

UNITED STATES DISTRICT COURT FOR THE DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA

J.G.G. v. Trump

Civil Action No. 25-766 (JEB) (D.D.C. Dec. 22, 2025) · No. Civil Action No. 25-766 (JEB) · Decided
December 22, 2025

SUMMARY

This memorandum opinion addresses habeas jurisdiction, constructive custody, class certification, mootness, and due-process claims arising from the removal of Venezuelan detainees from the United States to El Salvador under the Alien Enemies Act. The court concludes that the United States maintained constructive custody over the detainees, certifies a class of individuals removed on March 15, and determines that the class was denied constitutionally required process. The court orders the government to facilitate the class members’ ability to obtain a hearing.

CASE DETAILS

COURT	United States District Court for the District of Columbia
WRITING FOR THE COURT	James E. Boasberg
JURISDICTION	United States District Court for the District of Columbia
DECIDED	December 22, 2025
DOCKET	Civil Action No. 25-766 (JEB)
DISPOSITION	other
PROCEDURAL POSTURE	Plaintiffs renewed their motion for a preliminary injunction after the D.C. Circuit vacated the Court's prior preliminary injunction. The parties consented to converting the motion and opposition into cross-motions for summary judgment, which the Court consolidated with trial on the merits under Federal Rule of Civil Procedure 65(a)(2).
STANDARD OF REVIEW	Summary judgment is appropriate when there is no genuine dispute as to any material fact and the movant is entitled to judgment as a matter of law. Subject-matter jurisdiction was evaluated under Rule 12(b)(1) principles, permitting consideration of the pleadings, undisputed record evidence, and resolved factual disputes.
PRECEDENTIAL VALUE	published district-court memorandum opinion
PARTIES	J.G.G., et al., Liyanara Sánchez, as next friend on behalf of Frengel Reyes Mota, et al. v. Donald J. Trump, et al.

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QUESTIONS PRESENTED

1. Whether the Court had habeas jurisdiction under 28 U.S.C. § 2241 over Plaintiffs who were physically detained in El Salvador when they filed their Amended Complaint.
2. Whether Plaintiffs' claims became moot after their release from CECOT and transfer to Venezuela.
3. Whether habeas claims may be aggregated through a class-like procedure under the All Writs Act and whether the proposed CECOT class satisfied the relevant Rule 23 requirements.
4. Whether the Government violated the class members' due-process rights by removing them under the Alien Enemies Act without meaningful notice or an opportunity to challenge their designations.
5. Whether habeas relief may require the Government to facilitate Plaintiffs' return to the United States or otherwise provide a meaningful hearing.

HOLDINGS

1. The Court had habeas jurisdiction because Plaintiffs were in constructive custody of the United States when they filed their habeas claims. El Salvador acted as the United States' agent in detaining Plaintiffs at the United States' behest, and the United States retained sufficient control over their detention and release.
2. Plaintiffs' claims were not moot after their release from CECOT and transfer to Venezuela because they continued to suffer concrete, redressable collateral consequences from their designations and removal.
3. The All Writs Act authorizes a court with habeas jurisdiction to use a class-like representative procedure to aggregate habeas claims when doing so is necessary or appropriate to protect and administer the court's jurisdiction.
4. The Court certified a class consisting of all noncitizens removed from U.S. custody and transferred to CECOT in El Salvador on March 15 and 16, 2025, solely pursuant to the Alien Enemies Act Proclamation.
5. The CECOT class was denied due process because class members received no meaningful notice of their AEA designations and no opportunity to challenge those designations before removal.
6. Habeas relief is not limited to release from physical custody and may require the Government to facilitate Plaintiffs' return to the United States or otherwise provide a meaningful opportunity to challenge their designations and the Proclamation.

