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**UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF JUSTICE  
EXECUTIVE OFFICE FOR IMMIGRATION REVIEW  
BOARD OF IMMIGRATION APPEALS**

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| <p><b>In the Matter of:</b></p> <p><b>DURAN ORTEGA, MANUEL<br/>LEONIDAS</b></p> |  |
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**REQUEST OF JOURNALIST ORGANIZATIONS TO  
APPEAR AS *AMICI CURIAE***

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Pursuant to 8 C.F.R. § 1292.1(d), the following ten media and journalism organizations respectfully request leave to appear as *amici curiae* and to file the accompanying brief. Proposed *amici* have extensive experience working with and

representing the interests of journalists, both in the United States and abroad.

Proposed *amicus curiae* **American Society of News Editors** (“ASNE”), with some 500 members, is an organization that includes directing editors of daily newspapers throughout the Americas. ASNE changed its name in April 2009 to American Society of News Editors and approved broadening its membership to editors of online news providers and academic leaders. Founded in 1922 as American Society of Newspaper Editors, ASNE is active in a number of areas of interest to top editors with priorities on improving freedom of information, diversity, readership and the credibility of newspapers.

Proposed *amicus curiae* **The Associated Press Media Editors** (“APME”) is a nonprofit, tax-exempt organization of newsroom leaders and journalism educators that works closely with The Associated Press to promote journalism excellence. APME advances the principles and practices of responsible journalism; supports and mentors a diverse network of current and emerging newsroom leaders; and champions the First Amendment and promotes freedom of information.

Proposed *amicus curiae*

alternative to the mainstream press. AAN members have a total weekly circulation of seven million and a reach of over 25 million readers.

Proposed *amicus curiae* **Media Law Resource Center** is a non-profit trade association which counts as members about 140 media companies and 200 law firms practicing media law. It presents conferences on media law globally, distributes newsletters and bulletins about media law and has sixteen (16) standing committees on substantive media law subjects.

Proposed *amicus curiae* **The National Association of Hispanic Journalists (“NAHJ”)** is the largest organization of Latino journalists in the United States and dedicated to the recognition and professional advancement of Hispanics in the news industry. The mission of NAHJ is to increase the number of Latinos in the newsrooms and to work toward fair and accurate representation of Latinos in news media. Established in April 1984, NAHJ created a national voice and unified vision for all Hispanic journalists. NAHJ has approximately 2,200 members, including working journalists, journalism students, other media-related professionals and journalism educators. For more information please visit [NAHJ.org](http://NAHJ.org) or follow on Twitter @NAHJ.

Proposed *amicus curiae* **National Hispanic Media Coalition (“NHMC”)** is a media advocacy and civil rights organization for the advancement of Latinos, working towards a media that is fair and inclusive of Latinos, and towards

universal, affordable, and open access to communications. NHMC was established in Los Angeles in 1986.

Proposed *amicus curiae* **PEN America**, a non-profit organization based in New York, stands at the intersection of literature and human rights to protect open expression in the United States and worldwide. It champions the freedom to write, recognizing the power of the word to transform the world. Its mission is to unite writers and their allies to celebrate creative expression and defend the liberties that make it possible. PEN America's free expression work includes advocacy to defend writers, journalists and protect free expression and press freedoms in the

grassroots organization in 1946, RTDNA works to protect the rights of broadcast and digital journalists in the courts and legislatures throughout the country, promotes ethical standards in the industry, provides members with training and education and honors outstanding work in the profession through the Edward R. Murrow Awards. The Association's members help shape the future of the journalism profession as it protects their interests by advocating on their behalf and lobbying in their interest. It defends the First Amendment, advocates for open government and freedom of information, and promotes diversity in newsroom staffing and coverage.

