

**JURISDICTION OVER IMMIGRATION PETITIONS  
AND STANDARDS OF REVIEW**

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# JURISDICTION OVER IMMIGRATION PETITIONS

## I. OVERVIEW

Congress has amended the judicial review provisions of the Immigration and Nationality Act (“INA”) several times since 1996.

Before 1996, judicial review of most administrative action under the INA was governed by [8 U.S.C. § 1105a](#), which gave exclusive jurisdiction for judicial review over final orders of deportation to the courts of appeals. *Reno v. American-Arab Anti-Discrimination Comm.*, [525 U.S. 471, 476](#) (1999).

In 1996, Congress enacted the Illegal Immigration Reform and Immigrant Responsibility Act of 1996 (“IIRIRA”), Pub. L. No. 104–208, 110 Stat. 3009, *as amended by* Pub. L. No. 104–302, 110 Stat. 3656 (Oct. 11, 1996) *and by* NACARA, Pub. L. No. 105–100, § 203(a)(2), 111 Stat. 2160 (1997), and the Antiterrorism and Effective Death Penalty Act of 1996 (“AEDPA”), Pub. L. No. 104–132, 110 Stat. 1214. “IIRIRA . . . repealed the old judicial-review scheme set forth in § 1105a and instituted a new (and significantly more restrictive) one in [8 U.S.C. § 1252.](#)” *Reno*, [525 U.S. at 475](#). For example, IIRIRA placed significant limits on judicial review over certain discretionary determinations and petitions for review brought by individuals convicted of certain enumerated offenses. Cases that were pending when IIRIRA took effect on April 1, 1997, were to be governed by § 1105a, as modified by the IIRIRA transitional rules. *See Kalaw v. INS*, [133 F.3d 1147, 1150](#) (9th Cir. 1997).

In May 2005, Congress enacted the REAL ID Act of 2005, Pub. L. No. 109-13, 119 Stat. 231 (2005), which made several more significant changes to the judicial review provisions of the INA. Although the REAL ID Act did not repeal any of the existing statutory limits on the scope of judicial review implemented by IIRIRA, it eliminated statutory and non-statutory habeas jurisdiction over final orders of removal, deportation and exclusion, and made a petition for review filed with an appropriate court of appeals the sole and exclusive means for judicial review of such orders. Thus, the REAL ID Act restored the pre-IIRIRA scheme of limiting judicial review over final orders of removal and deportation to the courts of appeal, while maintaining IIRIRA’s limits on review over certain discretionary determinations and cases involving enumerated offenses. *See REAL ID Act*

§ 106(a) (amending [8 U.S.C. § 1252](#)). Simultaneously, the REAL ID Act expanded the scope of direct judicial review of final orders of removal and deportation by providing explicitly for review of all constitutional claims and questions of law related to such final orders. *See* REAL ID Act § 106(a)(1)(A); [8 U.S.C. § 1252\(a\)\(2\)\(D\)](#) (as amended).

The REAL ID Act made this new judicial review scheme applicable to both cases governed by the permanent rules and those governed by IIRIRA’s transitional rules by providing that a petition for review filed under the transitional rules shall be treated as being filed under the permanent provisions of [8 U.S.C. § 1252](#). *See* REAL ID Act § 106(d) (uncodified); *Sotelo v. Gonzales*, [430 F.3d 968, 970](#) (9th Cir. 2005) (explaining that jurisdiction over transitional rules cases is now governed by [8 U.S.C. § 1252](#) rather than [8 U.S.C. § 1105a](#)).

The REAL ID Act’s amendments to the judicial review provisions of the INA and IIRIRA are effective as to all final administrative orders of removal, deportation, or exclusion issued before, on, or after May 11, 2005, the date of enactment, and thus govern all pending petitions for review. *See* REAL ID Act § 106(b) (uncodified).

## II. APPLICABLE STATUTORY PROVISIONS

Petitions for review have been divided into three categories for purposes of judicial review:

- A. **Permanent Rules:** The new rules in [8 U.S.C. § 1252](#) apply to “removal” proceedings initiated on or after April 1, 1997. *See, e.g., Tawadrus v. Ashcroft*, [364 F.3d 1099, 1102](#) (9th Cir. 2004). Removal proceedings commence with the filing of a charging document, called a Notice to Appear, with the Immigration Court. *See infra* Commencement of Proceedings.
- B. **Old Rules:** The judicial review provisions in [8 U.S.C. § 1105a](#), as amended by AEDPA, apply if the final order of deportation or exclusion was entered before October 31, 1996. *See Velarde v. INS*, [140 F.3d 1305, 1309 n.3](#) (9th Cir. 1998) (superseded by statute on other grounds) (holding that the old rules applied where the BIA decided case on September 30, 1996).

- C. Transitional Rules:** Where deportation proceedings were initiated before April 1, 1997, and the final agency order was entered on or after October 31, 1996, the IIRIRA transitional rules apply. *See Kalaw v. INS*, [133 F.3d 1147, 1150](#) (9th Cir. 1997). The transitional rules are not codified, and are located in Pub. L. No. 104–208, 110 Stat. 3009 (Sept. 30, 1996), *as amended by* Pub. L. No. 104–302, 110 Stat. 3656 (Oct. 11, 1996). Transitional rule cases were previously governed by [8 U.S.C. § 1105a](#), as modified by the “Transitional Changes in Judicial Review,” found in IIRIRA § 309(c)(4). However, the REAL ID Act directs that jurisdiction in transitional rules cases is now governed by [8 U.S.C. § 1252](#). *See* REAL ID Act of 2005, Pub. L. No. 109-13, § 106(d), 119 Stat. 231, 311 (2005); *Sotelo v. Gonzales*, [430 F.3d 968, 970](#) (9th Cir. 2005).

