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SAN DIEGO DIVISION

15

16 AL OTRO LADO, INC., *et al.*,

17 Plaintiffs,

18 vs.

19 KIRSTJEN M. NIELSEN, *et al.*,

20 Defendants.

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Case No. 3:17-cv-02366-BAS-KSC

Hon. Cynthia A. Bashant

**BRIEF OF IMMIGRATION LAW  
PROFESSORS AS *AMICI  
CURIAE* IN SUPPORT OF  
PLAINTIFFS' OPPOSITION TO  
DEFENDANTS' MOTION TO  
PARTIALLY DISMISS THE  
SECOND AMENDED  
COMPLAINT**

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1 **I. INTEREST OF AMICI CURIAE**

2 *Amici curiae* are **Deborah Anker** (Clinical Professor of Law and founding  
3 Director, Harvard Immigration and Refugee Clinical Program at Harvard Law  
4 School), **Alina Das** (Professor of Clinical Law and Supervising Attorney at New  
5 York University School of Law, and Co-Director of the Immigrant Rights Clinic),  
6 **Denise L. Gilman** (Clinical Professor and Director, Immigration Clinic, University  
7 of Texas at Austin School of Law), **Anil Kalhan** (Professor of Law, Drexel  
8 University Thomas R. Kline School of Law), **Ira Kurzban** (Adjunct Faculty,  
9 University of Miami School of Law), **Stephen Legomsky** (John S. Lehmann  
10 University Professor Emeritus, Washington University in St. Louis School of Law),  
11 **Nancy Morawetz** (Professor of Clinical Law and Co-Director, Immigrant Rights  
12 Clinic at New York University School of Law), **Sarah Paoletti** (Practice Professor  
13 of Law at the University of Pennsylvania Law School), **Margaret L. Satterthwaite**  
14 (Professor of Clinical Law at New York University School of Law), **Jayashri**  
15 **Srikantiah** (Professor of Law and founding Director, Immigrants' Rights Clinic at  
16 Stanford Law School), and **Michael J. Wishnie** (William O. Douglas Clinical  
17 Professor of Law, Yale Law School).<sup>1</sup>

18 *Amici curiae* are law professors who research, write, and practice in the area  
19 of immigration and 36(o)-5.4(f 356.)u-3.9(ra)2.3(i)-49.4(i) 0 0lia37.5(D-1.2(T)e)-1.6





1 of Their Motion to Partially Dismiss the Second Amended Complaint [Dkt. 192-1]  
2 (“the Motion” or “Mot.”) at 2 n.1, 6–11 & 18–25, should be rejected.<sup>2</sup> Review of the  
3 requirements of the INA and Constitution requires facts, not labels.

4         Second, even if the Complaint had not alleged that each plaintiff “crossed the  
5 plane,” it would state cognizable claims. Defendants argue that the CBP officials who  
6 spoke to the new Individual Plaintiffs, and who refused to process Plaintiffs’ asylum  
7 requests, were on U.S. soil—and yet speaking face-to-face with new Individual  
8 Plaintiffs who somehow were not. While it finds no basis in the Complaint, even this

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1 obligations do not extend to the high seas, an asylum applicant just steps from the  
2 border—who is indeed “at” the border—is not on the high seas, or in any place  
3 comparable to the high seas. She is fully protected from *refoulement* by U.S. law.

4 *Amici* therefore respectfully suggest that Defendants’ Motion to Dismiss  
5 should be denied as to the eight new Individual Plaintiffs.

6 **III. DEFENDANTS CANNOT EVADE THEIR LEGAL DUTIES BY**  
7 **INTERCEPTING ASYLUM SEEKERS STEPS FROM U.S. SOIL.**

8 **A. Governing Law Requires that the Extraterritoriality Arguments**  
9 **Be Reviewed Only Upon a Full Factual Record.**

10 The premise of Defendants’ Motion is that the eight new Individual Plaintiffs  
11 assert no valid claims because “when they approached the border to the territorial  
12 United States at the San Ysidro, Laredo, or Hidalgo ports of entry [they] were  
13 prevented by CBP officers or Mexican immigration officials from physically  
14 crossing the international boundary.” Mot. at 2. Defendants assert that the new  
15 Individual Plaintiffs’ claims should be dismissed outright because (1) Defendants’  
16 “duties under the INA are not triggered until an alien is physically present in the  
17 United States,” *id.* at n.1, (2) the new Individual Plaintiffs have no due process rights  
18 because “the Fifth Amendment does not apply to aliens outside the United States,”  
19 *id.* at 18, and (3) “the United States does not have any *non-refoulement* obligation to  
20 aliens outside its borders,” *id.* at 23. In short, the government contends that  
21 everything turns upon a cartographer’s line that the Plaintiffs did not reach.

