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**UNITED STATES DISTRICT COURT
MIDDLE DISTRICT OF GEORGIA
COLUMBUS DIVISION**

JOHNNY ALEXANDER ROSTRAN ESPINOZA,

Petitioner,

v.

JASON STREEVAL, Warden of Stewart Detention Center; KRISTEN SULLIVAN, Field Office Director of Enforcement and Removal Operations, Atlanta Field Office, Immigration and Customs Enforcement; TODD M. LYONS, Acting Director, U.S. Immigrations & Customs Enforcement; KRISTI NOEM, Secretary, U.S. Department of Homeland Security; U.S. Department of Homeland Security; PAMELA BONDI, U.S. Attorney General; and DAREN K. MARGOLIN, Director, Executive Office for Immigration Review,

Respondents.

Case No.:

**VERIFIED PETITION
FOR WRIT OF
HABEAS CORPUS
UNDER 28 U.S.C. § 2241**

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INTRODUCTION

1. Petitioner, Johnny Alexander Rostran Espinoza, brings this petition for a writ of habeas corpus to seek enforcement of Petitioner’s rights as a member of the Bond Eligible Class certified in *Maldonado Bautista v. Santacruz*, No. 5:25-CV-01873-SSS-BFM (C.D. Cal.).

Petitioner is in the physical custody of Respondents at the Stewart Detention Center in Lumpkin, Georgia. Petitioner now faces unlawful detention because the Department of Homeland Security (DHS) and the Executive Office for Immigration Review (EOIR) have refused to abide by the declaratory judgment issued on behalf of the certified class in *Maldonado Bautista v. Santacruz*.

2. On November 20, 2025, the district court granted partial summary judgment on behalf of individual plaintiffs and on November 25, 2025, certified a nationwide class and extended declaratory judgment to the certified class. *Maldonado Bautista v. Santacruz*, No. 5:25-CV-01873-SSS-BFM, --- F. Supp. 3d ----, 2025 WL 3289861, at *11 (C.D. Cal. Nov. 20, 2025) (order granting partial summary judgment to named Plaintiffs-Petitioners); *Maldonado Bautista v. Santacruz*, No. 5:25-CV-01873-SSS-BFM, --- F. Supp. 3d ----, 2025 WL 3288403, at *9 (C.D. Cal. Nov. 25, 2025) (order certifying Plaintiffs-Petitioners’ proposed nationwide Bond Eligible Class, incorporating and extending declaratory judgment from Order Granting Petitioners’ Motion for Partial Summary Judgment).

3. The declaratory judgment held that the Bond Eligible Class members are detained under 8 U.S.C. § 1226(a), and thus may not be denied consideration for release on bond under § 1225(b)(2)(A). *Maldonado Bautista*, 2025 WL 3289861, at *11.

1 4. Nonetheless, the Executive Office for Immigration Review and its subagency the
2 Immigration Court and the Department of Homeland Security (DHS) have blatantly refused to
3 abide by the declaratory relief and have unlawfully ordered that Petitioner be denied the
4 opportunity to be released on bond.

5 5. Petitioner is a member of the Bond Eligible Class, as Petitioner:

6 a. does not have lawful status in the United States and is currently detained
7 at the Stewart Detention Center in Lumpkin, Georgia;

8 b. was apprehended by immigration authorities on or about February 05,
9 2026;

10 c. entered the United States without being inspected and admitted or paroled,
11 approximately 2 years ago, *cf. id.*; and

12 d. is not detained under 8 U.S.C. § 1226(c), § 1225(b)(1), or § 1231.

13 6. After apprehending Petitioner on or about February 05, 2026, the DHS placed
14 Petitioner in removal proceedings pursuant to 8 U.S.C. § 1229a. DHS has charged Petitioner as
15 being inadmissible under 8 U.S.C. §§ 1182(a)(6)(A)(i) and 1182(a)(7)(A)(i)(I), as someone who
16 entered the United States without inspection.
17

18 7. The Court should expeditiously grant this petition.

19 8. Respondents are bound by the judgment in *Maldonado Bautista*, as it has the full
20 “force and effect of a final judgment.” 28 U.S.C. § 2201(a). Nevertheless, Respondents continue
21 to flagrantly defy the judgment in that case and continue to subject Petitioner to unlawful
22 detention despite Petitioner’s clear entitlement to consideration for release on bond as a Bond
23 Eligible Class member.
24

1 9. Immigration judges have informed class members in bond hearings that they have
2 been instructed by “leadership” that the declaratory judgment in *Maldonado Bautista* is not
3 controlling, even with respect to class members, and that instead immigration judges remain
4 bound to follow the agency’s prior decision in *Matter of Yajure Hurtado*, 29 I. & N. Dec. 216
5 (BIA 2025).

