Camille Fenton
Federal Defenders of San Diego, Inc.
225 Broadway, Suite 900
San Diego, California 92101-5030
Telephone: (619) 234-8467
Facsimile: (619) 687-2666
camille_fenton@fd.org

Attorneys for Mr. Yousafzai

UNITED STATES DISTRICT COURT
SOUTHERN DISTRICT OF CALIFORNIA

MOHAMMAD IMRAN YOUSAFZAI, Petitioner, v. MARKWAYNE MULLIN, Secretary of the Department of Homeland Security, PAMELA JO BONDI, Attorney General, TODD M. LYONS, Acting Director, Immigration and Customs Enforcement, JESUS ROCHA, Acting Field Office Director, San Diego Field Office, CHRISTOPHER LAROSE, Warden at Otay Mesa Detention Center, Respondents.	CIVIL CASE NO.: 26-cv-1745-BAS **Traverse in Support of Petition for Writ of Habeas Corpus**

INTRODUCTION

When Mohammad Imran Yousafzai filed his amended habeas petition, Respondents had informed undersigned counsel that his voluntary departure order had not converted into a final removal order. Accordingly, Mr. Yousafzai argued that his detention in immigration custody has been unduly prolonged in violation of the Due Process Clause of the Fifth Amendment. *See* Amended Habeas Petition, ECF No. 8. In Respondents' return, they assert that Mr. Yousafzai's voluntary departure order converted to a final removal order on February 25, 2026, the day

France declined to issue travel documents, instead of December 24, 2025, the day set forth in the immigration judge ("IJ") order. Gov. Return at 1–2, ECF No. 10. However, Respondents provide no evidence that ICE ERO did in fact obtain an extension, nor do they share any evidence of the length of that extension. Respondents provide no evidence of the new date that the final removal order was set to issue under this alleged extension. Respondents cannot arbitrarily use the date that France declined Mr. Yousafzai's travel as the date of the final removal order.

Given this absence of evidence, Mr. Yousafzai's removal order became final on December 24, 2025. *See* IJ Order, ECF No. 10-2. This means the 90 days that Mr. Yousafzai must be detained following the final removal order have already run, and he is four months into the six-month *Zadvydas* period. And because "there is no significant likelihood of removal in the reasonably foreseeable future," Mr. Yousafzai must be released. *Zadvydas v Davis*, 533 U.S. 678 (2001). France has refused to accept him and the Taliban-led government of Afghanistan refuses to cooperate with the United States and is likely not "even accepting the return of Afghan nationals from the United States." *Samir v. Wolf*, No. 25-CV-01397, 2026 WL 817240, at *2 (W.D. La. Mar. 2, 2026).

Thus, because "there is no significant likelihood of removal in the reasonably foreseeable future," Mr. Yousafzai's detention is no longer statutorily authorized, and this Court must order his immediate release. *Zadvydas v. Davis*, 533 U.S. 678 (2001). That holds true even though Mr. Yousafzai has been detained for less than six months following his final removal order. **Many courts have held that *Zadvydas*'s six-month presumptively reasonable removal period is "just that—a presumption," which can be rebutted with sufficiently compelling evidence.** *Hoang Trinh v. Homan*, 333 F. Supp. 3d 984, 994 (C.D. Cal. 2018); *see also Cruz Medina v. Noem*, No. 25-CV-1768-ABA, 2025 WL 2306274, at *7 n.5 (D. Md. Aug. 11, 2025); *Munoz-Saucedo v. Pittman*, 789 F. Supp. 3d 387, 397 (D.N.J. 2025); *Zavvar v. Scott*, No. CV 25-2104-TDC, 2025 WL 2592543, at *5 (D. Md.

Sept. 8, 2025); *Sweid v. Cantu*, No. CV-25-03590-PHX-DWL (CDB), 2025 WL 3033655, at *3 (D. Ariz. Oct. 30, 2025); *Puertas Mendoza v. Bondi*, No. SA-25-CA-00890-XR, 2025 WL 3142089, at *2 (W.D. Tex. Oct. 22, 2025); *Jimenez v. Cronen*, 317 F. Supp. 3d 626, 641 n.6 (D. Mass. 2018); *Ali v Dep't of Homeland Sec* , 451 F. Supp. 3d 703, 707 (S.D. Tex. 2020); *Villanueva v. Tate*, No. CV H-25-3364, 2025 WL 2774610, at *9 (S.D. Tex. Sept. 26, 2025); *Douglas v Baker*, No. 25-CV-2243-ABA, 2025 WL 2687354, at *3 (D. Md. Sept. 19, 2025); *Jamal v. Sessions*, No. 5:18-06015-CV-RK, 2018 WL 1440609, at *2 (W.D. Mo. Mar. 22, 2018); *Cesar v. Achim*, 542 F. Supp. 2d 897, 902 (E.D. Wis. 2008).

