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IN THE UNITED STATES DISTRICT COURT
FOR THE DISTRICT OF MARYLAND

MBOCK, Ludovic Marcel)
A [REDACTED])
)
)
v.)
)
VERNON LIGGINS, Acting Director of Baltimore)
Field Office, U.S. Immigration and Customs)
Enforcement;)
)
TODD M LYONS, Acting Director, Immigration)
and Customs Enforcement;)
)
)
KRISTI NOEM, Secretary of the U.S. Department)
of Homeland Security;)
)
)
PAMELA BONDI, Attorney General of)
Of the United States)
)
Respondents.)

**PETITION FOR WRIT OF
HABEAS CORPUS**

VERIFIED PETITION FOR WRIT OF HABEAS CORPUS
PURSUANT TO 28 U.S.C. § 2241

Petitioner, Ludovic Marcel Mbock (“Petitioner”), by and through undersigned counsel, petitions this Court for a writ of habeas corpus under 28 U.S.C. § 2241 and alleges as follows:

I. INTRODUCTION

1. This is a petition for a writ of habeas corpus under 28 U.S.C. § 2241 challenging the legality of Petitioner’s present immigration detention and Respondents’ efforts to remove Petitioner from the United States and/or transfer Petitioner far from his counsel and community before he can pursue protection from removal.
2. Petitioner is currently detained by U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement (“ICE”) following his arrest at a routine ICE check-in in the Baltimore Field Office area on Tuesday, February 17, 2026. Petitioner has a long-standing removal order, which resulted from a grant of voluntary departure in 2005 (when he was a minor) that converted to a removal order when he did not depart. He now faces imminent transfer and removal, despite having a well-founded fear of persecution and torture in Cameroon on account of his sexual orientation and his intended motion to reopen his removal proceedings.
3. Petitioner is an openly gay man from Cameroon. Conditions for Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, or Queer (LGBTQ) individuals in Cameroon have materially worsened since his 2005 proceedings, including criminalization of same-sex conduct, targeted violence, and lack of effective state protection. These changed country conditions and new evidence regarding his sexual orientation form the basis for his motion to reopen and his claims for asylum, withholding of removal, and protection under the Convention Against Torture (“CAT”).
4. This Petition seeks (a) immediate injunctive relief preventing Respondents from removing or transferring Petitioner out of this District; (b) an order requiring Respondents to maintain

Petitioner within the jurisdiction of this Court with access to counsel while his motion to reopen and related proceedings are pending; (c) an order declaring his continued detention unlawful and requiring his release or, in the alternative, a constitutionally adequate custody hearing; and (d) such further relief as this Court deems just and proper.

5. As in other habeas matters involving ICE detainees challenging the legality of their detention and the risk of transfer or removal, Petitioner is “in custody” for purposes of § 2241 because he is arrested and detained by Respondents and is subject to an active removal order whose execution is imminent.

II. JURISDICTION AND VENUE

6. This Court has jurisdiction under 28 U.S.C. § 2241 because Petitioner is in custody under the authority of the United States and challenges the legality of that custody and actions taken in connection therewith.
7. This Court also has jurisdiction under 28 U.S.C. § 1331 because this action arises under the Constitution, laws, and treaties of the United States, including the Immigration and Nationality Act (“INA”) and the regulations implementing CAT.
8. This Court has authority under 28 U.S.C. § 2243 to grant the writ and to order such relief as law and justice require, including injunctive relief necessary to protect its jurisdiction and to prevent unlawful detention and removal.
9. Venue is proper in this District under 28 U.S.C. § 1391(e) and § 2241 because Petitioner is detained in this District, a substantial part of the events or omissions giving rise to the claims occurred here, and Respondent Liggins, Petitioner’s immediate custodian, performs his official duties in this District.

10. Petitioner does not seek review of the underlying 2005 removal order or a grant of asylum, withholding, or CAT relief from this Court. Rather, Petitioner challenges the legality of his present detention and Respondents' actions that would deprive him of a meaningful opportunity to invoke statutory mechanisms—such as a motion to reopen and stay of removal—and to seek protection from persecution and torture, as well as to access this Court's habeas jurisdiction. Accordingly, this Petition is not barred by 8 U.S.C. § 1252(a)(5) or (b)(9).

III. PARTIES

11. Petitioner is a native and citizen of Cameroon currently detained by ICE at the Baltimore Immigration and Customs Holding Facility located at 31 Hopkins Plaza, Baltimore, Maryland. The facility is within the District of Maryland. Petitioner is “in custody” for purposes of § 2241 because he is arrested and detained by Respondents.

12. Respondent Vernon Liggins is the Field Office Director of ICE Enforcement and Removal Operations (“ERO”) in Baltimore, Maryland, and is Petitioner's immediate custodian. He has authority over Petitioner's detention and removal within this District. He is sued in his official capacity.

13. Respondent Todd M. Lyons is the Acting Director of ICE. He has supervisory authority over ICE detention and removal operations nationwide. He is sued in his official capacity.