### III. GENERAL JURISDICTIONAL PROVISIONS

#### A. Commencement of Proceedings

Deportation or removal proceedings “commence” on the date the charging document is filed with the immigration court. *Armendariz-Montoya v. Sonchik*, [291 F.3d 1116, 1119-21](#) (9th Cir. 2002) (holding in pre-IIRIRA case that deportation proceedings commence when the Order to Show Cause (“OSC”) is filed with the immigration court); *Jimenez-Angeles v. Ashcroft*, [291 F.3d 594, 597-98](#) (9th Cir. 2002) (removal proceedings commence when the Notice to Appear (“NTA”) is filed with the immigration court); *see also United States v. Hovsepian*, [359 F.3d 1144, 1165](#) (9th Cir. 2004) (en banc). The relevant date is the filing of the charging document, not the service of the document on the applicant. *See Cortez-Felipe v. INS*, [245 F.3d 1054, 1056-57](#) (9th Cir. 2001) (proceedings did not commence until the INS filed the NTA even though the INS served petitioner with an OSC before April 1, 1997). Apart from a certificate showing service, there are no other jurisdictional requirements for jurisdiction to vest when an NTA is filed in immigration court. *See Kholi v. Gonzales*, [473 F.3d 1061, 1066-70](#) (9th Cir. 2007) (where name and title of issuing officer were not legible on NTA, alleged defect did not divest immigration court of jurisdiction).

Merely presenting oneself to the immigration service does not commence proceedings. *See Lopez-Urenda v. Ashcroft*, [345 F.3d 788, 792-94](#) (9th Cir. 2003) (filing asylum application before the passage of IIRIRA did not commence proceedings or lead to a settled expectation of placement in deportation, rather than removal, proceedings); *see also Vasquez-Zavala v. Ashcroft*, [324 F.3d 1105, 1108](#) (9th Cir. 2003) (filing of an asylum application before IIRIRA's effective date did not lead to a settled expectation of placement in deportation, rather than removal, proceedings); *Jimenez-Angeles*, [291 F.3d at 600](#) (proceedings did not commence when applicant surrendered to INS).

## **B. Petition for Review Exclusive Means for Judicial Review over Final Orders of Deportation and Removal**

The REAL ID Act, Pub. L. No. 109-13, Div. B., 119 Stat. 231 (2005), eliminated district court habeas corpus jurisdiction over final orders of deportation or removal, and vested jurisdiction to review such orders exclusively in the courts of appeals. *See Martinez-Rosas v. Gonzales*, [424 F.3d 926, 928-29](#) (9th Cir. 2005). As amended by § 106(a) of the REAL ID Act, § 1252(a)(5) of the INA now provides:

Notwithstanding any other provision of law (statutory or nonstatutory), including section 2241 of title 28, or any other habeas corpus provision, and sections 1361 and 1651 of such title, a petition for review filed with an appropriate court of appeals in accordance with this section shall be the sole and exclusive means for judicial review of an order of removal entered or issued under any provision of this chapter, except as provided in subsection (e) of this section.

In addition to eliminating habeas corpus jurisdiction over final administrative orders, the REAL ID Act directed that all such petitions pending in the district court upon enactment, *i.e.*, May 11, 2005, be transferred to the appropriate court of appeals and treated as if filed as a petition for review under INA § 242, [8 U.S.C. § 1252](#).

Although the REAL ID Act did not address how to treat appeals of the denial of habeas corpus relief already pending in the court of appeals upon

enactment, such appeals will in most cases be treated as timely petitions for review. *Rafaelano v. Wilson*, [471 F.3d 1091, 1095-96](#) (9th Cir. 2006); *Almaghzar v. Gonzales*, [457 F.3d 915, 918 n.1](#) (9th Cir. 2006); *Martinez-Rosas v. Gonzales*, [424 F.3d 926, 929](#) (9th Cir. 2005); *see also Alvarez-Barajas v. Gonzales*, [418 F.3d 1050, 1053 n.3](#) (9th Cir. 2005) (“[W]e make no comment on what should be done in the more unusual case where the pending habeas petition requires further factual development. In such a case, construing a pending habeas petition as a petition for review might bar this court from remanding the petition for further fact-finding.”).

“[I]n cases that do not involve a final order of removal, federal habeas corpus jurisdiction remains in the district court, and on appeal to this Court, pursuant to [28 U.S.C. § 2241.](#)” *Nadarajah v. Gonzales*, [443 F.3d 1069, 1076](#) (9th Cir. 2006); *see also Ali v. Gonzales*, [421 F.3d 795, 797 n.1](#) (9th Cir. 2005) (order) (noting that the transfer provisions of the REAL ID Act do not apply where alien does not challenge a final order of removal).

The elimination of habeas corpus review over final orders of removal and deportation does not violate the Suspension Clause. *Puri v. Gonzales*, [464 F.3d 1038, 1042](#) (9th Cir. 2006).

## **C. Final Order of Deportation or Removal**

### **1. Definition**

“The term ‘order of deportation’ means the order of the special inquiry officer, or other such administrative officer to whom the Attorney General has delegated the responsibility for determining whether an alien is deportable, concluding that the alien is deportable or ordering deportation.” [8 U.S.C. § 1101\(a\)\(47\)\(A\)](#). A “special inquiry officer” refers to an immigration judge. *See Molina-Camacho v. Ashcroft*, [393 F.3d 937, 940](#) (9th Cir. 2004), *overruled on other grounds by Lolong v. Gonzales*, [484 F.3d 1173](#) (9th Cir. 2007) (en banc).

