

UNITED STATES DISTRICT COURT FOR THE DISTRICT OF NEW JERSEY

Giorgi Onanashvili v. Luis Soto, et al.

Onanashvili · No. Civil Action No. 26-1251 (JXN) · Decided February 8, 2026

SUMMARY

The United States District Court for the District of New Jersey screened Giorgi Onanashvili’s counseled habeas petition under 28 U.S.C. § 2241 and determined that dismissal without an answer was not warranted. The court granted a temporary restraining order solely to enjoin Respondents from transferring Petitioner from his current New Jersey detention facility during the proceedings and directed Respondents to answer and produce the relevant detention records.

CASE DETAILS

COURT	United States District Court for the District of New Jersey
WRITING FOR THE COURT	Julien Xavier Neals
JURISDICTION	United States District Court for the District of New Jersey
DECIDED	February 8, 2026
DOCKET	Civil Action No. 26-1251 (JXN)
DISPOSITION	other
PROCEDURAL POSTURE	Petitioner filed a counseled petition for a writ of habeas corpus under 28 U.S.C. § 2241 challenging his detention and moved for a temporary restraining order preventing his transfer and removal. The court screened the petition under Rule 4 of the Rules Governing Section 2254 Cases, declined to dismiss it without an answer and record, and granted the TRO in limited part.
STANDARD OF REVIEW	For temporary injunctive relief, the movant must show likely success on the merits, irreparable harm absent relief, that the relief will not cause greater harm to the nonmoving party, and that the public interest favors relief. A party seeking to alter the status quo bears a heavy burden.
PRECEDENTIAL VALUE	nonprecedential
PARTIES	Giorgi Onanashvili v. Luis Soto, et al.

TOPICS

immigration detention

federal habeas corpus

injunctions

civil procedure

PRACTICE AREAS

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QUESTIONS PRESENTED

1. Whether the § 2241 petition should be dismissed at initial screening without an answer and the record.
2. Whether Petitioner was entitled to temporary injunctive relief preventing his transfer from his current New Jersey detention facility.
3. What procedural materials Respondents must provide in answering the habeas petition.

HOLDINGS

1. Dismissal of the § 2241 petition without an answer and the record was not warranted at the screening stage.
2. The TRO was granted solely to the extent that Respondents were enjoined from transferring Petitioner from his current detention facility in New Jersey during the pendency of the proceedings.
3. Respondents must file a paragraph-by-paragraph answer within fourteen days, state the statutory authority for Petitioner's detention, provide supporting legal analysis and record evidence, raise any appropriate defenses, and file certified copies of the administrative record and other relevant documents.

KEY QUOTATIONS

“A court may grant temporary restraints only if a party shows that: (1) it will likely succeed on the merits; (2) it will suffer irreparable harm if the injunction is denied; (3) granting preliminary relief will not result in even greater harm to the nonmoving party; and (4) the public interest favors such relief.”

“Petitioner’s motion for a TRO (ECF No. 2) is GRANTED solely to the extent the Respondents are enjoined from transferring Petitioner from his current detention facility in New Jersey during the pendency of these proceedings”

FACTUAL BACKGROUND

Giorgi Onanashvili was detained and filed a § 2241 habeas petition challenging the legality of his detention. He also sought a TRO to prevent Respondents from transferring him from his current detention facility and removing him from the United States.

PROCEDURAL HISTORY

At the initial screening stage, the court determined that dismissal of the § 2241 petition without an answer and the record was not warranted. The court granted the TRO solely to prohibit Respondents from transferring Petitioner from his current New Jersey detention facility during the proceedings, ordered Respondents to answer within fourteen days, and permitted Petitioner to reply.

DISPOSITION

other

CASES CITED

- Int'l Foodsource, LLC v. Grower Direct Nut Co., No. 16-3140, 2016 WL 4150748, at *6 (D.N.J. Aug. 3, 2016)
- Westchester Fire Ins. Co. v. Glob. Real Constr., LLC, No. 09-0207, 2009 WL 137414, at *1 (D.N.J. Jan. 20, 2009)
- Kos Pharm. Inc. v. Andrx Corp., 369 F.3d 700, 708 (3d Cir. 2004)
- Spectrum Produce Distrib., Inc. v. Fresh Mktg., Inc., No. 11-6368, 2011 WL 13063669, at *2 (D.N.J. Nov. 1, 2011)
- Acierno v. New Castle County, 40 F.3d 645, 647 (3d Cir. 1994)
- Punnett v. Carter, 621 F.2d 578, 582 (3d Cir. 1980)

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