Proposed *amicus curiae* **Reporters Without Borders**, a 501(c)(3) non-profit organization is the US office of the global organization Reporters sans frontières (“**RSF**”), based in Paris, a world leading defender of freedom of information with more than 30 years of experience. Thanks to an international network of correspondents in 130 countries, 12 offices (Vienna, Brussels, Helsinki, Paris, Berlin, Madrid, Stockholm, Geneva, Taipei, Tunis, DC, London) and a consultative status at the UN and UNESCO, RSF is able to make a global impact, gather a great deal of on-the ground information, conduct major advocacy campaigns, and assist and defend news providers all across the world. RSF has a significant interest in protecting freedom of expression and the ability of journalists to gather and report news – including by ensuring that journalists are free to

exercise their profession reporting on important issues such as corruption and drug cartels without fear of physical violence or murder.

Proposed *amicus curiae* **Society of Professional Journalists (“SPJ”)** is the nation’s largest, most broad-based journalism association. SPJ is dedicated to encouraging the free practice of journalism and stimulating high standards of ethical behavior. Founded in 1909 as Sigma Delta Chi, SPJ promotes the free flow of information vital to a well-informed citizenry through the daily work of its nearly 7,500 members; works to inspire and educate current and future journalists through professional development; and protects First Amendment guarantees of freedom of speech and press through its advocacy efforts.

The American Society of News Editors, Associated Press Media Editors, Association of Alternative Newsmedia, Media Law Resource Center, National Association of Hispanic Journalists, National Hispanic Media Coalition, PEN America, Radio Television Digital News Association, Reporters Without Borders, and Society of Professional Journalists therefore respectfully request leave to appear as *amici curiae*.

Pursuant to Rule 2.10, proposed *amici* have attached a copy of their  
Proposed B

Dated: June 20, 2018

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## **I. STATEMENT OF INTEREST OF *AMICI CURIAE***

*Amici Curiae* are ten media and journalism organizations that represent and advocate for the interests of journalists, both in the United States and abroad. They request to appear before the Board to defend two fundamental principles at stake in this case: that individuals who face the risk of persecution abroad should be given safe harbor in the United States, and that all persons in this country – no matter their citizenship or legal status – enjoy a First Amendment right to free speech.

What sets the United States apart from many other countries in the world is its guarantee to all within its borders of basic civil liberties, including the right to speak freely. Seeking removal of the respondent, Manuel Duran Ortega, as reprisal for exercising his right to speech breaks from that venerable tradition. Moreover, the country to which the Government has sought his removal – El Salvador – is one where such government reprisal is routine. More than that, deporting Mr. Duran Ortega to El Salvador may imperil his life. The law does not permit his removal.

## **II. SUMMARY OF ARGUMENT**

*Amici* offer two arguments for the Board's consideration. *First*, Mr. Duran Ortega's motion to reopen should be granted because of substantial evidence showing that the conditions in which journalists in El Salvador operate have materially changed since his *in absentia* removal order was entered in 2007. Non-



### **III. ARGUMENT**

#### **A. There is Abundant Evidence that Circumstances For Journalists in El Salvador Have Materially Changed Since 2007.**

An otherwise untimely motion to reopen removal proceedings will be granted where the evidence of changed country conditions “is material and was not available and would not have been discovered or presented at the previous proceeding.” *Zhang v. U.S. Atty’y* > .872 H 1 Tf -0(P)Tj -0.006 Tc 006BhegraA.d whAAAt 80 T



*The Nation* reported a climb in the “instances of aggression” against Salvadoran journalists, John Washington, *In El Salvador, Journalism Can Get You Killed*, *The Nation* (Sept. 8, 2015), <https://www.thenation.com/article/in-el-salvador-journalism-can-get-you-killed>. The growing consensus, in short, is that matters have worsened significantly and that it is presently a particularly dangerous time to be engaged in journalism in El Salvador.