The BIA is restricted to affirming orders of deportation or removal, and may not issue them in the first instance. *Noriega-Lopez v. Ashcroft*, [335 F.3d 874, 883-85](#) (9th Cir. 2003) (BIA acted beyond its authority when it vacated IJ’s termination of removal proceedings and issued removal order in the first instance). However,

where the BIA reverses an IJ's grant of relief that, by definition, follows an initial determination by the IJ that the alien is in fact removable, an order of deportation or removal has already been properly entered by the IJ. *See Lolong v. Gonzales*, [484 F.3d 1173, 1177](#) (9th Cir. 2007) (en banc) (overruling *Molina-Camacho v. Ashcroft*, [393 F.3d 937](#) (9th Cir. 2004)), and holding that this court has jurisdiction to review a BIA's order of removal following an initial determination of removability by the IJ); *see also Muradin v. Gonzales*, [494 F.3d 1208, 1209](#) (9th Cir. 2007) (concluding that the BIA's order of removal followed an initial determination of removability where the petitioner conceded removability and the IJ's grant of relief necessarily required the IJ to determine that the petitioner was removable). In such cases, the BIA does not enter an order of deportation *in the first instance* when it orders the alien removed, but simply reinstates the order of removal that has already been entered by the IJ. *Lolong*, [484 F.3d at 1177](#).

An order of deportation “shall become final upon the earlier of – (i) a determination by the Board of Immigration Appeals affirming such order; or (ii) the expiration of the period in which the alien is permitted to seek review of such order by the Board of Immigration Appeals.” [8 U.S.C. § 1101\(a\)\(47\)\(B\)](#); *see also Noriega-Lopez*, [335 F.3d at 882-83](#); *Kalaw v. INS*, [133 F.3d 1147, 1150 n.4](#) (9th Cir. 1997) (“final order of deportation” includes BIA denial of a motion to reopen); *cf. Valencia-Alvarez v. Gonzales*, [469 F.3d 1319, 1323-24](#) (9th Cir. 2006) (holding that res judicata does not bar INS from bringing additional charges where there is no final judgment and no separate action).

Jurisdiction over the petition for review ends if the BIA grants an applicant's motion to reopen because “there is no longer a final decision to review.” *Lopez-Ruiz v. Ashcroft*, [298 F.3d 886, 887](#) (9th Cir. 2002) (order) (dismissing, without prejudice, for lack of jurisdiction); *see also Cordes v. Mukasey*, [5176 F.3d 1094, 1095](#) (9th Cir. 2008) (order) (vacating prior opinion and denying as moot pending petition for rehearing en banc where BIA had previously sua sponte reopened and remanded to IJ for further proceedings); *Timbreza v. Gonzales*, [410 F.3d 1082, 1083](#) (9th Cir. 2005) (order) (dismissing petition and advising parties to notify court when BIA reopens administrative proceedings while a petition for review is pending); *cf. Plasencia-Ayala v. Mukasey*, [516 F.3d 738, 746](#) (9th Cir. 2008) (the BIA's grant of petitioner's motion to reconsider did not divest the court of appeals of jurisdiction over alien's petition for review where BIA affirmed its prior decision and BIA emphasized that

it was granting motion for limited purpose).

## 2. Scope of “Final Order” of Deportation or Removal

“[T]he term final orders in § 106(a) [[8 U.S.C. § 1105a\(a\)](#)] includes all matters on which the validity of the final order is contingent, rather than only those determinations actually made at the hearing.” *INS v. Chadha*, [462 U.S. 919, 938](#) (1983) (internal quotation marks omitted); *see also Montes v. Thornburgh*, [919 F.2d 531, 535](#) (9th Cir. 1990); *Mohammadi-Motlagh v. INS*, [727 F.2d 1450, 1452](#) (9th Cir. 1984).

Under the permanent rules, “[j]udicial review of all questions of law and fact, including interpretation and application of constitutional and statutory provisions, arising from any action taken or proceeding brought to remove an alien from the United States under this subchapter shall be available only in judicial review of a final order under this section.” [8 U.S.C. § 1252\(b\)\(9\)](#). This statutory provision “speaks to . . . the need to consolidate (or ‘zip’) *petitions for review* into one action in the court of appeals.” *Flores-Miramontes v. INS*, [212 F.3d 1133, 1139](#) (9th Cir. 2000); *see also Reno v. American-Arab Anti-Discrimination Comm.*, [525 U.S. 471, 482-83](#) (1999) (describing § 1252(b)(9) as a “general jurisdictional limitation” which “channels judicial review” of immigration actions and decisions, and acts as a “‘zipper’ clause”); *Singh v. Gonzales*, [499 F.3d 969, 976](#) (9th Cir. 2007) (discussing “zipper clause”).

### D. Timeliness

#### 1. Petitions for Review

“The petition for review must be filed not later than 30 days after the date of the final order of removal.” [8 U.S.C. § 1252\(b\)\(1\)](#); *see also Singh v. INS*, [315 F.3d 1186, 1188](#) (9th Cir. 2003); *Narayan v. INS*, [105 F.3d 1335](#) (9th Cir. 1997) (order); IIRIRA § 309(c)(4)(C) (transitional rules). “This provision applies to all final orders of exclusion or deportation entered after October 30, 1996.” *Singh*, [315 F.3d at 1188](#). The time limit is “mandatory and jurisdictional” and “not subject to equitable tolling.” *Stone v. INS*, [514 U.S. 386, 405](#) (1995); *see also Magtanong v. Gonzales*, [494 F.3d 1190, 1191](#) (9th Cir. 2007) (per curiam) (order); *Singh*, [315 F.3d at 1188](#); *Martinez-Serrano v. INS*, [94 F.3d 1256, 1258](#) (9th Cir.