STATEMENT OF FACTS

I. ICE has made no apparent progress in removing Mr. Yousafzai to Afghanistan.

Mr. Yousafzai was born in Afghanistan. Immigration Att'y Decl. at ¶ 2, ECF No. 8. On November 24, 2025, the IJ granted Mr. Yousafzai voluntary departure under safeguards to France, or if France refuses to accept him, Afghanistan. *Id.* at ¶ 6. The IJ's order became final on December 24, 2025. *See* IJ Order, ECF No. 10-2. On February 25, 2026, France refused to issue travel documents for Mr. Yousafzai. Gov. Return at 1–2. Neither ICE nor the French Embassy in Washington D.C. will explain to Mr. Yousafzai's immigration attorney why France refuses to accept him. Immigration Att'y Decl. at ¶ 7. Respondents also offer no explanation for the significant, three-month delay in obtaining a response from France regarding the travel documents.

Since France has refused to accept Mr. Yousafzai, Respondents are now responsible for removing him to Afghanistan, but they have not and will not make any progress in doing so. Respondents do not even attempt to outline any progress in obtaining Afghanistan's acceptance of Mr. Yousafzai's removal. *See generally* Gov. Return. And there is good reason to think that ICE will not be able to secure that acceptance. The country is in turmoil under Taliban rule, which began after the

United States withdrawal of troops in 2021. Kim, *Trump administration ends temporary protected status for thousands of Afghans*, NPR (Apr. 11, 2025).[1] And the United States does not recognize the Taliban or any other entity as the government of Afghanistan and "reports there are no U.S. or diplomatic or military personnel in the country." *Afghanistan. Background and U.S. Policy in Brief*, Congress.gov (Mar. 10, 2026).[2] The United States embassy in Kabul suspended all operations in 2021 and the Afghan Embassy in Washington D.C. and its consulates in New York and Los Angeles ceased operations in March 2022. *Afghanistan*, Travel.State.Gov (Apr. 15, 2026)[3]; Lee, *U.S. takes control of Afghan embassy, consulates in NY, CA*, Associated Press (May 17, 2022).[4] Thus, it is unlikely "that Afghanistan is even accepting the return of Afghan nationals from the United States." *Samir*, 2026 WL 817240, at *2.

II. The government is carrying out deportations to third countries without providing sufficient notice and opportunity to be heard.

If ICE cannot successfully remove Mr. Yousafzai to Afghanistan, ICE may attempt to remove him to a third country. If so, he is in grave danger of removal without due process.

The Trump administration reportedly has negotiated with at least 58 countries to accept deportees from other nations. Edward Wong et al, *Inside the Global Deal-Making Behind Trump's Mass Deportations*, N.Y. Times, June 25, 2025. On June 25, 2025, the New York Times reported that seven countries—Costa

---

[1] Available at https://www.npr.org/2025/04/11/g-s1-59939/trump-afghanistan-tps-kristi-noem-dhs#:~:text=Trump%20freeze%20on%20resettlement%20funding,York%20Times%20reported%20on%20Friday.

[2] Available at https://www.congress.gov/crs-product/R45122.

[3] Available at https://travel.state.gov/en/international-travel/travel-advisories/afghanistan.html.

[4] Available at https://apnews.com/article/afghanistan-government-and-politics-united-states-taliban-d27a667b6b8c763eb33cb3a133f5ec45.

Rica, El Salvador, Guatemala, Kosovo, Mexico, Panama, and Rwanda—had agreed to accept deportees who are not their own citizens. *Id.* Since then, ICE has carried out highly publicized third country deportations to South Sudan and Eswatini.

The Administration has reportedly negotiated with countries to have many of these deportees imprisoned in prisons, camps, or other facilities. The government paid El Salvador about $5 million to imprison more than 200 deported Venezuelans in a maximum-security prison notorious for gross human rights abuses, known as CECOT. *See id.* In February, Panama and Costa Rica took in hundreds of deportees from countries in Africa and Central Asia and imprisoned them in hotels, a jungle camp, and a detention center. *Id.*; Vanessa Buschschluter, *Costa Rican court orders release of migrants deported from U.S.*, BBC (Jun. 25, 2025). On July 4, 2025, ICE deported eight men, including one pre-1995 Vietnamese refugee, to South Sudan. *See* Wong, *supra*. On July 15, ICE deported five men to the tiny African nation of Eswatini, including one man from Vietnam, where they are reportedly being held in solitary confinement. Gerald Imray, *3 Deported by US held in African Prison Despite Completing Sentences, Lawyers Say*, PBS (Sept. 2, 2025). Many of these countries are known for human rights abuses or instability. For instance, conditions in South Sudan are so extreme that the U.S. State Department website warns Americans not to travel there, and if they do, to prepare their will, make funeral arrangements, and appoint a hostage-taker negotiator first. *See* Wong, *supra*.