6 10. Because Respondents are detaining Petitioner in violation of the declaratory
7 judgment issued in *Maldonado Bautista*, the Court should accordingly order that within one day,
8 Respondent DHS must release Petitioner.

9 11. Alternatively, the Court should order Petitioner’s release unless Respondents
10 provide a bond hearing under 8 U.S.C. § 1226(a) within seven days.

11
12 **JURISDICTION**

13 12. Petitioner is in the physical custody of Respondents. Petitioner is detained at the
14 Stewart Detention Center in Lumpkin, Georgia.

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

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

1 **VENUE**

2 15. Pursuant to *Braden v. 30th Judicial Circuit Court of Kentucky*, 410 U.S. 484, 493-
3 500 (1973), venue lies in the United States District Court for the Middle District of Georgia, the
4 judicial district in which Petitioner currently is detained.

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

9
10 **REQUIREMENTS OF 28 U.S.C. § 2243**

11 17. The Court should grant the petition for writ of habeas corpus “forthwith,” as the
12 legal issues have already been resolved for class members in *Maldonado Bautista*.

13 18. Habeas corpus is “perhaps the most important writ known to the constitutional
14 law . . . affording as it does a *swift* and imperative remedy in all cases of illegal restraint or
15 confinement.” *Fay v. Noia*, 372 U.S. 391, 400 (1963) (emphasis added). “The application for the
16 writ usurps the attention and displaces the calendar of the judge or justice who entertains it and
17 receives prompt action from him within the four corners of the application.” *Yong v. I.N.S.*, 208
18 F.3d 1116, 1120 (9th Cir. 2000) (citation omitted).

19
20 **PARTIES**

21 19. Petitioner is a citizen of Nicaragua who has been in immigration detention since
22 on or about February 5, 2026. After Petitioner was detained by ICE, ICE did not set bond.
23 Petitioner has resided in the United States since 2024.

1 20. Respondent Jason Streeval is Warden of the Stewart Detention Center, where
2 Petitioner is detained. Respondent Streeval has immediate physical custody of Petitioner and he
3 is sued in his official capacity.

4 21. Respondent Kristen Sullivan is the Acting Director of the Atlanta Field Office of
5 ICE's Enforcement and Removal Operations division. As such, she is a legal custodian of
6 Petitioner, is responsible for Petitioner's detention and removal, and has authority to release her.
7 She is named in her official capacity.

8 22. Respondent Todd M. Lyons is the Acting Director of ICE, which is the federal
9 agency responsible for implementing and enforcing the INA, including the detention and
10 removal of noncitizens. Respondent Lyons has control over the actions of Respondent Sullivan
11 and ICE in general. Respondent Lyons is a legal custodian of Petitioner and is sued in his official
12 capacity.

13 23. Respondent Kristi Noem is the Secretary of the Department of Homeland
14 Security. She is responsible for the implementation and enforcement of the Immigration and
15 Nationality Act (INA), and oversees ICE, which is responsible for Petitioner's detention. Ms.
16 Noem has ultimate custodial authority over Petitioner and is sued in her official capacity.

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

20 25. Respondent Pamela Bondi is the Attorney General of the United States. She is
21 responsible for the Department of Justice, of which the Executive Office for Immigration Review
22 and the immigration court system it operates is a component agency. She is sued in her official
23 capacity.

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

4 27. Respondent Daren K. Margolin is the Director of EOIR, which is the federal
5 agency responsible for implementing and enforcing the INA in removal proceedings, including
6 for custody redeterminations in bond hearings. Respondent Margolin is sued in his official
7 capacity.

8
9 **CLAIM FOR RELIEF**

10 **Violation of the INA:**

11 **Request for Relief Pursuant to *Maldonado Bautista***

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

14 29. As a member of the Bond Eligible Class, Petitioner is entitled to consideration for
15 release on bond under 8 U.S.C. § 1226(a).

16 30. The order granting partial summary judgment in *Maldonado Bautista* holds that
17 Respondents violate the INA in applying the mandatory detention statute at § 1225(b)(2) to class
18 members.

19 31. The order granting class certification in *Maldonado Bautista* further orders that
20 “[w]hen considering this determination with the MSJ Order, the Court extends the same
21 declaratory relief granted to Petitioners to the Bond Eligible Class as a whole.”
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1 e. Grant any other and further relief that this Court deems just and proper.
2

3 DATED this 26 of February 2026.
4

//s// Elizabeth Hildebrand Matherne

5 _____
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Attorney for Petitioner
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1 VERIFICATION PURSUANT TO 28 U.S.C. § 2242

2 I represent Petitioner, Johnny Alexander Rostran Espinoza, and submit this verification
3 on Petitioner's behalf. I verify that the factual statements made in the foregoing Petition for Writ
4 of Habeas Corpus are true and correct to the best of my knowledge.

5 Dated this 26 of February 2026.

6
7 Respectfully submitted,

8 *//s// Elizabeth Hildebrand Matherne*

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