1 2 3 4 5 6 7	MONIKA Y. LANGARICA (SBN 3085) JONATHAN MARKOVITZ (SBN 3017) BARDIS VAKILI (SBN 247783) (bvakil) DAVID LOY (SBN 229235) (davidloy@a ACLU FOUNDATION OF SAN DIEGO IMPERIAL COUNTIES P.O. Box 87131 San Diego, CA 92138-7131 Telephone: (619) 398-4493  Counsel for Plaintiff-Petitioners  UNITED STATES I SOUTHERN DISTRIC	DISTRICT COURT
8 9 10	CRISTIAN DOE, DIANA DOE, Plaintiff-Petitioners,	Case No. 19cv2119 DMS AGS
11 12 13 14	v.  CHAD F. WOLF, Acting Secretary of Homeland Security; <i>et. al.</i> ,	PLAINTIFF-PETITIONERS' REPLY IN SUPPORT OF MOTION FOR PRELIMINARY INJUNCTION
15 16	Defendant-Respondents.	DATE: December 20, 2019 TIME: 1:30 p.m. CTRM: 13A Hon. Dana M. Sabraw
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**INTRODUCTION** 

This Court already held that Plaintiffs met requirements "identical to the standard for issuing a preliminary injunction," whether "mandatory" or "prohibitory." Order Granting Motion for Temporary Restraining Order ("TRO" Order"), ECF No. 18 at 6:5–6 & n.3. Defendants assert nothing to justify holding otherwise now. The Court retains jurisdiction because Plaintiffs ask the Court only to ensure access to counsel, not prevent the return of any person to Mexico. Plaintiffs remain likely to prevail on their statutory claim "under the APA, 5 U.S.C. § 555(b)." TRO Order at 9:3–4. As the Court held and Defendants cannot refute, the APA right to counsel applies because the INA does not "expressly" supersede it for non-refoulement interviews. 5 U.S.C. § 559. It is arbitrary and capricious to allow access to counsel for credible and reasonable fear interviews but not for nonrefoulement interviews that involve the same issue—whether there is sufficient reason to believe a person would face persecution or torture in a given country. Defendants are also violating procedural and substantive due process by prohibiting access to retained counsel before and during critical interviews that could determine whether they live or die. Nothing is more fundamental than the right to assistance of counsel in resisting the government's attempt to expel persons to a country where they fear persecution or torture. As the Court already held, irreparable harm, balance of equities, and the public interest support a preliminary injunction.

## <u>ARGUMENT</u>

#### . THE COURT RETAINS JURISDICTION.

The Court must "construe narrowly restrictions on jurisdiction." *Montero-Martinez v. Ashcroft*, 277 F.3d 1137, 1141 (9th Cir. 2002). Defendants cannot overcome "the strong presumption in favor of judicial review of administrative action." *I.N.S. v. St. Cyr*, 533 U.S. 289, 298 (2001).

The Court lacks jurisdiction over a "decision or action" that is "in the discretion" of Defendants. 8 U.S.C. § 1252(a)(2)(B)(ii). Defendants assert

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REPLY IN SUPPORT OF MOTION FOR PRELIMINARY INJUNCTION

discretion to decide whether they "may return" persons to Mexico pending removal proceedings. 8 U.S.C. § 1225(b)(2)(C). This case does not attack any such decision. Plaintiffs do not challenge the government's ultimate "return decisions," the substantive "standards" for making those decisions, or how the government "weighs the evidence" in making such decisions. Response at 7:19, 8:3–7. They seek only to ensure access to and assistance of counsel for class members before officials make those decisions, not dispute the "substance" of any "discretionary choice" to return anyone to Mexico. *Id.* at 8:13–14. The Court therefore retains jurisdiction over Plaintiffs' claims.