That fact appears in large part attributable to the widespread and severe deterioration in safety and security in El Salvador. As has been widely reported, warfare by and between the country’s gangs has created “[e]xceptionally intense and persistent violence.” International Crisis Group, *El Salvador’s Politics of Perpetual Violence* (Dec. 19, 2017), <https://www.crisisgroup.org/latin-america-caribbean/central-america/el-salvador/64-el-salvadors-politics-perpetual-violence> (hereinafter, “*Perpetual Violence*”).<sup>2</sup> Indeed, given El Salvador’s size and population, the extent of its gangs’ territorial presence and armed power “has no

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<sup>2</sup> See also, e.g., Jasmine Garsd, *How El Salvador Fell Into a Web of Gang Violence*, NPR (Oct. 5, 2015), <https://www.npr.org/sections/goatsandsoda/2015/10/05/445382231/how-el-salvador-fell-into-a-web-of-gang-violence>; Dan Harris, Adam Desiderio, Jenna Millman, & Lauren Effron, *In El Salvador, The Murder Capital of the World, Gang Violence Becomes a Way of Life*, ABC News (May 17, 2016), <https://abcnews.go.com/International/el-salvador-murder-capital-world-gang-violence-life/story?id=39177963>; Oscar Martinez, Efren Lemus, Carlos Martinez, & Deborah Sontag, *Killers on a Shoestring: Inside the Gangs of El Salvador*, N.Y. Times (Nov. 20, 2016), <https://www.nytimes.com/2016/11/21/world/americas/el-salvador-drugs-gang-ms-13.html>.

equal anywhere in the world.” *Id.* Government institutions “have proved singularly unable” to address this problem: security strategy has been largely

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reports indicate that individuals deported from the United States to El Salvador and other central American countries with high rates of violence are murdered with disturbing frequency. Sibylla Brodzinsky & Ed Pilkington, *US Government Deporting Central American Migrants to Their Deaths*, *The Guardian* (Oct. 12, 2015), <https://www.theguardian.com/us-news/2015/oct/12/obama-immigration-deportations-central-america>.

As gang violence has risen in El Salvador, so too have targeted attacks by gangs on Salvadoran journalists. In March 2016, Nicolás Humberto García, a 23-year-old director of a community radio station, was disfigured and killed after his reporting on youth violence prevention, which had drawn death threats from gangs. Comm. to Protect Journalists, *Nicolás Humberto García* (Mar. 10, 2016), <https://cpj.org/data/people/nicolas-humberto-garcia>. That killing followed an incident in December 2015, when gang members took a cameraman for a television news program hostage, confiscated his cellphone, and demanded that he show them footage he had recently recorded before releasing him. Freedom House, *El Salvador: Freedom of the Press 2016*, <https://freedomhouse.org/report/freedom-press/2016/el-salvador>. And that incident took place in Soyapango – the same region where, four and a half years earlier, a cameraman “constantly participating in police operations and raids against gang members” died after he was shot ten times. Monica Medel, *Camarógrafo es acribillado en autobús en El*





handed responses to gang violence – frequently at their own peril. Just last year, journalists at two major news outlets received death threats in response to a story about the police’s involvement in three extrajudicial killings and other illegal activities. *Two Salvadoran News Websites Threatened for Their Reporting*, Comm. to Protect Journalists (Aug. 28, 2017)

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plainly be part of that class. The Supreme Court’s decision in *United States v. Verdugo-Urquidez*, 494 U.S. 259 (1990), is instructive. That case addressed whether the Fourth Amendment’s protection for the “right of the people” to be free from unreasonable searches and seizures applied to the government’s search of a noncitizen’s property in Mexico. *Id.* at 261. The Court held that it did not, but explained that “the people” protected by the Fourth Amendment is a group broader than just the American citizenry; rather, it refers to “a class of persons who are part of a national community or who have otherwise developed sufficient connection with this country to be considered part of the community.” *Id.* at 265. The Court’s analysis is consistent with the Court’s holding in *United States v. Verdugo-Urquidez*, 494 U.S. 259 (1990).

here attests to his substantial and meaningful connections to the United States. Mr. Duran Ortega has continuously resided in the United States for close to 12 years. Mot., Ex. A ¶ 2. He has not hidden in the shadows, but has spent nearly all of the time as a journalist in Memphis, reporting on matters of interest to his local community – first as a News Director and Co-Anchor for *Radio Ambiente*, and then through a news outlet he founded himself, *Memphis Noticias*. *Id.* ¶ 6. He has developed close relationships within the community, and has served it by providing years’ worth of reporting on matters that are indisputably matters of public concern. *See generally id.* These ties are more than sufficient to bestow upon him the same constitutional right to free speech enjoyed by American citizens. *See, e.g., Ibrahim*, 669 F.3d at 996-97 (noncitizen’s doctoral studies at American university were sufficient to establish “substantial voluntary connection to United States” required to assert constitutional claims). Simply put, Mr. Duran Ortega has the same First Amendment rights that any American citizen does.