KEY QUOTATIONS

“All in all, the undisputed factual record indicates that the United States and El Salvador have behaved as principal and agent in the detention and subsequent release of Plaintiffs.” (24)

“Because all detainees were subject to an identical removal, see Am. Compl., ¶¶ 64–74, the Court holds that the entire class received constitutionally inadequate process on the weekend of March 14–16, 2025, when class members were given no meaningful notice of their AEA designations and no opportunity to challenge them.” (39)

“The remedy must thus adapt to meet the injury that has occurred.” (40)

“If secretly spiriting individuals to another country were enough to neuter the Great Writ, then “the Government could snatch anyone off the street, turn him over to a foreign country, and then effectively foreclose any corrective course of action.”” (41)

FACTUAL BACKGROUND

In March 2025, the Government removed Venezuelan detainees from Texas under a Presidential Proclamation invoking the Alien Enemies Act. The detainees were given no meaningful advance notice of their designation as Tren de Aragua members and no opportunity to challenge the designation before being transported to El Salvador and imprisoned at CECOT. The United States arranged and funded their detention in El Salvador, and the detainees were later transferred to Venezuela as part of a prisoner exchange involving the United States. They sought an opportunity to challenge their designations and the legality of the removals in a United States court.

PROCEDURAL HISTORY

Plaintiffs challenged the removal of Venezuelan detainees under the Alien Enemies Act without advance notice or an opportunity to contest their designation. The Court previously issued temporary restraining orders, certified a class, later found no constructive custody on the then-existing record, exercised equitable jurisdiction over due-process claims, and ordered the Government to facilitate access to process. The Supreme Court vacated an earlier TRO for improper venue, and the D.C. Circuit later vacated the preliminary injunction after the detainees were transferred from El Salvador to Venezuela. On renewed motions, the Court found constructive custody, held the claims nonmoot, certified the CECOT class, granted Plaintiffs' summary judgment motion, denied the Government's motion, and ordered the Government to propose steps facilitating Plaintiffs' return or otherwise providing a constitutionally adequate hearing.

DISPOSITION

other

REMAND INSTRUCTIONS

The Government must submit within two weeks a proposal identifying steps to facilitate Plaintiffs' return to the United States so they can meaningfully contest their AEA designations and the Proclamation's validity, or otherwise provide a constitutionally adequate hearing. The Court permitted the Government to propose an alternative process that does not require return if it satisfies due process.

CASES CITED

- J.G.G. v. Trump, 772 F. Supp. 3d 18 (D.D.C. 2025)
- J.G.G. v. Trump, 786 F. Supp. 3d 37 (D.D.C. 2025)
- Trump v. J.G.G., 604 U.S. 670 (2025)
- Noem v. Abrego Garcia, 145 S. Ct. 1017 (2025)
- Abu Ali v. Ashcroft, 350 F. Supp. 2d 28 (D.D.C. 2004)
- Jones v. Cunningham, 371 U.S. 236 (1963)
- Justices of Boston Municipal Court v. Lydon, 466 U.S. 294 (1984)
- Braden v. 30th Judicial Circuit Court, 410 U.S. 484 (1973)
- Kiyemba v. Obama, 561 F.3d 509 (D.C. Cir. 2009)
- Gul v. Obama, 652 F.3d 12 (D.C. Cir. 2011)
- A.A.R.P. v. Trump, 605 U.S. 91 (2025)
- Carafas v. LaVallee, 391 U.S. 234 (1968)
- Harris v. Nelson, 394 U.S. 286 (1969)
- Wal-Mart Stores, Inc. v. Dukes, 564 U.S. 338 (2011)
- Amchem Products, Inc. v. Windsor, 521 U.S. 591 (1997)
- Whitmore ex rel. Simmons v. Arkansas, 495 U.S. 149 (1990)
- Family Trust of Massachusetts, Inc. v. United States, 892 F. Supp. 2d 149 (D.D.C. 2012)
- Anderson v. Liberty Lobby, 477 U.S. 242 (1986)
- Holcomb v. Powell, 433 F.3d 889 (D.C. Cir. 2006)
- Scott v. Harris, 550 U.S. 372 (2007)
- United States v. New York Telephone Co., 434 U.S. 159 (1977)
- Clinton v. Goldsmith, 526 U.S. 529 (1999)
- Pa. Bureau of Correction v. U.S. Marshals Service, 474 U.S. 34 (1985)
- United States Parole Commission v. Geraghty, 445 U.S. 388 (1980)
- LoBue v. Christopher, 82 F.3d 1081 (D.C. Cir. 1996)
- A.A.R.P. v. Trump, 605 U.S. 91 (2025)

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