

UNITED STATES DISTRICT COURT
SOUTHERN DISTRICT OF GEORGIA
WAYCROSS DIVISION

ESTEBAN NOE CASTRO CHEVEZ,

A# 

Petitioner,

v.

Warden of Folkston ICE Processing Center (Annex)
in their official capacity; 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

INTRODUCTION

1
2 1. Petitioner, Esteban Noe Castro Chevez, brings this petition for a writ of habeas
3 corpus to seek enforcement of Petitioner's rights as a member of the Bond Eligible Class
4 certified in *Maldonado Bautista v. Santacruz*, No. 5:25-CV-01873-SSS-BFM (C.D. Cal.).
5 Petitioner is in the physical custody of Respondents at the Folkston Processing Center in
6 Folkston, Georgia. Petitioner now faces unlawful detention because the Department of
7 Homeland Security (DHS) and the Executive Office for Immigration Review (EOIR) have
8 refused to abide by the declaratory judgment issued on behalf of the certified class in *Maldonado*
9 *Bautista v. Santacruz*.

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

19 3. The declaratory judgment held that the Bond Eligible Class members are detained
20 under 8 U.S.C. § 1226(a), and thus may not be denied consideration for release on bond under §
21 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 Folkston ICE Processing Center in Folkston, Georgia;

8 b. was apprehended by immigration authorities on or about January 27,
9 2026;

10 c. entered the United States without being inspected and admitted or paroled,
11 approximately 5 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 January 29, 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 7. The Court should expeditiously grant this petition.

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

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

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

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

JURISDICTION

12. Petitioner is in the physical custody of Respondents. Petitioner is detained at the Folkston Processing Center (Annex) in Folkston, Georgia.

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.

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 Southern District of Georgia,
4 the 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 Southern
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 Honduras who has been in immigration detention since
22 on or about January 27, 2026. After Petitioner was detained by ICE, ICE did not set bond.
23 Petitioner has resided in the United States since 2021.

1 20. Respondent Warden of the Folkston ICE Processing Center (Annex), where Petitioner is
2 detained. The Warden of the Folkston ICE Processing Center (Annex) has immediate physical
3 custody of Petitioner. The Warden of the Folkston ICE Processing Center (Annex) is sued in the
4 Warden's official capacity.

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

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

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

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

21 25. Respondent Pamela Bondi is the Attorney General of the United States. She is
22 responsible for the Department of Justice, of which the Executive Office for Immigration Review
23
24

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

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

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

10
11 **CLAIM FOR RELIEF**

12 **Violation of the INA:**

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

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

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

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

21 31. The order granting class certification in *Maldonado Bautista* further orders that
22 “[w]hen considering this determination with the MSJ Order, the Court extends the same
23 declaratory relief granted to Petitioners to the Bond Eligible Class as a whole.”
24

1 32. Respondents are parties to *Maldonado Bautista* and bound by the Court's
2 declaratory judgment, which has the full "force and effect of a final judgment." 28 U.S.C.
3 § 2201(a).

4 33. By denying Petitioner a bond hearing under § 1226(a) and asserting that Petitioner
5 is subject to mandatory detention under § 1225(b)(2), Respondents violate Petitioner's statutory
6 rights under the INA and the Court's judgment in *Maldonado Bautista*.

7 34. Assuming, *arguendo*, that *Maldonado Bautista* does not apply, find that Petitioner
8 is currently detained under § 1226(a) and therefore not subject to mandatory detention as
9 required by § 1225(b)(2). *See J.A.M. v. Streeval*, No. 4:25-CV-342-CDL, 2025 WL 3050094
10 (M.D. Ga. Nov. 1, 2025); *P.R.S. v. Streeval*, No. 4:25-CV-330-CDL, 2025 WL 3269947 (M.D.
11 Ga. Nov. 24, 2025).

12
13 **PRAYER FOR RELIEF**

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

- 15 a. Assume jurisdiction over this matter;
- 16 b. Issue a writ of habeas corpus requiring that within one day, Respondents release
17 Petitioner;
- 18 c. Alternatively, issue a writ of habeas corpus requiring Respondents to release
19 Petitioner unless they provide a bond hearing under 8 U.S.C. § 1226(a) within
20 seven days;
- 21 d. Award Petitioner attorney's fees and costs under the Equal Access to Justice Act
22 (EAJA), as amended, 28 U.S.C. § 2412, and on any other basis justified under
23 law; and
- 24

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

2
3 DATED this 18th of March 2026.

4 *//s// Elizabeth Hildebrand Matherne*

5 _____
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10 *Attorney for Petitioner*

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

I represent Petitioner, Esteban Noe Casto Chevez, and submit this verification on
Petitioner's behalf. I 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 18th of March 2026.

Respectfully submitted,

//s// Elizabeth Hildebrand Matherne

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