The right to speak freely entails, of course, the right to be free from reprisal for one’s speech and from actions by government officials to censor or to suppress such speech. The central meaning of the First Amendment – and the protection that differentiated our Nation from the English Crown and continues to distinguish it from large swaths of the world – is that it prevents government officials from taking actions to suppress speech critical of them. *See, e.g., Rossignol v.*

*Voorhaar*, 316 F.3d 516, 522 (4th Cir. 2003) (“In suppressing criticism of their official conduct . . . , defendants did more than compromise some attenuated or penumbral First Amendment right; they struck at its heart.”). And, as the Supreme Court just reiterated earlier this week in an 8-1 decision, “the First Amendment prohibits government officials from retaliating against individuals for engaging in protected speech.” *Lozman v. City of Riviera Beach, Fla.*, --- S. Ct. ----, 2018 WL 3013809, at \*3 (Jun. 18, 2018). In whatever form or context it may occur, government reprisal for protected speech is anathema because “it threatens to inhibit exercise of the protected right.” *Crawford-El v. Britton*, 523 U.S. 574, 588 n.10 (1998). And where, as here, the speech in question bears on a matter of public concern, it occupies “the highest rung of the hierarchy of First Amendment values, and is entitled to special protection.” *Connick v. Myers*, 461 U.S. 138, 145 (1983) (internal marks and citation omitted); *see also Snyder v. Phelps*, 562 U.S. 443, 451-52 (2011) (“Speech on matters of public concern is at the heart of the First Amendment’s protection”); *Garrison v. Louisiana*, 379 U.S. 64, 74-75 (1964) (“[S]peech concerning public affairs is more than self-expression; it is the essence of self-government.”). Put simply, efforts to suppress speech related to matters of public concern, whether through retaliation or otherwise, “strike at the heart” of the First Amendment’s limitation on government action.



**2. There is Substantial Evidence Indicating the Government’s Retaliatory and Censorial Purpose and Effect Against Mr. Duran Ortega’s Speech.**

The circumstances leading up to and surrounding Mr. Duran Ortega’s arrest and transfer to ICE demonstrate that the Government’s efforts to remove Mr. Duran Ortega are based primarily on his critical reporting about the MPD and ICE.

A simple review of the evidence in the record evinces that retaliatory and censorial motive and effect for the Government’s conduct. For the past decade, Mr. Duran Ortega has peacefully lived and worked as a journalist in Memphis. *See generally* BIA Motion to for Emergency Stay, Ex. D (Affidavit of Melisa Valdez) (“Valdez Aff.”). He became known to the MPD because of his reporting through *Memphis Noticias*, the news outlet he founded in 2014. Mot., Ex. A ¶ 6. *Memphis Noticias* regularly published hard-hitting stories critical of the MPD’s collaboration with ICE and its conduct towards black and Latino members of the community. *Id.* ¶¶ 7-11. In one notable case from 2017, Mr. Duran Ortega reported that, contrary to public statements made by the mayor of Memphis, the MPD had in fact been collaborating with ICE. *Id.* ¶ 9; Mot., Ex. D. The MPD requested that he remove the story; he refused. Mot., Ex. A ¶ 10. In another report in 2018, Mr. Duran Ortega drew national opprobrium when he reported that the MPD had left the body of a murder victim in the back of a van for 49 days. *Id.* ¶ 11.