In barring review of "discretionary decisions themselves," section 1252(a)(2)(B)(ii) does not bar review of all "procedures used to arrive at those decisions." *Id.* at 7:26–27. For example, although it bars review of the ultimate decision on amount of bond, it does not foreclose a claim that it is "constitutionally flawed" to fail to consider "a detainee's financial circumstances" or "whether the person may be released on alternative conditions." *Hernandez v. Sessions*, 872 F.3d 976, 987–88 (9th Cir. 2017); *cf. Make the Rd. New York v. McAleenan*, No. 19-CV-2369 (KBJ), 2019 WL 4738070, at \*24–25 (D.D.C. Sept. 27, 2019) (holding that giving "agency the ultimate authority to *make* the decision ... is not the same thing as giving the agency sole discretion to determine the *manner* in which that decision will be made," for example with "a Ouija board").

Therefore, section 1252(a)(2)(B)(ii) "restricts jurisdiction *only* with respect to the executive's exercise of discretion" in deciding the ultimate outcome on return to Mexico, not "jurisdiction over questions of law" whether class members must have access to and assistance of counsel before that outcome, and it "mischaracterizes Plaintiffs' challenge" to state otherwise. *Hernandez*, 872 F.3d at 988. The absurd logical conclusion of Defendants' contrary position is that this Court could not review a policy to bind and gag or otherwise prevent persons from speaking at non-*refoulement* interviews.

issue "collateral" to the outcome or the "substantive standards" for deciding that outcome, such as whether an agency "denied the plaintiffs due process by not permitting them access to certain records" before the agency made the ultimate decision. *Gebhardt v. Nielsen*, 879 F.3d 980, 987 (9th Cir. 2018), *cert. denied*, 139 S. Ct. 330 (2018). Similarly, the Court may decide whether class members must have access to and assistance of counsel in making their case because that issue is collateral to the ultimate question of return to Mexico.

As the government's own authority acknowledges, this Court may review an

As the Court recognized, the "non-inquiry" issue is a "strawman argument" because "Petitioners are not challenging an executive branch decision to return Petitioners to Mexico." TRO Order at 5-6 n.2. Plaintiffs assert claims under the APA and Due Process Clause, not "the Convention Against Torture" or extradition statutes. Response at 9:3.

# II. PLAINTIFFS ARE LIKELY TO PREVAIL ON THE MERITS.

## A. Class Members Retain Express Statutory Rights to Counsel.

Defendants assert nothing that warrants revisiting the Court's holding that class members are "entitled to be accompanied, represented, and advised by counsel" because they are "compelled to appear in person before an agency or representative thereof." TRO Order at 7:9–11 (quoting 5 U.S.C. § 555(b)).

It is absurd to contend class members are not "compelled to appear at their non-refoulement interviews." Response at 14:23. They are forced into the MPP program. They are "held in CBP detention facilities" and brought to the interviews in custody, and their "freedom is clearly confined and restrained." TRO Order at 5:9–10. If such detention is not "overwhelming pressure," then nothing is. Response at 14:20. Although a subpoena or summons may be sufficient, neither is necessary to constitute compulsion. Nor is section 555(b) limited to "witnesses." *Id.* at 14:13. It protects any "person compelled to appear." 5 U.S.C. § 555(b). Congress could have said "witness," but it chose the broader term "person." Defendants

cannot rewrite the statute to suit their convenience.

Section 555(b) contains two related but different provisions on access to counsel. The first guarantees the right to "be accompanied, represented, and advised by counsel" for any "person compelled to appear in person before an agency or representative thereof" for any purpose. 5 U.S.C. § 555(b). The second gives a "party" the right to "appear ... with counsel ... in an agency proceeding." *Id*. The first is broader than the second, applying to any "person," not just a "party"; protecting the right to be "represented" and "advised," not merely to "appear"; and containing no limitation to "agency proceeding[s]."

Therefore, section 555(b) does not apply "only 'to agency adjudications of liability." Response at 14:16–17; *see United States v. DiStefano*, 129 F. Supp. 2d 342, 349 n.3 (S.D.N.Y. 2001) (section 555(b) applied at investigative deposition). In any event, a decision on non-*refoulement* is the "final disposition" of whether a class member will be returned to Mexico pending removal proceedings, which is unreviewable and collateral to the merits of removability. Response at 15:12. Therefore, non-*refoulement* interviews are "agency proceeding[s]" even assuming section 555(b) is so limited.