14. Respondent Kristi Noem is the Secretary of the U.S. Department of Homeland Security (“DHS”). DHS is the agency responsible for enforcing the immigration laws and overseeing ICE. The Secretary is sued in her official capacity.

15. Respondent Pamela Bondi is the Attorney General of the United States. The Attorney General oversees immigration adjudications by the Executive Office for Immigration

Review (“EOIR”) and has ultimate responsibility for enforcement of the immigration laws.

The Attorney General is sued in his/her official capacity.

IV. FACTUAL ALLEGATIONS

16. Petitioner is a citizen of Cameroon who has resided in the United States for many years. In or about 2005, Petitioner was placed in removal proceedings and granted voluntary departure. When he was unable to depart, that grant converted to a final order of removal against him.
17. Since the issuance of the removal order, Petitioner has remained in the United States. He has complied with ICE supervision requirements, including attending scheduled check-ins at the Baltimore Field Office.
18. On February 17, 2026, Petitioner appeared for a routine ICE check-in at the Baltimore Field Office. Without prior warning, ICE officers arrested him and placed him in custody at the Baltimore Immigration and Customs Holding Facility at 31 Hopkins Plaza.
19. ICE did not provide Petitioner with a meaningful explanation of the statutory basis for his detention, nor has he been afforded a bond or custody determination hearing before an immigration judge or other neutral decisionmaker with authority to order his release.
20. Petitioner is an openly gay man. Since his 2005 removal proceedings, country conditions in Cameroon for LGBTQ persons, including gay men, have materially worsened. Same-sex conduct remains criminalized, and LGBTQ individuals face arrest, physical violence, extortion, and social persecution, often with little or no protection from the authorities.
21. Based on these materially changed country conditions and new, previously unavailable evidence concerning his sexual orientation and risk of harm, Petitioner has prepared and is filing with the Immigration Court) a motion to reopen his removal proceedings, together

with an application for asylum, withholding of removal under 8 U.S.C. § 1231(b)(3), and protection under the CAT regulations, and a request for a stay of removal.

22. Unless this Court intervenes, Respondents' actions will (a) deprive Petitioner of his statutory right to file and have adjudicated a motion to reopen based on changed country conditions and (b) expose him to a significant risk of persecution and torture in violation of U.S. law.
23. Upon information and belief, Respondents intend to effectuate Petitioner's removal on an expedited basis and/or to transfer him to a distant detention facility outside the District of Maryland, thereby frustrating his access to counsel and to this Court and undermining the pending or imminent motion to reopen and stay request.

CLAIMS FOR RELIEF

COUNT I – UNLAWFUL DETENTION

(Violation of 8 U.S.C. §§ 1226/1231 and the Due Process Clause)

24. Petitioner realleges and incorporates by reference paragraphs 1–23 as though fully set forth herein.
25. Petitioner's current detention violates the INA and the Due Process Clause of the Fifth Amendment. Petitioner was taken into custody abruptly at a routine ICE check-in, without adequate explanation of the statutory authority for his detention and without a meaningful opportunity for release or bond review, unlike similarly situated detainees whose prolonged or arbitrary detention has been found unlawful under § 2241.
26. To the extent Respondents purport to detain Petitioner under 8 U.S.C. § 1226, he is entitled to a prompt, individualized bond hearing before a neutral decisionmaker, at which the

government bears the burden of justifying continued detention by clear and convincing evidence and consideration is given to less restrictive alternatives.

27. To the extent Respondents purport to detain Petitioner under 8 U.S.C. § 1231, his detention must be reasonably related to effectuating removal and cannot be indefinite or arbitrary. Here, Respondents' actions are directed not toward the orderly execution of a removal order, but toward rushing removal before Petitioner's lawful statutory and treaty-based claims can be adjudicated, rendering his detention arbitrary and not reasonably related to its purported purpose.
28. Under *Zadvydas v. Davis*, 533 U.S. 678 (2001), and due process principles, immigration detention must bear a reasonable relation to the government's legitimate objectives and cannot be prolonged or imposed arbitrarily. Respondents' detention of Petitioner in these circumstances violates the INA and the Due Process Clause.

**COUNT II – INTERFERENCE WITH STATUTORY RIGHTS AND
NON-REFOULEMENT OBLIGATIONS**
(Violation of 8 U.S.C. §§ 1229a(c)(7), 1231(b)(3), CAT Regulations, and Due Process)

29. Petitioner realleges and incorporates by reference paragraphs 1–28 as though fully set forth herein.
30. Under 8 U.S.C. § 1229a(c)(7), Petitioner has a statutory right to seek reopening of his removal proceedings, including through a motion based on changed country conditions that is exempt from the usual 90-day filing deadline. See 8 U.S.C. § 1229a(c)(7)(C)(ii).
31. Under 8 U.S.C. § 1231(b)(3) and the regulations implementing the Convention Against Torture, see 8 C.F.R. §§ 208.16–208.18, 1208.16–1208.18, the United States is prohibited from removing individuals to countries where their life or freedom would be threatened on a protected ground or where they would likely be tortured.