On June 23 and July 3, 2025, the Supreme Court issued a stay of a national class-wide preliminary injunction issued in *D.V.D. v. U.S Department of Homeland Security*, No. CV 25-10676-BEM, 2025 WL 1142968, at *1, 3 (D. Mass. Apr. 18, 2025), which required ICE to follow statutory and constitutional requirements before removing an individual to a third country. *U.S. Dep't of Homeland Sec v. D.V.D.*, 145 S. Ct. 2153 (2025) (mem.); *id.*, No. 24A1153, 2025

WL 1832186 (U.S. July 3, 2025).[5] On July 9, 2025, ICE rescinded previous guidance meant to give immigrants a "'meaningful opportunity' to assert claims for protection under the Convention Against Torture (CAT) before initiating removal to a third country" like the ones just described. Exhibit B.

Under the new guidance, ICE may remove any immigrant to a third country "without the need for further procedures," as long as—in the view of the State Department—the United States has received "credible" "assurances" from that country that deportees will not be persecuted or tortured. *Id.* at 1. If a country fails to credibly promise not to persecute or torture releasees, ICE may still remove immigrants there with minimal notice. *Id.* Ordinarily, ICE must provide 24 hours' notice. But "[i]n exigent circumstances," a removal may take place in as little as six hours, "as long as the alien is provided reasonably means and opportunity to speak with an attorney prior to the removal." *Id.*

Upon serving notice, ICE "will not affirmatively ask whether the alien is afraid of being removed to the country of removal." *Id.* (emphasis original). If the noncitizen "does not affirmatively state a fear of persecution or torture if removed to the country of removal listed on the Notice of Removal within 24 hours, [ICE] may proceed with removal to the country identified on the notice." *Id.* at 2. If the noncitizen "does affirmatively state a fear if removed to the country of removal" then ICE will refer the case to U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services ("USCIS") for a screening for eligibility for withholding of removal and protection

---

[5] Though the Supreme Court's order was unreasoned, the dissent noted that the government had sought a stay based on procedural arguments applicable only to class actions. *Dep't of Homeland Sec. v D.V.D.*, 145 S. Ct. 2153, 2160 (2025) (Sotomayor, J., dissenting). Thus, "even if the Government [was] correct that classwide relief was impermissible" in *D.V.D.*, Respondents still "remain[] obligated to comply with orders enjoining [their] conduct with respect to individual plaintiffs" like Mr. Sulimankhel. *Id.* Thus, the Supreme Court's decision does not override courts' authority to grant individual injunctive relief. *See Nguyen v Scott*, No. 25-CV-01398, 2025 WL 2419288, at *20–23 (W.D. Wash. Aug. 21, 2025).

under the Convention Against Torture ("CAT"). *Id.* at 2. "USCIS will generally screen within 24 hours." *Id.* If USCIS determines that the noncitizen does not meet the standard, the individual will be removed. *Id.* If USCIS determines that the noncitizen has met the standard, then the policy directs ICE to either move to reopen removal proceedings "for the sole purpose of determining eligibility for [withholding of removal protection] and CAT" or designate another country for removal. *Id.*

CLAIMS FOR RELIEF

Zadvydas v. Davis holds that immigration statutes do not authorize the government to detain immigrants like Mr. Yousafzai, for whom there is "no significant likelihood of removal in the reasonably foreseeable future." 533 U.S. 678, 701 (2001). Though *Zadvydas* recognized that detention pending removal is "presumptively reasonable" for six months after a removal order becomes final, *id.*, many courts have concluded that that presumption is rebuttable.

Mr. Yousafzai has rebutted the presumption here, proving that he will not be removed in the reasonably foreseeable future. Regardless, ICE may not remove him to a third country without notice and an adequate opportunity to make a fear-based claim. This Court should therefore grant the petition on both counts.