22 At this point, however, the only record is the Complaint. And the Complaint  
23 does not allege the Defendants’ theory. Rather, it alleges (at minimum) that each new  
24 Individual Plaintiff:

- 25 spoke to CBP officials;
- 26 requested asylum (or expressed an intent to do so); and
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1 33, 185, & 187–88 (Bianca); *id.* ¶¶ 34 & 193 (Emiliana); and *id.* ¶¶ 35 & 199 (César).  
2 It is undisputed that all U.S. ports of entry “are located within the territorial United  
3 States.” Mot. at 11. Thus, the allegation that each new Individual Plaintiff presented  
4 himself or herself “at” a port of entry where he or she spoke to CBP officials is a  
5 plain assertion that each new Individual Plaintiff had sufficient “presence” in the  
6 United States to seek asylum. *See, e.g., Thompson v. Davis*, 295 F.3d 890, 895 (9th  
7 Cir. 2002) (“All allegations of material fact are taken as true and construed in the  
8 light most favorable to the nonmoving party.”). Whatever the significance of  
9 cartography to the ultimate question whether a plaintiff was “at” the border, the  
10 question depends on a factual record that does not yet exist. Given the importance of  
11 the legal questions presented, *Amici* suggest that the Court should resolve them only  
12 upon development of that factual record.

13 **B. Even If the New Individual Plaintiffs Were Turned Back Steps**  
14 **from the Border, They State Cognizable Claims.**

15 It has been nearly forty years since Congress amended the INA to replace the  
16 *ad hoc* refugee and asylum system that grew up over the preceding century to  
17 establish “for the first time a comprehensive United States refugee resettlement and  
18 assistance policy.” S. Rep. No. 96-256, at 1 (1979). The Refugee Act of 1980  
19 amended the INA to “a permanent and systematic procedure for the admission to this  
20 country of refugees of special humanitarian concern to the United States.” Refugee  
21 Act of 1980, Pub. L. No. 96-212, § 101(b), 94 Stat. 102, 102. Explaining the purpose  
22 of the law, Congress declared:  
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1 America’s history—welcoming homeless refugees to our shores” and “gives  
2 statutory meaning to our national commitment to human rights and humanitarian  
3 concerns.” S. Rep. No. 96-256, at 1.

4 Defendants contend that the new Individual Plaintiffs and CBP officials spoke  
5 athwart the map-maker’s line: each new Individual Plaintiff, they argue, “spoke to a  
6 CBP officer *in the United States* but never herself crossed the border.” Mot at 2 n.1  
7 (emphasis added). Even if the Court were to accept what the Complaint contradicts,  
8 it should rule Defendants wrong on the law. U.S. law indisputably provides that the  
9 government may not strip Plaintiff’s rights by barring asylees at the border from  
10 “breaking the plane.”

11 **1. Under the INA, CBP Officials May Not Deny the New**  
12 **Individual Plaintiffs Access to the Asylum Process.**

13 The INA’s asylum provisions extend to persons like the n 26(e)-247t3/O2duB

1 been rebutted—that is, whether the statute gives a clear, affirmative indication that it  
2 applies extraterritorially.” *RJR Nabisco, Inc. v. European Cmty.*, 136 S. Ct. 2090,  
3 2101 (2016). “While the presumption can be overcome only by a clear indication of  
4 extraterritorial effect, an express statement of extraterritoriality is not essential.  
5 ‘Assuredly context can be consulted as well.’” *Id.* at 2102 (quoting *Morrison v. Nat’l*  
6 *Austl. Bank Ltd.*, 561 U.S. 247, 265 (2010)).

7 If the statute clearly indicates that it applies extraterritorially, the analysis is  
8 complete because “[t]he scope of an extraterritorial statute [] turns on the limits  
9 Congress has (or has not) imposed on the statute’s foreign application[.]” *Id.*; *see also*  
10 *Rodriguez v. Swartz*, 899 F.3d 719, 747 (9th Cir. 2018) (the presumption against the  
11 extraterritorial application of a statute “can be overcome when actions ‘touch and  
12 concern the territory of the United States . . . with sufficient force to displace the  
13 presumption’”) (quoting *Kiobel v. Royal Dutch Petrol. Co.*, 569 U.S. 108, 124–25,  
14 (2013)). If the statute does not clearly indicate that it applies extraterritorially, the  
15 court will consider “whether the case involves a domestic application of the  
16 statute . . . by looking to the statute’s ‘focus.’” *RJR Nabisco*, 136 S. Ct. at 2101. “If  
17 the conduct relevant to the statute’s focus occurred in the United States, then the case  
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1 8 U.S.C. § 1225(a)(3).