The Court already held section 555(b) applies to this case because the INA "has not expressly superseded" it in the context of "a non-*refoulement* interview." TRO Order at 8–9. In contending otherwise, Defendants continue to ignore the rule that a subsequent statute cannot supersede the APA's default right to counsel unless "it does so expressly." 5 U.S.C. § 559.

Defendants admit "there is no statutory ... provision" in the INA on "access to retained counsel prior to and during a non-refoulement interview." Response at 12:26–27. As this Court ruled, "Where the INA is silent, the APA default provisions necessarily apply." TRO Order at 8:23–24. Other courts agree. *Aslam v. Mukasey*, 531 F. Supp. 2d 736, 742 (E.D. Va. 2008) (where "INA mandates no particular time frame" to decide "adjustment of status application," agency "is

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subject to the catchall time requirement" in section 555(b); *Kim v. Ashcroft*, 340 F. Supp. 2d 384, 393 (S.D.N.Y. 2004) (without "statutory or regulatory deadline" for USCIS to "adjudicate an application," agency is subject to "section 555(b)"). To ignore the express statement rule of section 559, as Defendants do, would improperly "emasculate an entire section" of the APA. *United States v. Menasche*, 348 U.S. 528, 538–39 (1955).

As this Court observed, the Supreme Court has not held otherwise. TRO Order at 7:27–8:3. The Supreme Court held only that specific provisions of the INA involving "deportation proceedings" superseded the APA's hearing requirements, because those provisions expressly stated they "shall be the sole and exclusive procedure for determining the *deportability* of an alien under this section." Ardestani v. INS, 502 U.S. 129, 133-34 (1991) (quoting Marcello v. Bonds, 349 U.S. 302 (1955)) (emphasis added). In relevant part, the current version of that provision is similarly limited to removal proceedings. 8 U.S.C. § 1229a(a)(3) "unless otherwise specified," immigration court proceedings "shall be the sole and exclusive procedure for determining whether an alien may be ... removed from the United States."). As Defendants concede, under the INA "decisions to remove an alien" are distinct from decisions to "return an alien" to a "contiguous territory." Response at 17:16–18. Accordingly, the INA does not supersede the APA right to counsel in this case because "[a]ccess to retained counsel for a non-refoulement interview, which is undisputedly not a part of formal removal proceedings, is not addressed in the INA." TRO Order at 8:27–28.

For the same reasons, the Court already distinguished cases about "expedited removal proceedings," Response at 11:24, because whatever the INA may say about "removal proceedings," it does not address "whether asylum seekers have access to retained counsel" in the different context of "a non-refoulement interview." TRO Order at 8:20–21. The Ninth Circuit did not address whether section 555(b) applies to expedited removal in *United States v. Barajas-Alvarado*,

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655 F.3d 1077, 1088 (9th Cir. 2011). Even if one court has held section 555(b) "does not apply" to an expedited removal proceeding, such a holding remains distinguishable because it pertains only to proceedings governed by "removal statutes." *United States v. Quinteros Guzman*, No. 3:18-CR-00031-001, 2019 WL 3220576, at \*10 (W.D. Va. July 17, 2019). As this Court already held, a non-refoulement interview is not part of "removal proceedings," expedited or otherwise, or addressed in any removal statute. TRO Order at 8:28.

It is irrelevant whether there is any right to counsel in "primary or secondary inspection." Response at 13:14. Such inspection is a limited threshold inquiry by CBP officers into customs matters and eligibility to enter the United States. Am. Immigration Lawyers Ass'n v. Reno, 18 F. Supp. 2d 38, 42 (D.D.C. 1998), aff'd, 199 F.3d 1352 (D.C. Cir. 2000). It does not reach the separate, complex, and factintensive question whether an individual has established sufficient evidence of fear of persecution or torture to satisfy the non-refoulement doctrine, which is determined in a lengthy and thorough interview by a USCIS asylum officer. As Defendants admit, "primary and secondary inspection" occur in "inspection booths" and "ensur[e] and facilitat[e] lawful trade and travel, and prevent[] the introduction of contraband into the United States." Marin Decl., ECF No. 30-4 ¶ 24. By contrast, the non-refoulement interview occurs in an "interview room" in a different location, id. ¶ 22, usually days later, after a person is "referred to a USCIS asylum officer for screening" to "assess whether it is more likely than not that the alien will face persecution or torture if returned to Mexico," Response at 4:8–10. Therefore, a nonrefoulement interview is not part of the "inspection process." Id. at 13:19–20.