The MPD arrested Mr. Duran Ortega on April 3, 2018, as he covered for



traffic stop – rather, he was singled out by the MPD, at a public event where his identity was well known to authorities. There is no reasonable explanation for Mr. Duran Ortega’s arrest on minor charges that were promptly dropped, and his transfer to ICE, apart from

and sought to immediately deport – following a routine check-in. A judge enjoined Ragbir’s immediate deportation on due process grounds, and suggested that ICE’s conduct may have also violated the First Amendment. *Ragbir v. Sessions*, 2018 WL 623557, at \*1 n.1 (S.D.N.Y. Jan. 29, 2018) (noting “with grave concern the argument that petitioner has been targeted as a result of his speech and political advocacy on behalf of immigrants’ rights and social justice” and quoting *United States v. Alvarez*, 579 U.S. 709, 716 (2012)). In March of last year, a 22-year-old activist named Daniela Vargas was pulled over by ICE officials after leaving a rally where she had spoken about the rights of undocumented immigrants. Samantha Schmidt, *ICE nabs young ‘dreamer’ applicant after she speaks out at a news conference*, Wash. Post (Mar. 2, 2017), <https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/morning-mix/wp/2017/03/02/ice-nabs-young-dreamer-applicant-after-she-speaks-out-at-a-news-conference>. And, another prominent advocate of immigrants’ rights, Maru Mora-Villalpando, is facing deportation after 22 years in the United States with no criminal record. Linda Yang, *Immigration Activists Say ICE Is Targeting Them for Deportation*, Broadly (Feb. 28, 2018), [https://broadly.vice.com/en\\_us/article/zmwkqe/undocumented-activists-targeted-ice-y4-2\( And\)-8\(,\)-2\( \)JTJ ET /CS1 cs 0 0 1 221\(ine\)12\(nt](https://broadly.vice.com/en_us/article/zmwkqe/undocumented-activists-targeted-ice-y4-2( And)-8(,)-2( )JTJ ET /CS1 cs 0 0 1 221(ine)12(nt)

Government is wielding the tool of deportation and an important voice reporting on the rights of immigrants is effectively being silenced.

Further, as explained above, the Government’s conduct here is also troublesome because it burdens the First Amendment rights of others. Mr. Duran Ortega’s arrest and attempted removal, which have garnered national media attention,<sup>10</sup> conveys a stark and direct message to others considering speaking out against ICE or other law enforcement. This chilling effect, which falls to a great degree on the community of the very people likely to be impacted by ICE and police policies, undermines our “profound national commitment to the principle that debate on public issues should be uninhibited, robust, and wide-open.” *New York Times Co. v. Sullivan*, 376 U.S. 254, 270 (1964). Muzzling Mr. Duran Ortega deprives the audience of his journalism, both within his community and elsewhere, of their First Amendment right to receive his speech. *Kleindienst v. Mandel*, 408 U.S. 753, 770 (1972) (noting “the First Amendment interests of those who seek

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<sup>10</sup> See, e.g., Chantal De Silva, *ICE Arrests Journalist Who Covered Protest Against Agency’s Policies*, Newsweek (Apr. 6, 2018), <http://www.newsweek.com/ice-arrests-manuel-duran-journalist-covered-protest-immigration-agencys-875279>; Sheila Burke, *Lawyers: Journalist was Detained by ICE Because of Reporting*, The Associated Press (Apr. 16, 2018), <https://www.apnews.com/>

personal communication with” noncitizens); *ACLU of Illinois v. Alvarez*, 679 F.3d 583, 592 (7th Cir. 2012) (“[I]t is well established that ‘when one person has a right to speak,’ others hold a ‘reciprocal right to receive’ the speech.” (citations omitted)). In short, the conduct here, if ratified by the Board, provides a roadmap for officials to suppress and retaliate against speech critical of them in a manner that is directly at odds with the values enshrined in the First Amendment.

#### **IV. CONCLUSION**

The circumstances of this case are unusual, but the relief sought is anything but. There is substantial evidence that both the MPD and ICE are seeking Mr. Duran Ortega’s removal to punish him for his constitutionally protected speech and to prevent him from engaging in such speech in the future. Official conduct with a