2 In each of the cited statutes, Congress carefully distinguished the categories  
3 from each other. First, each of the provisions uses the disjunctive “or.” This makes  
4 clear that a person in any one of the categories must be appropriately inspected and  
5 have his asylum claim addressed. *See, e.g., Loughrin v. United States*, 573 U.S. 351,  
6 357 (2014) (the “ordinary use” of the word “or” “is almost always disjunctive, that  
7 is, the words it connects are to be given separate meanings”) (internal quotation  
8 omitted). Second, by setting out distinct categories of eligibility, Congress intended  
9 the terms “[physically] present in the United States” and “who arrives in the United  
10 States” (or “who is arriving in the United States”) to mean different things, under the  
11 familiar canon against surplusage. *See, e.g., Duncan v. Walker*, 533 U.S. 167, 174  
12 (2001). Third, the use of the present tense (“arrives”) and present progressive tense  
13 (“is arriving”) of the verb “to arrive” indicates an ongoing or continuing action. *See,*  
14 *e.g., United States v. Balint*, 201 F.3d 928, 933 (7th Cir. 2000) (“[U]se of the present  
15 progressive tense, formed by pairing a form of the verb ‘to be’ and the present  
16 participle, or ‘-ing’ form of an action verb, generally indicates continuing action.”).  
17 A guest may not have entered the house, and still we refer to him as an “arriving  
18 guest.”

19 The hole in Defendants’ argument appears most starkly in their elisions of the  
20 text. The Motion refers to non-citizens who have “arriv[ed]” in the United States. *See*  
21 *Mot.* at 8 & 9 (alteration in original). But the statute does not say “arrived”; it says  
22 “arrives” and “arriving.” The text does not require a noncitizen to complete her  
23 arrival, but only that she be in the process of doing so. Noncitizens like Plaintiffs who  
24 request asylum or express a fear of persecution in a face-to-face conversation with  
25 CBP officials are in the process of “arriving in the United States” even if those  
26 officials physically stop them from stepping across the cartographer’s line.

27 The third category of noncitizens who must be inspected, and whose asylum  
28 claims must be processed, are those who are “otherwise seeking admission” within

1 the meaning of Section 1225(a)(3). The Complaint describes how each new  
2 Individual Plaintiff specifically sought admission to the United States—in some  
3 cases repeatedly—and was turned back by CBP officials. *See* Compl. ¶¶ 29 & 154–  
4 56 (Roberto); *id.* ¶¶ 30, 162, & 165–167 (Maria and her two children); *id.* ¶¶ 31 &  
5 174–75 (Juan and Úrsula); *id.* ¶¶ 32 & 181 (Victoria); *id.* ¶¶ 33, 185, & 187–88  
6 (Bianca); *id.* ¶¶ 34 & 193 (Emiliana); and *id.* ¶¶ 35 & 199 (César). Although  
7 Defendants assert that Plaintiffs were not “‘seeking admission’ in the manner  
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1 dated Feb. 3, 1997 to Immigration and Naturalization Service from Chairman Smith)  
2 (emphasis added). An alien “attempting to enter” the United States necessarily has  
3 not yet entered. Chairman Smith’s comments confirm that the statutory text was  
4 intentional: Congress meant to reach aliens who are in the active process of entering  
5 the United States, even if they have not yet taken the last steps to cross the border.

6 **d. *Sale* Does Not Support Defendants’ Statutory**  
7 **Interpretation.**

8 Defendants cite *Sale v. Haitian Ctrs. Council, Inc.*, 509 U.S. 155 (1993), in  
9 support of the assertion that “CBP’s duties to ‘inspect,’ ‘refer,’ or ‘detain’ an alien  
10 are triggered *only* if the alien is on American soil.” Mot. at 7–8 (emphasis in original).  
11 *Sale* does not say that. The footnote that Defendants cite merely quotes  
12 Section 1158(a)(1) without relevant commentary. *See id.* at 8 (citing *Sale*, 509 U.S.  
13 at 162 n.11).

14 A narrow decision, *Sale* was driven by the unique facts of the 1990s Haitian  
15 migration crisis. The Supreme Court analyzed whether INA § 243(h), 8 U.S.C.



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the International Boundary, art. IV, Nov. 23, 1970, 23 U.S.T. 390, T.I.A.S. No. 7313

