He and his family are active members of the Evangelical church. Mr. Lopez Lucas is neither a flight risk nor a danger to the community.

52. On December 16, 2025, Mr. Lopez Lucas custody redetermination hearing was denied by the El Paso Immigration Court on the basis that the court did not have jurisdiction.

53. As a result, Mr. Lopez Lucas remains in detention. Without relief from this court, he faces the prospect of months, or even years, in immigration custody, separated from his family and community. His detention creates significant and undue burden on Mr. Lopez Lucas's ability to assist in his own defense with his removal proceedings. Additionally, removal proceedings are expedited for individuals on detained dockets compared to non-detained dockets.

CLAIMS FOR RELIEF

COUNT I

Violation of the INA

54. Mr. Lopez Lucas incorporates by reference the allegations of fact set forth in the preceding paragraphs.

55. The mandatory detention provision at 8 U.S.C. § 1225(b)(2) does not apply to all noncitizens residing in the United States who are subject to the grounds of inadmissibility. As relevant here, it does not apply to those who previously entered the country and have been residing in the United States prior to being apprehended and placed in removal proceedings by Respondents. Such noncitizens are detained under § 1226(a), unless they are subject to § 1225(b)(1), § 1226(c), or § 1231.

56. The application of § 1225(b)(2) to Petitioner unlawfully mandates his continued detention and violates the INA.

COUNT II

Violation of Due Process

57. Mr. Lopez Lucas repeats, re-alleges, and incorporates by reference each and every allegation in the preceding paragraphs as if fully set forth herein.

58. The government may not deprive a person of life, liberty, or property without due process of law. U.S. Const. amend. V. “Freedom from imprisonment—from government custody, detention, or other forms of physical restraint—lies at the heart of the liberty that the Clause protects.” *Zadvydas v. Davis*, 533 U.S. 678, 690, 121 S.Ct. 2491, 150 L.Ed.2d 653 (2001).

59. Mr. Lopez Lucas has a fundamental interest in liberty and being free from official restraint.

60. The government’s detention of Mr. Lopez Lucas and argument that he is not eligible for a bond redetermination hearing to determine whether he is a flight risk or danger to others violates his right to due process.

PRAYER FOR RELIEF

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

- a. Assume jurisdiction over this matter;
- b. Order that Petitioner shall not be transferred outside the Western District of Texas while this habeas petition is pending;
- c. Issue an Order to Show Cause ordering Respondents to show cause why this Petition should not be granted within three days;
- d. Issue a Writ of Habeas Corpus requiring that Respondents release Petitioner. In the alternative, provide Petitioner with a bond hearing pursuant to 8 U.S.C. § 1226(a) within seven days, at which DHS bears the burden of proof and the immigration judge is enjoined from applying 8 U.S.C. § 1225(b)(2);
- e. Declare that Petitioner's detention is unlawful; and
- f. Grant any other and further relief that this Court deems just and proper.

DATED this 26th of January, 2026.

Respectfully submitted,

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