

UNITED STATES DISTRICT COURT FOR THE WESTERN DISTRICT OF
TEXAS, SAN ANTONIO DIVISION

Jennifer Pahola Umanzor Maldonado v. Todd M. Lyons, Acting
Director of U.S. ICE, et al.

No. 5:26-CV-0112-JKP (W.D. Tex. Jan. 20, 2026) · No. No. 5:26-CV-0112-JKP · Decided January 20, 2026

SUMMARY

The United States District Court for the Western District of Texas granted Jennifer Pahola Umanzor Maldonado’s petition for a writ of habeas corpus under 28 U.S.C. § 2241. The court held that the respondents could not detain her under 8 U.S.C. § 1225(b) under the circumstances presented and ordered her release under appropriate conditions. The court also addressed its jurisdiction to preserve existing conditions pending resolution of the habeas petition and dissolved the stay upon entry and closing of the case.

CASE DETAILS

COURT	United States District Court for the Western District of Texas, San Antonio Division
WRITING FOR THE COURT	Jason K. Pulliam
JURISDICTION	U.S. District Court for the Western District of Texas, San Antonio Division
DECIDED	January 20, 2026
DOCKET	No. 5:26-CV-0112-JKP
DISPOSITION	writ_granted
PROCEDURAL POSTURE	Petitioner sought habeas relief under 28 U.S.C. § 2241 challenging her immigration detention. After reviewing the petition, abbreviated responses, evidence, and applicable law, the district court granted the petition and ordered her release under appropriate conditions.
STANDARD OF REVIEW	The court independently determined its jurisdiction and reviewed the habeas petition, briefing, evidence, and applicable law; no separate formal standard of review was stated.
PRECEDENTIAL VALUE	unpublished district-court order; persuasive value only
PARTIES	Jennifer Pahola Umanzor Maldonado v. Todd M. Lyons, Acting Director of U.S. ICE, et al.

TOPICS

immigration detention

removal proceedings

immigration

injunctions

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PRACTICE AREAS

immigration law

habeas corpus

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federal civil procedure

remedies

QUESTIONS PRESENTED

1. Whether the district court had jurisdiction to consider the § 2241 habeas petition challenging Petitioner's immigration detention.
2. Whether Respondents could detain Petitioner under 8 U.S.C. § 1225(b)(1) or § 1225(b)(2) under the facts presented.
3. Whether the court's service order and stay preserving Petitioner's existing conditions exceeded the court's jurisdiction.
4. Whether the Equal Access to Justice Act permits an award of fees in this habeas proceeding.
5. Whether *Maldonado Bautista v. Santacruz* precluded habeas relief.

HOLDINGS

1. The district court had jurisdiction to consider the arguments presented in the § 2241 habeas petition.
2. Under the facts presented, Respondents could not detain Petitioner under either 8 U.S.C. § 1225(b)(1) or § 1225(b)(2), and her detention was unlawful.
3. The court had inherent power to issue a stay preserving existing conditions while determining its authority to grant injunctive relief, although the stay would be dissolved upon entry of the order and closing of the case.
4. Fees under the Equal Access to Justice Act, 28 U.S.C. § 2412, were not available in this habeas corpus proceeding.
5. *Maldonado Bautista v. Santacruz* did not preclude granting habeas relief at that time.

KEY QUOTATIONS

“the power to preserve existing conditions while it was determining its own authority to grant injunctive relief.”

FACTUAL BACKGROUND

Petitioner was detained by immigration authorities under 8 U.S.C. § 1225(b)(1) or § 1225(b)(2). She had completed removal proceedings, reserved appeal, and had not yet appealed her removal order, making the order non-final. Respondents maintained that the detention was authorized, challenged the court's jurisdiction, and argued that the court's service order improperly stayed removal or transfer.

PROCEDURAL HISTORY

Maldonado filed a petition for a writ of habeas corpus under 28 U.S.C. § 2241. Respondents filed abbreviated responses preserving their legal arguments and incorporating filings from related cases. The court declined to await a reply, followed its prior reasoning in materially similar detention cases, granted habeas relief, ordered release by January 22, 2026, and required a status report; the court stated that a final judgment would issue separately.

DISPOSITION

writ_granted

REMAND INSTRUCTIONS

No remand. Respondents were ordered to release Petitioner under appropriate conditions by January 22, 2026; notify Petitioner's counsel of the exact location and time of release; refrain from removing or transferring Petitioner under the present detention; follow all applicable procedures, including a bond hearing, if Petitioner is re-detained under 8 U.S.C. § 1226; and file a status report confirming release by January 23, 2026.