1 asylum claim evaluated in accordance with Due Process extend to anyone, anywhere  
2 who intends to seek asylum. But those rights do extend to those who are on the  
3 threshold of entering the United States, close enough to have a face-to-face  
4 conversation with CBP officers standing on U.S soil, and who are prevented from  
5 advancing further only by the extension of the government’s active force. *Cf.*  
6 *Rodriguez*, 899 F.3d at 731 (“The practical concerns . . . about regulating conduct on  
7 Mexican soil also do not apply here. There are many reasons not to extend the Fourth  
8 Amendment willy-nilly to actions abroad. . . . But those reasons do not apply to [the  
9 CBP agent in *Rodriguez*]. He acted on American soil subject to American law.”).  
10 Under the particular circumstances as pled, the Plaintiffs had a right to apply for  
11 asylum under the INA, and a right to due process in the evaluation of those claims,  
12 even if they technically were standing in Mexico when they requested asylum or  
13 expressed their intent to do so. To hold otherwise, particularly without a full factual  
14 record, would give Defendants *carte blanche* to ignore their duties under the INA,  
15 and, as alleged in the Complaint, to use all manner of lies, threats, coercion, and  
16 physical force to turn back refugees fleeing violence and persecution. *See, e.g.,*  
17 Compl. at ¶¶ 2, 33, 62, 84, 87–97, 107–18, 121–23, 128–31, 134–36, 141–44, 150–  
18 51, 155–56, 167, 174, 181, 185–88, 192–93, 197, 199.

19 The Supreme Court has previously rejected similar claims that the Executive’s  
20 conduct is without constraint:

21 Even when the United States acts outside its borders, its  
22 powers are not “absolute and unlimited” but are subject “to  
23 such restrictions as are expressed in the Constitution.”  
24 *Murphy v. Ramsey*, 114 U.S. 15, 44, 5 S. Ct. 747, 29 L.Ed.  
25 47 (1885). Abstaining from questions involving formal  
26 sovereignty and territorial governance is one thing. To hold  
27 the political branches have the power to switch the  
28 Constitution on or off at will is quite another. The former  
position reflects this Court’s recognition that certain  
matters requiring political judgments are best left to the

1 *Boumediene*, 553 U.S. at 765.

2 **3. The United States’ *Non-Refoulement* Obligations**  
3 **Prohibit It from Denying Noncitizens at The Border**  
4 **from Access to The Asylum Process.**

5 Defendants assert that “the United States does not have a *non-refoulement*  
6 obligation to aliens outside its borders.” Mot. at 23. This is a misreading of the United  
7 States’ responsibilities, and Defendants’ categorical claim is not supported by *Sale*,  
8 the only case they cite. The *Sale* court determined that the United States’ *non-*  
9 *refoulement* obligations did not “appl[y] to action taken by the Coast Guard on the  
10 high seas.” 509 U.S. at 159. In particular, the U.S.’s treaty obligations did not require  
11 the government to transport Haitians intercepted on the high seas to either the U.S.  
12 or a third country, rather than returning the migrants to their home country. *Id.* at  
13 181–83. Here, both Article 33 and the *Sale* Court’s analysis support a finding that the  
14 United States does in fact have a *non-refoulement* obligation to refugees who are at  
15 the border and in the process of attempting to enter this country in search of asylum:

16 1. No Contracting State shall expel or return (“*refouler*”) a  
17 refugee in any manner whatsoever to the frontiers of  
18 territories where his life or freedom would be threatened  
19 on account of his race, religion, nationality, membership of  
20 a particular social group or political opinion.

21 *Sale*, 509 U.S. at 179 (quoting United Nations Protocol Relating to the Status of  
22 Refugees, art. 33.1, Jan. 31, 1967, 19 U.S.T. 6223, T.I.A.S. No. 6577). In evaluating  
23 this prohibition, the *Sale* Court noted that the English word “return” and the French  
24 term “*refouler*”  
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1 prohibition of *refoulement* is not limited to the territory of a State, but also applies to  
2 extraterritorial State action, including action occurring on the high seas. . . . With all  
3 due respect, the United States Supreme Court’s interpretation contradicts the literal  
4 and ordinary meaning of the language of Article 33 of the United Nations Convention  
5 relating to the Status of Refugees and departs from the common rules of treaty  
6 interpretation.”); *The Haitian Ctr. for Human Rights v. United States*, Case 10.675,  
7 Inter-Am. Comm’n H.R., Report No. 51/96, OEA/Ser. L/V/II.95, Doc. 7 rev. ¶ 157  
8 (1997), <http://hrlibrary.umn.edu/cases/1996/unitedstates51-96.htm> (“Article 33 had  
9 no geographical limitations”). These criticisms do not, of course, effect *Sale*’s status  
10 as precedent, but they do counsel against over-reading *Sale* to go beyond the Court’s  
11 holding and reasoning.

12         The facts here are very different from *Sale*, and compel a different conclusion.  
13 It is undisputed that Plaintiffs were at least “at a border” of the United States. *See*,  
14 *e.g.*, Compl. at ¶¶ 30, 86, 96, 97, 105, 150–51, 154, 162, 197; Mot. at 2. The  
15 Complaint specifically alleges that Defendants’ agents resisted Plaintiffs’ efforts to  
16 enter the country and excluded them at the border. Compl. at ¶¶ 33, 62, 84, 87–97,  
17 107–18, 121–23, 128–31, 134–36, 141–44, 150–51, 155–56, 167, 174, 181, 185–88,  
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