1996); *Caruncho v. INS*, [68 F.3d 356, 359-60](#) (9th Cir. 1995).

The filing of a motion to reopen or reconsider does not toll the statutory time in which to appeal the underlying final order. *See Stone*, [514 U.S. at 405-06](#); *see also Martinez-Serrano*, [94 F.3d at 1258](#).

The time limit for filing a petition for review begins to run when the BIA mails its decision, which is presumed to be the date indicated on the cover letter to the decision. *See Haroutunian v. INS*, [87 F.3d 374, 375](#) (9th Cir. 1996). The three-day grace period of Fed. R. App. P. 26(c) does not apply. *See id. at 377*. The time limit does not begin to run until the BIA mails its decision to the correct address. *See Martinez-Serrano*, [94 F.3d at 1258-59](#); *cf. Singh v. INS*, [315 F.3d 1186, 1188-90](#) (9th Cir. 2003) (time limit began to run when BIA mailed decision to the applicant's last known address where attorney never filed a notice of appearance).

A petition for review is "filed" when it is received by the court. *See Sheviakov v. INS*, [237 F.3d 1144, 1147-48](#) (9th Cir. 2001). For instance, where a petition is sent via express mail and received at the court's post office on the 30th day, the petition is timely even though it was not stamped by the Clerks's office until the following day. *See id. at 1148*.

## **2. Habeas Appeals**

A pending appeal of the district court's denial of habeas relief converted by this court into a petition for review will be deemed timely. *See, e.g., Almaghzar v. Gonzales*, [457 F.3d 915, 917](#) (9th Cir. 2006); *Alvarez-Barajas v. Gonzales*, [418 F.3d 1050, 1053](#) (9th Cir. 2005); *Martinez-Rosas v. Gonzales*, [424 F.3d 926, 928-29](#) (9th Cir. 2005); *cf. Puri v. Gonzales*, [464 F.3d 1038, 1041](#) (9th Cir. 2006) (district court properly dismissed for lack of jurisdiction a habeas petition filed after the effective date of the REAL ID Act and attempting to challenge a final order of removal).

An appeal from the district court's denial of a [28 U.S.C. § 2241](#) habeas corpus petition must be filed within 60 days. Fed. R. App. P. 4(a)(1)(B).

## **E. Venue**

“The petition for review shall be filed with the court of appeals for the judicial circuit in which the immigration judge completed the proceedings.” [8 U.S.C. § 1252\(b\)\(2\)](#); *see also* IIRIRA § 309(c)(4)(D). Before IIRIRA, an applicant could file a petition for review in the judicial circuit where she resided, or in “the judicial circuit in which the administrative proceedings before a special inquiry officer were conducted in whole or in part.” *See* [8 U.S.C. § 1105a\(a\)\(2\)](#) (repealed 1996).

## **F. Stay Issues**

### **1. No Automatic Stay of Removal Pending Review**

“Service of the petition [for review] does not stay the removal of an alien pending the court’s decision on the petition, unless the court orders otherwise.” [8 U.S.C. § 1252\(b\)\(3\)\(B\)](#); *see also* IIRIRA § 309(c)(4)(F). *Contra* [8 U.S.C. § 1105a\(a\)\(3\)](#) (repealed 1996) (providing for automatic stay of deportation in most cases upon service of the petition for review). Under *De Leon v. INS*, [115 F.3d 643, 644](#) (9th Cir. 1997) (order), “[t]he filing of a motion for stay or a request for a stay contained in a petition for review will stay a petitioner’s deportation temporarily until the court rules on the stay motion.” *See also* *Rivera v. Mukasey*, [508 F.3d 1271, 1277-78](#) (9th Cir. 2007); Ninth Circuit General Order 6.4(c) (setting forth procedures for stays of deportation or removal).

The preliminary injunction standard applies to stay requests. *See Andreiu v. Ashcroft*, [253 F.3d 477, 483](#) (9th Cir. 2001) (en banc) (heightened standard of [8 U.S.C. § 1252\(f\)\(2\)](#) does not apply to stay requests); *Abbassi v. INS*, [143 F.3d 513, 514](#) (9th Cir. 1998); *see also* *Maharaj v. Ashcroft*, [295 F.3d 963, 966](#) (9th Cir. 2002) (order) (preliminary injunction standard applies to stay requests in appeals of the denial of habeas corpus relief). The petitioner must demonstrate “either a probability of success on the merits and the possibility of irreparable injury, or that serious legal questions are raised and the balance of hardships tips sharply in petitioner’s favor.” *Abbassi*, [143 F.3d at 514](#). “These standards represent the outer extremes of a continuum, with the relative hardships to the parties providing the critical element in determining at what point on the continuum a stay pending review is justified.” *Id.*

The stay of removal remains in place until this court issues its mandate. *See Mariscal-Sandoval v. Ashcroft*, [370 F.3d 851, 856](#) (9th Cir. 2004).

## 2. Voluntary Departure Stays

The court lacks jurisdiction to review a denial of voluntary departure. [8 U.S.C. § 1229c\(f\)](#) (“No court shall have jurisdiction over an appeal from denial of a request for an order of voluntary departure . . . nor shall any court order a stay of an alien’s removal pending consideration of any claim with respect to voluntary departure.”); *Kalilu v. Mukasey*, [516 F.3d 777, 779 n.1](#) (9th Cir. 2008) (per curiam) (mandate pending); *Gomez-Lopez v. Ashcroft*, [393 F.3d 882, 883-84](#) (9th Cir. 2005); *Alvarez-Santos v. INS*, [332 F.3d 1245, 1255](#) (9th Cir. 2003); *Antonio-Cruz v. INS*, [147 F.3d 1129, 1130](#) (9th Cir. 1998); *cf. Padilla-Padilla v. Gonzales*, [463 F.3d 972, 980-82](#) (9th Cir. 2006) (reviewing contention that BIA lacks authority in a streamlined summary affirmance to reduce the IJ’s period of voluntary departure).

