UNITED STATES DISTRICT COURT

DISTRICT OF NEW MEXICO

ELIDIO JOSE PENA ROJAS,
Petitioner,

v. Case No.

Mary DE ANDA-YBARRA, Field Office Acting 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; Ray CARNES, Warden of Torrance County Detention Center,
Respondents.

PETITION FOR WRIT OF HABEAS CORPUS

INTRODUCTION

1. Petitioner, Elidio Jose PENA ROJAS (A-[redacted]) is in the physical custody of Respondents at the Torrance County Processing Facility in Estancia, New Mexico. 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.

2. Petitioner is charged with, inter alia, having entered the United States without inspection. 8 U.S.C. § 1182(a)(6)(A)(i).

3. Based on this allegation in Petitioner's removal proceeding, DHS denied Petitioner 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

inspection—to be an "applicant for admission" under 8 U.S.C. § 1225(b)(2)(A) and therefore subject to mandatory detention.

4. Petitioner'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 Petitioner 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 Petitioner, are charged as inadmissible for having entered the United States without inspection.

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

6. Accordingly, Petitioner seeks a writ of habeas corpus requiring that he be released unless Respondents provide a bond hearing under § 1226(a) within fourteen days.

JURISDICTION

7. Petitioner is in physical custody of Respondents and is detained at the Torrance County Detention Facility located at 209 E Allen Ayers Rd, Estancia, NM 87016.

8. 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).

9. 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

10. Pursuant to Braden v. 30th Judicial Circuit Court of Kentucky, 410 U.S. 484, 493-500 (1973), venue lies in the United States District Court for New Mexico where Petitioner currently is detained.

11. 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 District of New Mexico.

REQUIREMENTS OF 28 U.S.C. § 2243

12. 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, the Respondents must file a return "within three days unless for good cause additional time, not exceeding twenty days, is allowed." Id.

13. 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

14. Petitioner, PENA ROJAS, born [redacted] is a citizen of Venezuela, who has been in immigration detention since December 12, 2025. After arresting Petitioner in Amarillo Texas, ICE did not set bond and Petitioner requested review of his custody by an IJ. Petitioner has resided in the United States since April 2024 and has a pending Asylum application.

15. Respondent, Mary de Anda-Ybarra, is the Director of the El Paso Field Office of ICE's Enforcement and Removal Operations division which includes all of New Mexico. As

such Mary de Anda-Ybarra is Petitioner's immediate custodian and is responsible for Petitioner's detention and removal. She is named in her official capacity.

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

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

18. 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.

19. Respondent Ray Carnes is the Warden of the Torrance County Detention Facility, where Petitioner is detained. He has immediate physical custody of Petitioner. He is sued in his official capacity.

LEGAL FRAMEWORK

REQUIREMENTS FOR DETENTION

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

21. 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).

22. 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).

23. 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).

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

25. 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).

26. 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).

27. 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. 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)).

28. 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.

29. 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 deemed "applicants for admission" under 8 U.S.C. § 1225, and therefore are 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.

30. In a May 22, 2025, unpublished decision from the Board of Immigration Appeals (BIA), EOIR adopts this same position.[2] That decision holds that all noncitizens who entered the United States without admission or parole are considered applicants for admission and are ineligible for immigration judge bond hearings.

31. ICE and EOIR have adopted this position even though federal courts have rejected this exact conclusion. For example, after IJs in the Tacoma, Washington Immigration Court stopped providing bond hearings for persons who entered the United States without inspection and who have since resided here, the U.S. District Court in the Western District of Washington found that such a reading of the INA is likely unlawful and that § 1226(a), not §1225(b), applies to noncitizens who are not apprehended upon arrival to the United States. Rodriguez Vazquez v. Bostock, --- F. Supp. 3d --- 2025 WL 1193850 (W.D. Wash. Apr. 24, 2025); see also Gomes v.

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

2 Available at https://nwirp.org/our-work/impact-litigation/assets/vazquez/59-1%20ex%20A%20decision.pdf.

Hyde, No. 1:25-CV-11571-JEK, 2025 WL 1869299, at *8 (D. Mass. July 7, 2025) (granting habeas petition based on same conclusion).

32. DHS's and DOJ's interpretation defies the INA. As the Rodriguez Vazquez court explained, the plain text of the statutory provisions demonstrates that § 1226(a), not § 1225(b), applies to people like Petitioner.

33. 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]."

34. 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, 2025 WL 1193850, at *12 (citing Shady Grove Orthopedic Assocs., P.A. v. Allstate Ins. Co., 559 U.S. 393, 400 (2010)).

35. 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.

36. 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).

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

FACTS

38. Petitioner has resided in the United States since April 2024. He has a pending Asylum application that was timely filed. He was detained by ICE, issued a Notice to Appear ("NTA") and released on Parole.

39. On December 12, 2025, Petitioner was arrested by ICE after being stopped at a checkpoint in Texas. He is now detained at the Torrance County Detention Facility.

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

41. Petitioner has resided in the United States for over a year and a half and has a pending Asylum application. He was already released by ICE on Parole in April of 2024 while his case proceeded. Petitioner has developed deep community ties during his time in the United States. He has no criminal record and has complied with all of his Immigration Proceedings to date. Petitioner is neither a flight risk nor a danger to the community.

42. Following Petitioner's arrest and transfer to the Torrance County Detention Facility, ICE issued a custody determination to continue Petitioner's detention without an opportunity to post bond or be released on other conditions.

43. On February 4, 2026, Respondent applied for a bond request. On February 11, 2025, Immigration Court denied his request.

44. As a result, Petitioner 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.

45. Petitioner was previously released from custody, and in the absence of any material change in circumstances, Respondents' decision to re-arrest and detain him without bond is arbitrary and unjustified.

46. Any appeal to the BIA is futile. DHS's new policy was issued "in coordination with DOJ," which oversees the immigration courts. Further, as noted, the most recent unpublished BIA decision on this issue held that persons like Petitioner are subject to mandatory detention as applicants for admission. Finally, in the Rodriguez Vazquez litigation, where EOIR and the Attorney General are defendants, DOJ has affirmed its position that individuals like Petitioner are applicants for admission and subject to detention under § 1225(b)(2)(A). See Mot. to Dismiss, Rodriguez Vazquez v. Bostock, No. 3:25-CV-05240-TMC (W.D. Wash. June 6, 2025), Dkt. 49 at 27–31.

CLAIMS FOR RELIEF
Count I
Violation of the INA

47. Petitioner incorporates by reference the allegations of fact set forth in the preceding paragraphs.

48. 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.

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

COUNT II

Violation of Due Process

50. Petitioner repeats, re-alleges, and incorporates by reference each and every allegation in the preceding paragraphs as if fully set forth herein.

51. 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).

52. Petitioner has a fundamental interest in liberty and being free from official restraint.

53. The government's detention of Petitioner without 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. Issue a writ of habeas corpus requiring Respondents promptly release or, if Petitioner is already released on bond and no longer in ICE custody, prompt reimbursement of all bond payment, and lift all imposed conditions of release;

c. Alternatively, issue a writ of habeas corpus requiring that Respondents release or provide Petitioner with a bond hearing pursuant to 8 U.S.C. § 1226(a) within 7 days and enjoin Respondents from denying bond under 8 U.S.C. § 1225;

d. 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;

e. Issue a limiting order barring Respondents from re-detaining Petitioner during the pendency of his immigration proceedings absent a substantial change in circumstances; and

f. Grant any other and further relief that this Court deems just and proper.

Dated: February 16, 2026.

Respectfully Submitted by:

/s/ Santiago Juarez