### **B.** The Policy Is Arbitrary and Capricious.

The Policy remains arbitrary and capricious because there is no material distinction between credible fear, reasonable fear, and non-*refoulement* interviews for purposes of access to retained counsel. Each is an interview concerning the issue of "persecution based on a protected ground or torture," *id.* at 17:9–10, but

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Defendants deny access to counsel only for non-refoulement. Persecution is persecution and torture is torture, regardless of procedural posture.<sup>1</sup>

Concerns about "capacity and resources" remain problems of Defendants' own making. Id. at 18:17–18. The government elected to create MPP, implement it at scale, and detain people in CBP custody pending non-refoulement interviews, when it concedes ICE custody can accommodate counsel access. Marin Decl., ECF No. 30-4 ¶ 19. It cannot bootstrap its choices into justifications for those choices.

#### C. The Policy Violates Procedural and Substantive Due Process.

The entry fiction does not deprive any class members of the procedural due process right of access to retained counsel for non-refoulement interviews. It covers only "rights available in the admissions process," not the separate matter of return to Mexico pending removal proceedings. Kwai Fun Wong v. United States, 373 F.3d 952, 972 (9th Cir. 2004). Defendants ignore the rule that their interference with an existing attorney-client relationship necessarily violates the Constitution. Comm. of Cent. Am. Refugees v. I.N.S., 795 F.2d 1434, 1439 (9th Cir. 1986). In any event, their discussion of the *Mathews* factors is fundamentally flawed.

On the first factor—the interest at stake—the paramount interest in freedom from persecution, torture, or death remains no less "weighty" in Mexico than in class members' home countries. Response at 22:3. Whatever aspiration the Mexican government has "to honor its international-law obligations," id. at 22:1-2, the record demonstrates clear threats to class members in Mexico. ECF 2-1 at 5:7-13. As noted by the USCIS asylum officers' union, citing Department of State reports, "Mexico is simply not safe for Central American asylum seekers."<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>1</sup> A regulation providing an attorney "may be present at the [credible fear] interview" cannot mean an attorney may *not* be present. Response at 18:8-12 (citing 8 C.F.R. § 208.30(d)(4)). Plaintiffs cannot credibly be accused of "unreasonably delay[ing] the process" to languish in horrific conditions of detention. *Id.* at 18:2-5.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>2</sup> Brief of Amicus Curiae Local 1924 in Support of Plaintiffs-Appellees' Answering Brief and Affirmance of the District Court's Decision, 2019 WL 2894881 \*22-23, Innovation Law Lab v. McAleenan, 924 F.3d 503 (9th Cir. 2019).

On the second factor—risk of error and value of additional safeguards— 1 access to and assistance of counsel unquestionably reduce the risk of error. Unlike 2 the "narrow and mechanical determinations" involved in reinstating a removal 3 order, Morales-Izquierdo v. Gonzales, 486 F.3d 484, 496 (9th Cir. 2007), non-4 refoulement decisions involve complex, fact-intensive issues for which counsel is 5 essential to develop a full record. The record demonstrates the self-evident value of 6 access to counsel. Uncontested declarations establish the value of counsel's 7 participation. ECF No 2-2, Chavarria Decl. at 152 ¶¶ 23-29, Cargioli Decl. at 172 8 ¶¶ 29-35, Waldron Decl. at 181 ¶¶ 24-28, Knox Decl. at 187 ¶¶ 11-14. Plaintiffs 9 themselves did not pass non-refoulement interviews without access to counsel but 10 did so with assistance of counsel after the TRO Order was issued. Decl. of 11 Stephanie Blumberg in Support of Plaintiff-Petitioners' Reply, Dec.12, 2019 ¶¶ 3-12 9; Cadill-Mirillo Decl., ECF No. 30-2 ¶¶ 5-7. 13