The court has equitable jurisdiction to grant a timely request for a stay of the voluntary departure period. *See El Himri v. Ashcroft*, [344 F.3d 1261, 1262](#) (9th Cir. 2003) (order). The same preliminary injunction standard for obtaining a stay of removal applies to a request for a stay of voluntary departure. *Id.*; *see also Rivera v. Mukasey*, [508 F.3d 1271, 1277-78](#) (9th Cir. 2007). “As a procedural matter, . . . this court shall temporarily stay the voluntary departure period pending determination of a motion for stay of voluntary departure, according to the same procedures presently in place for motions for stay of removal.” *El Himri*, [344 F.3d at 1263 n.1](#) (citing *De Leon v. INS*, [115 F.3d 643](#) (9th Cir. 1997) (order) and Ninth Circuit General Order 6.4(c)).

Under the transitional rules, the voluntary departure period does not begin to run until this court issues its mandate; a request to stay the voluntary departure period is not necessary. *See Elian v. Ashcroft*, [370 F.3d 897, 901](#) (9th Cir. 2004) (order) (denying as moot motion to stay voluntary departure period).

**Note** that this court has not addressed if or how section 106(d) of the REAL [ID](#) Act, which directs that petitions for review filed under the transitional rules shall be treated as if filed under the permanent rules of [8 U.S.C. § 1252](#), affects the running of the voluntary departure period in transitional rules cases.

Under the permanent rules, the voluntary departure period begins to run when the BIA renders its decision. *See Zazueta-Carrillo v. Ashcroft*, [322 F.3d 1166, 1172-74](#) (9th Cir. 2003) (announcing that *Contreras-Aragon v. INS*, [852 F.2d 1088](#) (9th Cir. 1988) (en banc), which held that the voluntary departure period was automatically stayed during the pendency of the petition for review, is no longer the law of the circuit after IIRIRA).

A motion for a stay of removal filed before expiration of the voluntary departure period is construed as including a timely motion to stay voluntary departure. *See Desta v. Ashcroft*, [365 F.3d 741, 749-50](#) (9th Cir. 2004) (denying as unnecessary subsequent untimely motion to stay voluntary departure period). Where the expiration of the voluntary departure period falls on a weekend or holiday it is deemed to fall on the next non-weekend and/or non-holiday day. *Barroso v. Gonzales*, [429 F.3d 1195, 1204](#) (9th Cir. 2005); *Salvador-Calleros v. Ashcroft*, [389 F.3d 959, 964-65](#) (9th Cir. 2004).

This court lacks jurisdiction to grant a voluntary departure stay where the request is filed after expiration of the voluntary departure period. *See Garcia v. Ashcroft*, [368 F.3d 1157, 1159-60](#) (9th Cir. 2004) (order) (declining to reach the question of whether petitioners properly relied on *Contreras-Aragon* because the issue was not yet ripe for consideration); *cf. Padilla-Padilla v. Gonzales*, [463 F.3d 972, 982](#) (9th Cir. 2006) (remanding for the Board to consider whether *Contreras-Aragon* applies where the voluntary departure period expired before this court decided *Zazueta-Carillo*). Where the voluntary departure period expires on a weekend, and the petitioner files a timely petition for review and motion to stay removal on the next court day, the motion to stay voluntary departure is timely under Fed. R. App. P. 26(a). *See Salvador-Calleros v. Ashcroft*, [389 F.3d 959, 965](#) (9th Cir. 2004).

### **3. Stay of the Court's Mandate**

This court may, upon denial of a petition for review, stay its mandate to allow the applicant to seek additional relief. *See, e.g., Belishta v. Ashcroft*, [378 F.3d 1078, 1081](#) (9th Cir. 2004) (order) (staying mandate to permit BIA to reopen and consider in the first instance eligibility for asylum based on fear of “other serious harm upon removal”); *Flores-Miramontes v. INS*, [212 F.3d 1133, 1143](#) (9th Cir. 2000) (staying mandate to permit filing of habeas corpus petition in

district court); *Khourassany v. INS*, [208 F.3d 1096, 1101](#) (9th Cir. 2000) (staying mandate to permit applicant to seek reopening under Convention Against Torture); *Ortiz v. INS*, [179 F.3d 1148, 1152](#) (9th Cir. 1999) (staying mandate to permit applicants to seek reopening for relief under the Nicaraguan Adjustment and Central American Relief Act (“NACARA”)); *Ardon-Matute v. INS*, [157 F.3d 696, 697](#) (9th Cir. 1998) (staying proceedings pending BIA’s adjudication of motion to reopen seeking NACARA relief); *Aguilar-Escobar v. INS*, [136 F.3d 1240, 1241](#) (9th Cir. 1998) (staying mandate to provide opportunity to reopen for NACARA relief); *Echeverria-Hernandez v. INS*, [946 F.2d 1481, 1482](#) (9th Cir. 1991) (en banc) (staying mandate pending resolution of administrative proceedings commenced pursuant to the *American Baptist Churches* settlement agreement); *Roque-Carranza v. INS*, [778 F.2d 1373, 1374](#) (9th Cir. 1985) (60-day stay to permit applicant to seek reopening to present ineffective assistance of counsel claim); *cf. Valderrama v. INS*, [260 F.3d 1083, 1086](#) (9th Cir. 2001) (per curiam) (declining to stay the mandate).