CASES CITED

- Diaz Perez v. Thompson, No. 5:25-CV-1664-JKP, 2025 WL 3654333 (W.D. Tex. Dec. 15, 2025)
- Davila Mercado v. Lyons, No. 5:25-CV-1623-JKP, 2025 WL 3654268 (W.D. Tex. Dec. 11, 2025)
- Orellana v. U.S. Dep't of Homeland Sec., No. 5:25-CV-1028-JKP, 2025 WL 3471569 (W.D. Tex. Nov. 24, 2025)
- Gonzalez v. Ortega, No. 5:25-CV-1156-JKP, 2025 WL 3471571 (W.D. Tex. Nov. 24, 2025)
- Trujillo v. Noem, No. 5:25-CV-1266-JKP, 2025 WL 3471572 (W.D. Tex. Nov. 24, 2025)
- Granados v. Noem, No. SA-25-CA-01464-XR, 2025 WL 3296314 (W.D. Tex. Nov. 26, 2025)
- Tinoco Pineda v. Noem, No. SA-25-CA-01518-XR, 2025 WL
- Reyes-Lopez v. Bondi, No. 5:25-CV-1800-JKP, 2026 WL 94653, at *1 (W.D. Tex. Jan. 6, 2026)
- Montilla De Diaz v. Lyons, No. 5:25-CV-1809-JKP, 2026 WL 94645, at *1 (W.D. Tex. Jan. 6, 2026)
- Imran v. Harper, No. 25-30370, 2026 WL 93131, at *1 (5th Cir. Jan. 13, 2026)
- United States v. United Mine Workers of Am., 330 U.S. 258, 293 (1947)
- Brownback v. King, 592 U.S. 209, 218–19 (2021)
- Santiago v. Noem, No. 3:25-CV-361-KC, 2025 WL 2606118, at *2–3 (W.D. Tex. Sept. 9, 2025)
- Maldonado Bautista v. Santacruz, No. 5:25-CV-01873-SSS-BFM (C.D. Cal. 2025)

OPINION

Lyons

PER CURIAM.

WESTERN DISTRICT OF TEXAS

SAN ANTONIO DIVISION

JENNIFER PAHOLA UMANZOR

MALDONADO,

Petitioner, v. Case No. 5:26-CV-0112-JKP TODD M. LYONS, Acting Director of US ICE, et al.,
Respondents.

ORDER GRANTING

PETITION FOR WRIT OF HABEAS CORPUS

Before the Court is a Petition for Writ of Habeas Corpus (ECF No. 1) filed pursuant to 28 U.S.C. § 2241. Respondents have submitted an Abbreviated Response (ECF No. 5) and an Abbreviated Response (ECF No. 6) with an attachment to preserve the legal issues and to conserve judicial and party resources. The Court finds no need to await a reply. After reviewing the briefing, provided evidence, and applicable law, the Court grants the petition for the same reasons stated in the cases cited in footnote 1 of its Order for Service (ECF No. 3) and relisted here.¹ While Respondents respectfully disagree with those decisions, the factual and legal issues presented in this case do not differ in any material fashion from those presented in the identified decisions. As requested by Respondents, the Court incorporates the filings in the cases identified in their Abbreviated Response into the record in this case. 1 Cases addressing detention under 8 U.S.C. § 1225(b)(1): See, e.g., *Diaz Perez v. Thompson*, No. 5:25-CV-1664-JKP, 2025 WL 3654333 (W.D. Tex. Dec. 15, 2025); *Davila Mercado v. Lyons*, No. 5:25-CV-1623-JKP, 2025 WL 3654268 (W.D. Tex. Dec. 11, 2025). Cases addressing detention under 8 U.S.C. § 1225(b)(2): See, e.g., *Orellana v. U.S. Dep't of Homeland Sec.*, No. 5:25-CV-1028-JKP, 2025 WL 3471569 (W.D. Tex. Nov. 24, 2025); *Gonzalez v. Ortega*, No. 5:25-CV-1156-JKP, 2025 WL 3471571 (W.D. Tex. Nov. 24, 2025); *Trujillo v. Noem*, No. 5:25-CV-1266-JKP, 2025 WL 3471572 (W.D. Tex. Nov. 24, 2025); *Granados v. Noem*, No. SA-25-CA-01464-XR, 2025 WL 3296314 (W.D. Tex. Nov. 26, 2025). Case addressing § 1225(b)(1) and § 1225(b)(2): *Tinoco Pineda v. Noem*, No. SA-25-CA-01518-XR, 2025 WL the government policy or practice at issue in this case, and the common question of law between this case and those rulings, would control the result in this case should this Court follow its legal reasoning in its prior decisions. They have considered the Court's cited orders and present two new arguments that deserve brief consideration. First, they note a difference between this case and the cited orders that they deem to be material to resolving the instant petition, i.e., Petitioner has concluded her removal proceedings, reserved appeal, but has not yet appealed her removal order. The Court has had similar facts in at least two prior cases. See *Reyes-Lopez v. Bondi*, No. 5:25-CV-1800-JKP, 2026 WL 94653, at *1 (W.D. Tex. Jan. 6, 2026); *Montilla De Diaz v. Lyons*, No. 5:25-CV-1809-JKP, 2026 WL 94645, at *1 (W.D. Tex. Jan. 6, 2026). In neither case did the non-final removal order affect the Court's consideration of the issues or its ultimate conclusion that Respondents may not detain the petitioner under § 1225(b)(1) or (2). See *Reyes-Lopez*, 2026 WL 94653, at *1–6 (addressing detention under 8 U.S.C. § 1225(b)(2)); *Montilla De Diaz*, 2026 WL 94645, at *1–6 (addressing detention under 8 U.S.C. § 1225(b)(1)). That Petitioner here is now subject to a non-final order of removal does not alter this Court's prior analysis. The Court does not find that Respondents' argument materially distinguishes this case from numerous