I. Count 1: Mr. Yousafzai's detention violates *Zadvydas* and 8 U.S.C. § 1231.

A. Legal background

Mr. Yousafzai's indefinite detention violates the statute authorizing detention, 8 U.S.C. § 1231(a)(6). In *Zadvydas v. Davis*, 533 U.S. 678 (2001), the Supreme Court considered a problem affecting people like Mr. Yousafzai. Federal law requires ICE to detain an immigrant during the "removal period," which typically spans the first 90 days after the immigrant is ordered removed. 8 U.S.C. § 1231(a)(1)-(2). After that 90-day removal period expires, detention becomes discretionary—ICE may detain the migrant while continuing to try to remove

them. *Id.* § 1231(a)(6). Ordinarily, this scheme would not lead to excessive detention, as removal happens within days or weeks. But some detainees cannot be removed quickly. Perhaps their removal "simply require[s] more time for processing," or they are "ordered removed to countries with whom the United States does not have a repatriation agreement," or their countries "refuse to take them," or they are "effectively 'stateless' because of their race and/or place of birth." *Kim Ho Ma v. Ashcroft*, 257 F.3d 1095, 1104 (9th Cir. 2001). In these and other circumstances, detained immigrants can find themselves trapped in detention for months, years, decades, or even the rest of their lives.

If federal law were understood to allow for "indefinite, perhaps permanent, detention," it would pose "a serious constitutional threat." *Zadvydas*, 533 U.S. at 699. In *Zadvydas*, the Supreme Court avoided the constitutional concern by interpreting § 1231(a)(6) to incorporate implicit limits. *Id.* at 689.

As an initial matter, *Zadvydas* held that detention is "presumptively reasonable" for at least six months. *Id.* at 701. This acts as a kind of grace period for effectuating removals.

Following the six-month grace period, courts must use a burden-shifting framework to decide whether detention remains authorized. First, the petitioner must make a prima facie case for relief: He must prove that there is "good reason to believe that there is no significant likelihood of removal in the reasonably foreseeable future." *Id.*

If he does so, the burden shifts to "the Government [to] respond with evidence sufficient to rebut that showing." *Id.* Ultimately, then, the burden of proof rests with the government: The government must prove that there is a "significant likelihood of removal in the reasonably foreseeable future," or the immigrant must be released. *Id.*

B. Courts across the country agree that the six-month presumption is rebuttable.

Mr. Yousafzai is different from many *Zadvydas* petitioners in that he has not been detained for six months after his removal order became final. But as *Zadvydas* makes clear, detention is only "*presumptively* reasonable" for six months. 533 U.S. at 701 (emphasis added). Numerous courts have concluded that the six-month presumption is "just that, a presumption, one that can be rebutted upon a showing that removal is *not* reasonably foreseeable." *Cruz Medina v. Noem*, No. 25-CV-1768-ABA, 2025 WL 2306274, at *7 n.5 (D. Md. Aug. 11, 2025); *accord Munoz-Saucedo v. Pittman*, 789 F. Supp. 3d 387, 397 (D.N.J. 2025); *Zavvar v. Scott*, No. CV 25-2104-TDC, 2025 WL 2592543, at *5 (D. Md. Sept. 8, 2025); *Trinh v. Homan*, 466 F. Supp. 3d 1077, 1093 (C.D. Cal. 2020); *Sweid v. Cantu*, No. CV-25-03590-PHX-DWL (CDB), 2025 WL 3033655, at *3 (D. Ariz. Oct. 30, 2025); *Puertas Mendoza v. Bondi*, No. SA-25-CA-00890-XR, 2025 WL 3142089, at *2 (W.D. Tex. Oct. 22, 2025); *Jimenez v. Cronen*, 317 F. Supp. 3d 626, 641 n.6 (D. Mass. 2018); *Ali v Dep't of Homeland Sec.*, 451 F. Supp. 3d 703, 707 (S.D. Tex. 2020); *Villanueva v. Tate*, No. CV H-25-3364, 2025 WL 2774610, at *9 (S.D. Tex. Sept. 26, 2025); *Douglas v. Baker*, No. 25-CV-2243-ABA, 2025 WL 2687354, at *3 (D. Md. Sept. 19, 2025); *Jamal v. Sessions*, No. 5:18-06015-CV-RK, 2018 WL 1440609, at *2 (W.D. Mo. Mar. 22, 2018). "A close reading of *Zadvydas*" refutes any attempt to turn that presumption into a bright-line rule. *Cesar*, 542 F. Supp. 2d at 902.