## G. Exhaustion

This court may review a final order of removal only if “the alien has exhausted all administrative remedies available to the alien as of right.” [8 U.S.C. § 1252\(d\)\(1\)](#); *see also* [8 U.S.C. § 1105a\(c\)](#) (repealed 1996). An applicant’s failure to raise an issue to the BIA generally constitutes a failure to exhaust, thus depriving this court of jurisdiction to consider the issue. *See Barron v. Ashcroft*, [358 F.3d 674, 678](#) (9th Cir. 2004) (no subject-matter jurisdiction over legal claims not presented in administrative proceedings below); *see also Kalilu v. Mukasey*, [516 F.3d 777, 779 n.1](#) (9th Cir. 2008) (mandate pending) (no jurisdiction to review claim concerning merits of asylum application where petitioner failed to challenge its denial before the BIA); *Serrano v. Gonzales*, [469 F.3d 1317, 1319](#) (9th Cir. 2006) (no jurisdiction over issues raised for the first time on appeal to this court).

“A petitioner cannot satisfy the exhaustion requirement by making a general challenge to the IJ’s decision, but, rather, must specify which issues form the basis of the appeal.” *Zara v. Ashcroft*, [383 F.3d 927, 930](#) (9th Cir. 2004); *see also Rendon v. Mukasey*, [520 F.3d 967, 972](#) (9th Cir. 2008) (no jurisdiction over claim challenging certain conviction where brief submitted to BIA made no mention of conviction and rather made only a general challenge to IJ’s decision concerning removability); *Tall v. Mukasey*, [517 F.3d 1115, 1120](#) (9th Cir. 2008) (although

petitioner “raised his due process rights in his brief to the BIA,” he failed to raise the particular procedural errors that he presented for the first time to the court of appeals, and thereby failed to exhaust his administrative remedies); *Camposeco-Montejo v. Ashcroft*, [384 F.3d 814, 821](#) (9th Cir. 2004) (no jurisdiction to review withholding of removal claim not raised in brief to BIA); *Barron*, [358 F.3d at 676-78](#) (no jurisdiction where BIA appeal failed to mention newly-raised procedural due process challenge); cf. *Vizcarra-Ayala v. Mukasey*, [514 F.3d 870, 873-74](#) (9th Cir. 2008) (concluding petitioner adequately exhausted claim concerning modified categorical approach, even though argument before the BIA was directed at a different part of the aggravated felony definition, particularly because petitioner was pro se before the BIA); *Moreno-Morante v. Gonzales*, [490 F.3d 1172, 1173 n.1](#) (9th Cir. 2007) (concluding petitioner exhausted claim where he did not make the “precise statutory argument in the proceedings below, [but] . . . did raise his general argument”); *Kaganovich v. Gonzales*, [470 F.3d 894, 897](#) (9th Cir. 2006) (raising claim in notice of appeal sufficient despite failing to elaborate on argument in brief to BIA); *Zhang v. Ashcroft*, [388 F.3d 713, 721](#) (9th Cir. 2004) (per curiam) (applicant exhausted CAT claim by “explicitly mention[ing] in his brief to the BIA that he was requesting reversal of the IJ’s denial of relief under the Convention Against Torture”); *Ladha v. INS*, [215 F.3d 889, 903](#) (9th Cir. 2000) (applicants exhausted claim by raising it in their notice of appeal despite failing to address it in briefs before the BIA); *Urbina-Osejo v. INS*, [124 F.3d 1314, 1317](#) (9th Cir. 1997) (raising claim in declaration constituted exhaustion).

Claims may be exhausted even if the applicant did not use precise legal language. See *Ladha*, [215 F.3d at 901 n.13](#) (applicants did not use the exact phrase in brief to BIA); *Agyeman v. INS*, [296 F.3d 871, 877-78](#) (9th Cir. 2002) (“inartfully” raised due process claim and absence of “exact legalese”); *Socop-Gonzalez v. INS*, [272 F.3d 1176, 1183-84](#) (9th Cir. 2001) (en banc) (applicant that “never specifically invoked the phrase ‘equitable tolling’ in his briefs to the BIA . . . sufficiently raised the issue before the BIA to permit us to review the issue on appeal”); *Cruz-Navarro v. INS*, [232 F.3d 1024, 1030 n.8](#) (9th Cir. 2000) (addressing imputed political opinion argument even though issue was argued in “slightly different manner” below).

Where an issue was presented to the IJ, and the BIA affirms the IJ decision citing *Burbano*, the issue will be deemed exhausted. See *Arreguin-Moreno v. Mukasey*, [511 F.3d 1229, 1232](#) (9th Cir. 2008) (“[W]hen the BIA cites *Burbano*

. . . all issues presented before the IJ are deemed to have been presented to the BIA.”).

Where the BIA has addressed an issue, the issue has been exhausted. *See Vizcarra-Ayala*, [514 F.3d at 874](#); *Abebe v. Gonzales*, [432 F.3d 1037, 1040-41](#) (9th Cir. 2005) (en banc); *Socop-Gonzalez*, [272 F.3d at 1186](#); *Sagermark v. INS*, [767 F.2d 645, 648](#) (9th Cir. 1985). “We do not require an alien to exhaust administrative remedies on legal issues based on events that occur *after* briefing to the BIA has been completed.” *Alcaraz v. INS*, [384 F.3d 1150, 1158](#) (9th Cir. 2004) (applicants exhausted administrative remedies regarding repapering argument because agency’s repapering policies were issued after briefing before the BIA); *see also Padilla-Padilla v. Gonzales*, [463 F.3d 972, 977](#) (9th Cir. 2006) (concluding petitioner not required to exhaust claim that BIA acted improperly by reducing the voluntary departure period in a streamlined order, because reduction of voluntary departure period occurred after briefing before the BIA).