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Case studies confirm the value of access to lawyers. Two months after the establishment of an attorney project at a detention center, removals decreased by 97 percent.<sup>3</sup> Similarly, a pro bono project in a family detention center secured relief from expedited removal for more than 99 percent of those represented.<sup>4</sup> After asylum seekers detained for credible fear interviews secured access to counsel, 100 percent of those represented were found to have a credible fear. *Innovation Law Lab v. Nielsen*, 342 F. Supp. 3d 1067, 1073–75 (D. Or. 2018).

On the third factor—burden on the government—any alleged burden is a problem of the government's own making and cannot outweigh the paramount interest at stake and high risk of error. Defendants provide confidential attorney-client meetings for CBP detainees in other contexts. *See, e.g.,* Chavarria Decl., ECF No. 2-2 at 152 ¶ 23. There is no legitimate reason they cannot do so here. Access to

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>3</sup> Innovation Law Lab, The Artesia Report, https://innovationlawlab.org/the-artesia-report/.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>4</sup> Kari E. Hong and Stephen Manning, Getting it Righted: Access to Counsel in Rapid Removals, 101 Marquette L. Rev. 673, 699-700 (2018).

counsel is far more important than the marginal value of serving notice of a removal hearing on both an adult sponsor and a 16-year-old, rather than only on the youth. *Cruz Pleitez v. Barr*, 938 F.3d 1141, 1143 (9th Cir. 2019).

Even if the entry fiction applies to procedural due process claims of some class members, it does not foreclose the substantive due process rights of any class members. *Cancino Castellar v. McAleenan*, 388 F. Supp. 3d 1218, 1246 (S.D. Cal. 2019). Few things are more fundamental to "ordered liberty," *id.* at 1236, than the right of access to and assistance of retained counsel for persons confined by the government who must make their case against forced return to a country where they fear persecution, torture, or death. The class members are persons seeking asylum facing blanket denials of counsel access, not "present and future death row and high-maximum security inmates" facing only non-contact in-person legal visits. *Mann v. Reynolds*, 46 F.3d 1055, 1056 (10th Cir. 1995). Their rights cannot be reduced to, much less below, those of convicted prisoners. *Jones v. Blanas*, 393 F.3d 918, 931 (9th Cir. 2004).

## D. The Right of Access to Counsel Requires In-Person Visits.

Plaintiffs expressly sought to enjoin Defendants "from preventing confidential legal visits" with class members. ECF No. 1 at 27:9. Even for convicted prisoners, access to counsel must be confidential and in-person. *Ching v. Lewis*, 895 F.2d 608, 610 (9th Cir. 1990). If mere delays in visits by attorneys to detained clients improperly "impaired their ability to establish rapport and trust with clients, to collect information from clients, [and] to counsel clients in a crisis," then the total denial of such visits is unlawful. *Benjamin v. Fraser*, 264 F.3d 175, 180 (2d Cir. 2001). "[E]ven if telephone access were available, a healthy counsel relationship in the immigration context requires confidential in-person visitation" with detainees, "especially where an immigrant must be forthcoming about sensitive matters such as past trauma," which is especially salient for class members seeking asylum. *Arroyo v. United States Dep't of Homeland Sec.*, No. SACV 19-

815 JGB (SHKx), 2019 WL 2912848, at \*17 (C.D. Cal. June 20, 2019). Effective communication and rapport with clients are far more than verbal. They include eye contact, gestures, facial expressions, body language, and other nuances that cannot be captured telephonically. Any "paucity of support in appellate opinions" for that self-evident principle "does more to show that the proposition is too clear to be questioned than to show that it is debatable." *Ueland v. United States*, 291 F.3d 993, 997 (7th Cir. 2002). It is absurd to contend that the hypothetical ability to talk with counsel before detention deprives class members of the right to consult retained counsel before a critical interview that could determine whether they live or die. Class members therefore have the right to confidential in-person legal visits.