Prohibiting all detention challenges before the six-month mark would go against *Zadvydas*'s most fundamental holding: that "if removal is not reasonably foreseeable, the court should hold continued detention unreasonable and no longer authorized by statute." *Zadvydas*, 533 U.S. at 699–700. "The fundamental principle in *Zadvydas* . . . is that where removal is not reasonably foreseeable, detention is unconstitutional." *Cesar*, 542 F. Supp. 2d at 902. "*Zadvydas* unequivocally held

that 'once removal is no longer reasonably foreseeable, continued detention is no longer authorized.'" *Puerta Mendoza*, 2025 WL 3142089, at *2. It follows that "[i]f there comes a point during the six-month period at which it is 'no longer reasonably foreseeable' that a person will actually be removed, then detention 'is no longer authorized,'" and the petitioner must be released. *Cruz Medina*, 2025 WL 2306274, at *6 (quoting *Zadvydas*, 533 U.S. at 699–700). To hold otherwise would be to render *Zadvydas* "internally inconsistent." *Zavvar*, 2025 WL 2592543, at *5.

Zadvydas did not back away from that fundamental principle when describing the six-month presumption. "At no point did the *Zadvydas* Court preclude a noncitizen from challenging their detention before the end of the presumptively reasonable six-month period." *Trinh*, 466 F. Supp. 3d at 1092. To the contrary, the Court said that it was "adopting a *presumption* of reasonableness before the six-month period expires. A presumption is just that: a default, a starting point." *Cruz Medina*, 2025 WL 2306274, at *5. "The *Zadvydas* Court did not say that the presumption is irrebuttable, and there is nothing inherent in the operation of the presumption itself that requires it to be irrebuttable." *Cesar*, 542 F. Supp. 2d at 903; *accord Sweid*, 2025 WL 3033655, at *3 ("*Zadvydas* did not hold that this presumption is conclusive in all cases and under all sets of facts.").

Furthermore, when introducing the six-month presumption, the Court "noted that such presumptions are intended to 'guide lower court determinations.'" *Zavvar*, 2025 WL 2592543, at *5. A "guide" is "not a categorical prohibition on claims challenging detention less than six months." *Trinh*, 466 F. Supp. 3d at 1093.

Finally, *Zadvydas* analogized to the "similar" rule in *County of Riverside v McLaughlin*, 500 U.S. 44, 56–58 (1991), in which the Court "adopt[ed] [a] presumption, based on lower court estimate of time needed to process arrestee, that 48–hour delay in probable-cause hearing after arrest is reasonable, hence constitutionally permissible." *Zadvydas*, 533 U.S. at 701 (describing *Riverside*). *Riverside*'s 48-hour rule "is a rebuttable presumption." *Cesar*, 542 F. Supp. 2d at

904. It stands to reason that "the *Zadvydas* presumption, like the *Riverside* presumption, is rebuttable." *Munoz-Saucedo*, 789 F. Supp. 3d at 397.

In short, then, "[t]he presumption of reasonableness is the default, but if a person 'can prove' that his removal is not reasonably foreseeable, then he can overcome that presumption." *Munoz-Saucedo*, 789 F. Supp. 3d at 397 (quoting *Riverside*, 500 U.S. at 56).

C. Mr. Yousafzai's experience and ICE's historical experience provide good reasons to believe that he will not likely be removed in the reasonably foreseeable future.

Because Mr. Yousafzai must rebut the six-month presumption, he bears the burden to show that "there is no significant likelihood of removal in the reasonably foreseeable future." *Zadvydas*, 533 U.S. at 701. This standard can be broken down into three parts.

"Good reason to believe." The "good reason to believe" standard is a relatively forgiving one. "A petitioner need not establish that there exists no possibility of removal." *Freeman v. Watkins*, No. CV B:09-160, 2009 WL 10714999, at *3 (S.D. Tex. Dec. 22, 2009). Nor does "'[g]ood reason to believe' . . . place a burden upon the detainee to demonstrate no reasonably foreseeable, significant likelihood of removal or show that his detention is indefinite; it is something less than that." *Rual v. Barr*, No. 6:20-CV-06215 EAW, 2020 WL 3972319, at *3 (W.D.N.Y. July 14, 2020) (quoting *Senor v. Barr*, 401 F. Supp. 3d 420, 430 (W.D.N.Y. 2019)). In short, the standard means what it says: Petitioners need only give a "good reason"—not prove anything to a certainty.

"Significant likelihood of removal." This component focuses on <u>whether</u> Mr. Yousafzai will likely be removed: Continued detention is permissible only if it is "significant[ly] like[ly]" that ICE will be able to remove him. *Zadvydas*, 533 U.S. at 701. This inquiry targets "not only the *existence* of untapped possibilities, but

also [the] probability of *success* in such possibilities." *Elashi v. Sabol*, 714 F. Supp. 2d 502, 506 (M.D. Pa. 2010) (second emphasis added).