The BIA’s use of the streamlined summary affirmance procedure does not eliminate the exhaustion requirement. *See Zara*, [383 F.3d at 931](#).

## **1. Exceptions to Exhaustion**

### **a. Constitutional Challenges**

“An exception to the exhaustion requirement has been carved for constitutional challenges to the Immigration and Naturalization Act and INS procedures,” *Rashtabadi v. INS*, [23 F.3d 1562, 1567](#) (9th Cir. 1994), because “[t]he BIA does not have jurisdiction to determine the constitutionality of the statutes it administers,” *Padilla-Padilla v. Gonzales*, [463 F.3d 972, 977](#) (9th Cir. 2006). The BIA also lacks jurisdiction over, and an applicant thus need not exhaust, claims arising under international law. *See Padilla-Padilla*, [463 F.3d at 977](#).

*See also Espinoza-Gutierrez v. Smith*, [94 F.3d 1270, 1273-74](#) (9th Cir. 1996) (“[T]he exhaustion doctrine does not bar review of a question concerning the validity of an INS regulation because of conflict with a statute.”); *Garberding v. INS*, [30 F.3d 1187, 1188 n.1](#) (9th Cir. 1994) (considering equal protection claim raised for the first time on appeal); *Bagues-Valles v. INS*, [779 F.2d 483, 484](#) (9th

Cir. 1985) (considering two due process claims not raised before the BIA).

“Retroactivity challenges to immigration laws implicate legitimate due process considerations that need not be exhausted in administrative proceedings because the BIA cannot give relief on such claims.” *Garcia-Ramirez v. Gonzales*, [423 F.3d 935, 938](#) (9th Cir. 2005) (per curiam); *see also Saravia-Paguada v. Gonzales*, [488 F.3d 1122, 1130](#) (9th Cir. 2007)

Nevertheless, “a petitioner cannot obtain review of procedural errors in the administrative process that were not raised before the agency merely by alleging that every such error violates due process.” *Vargas v. INS*, [831 F.2d 906, 908](#) (9th Cir. 1987) (“‘Due process’ is not a talismanic term which guarantees review in this court of procedural errors correctable by the administrative tribunal.” (quoting *Reid v. Engen*, [765 F.2d 1457, 1461](#) (9th Cir. 1985))). “The key is to distinguish the procedural errors, constitutional or otherwise, that are correctable by the administrative tribunal from those that lie outside the BIA’s ken.” *Liu v. Waters*, [55 F.3d 421, 426](#) (9th Cir. 1995); *see also Barron v. Ashcroft*, [358 F.3d 674, 676-78](#) (9th Cir. 2004) (requiring exhaustion of due process claims concerning the denial of opportunity to present case and deprivation of right to counsel); *Sanchez-Cruz v. INS*, [255 F.3d 775, 780](#) (9th Cir. 2001) (due process claim alleging IJ bias must be exhausted); *cf. Granados-Oseguera v. Gonzales*, [464 F.3d 993, 997](#) (9th Cir. 2006) (court has jurisdiction to review IAC claim not raised before BIA where it asserts a due process violation and petitioner did not have an earlier opportunity to raise it due to the inadequacy of prior counsel).

#### **b. Futility and Remedies “Available . . . As of Right”**

“[T]here are a number of exceptions to the general rule requiring exhaustion, covering situations such as where administrative remedies are inadequate or not efficacious, pursuit of administrative remedies would be a futile gesture, irreparable injury will result, or the administrative proceedings would be void.” *Laing v. Ashcroft*, [370 F.3d 994, 1000](#) (9th Cir. 2004) (internal quotation marks omitted); *see also Al-Mousa v. Mukasey*, [518 F.3d 738, 739-40](#) (9th Cir. 2008) (mandate pending) (remanding to the BIA to determine if the petitioner was a minor, and if so whether petitioner’s status as a minor could forgive petitioner’s failure to exhaust a claim).

However, an alien must exhaust “all administrative remedies *available* to the alien *as of right*.” [8 U.S.C. § 1252\(d\)\(1\)](#) (emphasis added). “Some issues may be so entirely foreclosed by prior BIA case law that no remedies are ‘available . . . as of right’ with regard to them before IJs and the BIA. The realm of such issues, however, cannot be broader than that encompassed by the futility exception to prudential exhaustion requirements.” *Sun v. Ashcroft*, [370 F.3d 932, 942-43](#) (9th Cir. 2004) (“us[ing] the futility cases as a guide to the interpretation of the ‘available . . . as of right’ requirement”); *see also El Rescate Legal Servs., Inc. v. EOIR*, [959 F.2d 742, 747](#) (9th Cir. 1991) (as amended) (“where the agency’s position on the question at issue ‘appears already set,’ and it is ‘very likely’ what the result of recourse to administrative remedies would be, such recourse would be futile and is not required”).

“[M]otions to reconsider, like motions to reopen, are not ‘remedies available . . . as of right’ within the meaning of [8 U.S.C. § 1252\(d\)\(1\)](#).” *Noriega-Lopez v. Ashcroft*, [335 F.3d 874, 881](#) (9th Cir. 2003) (rejecting the INS’s contention that habeas petitioner was obliged to file a motion to reopen or reconsider before seeking review of the BIA’s order of removal).

### **c. Nationality Claims**

The exhaustion requirement of [8 U.S.C. § 1252\(d\)\(1\)](#) does not apply to nationality claims brought under [8 U.S.C. § 1252\(b\)\(5\)](#). *Theogene v. Gonzales*, [411 F.3d 1107, 1111](#) (9th Cir. 2005).