#### III. THE REMAINING FACTORS FAVOR AN INJUNCTION.

Defendants assert nothing to refute the Court's holding that irreparable harm, balance of hardships, and public interest favor an injunction. TRO Order at 9–10. They ignore evidence of harm suffered by Plaintiffs and class members in Mexico. ECF No. 2-1 at 4–5. They ignore evidence and case law on the importance of counsel in accurate assessments of the likelihood of persecution or torture. They ignore the fact that Plaintiffs' own "fear assessments" turned out differently when Plaintiffs were guaranteed access to counsel. Response at 24:13. The government suffers no cognizable harm from being compelled to follow the law, and the balance of equities and public interest always favor protecting fundamental rights. *Arizona Dream Act Coal. v. Brewer*, 757 F.3d 1053, 1069 (9th Cir. 2014); *Zepeda v. INS*, 753 F.2d 719, 727 (9th Cir. 1983).

#### **CONCLUSION**

For the stated reasons, Plaintiffs respectfully request that the court grant their motion for preliminary injunction.

Dated: December 13, 2019 Respectfully submitted,

s/ Bardis VakiliBardis Vakili

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ACLU FOUNDATION OF SAN DIEGO & 2 3 **IMPERIAL COUNTIES** P.O. Box 87131 4 San Diego, CA 92138-7131 Telephone: (619) 398-4493 5 Counsel for Plaintiff-Petitioners 6 7 UNITED STATES DISTRICT COURT SOUTHERN DISTRICT OF CALIFORNIA 8 9 Case No. 19cv2119 DMS AGS CRISTIAN DOE, DIANA DOE, 10 Plaintiff-Petitioners, 11 **DECLARATION OF** STEPHANIE BLUMBERG IN v. 12 SUPPORT OF PLAINTIFFS-CHAD F. WOLF, Acting Secretary of PETITIONERS' REPLY IN 13 Homeland Security; et al., **SUPPORT OF MOTION FOR** PRELIMINARY INJUNCTION 14 Defendants-Respondents. 15 DATE: December 20, 2019 TIME: 1:30 p.m. 16 CTRM: 13A Hon. Dana M. Sabraw 17 18 19 20 21 22 23 24 25 26 27 28

#### DECLARATION OF STEPHANIE BLUMBERG

- I, Stephanie Blumberg, hereby declare as follows:
  - 1. I have personal knowledge of the facts set forth below, and if called to testify to the same, I could and would do so competently.
  - 2. I am an immigration attorney at Jewish Family Services of San Diego ("JFS"). In that capacity, I represent the plaintiffs in this case known as Cristian Doe and Diana Doe (collectively, "Clients") and their children in their immigration proceedings. Clients and their children are seeking asylum and were previously subject to the "Remain in Mexico" or "Migrant Protection Protocols" program ("MPP").
  - 3. After the court granted the Temporary Restraining Order in this case on November 12, 2019, I was able to confidentially consult with Clients in person in preparation for their non-*refoulement* interviews at a Customs and Border Protection ("CBP") office in downtown San Diego on November 13, 2019, along with Luis Gonzalez, a supervising attorney with JFS.
  - 4. The non-*refoulement* interview for Plaintiff Cristian Doe occurred on November 14, 2019 at approximately 11 a.m. I was present telephonically in the interview along with two other supervising JFS attorneys. Others who participated in the interview included the Asylum Officer and an interpreter. The interview lasted over three hours.
  - 5. During the interview, we were able to participate by identifying discrepancies with the interpretation and adding to the record by eliciting important testimony from Cristian Doe.
- 6. For instance, it was clear that the interpreter was not directly translating what Cristian Doe was saying to the Asylum Officer; rather, he was summarizing and missing important points. I was able to intervene and ask the interpreter to slow Cristian Doe down if he was unable to directly translate. I also intervened when the interpreter mis-translated a couple of very important DECLARATION OF

STEPHANIE BLUMBERG

Case No. 19cv2119

STEPHANIE BLUMBERG