In other words, even if "there remains *some* possibility of removal," a petitioner can still meet its burden if there is good reason to believe that successful removal is not significantly likely. *Kacanic v. Elwood*, No. CIV.A. 02-8019, 2002 WL 31520362, at *4 (E.D. Pa. Nov. 8, 2002) (emphasis added).

"In the reasonably foreseeable future." This component of the test focuses on when Mr. Yousafzai will likely be removed: Continued detention is permissible only if removal is likely to happen "in the reasonably foreseeable future." *Zadvydas*, 533 U.S. at 701. This inquiry places a time limit on ICE's removal efforts.

If the Court has "no idea of when it might reasonably expect [Petitioner] to be repatriated, this Court certainly cannot conclude that his removal is likely to occur—or even that it might occur—in the reasonably foreseeable future." *Palma v. Gillis*, No. 5:19-CV-112-DCB-MTP, 2020 WL 4880158, at *3 (S.D. Miss. July 7, 2020), *report and recommendation adopted*, 2020 WL 4876859 (S.D. Miss. Aug. 19, 2020) (quoting *Singh v Whitaker*, 362 F. Supp. 3d 93, 102 (W.D.N.Y. 2019)). Thus, even if this Court concludes that Mr. Yousafzai "would *eventually* receive" a travel document, he can still meet his burden by giving good reason to anticipate sufficiently lengthy delays. *Younes v. Lynch*, 2016 WL 6679830, at *2 (E.D. Mich. Nov. 14, 2016).

Mr. Yousafzai satisfies this standard for two reasons.

First, Respondents proffer no effort or progress made by ICE to remove Mr. Yousafzai to Afghanistan in the two months since France refused to accept him. And there is a good explanation for this absence of effort or progress: As explained *supra*, the United States has no diplomatic relations with Afghanistan and is currently unable to deport people there.

Mr. Yousafzai has thus shown good reason to believe his removal is not significantly likely in the reasonably foreseeable future. In light of this information,

the government cannot rebut this showing, and this Court should grant the petition. *Zadvydas*, 533 U.S. at 701.

II. Count 2: ICE may not remove Mr. Yousafzai to a third country without adequate notice and an opportunity to be heard.

In addition to unlawfully detaining him, ICE's policies threaten Mr. Yousafzai's removal to a third country without adequate notice and an opportunity to be heard. These policies violate the Fifth Amendment, the Convention Against Torture, and implementing regulations.

A. Legal background

U.S. law enshrines protections against dangerous and life-threatening removal decisions. By statute, the government is prohibited from removing an immigrant to any third country where they may be persecuted or tortured, a form of protection known as withholding of removal. *See* 8 U.S.C. § 1231(b)(3)(A). The government "may not remove [a noncitizen] to a country if the Attorney General decides that the [noncitizen's] life or freedom would be threatened in that country because of the [noncitizen's] race, religion, nationality, membership in a particular social group, or political opinion." *Id.*; *see also* 8 C.F.R. §§ 208.16, 1208.16. Withholding of removal is a mandatory protection.

Similarly, Congress codified protections enshrined in the CAT prohibiting the government from removing a person to a country where they would be tortured. *See* FARRA 2681-822 (codified as 8 U.S.C. § 1231 note) ("It shall be the policy of the United States not to expel, extradite, or otherwise effect the involuntary return of any person to a country in which there are substantial grounds for believing the person would be in danger of being subjected to torture, regardless of whether the person is physically present in the United States."); 28 C.F.R. § 200.1; *id.* §§ 208.16-208.18, 1208.16-1208.18. CAT protection is also mandatory.

To comport with the requirements of due process, the government must provide notice of the third country removal and an opportunity to respond. Due

process requires "written notice of the country being designated" and "the statutory basis for the designation, i.e., the applicable subsection of § 1231(b)(2)." *Aden v. Nielsen*, 409 F. Supp. 3d 998, 1019 (W.D. Wash. 2019); *accord D V.D. v. U.S. Dep't of Homeland Sec.*, No. 25-cv-10676-BEM, 2025 WL 1453640, at *1 (D. Mass. May 21, 2025); *Andriasian v INS*, 180 F.3d 1033, 1041 (9th Cir. 1999).

The government must also "ask the noncitizen whether he or she fears persecution or harm upon removal to the designated country and memorialize in writing the noncitizen's response. This requirement ensures DHS will obtain the necessary information from the noncitizen to comply with section 1231(b)(3) and avoids [a dispute about what was said]." *Aden*, 409 F. Supp. 3d at 1019. "Failing to notify individuals who are subject to deportation that they have the right to apply for asylum in the United States and for withholding of deportation to the country to which they will be deported violates both INS regulations and the constitutional right to due process." *Andriasian*, 180 F.3d at 1041.