32. . By seeking to remove Petitioner quickly based on an order entered nearly twenty years ago, without allowing him a fair opportunity to file and have adjudicated a motion to reopen based on new and materially changed conditions in Cameroon concerning persecution of gay men, Respondents are unlawfully circumventing these statutory and treaty-based protections and effectively nullifying his right to seek reopening.
33. Removal under these circumstances—before Petitioner’s motion to reopen, associated stay request, and fear-based protection claims can be meaningfully adjudicated—would violate the INA, the CAT regulations, and the Due Process Clause of the Fifth Amendment.

COUNT III – VIOLATION OF PROCEDURAL DUE PROCESS
(Denial of Notice, Opportunity to Be Heard, and Access to Counsel and Courts)

34. Petitioner realleges and incorporates by reference paragraphs 1–33 as though fully set forth herein.
35. The Fifth Amendment’s Due Process Clause guarantees noncitizens in removal proceedings—and those subject to final orders of removal—a fair procedure, including adequate notice and a meaningful opportunity to be heard, at a meaningful time and in a meaningful manner, before being deprived of liberty or returned to a place of persecution or torture.
36. Respondents have violated and threaten to continue violating Petitioner’s procedural due process rights by:
- a. Detaining him without clear notice of the statutory basis for his custody and without providing any meaningful opportunity to be heard regarding his detention or potential release;

- b. Failing to provide adequate notice and opportunity to pursue a motion to reopen and stay of removal before executing his removal order; and
 - c. Planning to transfer or remove him in a manner that would effectively deny him meaningful access to counsel and to the courts—including this Court’s habeas jurisdiction and the immigration courts’ reopening process—as other courts have found improper in similar habeas and TRO contexts involving immigration detainees.
37. These actions constitute arbitrary and capricious government conduct and violate Petitioner’s procedural due process rights under the Fifth Amendment.

PRAYER FOR RELIEF

WHEREFORE, Petitioner respectfully requests that this Court:

- A. Assume jurisdiction over this matter;
- B. Issue a writ of habeas corpus directing Respondents to show cause why Petitioner’s detention and planned removal should not be declared unlawful;
- C. Order Respondents to refrain from removing Petitioner from the United States or transferring him outside the District of Maryland (or beyond the Baltimore ICE Field Office area) while his motion to reopen and any related administrative proceedings, including any associated stay-of-removal requests, are pending;
- D. Order Respondents to release Petitioner from custody forthwith, or in the alternative, to provide a constitutionally adequate custody hearing before a neutral decisionmaker with authority to order release, at which the government bears the burden, by clear and convincing evidence, to justify continued detention and to show that no less restrictive alternatives would suffice;

- E. Grant such temporary, preliminary, and permanent injunctive relief as may be necessary to protect Petitioner's statutory and constitutional rights, including but not limited to preserving this Court's jurisdiction and Petitioner's access to counsel and to the courts; and
- F. Grant such other and further relief as the Court deems just and proper.

Respectfully submitted,

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VERIFICATION PURSUANT TO 28 U.S.C. § 2242

I represent Petitioner, Ludovic Marcel Mbock, and submit this verification on his behalf. I hereby 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.

Dated this 19th day of February 2026.

/s/ Edward W. Neufville, III
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Attorney for Petitioner

CERTIFICATE OF SERVICE

I, Edward W. Neufville, III, hereby declare that, pursuant to Federal Rule of Civil Procedure 4(i), on February 19, 2026, I caused to be served the following documents in the above-captioned matter:

- Petition for Writ of Habeas Corpus; Emergency Motion for Temporary Restraining Order and/or Preliminary Injunction; Application for Order to Show Cause; and
- Civil Cover Sheet

I caused the aforementioned documents to be served by USPS certified mail, return receipt requested, at the following addresses:

U.S. Attorney's Office
36 S. Charles Street 4th Floor
Baltimore, MD 21201

Vernon Liggins, Acting Director
Department of Homeland Security
Immigration and Customs Enforcement ERO
Baltimore Field Office
31 Hopkins Plaza, 6th Floor
Baltimore, Maryland 21201

Todd Lyons, Acting Director
Acting Director
Immigration and Customs Enforcement
500 12th Street SW
Washington, DC, 20536

Kristi Noem, Secretary of Homeland Security
Office of General Counsel
U.S. Department of Homeland Security 277
245 Murray Lane, SW
Mail Stop 0485
Washington, DC 20528-0485

Pamela Jo Bondi, Attorney General
U.S. Department of Justice
950 Pennsylvania Avenue, NW
Washington, DC 20530-0001

I declare under penalty of perjury under the laws of the United States of America that the foregoing is true and correct. Executed on September 19, 2026, at Silver Spring, Maryland.

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Dated: September 19, 2026