others that have rejected Respondents' position and their jurisdictional arguments. Its consistent analysis is that neither § 1225(b)(1) nor § 1225(b)(2) permit Respondents to detain noncitizens under facts like those now before the Court. Respondents also contend that this Court's service order stays removal and thus prevents them from executing any removal order. They argue that the Court should immediately dissolve the stay entered in this case as the Court lacks jurisdiction to grant a stay of removal. The Fifth Circuit has recently reiterated that district courts lack jurisdiction to grant a request for stay of removal. See *Imran v. Harper*, No. 25-30370, 2026 WL 93131, at *1 (5th Cir. Jan. 13, 2026)) (per was simply preserving existing conditions so that it could address the matters raised in the instant habeas petition. The Supreme Court recognized long ago that a district court has "the power to preserve existing conditions while it was determining its own authority to grant injunctive relief." *United States v. United Mine Workers of Am.*, 330 U.S. 258, 293 (1947). Because federal courts always have jurisdiction to determine their own jurisdiction, see *Brownback v. King*, 592 U.S. 209, 218– 19 (2021), they must be afforded an opportunity to make such determination. And in the current immigration environment, such opportunity may properly require courts to stay removal or transfer of petitioners like the Petitioner here. The Court finds the stay issued in this case to be a proper exercise of its inherent power to preserve its ability to hear the case. See *Santiago v. Noem*, No. 3- 25-CV-361-KC, 2025 WL 2606118, at *2–3 (W.D. Tex. Sept. 9, 2025) (collecting cases). For these reasons, the Court disagrees that it lacked jurisdiction to issue the stay of removal and transfer. In any event, the stay will be dissolved upon entry of this order and the subsequent closing of this case. For reasons previously stated in other cases, the Court finds that (1) it has jurisdiction to consider the arguments presented in the instant habeas petition; (2) Respondents have violated provisions of the Immigration and Nationality Act; (3) Petitioner cannot be detained under 8 U.S.C. § 1225(b); (4) fees under the Equal Access to Justice Act, 28 U.S.C. § 2412 are not available in habeas corpus proceedings like this one; and (5) *Maldonado Bautista v. Santacruz*, No. 5:25-CV-01873-SSS-BFM (C.D. Cal. 2025) does not preclude granting habeas relief in this case at this time. The Court treats the instant action solely as a habeas action under 28 U.S.C. § 2241 and declines to consider any constitutional or other challenge presented. Under the facts and circumstances of this case, this Court concludes Petitioner's detention is unlawful, and habeas relief is proper. Accordingly, the Court GRANTS the Petition for Habeas Corpus (ECF No. 1). It is OR- DERED that:

1. Respondents are DIRECTED to RELEASE Petitioner Jennifer Pahola Umanzor Maldonado from custody, under appropriate conditions of release, to a public place by to a public place no later than January 22, 2026.
2. Respondents must NOTIFY Petitioner's counsel of the exact location and exact time of her release as soon as practicable and no less than two hours before his release.
3. Any possible or anticipated removal or transfer of Petitioner under this present detention is PROHIBITED so that Petitioner is released consistent with this order.
4. If Petitioner is re-detained pursuant to 8 U.S.C. § 1226, all applicable procedures must

be followed, including that he be afforded a bond hearing.

5. Respondents shall FILE a Status Report no later than January 23, 2026, confirming that Petitioner has been released. If counsel for Petitioner disagrees with any aspect of the filed Status Report, counsel may file a separate Status Report. A final judgment will be issued separately. IT IS SO ORDERED this 20th day of January 2026. D ih | blir lf AWW

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in ITED STATES DISTRICT JUDGE