If the noncitizen claims fear, measures must be taken to ensure that the noncitizen can seek asylum, withholding, and relief under CAT before an immigration judge in reopened removal proceedings. The amount and type of notice must be "sufficient" to ensure that "given [a noncitizen's] capacities and circumstances, he would have a reasonable opportunity to raise and pursue his claim for withholding of deportation." *Aden*, 409 F. Supp. 3d at 1009 (citing *Mathews v. Eldridge*, 424 U.S. 319, 349 (1976) and *Kossov v. I.N.S*, 132 F.3d 405, 408 (7th Cir. 1998)); *cf. D.V.D.*, 2025 WL 1453640, at *1 (requiring the government to move to reopen the noncitizen's immigration proceedings if the individual demonstrates "reasonable fear" and to provide "a meaningful opportunity, and a minimum of fifteen days, for the non-citizen to seek reopening of their immigration proceedings" if the noncitizen is found to not have demonstrated "reasonable fear"); *Aden*, 409 F. Supp. 3d at 1019 (requiring notice and time for a respondent to file a motion to reopen and seek relief).

"[L]ast minute" notice of the country of removal will not suffice, *Andriasian*, 180 F.3d at 1041; *accord Najjar v. Lunch*, 630 Fed. App'x 724 (9th Cir. 2016), and for good reason: To have a meaningful opportunity to apply for fear-based protection from removal, immigrants must have time to prepare and present relevant arguments and evidence. Merely telling a person where they may be sent, without giving them a chance to look into country conditions, does not give them a meaningful chance to determine whether and why they have a credible fear.

B. The June 9, 2025, memo's removal policies violate the Fifth Amendment, 8 U.S.C. § 1231, the Conviction Against Torture, and Implementing Regulations.

The policies in the June 9, 2025, memo do not adhere to these requirements. First, under the policy, ICE need not give immigrants *any* notice or hearing before removing them to a country that—in the State Department's estimation—has provided "credible" "assurances" against persecution and torture. Exhibit C. By depriving immigrants of any chance to challenge the State Department's view, this policy violates "[t]he essence of due process," "the requirement that a person in jeopardy of serious loss be given notice of the case against him and opportunity to meet it." *Mathews v. Eldridge*, 424 U.S. 319, 348 (1976) (cleaned up).

Second, even when the government has obtained no credible assurances against persecution and torture, the government can still remove the person with between 6 and 24 hours' notice, depending on the circumstances. Exhibit A. Practically speaking, there is not nearly enough time for a detained person to assess their risk in the third country and martial evidence to support any credible fear—let alone a chance to file a motion to reopen with an IJ. An immigrant may know nothing about a third country, like Eswatini or South Sudan, when they are scheduled for removal there. Yet if given the opportunity to investigate conditions, immigrants would find credible reasons to fear persecution or torture—like patterns of keeping deportees indefinitely and without charge in solitary confinement or

extreme instability raising a high likelihood of death—in many of the third countries that have agreed to removal thus far. Due process requires an adequate chance to identify and raise these threats to health and life. This Court must prohibit the government from removing Mr. Yousafzai without these due process safeguards.

III. This Court must hold an evidentiary hearing on any disputed facts.

Resolution of a prolonged-detention habeas petition may require an evidentiary hearing. *Owino v. Napolitano*, 575 F.3d 952, 956 (9th Cir. 2009). Mr. Yousafzai hereby requests such a hearing on any material, disputed facts.

IV. Prayer for relief

For the foregoing reasons, Petitioner respectfully requests that this Court:

1. Order Respondents to immediately release Petitioner from custody;
2. Enjoin Respondents from re-detaining Petitioner under 8 U.S.C. § 1231(a)(6) unless and until Respondents obtain a travel document for his removal;
3. Enjoin Respondents from removing Petitioner to any country other than Greece or Eritrea, unless they provide the following process, *see D.V.D. v. U.S. Dep't of Homeland Sec.*, No. CV 25-10676-BEM, 2025 WL 1453640, at *1 (D. Mass. May 21, 2025):
    a. written notice to both Petitioner and Petitioner's counsel in a language Petitioner can understand;
    b. a meaningful opportunity, and a minimum of ten days, to raise a fear-based claim for CAT protection prior to removal;
    c. if Petitioner is found to have demonstrated "reasonable fear" of removal to the country, Respondents must move to reopen Petitioner's immigration proceedings;
    d. if Petitioner is not found to have demonstrated a "reasonable fear" of removal to the country, a meaningful opportunity, and a

minimum of fifteen days, for the Petitioner to seek reopening of his immigration proceedings.

4. Order all other relief that the Court deems just and proper.

Respectfully submitted,

Dated: April 23, 2026

s/ Camille Fenton

CAMILLE FENTON
Federal Defenders of San Diego, Inc.
Email: camille_fenton@fd.org

EXHIBIT A

PLAINTIFFS' EXHIBIT NO 2
CASE NO. PX 25-951
IDENTIFICATION: JUL 10 2025
ADMITTED: JUL 10 2025

To All ICE Employees
July 9, 2025

Third Country Removals Following the Supreme Court's Order in *Department of Homeland Security v. D.V.D.*, No. 24A1153 (U.S. June 23, 2025)

On June 23, 2025, the U.S. Supreme Court granted the Government's application to stay the district court's nationwide preliminary injunction in *D.V.D. v. Department of Homeland Security*, No. 25-10676, 2025 WL 1142968 (D. Mass. Apr. 18, 2025), which required certain procedures related to providing a "meaningful opportunity" to assert claims for protection under the Convention Against Torture (CAT) before initiating removal to a third country. Accordingly, all previous guidance implementing the district court's preliminary injunction related the third country removals issued in *D.V.D.* is hereby rescinded. Absent additional action by the Supreme Court, the stay will remain in place until any writ of certiorari is denied or a judgment following any decision issues.

Effective immediately, when seeking to remove an alien with a final order of removal—other than an expedited removal order under section 235(b) of the Immigration and Nationality Act (INA)—to an alternative country as identified in section 241(b)(1)(C) of the INA, ICE must adhere to Secretary of Homeland Security Kristi Noem's March 30, 2025 memorandum, *Guidance Regarding Third Country Removals*, as detailed below. A "third country" or "alternative country" refers to a country other than that specifically referenced in the order of removal.

If the United States has received diplomatic assurances from the country of removal that aliens removed from the United States will not be persecuted or tortured, and if the Department of State believes those assurances to be credible, the alien may be removed without the need for further procedures ICE will seek written confirmation from the Department of State that such diplomatic assurances were received and determined to be credible. HSI and ERO will be made aware of any such assurances. In all other cases, ICE must comply with the following procedures:

- An ERO officer will serve on the alien the attached Notice of Removal. The notice includes the intended country of removal and will be read to the alien in a language he or she understands.
- ERO will not affirmatively ask whether the alien is afraid of being removed to the country of removal.
- ERO will generally wait at least 24 hours following service of the Notice of Removal before effectuating removal. In exigent circumstances, ERO may execute a removal order six (6) or more hours after service of the Notice of Removal as long as the alien is provided reasonable means and opportunity to speak with an attorney prior to removal.
    - Any determination to execute a removal order under exigent circumstances less than 24 hours following service of the Notice of Removal must be approved by the DHS General Counsel, or the Principal Legal Advisor where the DHS General Counsel is not available.

- If the alien does not affirmatively state a fear of persecution or torture if removed to the country of removal listed on the Notice of Removal within 24 hours, ERO may proceed with removal to the country identified on the notice. ERO should check all systems for motions as close in time as possible to removal.
- If the alien does affirmatively state a fear if removed to the country of removal listed on the Notice of Removal, ERO will refer the case to U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS) for a screening for eligibility for protection under section 241(b)(3) of the INA and the Convention Against Torture (CAT). USCIS will generally screen the alien within 24 hours of referral.
    - USCIS will determine whether the alien would more likely than not be persecuted on a statutorily protected ground or tortured in the country of removal.
    - If USCIS determines that the alien has not met this standard, the alien will be removed.
    - If USCIS determines that the alien has met this standard and the alien was not previously in proceedings before the immigration court, USCIS will refer the matter to the immigration court for further proceedings. In cases where the alien was previously in proceedings before the immigration court, USCIS will notify the referring immigration officer of its finding, and the immigration officer will inform ICE. In such cases, ERO will alert their local Office of the Principal Legal Advisor (OPLA) Field Location to file a motion to reopen with the immigration court or the Board of Immigration Appeals, as appropriate, for further proceedings for the sole purpose of determining eligibility for protection under section 241(b)(3) of the INA and CAT for the country of removal. Alternatively, ICE may choose to designate another country for removal.

Notably, the Supreme Court's stay of removal does not alter any decisions issued by any other courts as to individual aliens regarding the process that must be provided before removing that alien to a third country.

Please direct any questions about this guidance to your OPLA field location.

Thank you for all you continue to do for the agency.

Todd M. Lyons
Acting Director
U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement

Attachments:

- U.S. Supreme Court Order
- Secretary Noem's Memorandum
- Notice of Removal