### **d. Events Occurring after Briefing before the Board**

“We do not require an alien to exhaust administrative remedies on legal issues based on events that occur *after* briefing to the BIA has been completed.” *Alcaraz v. INS*, [384 F.3d 1150, 1158](#) (9th Cir. 2004); *see also Padilla-Padilla v. Gonzales*, [463 F.3d 972, 977-78](#) (9th Cir. 2006) (applicant need not have exhausted a challenge to the BIA’s reduction of the IJ’s voluntary departure period because it occurred after briefing); *Granados-Oseguera v. Gonzales*, [464 F.3d 993, 997](#) (9th Cir. 2006) (court has jurisdiction to review IAC claim not raised before BIA where it asserts a due process violation and petitioner did not have an earlier opportunity to raise it due to the inadequacy of prior counsel).

## H. Departure from the United States

### 1. Review of Removal Orders

For cases governed by the permanent rules, departure from the United States does not terminate jurisdiction. *See* [8 U.S.C. § 1252\(a\)](#); *Mendez-Alcaraz v. Gonzales*, [464 F.3d 842, 844](#) (9th Cir. 2006); *see also* *Rivera v. Mukasey*, [508 F.3d 1271, 1277](#) (9th Cir. 2007).

For cases governed by the transitional rules, former [8 U.S.C. § 1105a\(c\)](#), the court generally lacks jurisdiction to review a deportation order once the applicant departs from the United States. *See id.* (“An order of deportation or of exclusion shall not be reviewed by any court if the alien . . . has departed from the United States after the issuance of the order.”); *see also* *Stone v. INS*, [514 U.S. 386, 399](#) (1995) (“Once an alien has been deported, the courts lack jurisdiction to review the deportation order’s validity.”); *Kon v. Gonzales*, [400 F.3d 1225, 1226](#) (9th Cir. 2005) (per curiam); *Hajnal v. INS*, [980 F.2d 1247, 1247](#) (9th Cir. 1992) (per curiam). However, “[u]nder the *Mendez* exception, an alien outside the United States may petition for review of his deportation order when his departure was not ‘legally executed.’” *Zepeda-Melendez v. INS*, [741 F.2d 285, 288, 290](#) (9th Cir. 1984) (“deportation of an alien without notice to his counsel is not a legally executed departure within the meaning of [8 U.S.C. § 1105a\(c\)](#), and does not strip the court of jurisdiction to review the deportation order whether or not the alien was in custody at the time of deportation”); *see also* *Wiedersperg v. INS*, [896 F.2d 1179, 1181-82](#) (9th Cir. 1990) (deportation based on a vacated conviction was not legally executed).

Cases governed by the transitional rules face a potentially anomalous situation because the court loses jurisdiction once the petitioner departs, *see* [8 U.S.C. § 1105a\(c\)](#), and the filing of a petition for review no longer results in an automatic stay of deportation, *see* IIRIRA § 309(c)(4)(F).

**Note** that the Ninth Circuit has not yet addressed the interplay between former [8 U.S.C. § 1105a\(c\)](#), which eliminated jurisdiction in transitional rules

cases once a petitioner departs the United States, and section 106(d) of the REAL ID Act, which directs that all petitions for review filed under the transitional rules shall be treated as if filed under the permanent rules of [8 U.S.C. § 1252](#).

## 2. Review of Motions to Reopen

“Any departure from the United States, including the deportation or removal of a person who is the subject of exclusion, deportation, or removal proceedings, occurring after the filing of a motion to reopen or a motion to reconsider, shall constitute a withdrawal of such motion.” [8 C.F.R. § 1003.2\(d\)](#). *But see Wiedersperg v. INS*, [896 F.2d 1179](#) (9th Cir. 1990) (applicant entitled to reopen his deportation proceedings following deportation where his state conviction, which was the sole ground of deportation, was vacated).

“A motion to reopen or reconsider shall not be made by or on behalf of a person who is the subject of exclusion, deportation, or removal proceedings subsequent to his or her departure from the United States.” [8 C.F.R. § 1003.2\(d\)](#); *Singh v. Gonzales*, [412 F.3d 1117, 1120](#) (9th Cir. 2005). “[T]he scope of this regulation is clearly limited to persons who depart the U.S. *after removal proceedings* have already commenced against them.” *Singh*, [412 F.3d at 1121](#) (holding that the regulation does not apply to applicant who first departs the U.S., then becomes subject to removal proceedings, returns, and files motion to reopen); *see also Lin v. Gonzales*, [473 F.3d 979, 982](#) (9th Cir. 2007) (concluding that [8 C.F.R. § 1003.23\(b\)\(1\)](#), which bars IJ from exercising jurisdiction over a motion to reopen filed after departure by a person who “is” the subject of removal proceedings, could not be applied where departure and motion to reopen followed conclusion of proceedings).

### I. Fugitive Disentitlement Doctrine

An applicant who fails to report for deportation or who fails to keep the courts apprised of his or her current address may have a petition for review dismissed under the fugitive disentitlement doctrine. “Although an alien who fails to surrender to the INS despite a lawful order of deportation is not, strictly speaking, a fugitive in a criminal matter, we think that he is nonetheless a fugitive from justice. Like the fugitive in a criminal matter, the alien who is a fugitive from a deportation order should ordinarily be barred by his fugitive status from

calling upon the resources of the court to determine his claims.” *Zapon v. Dep’t of Justice*, [53 F.3d 283, 285](#) (9th Cir. 1995) (quoting *Bar-Levy v. United States Dep’t of Justice*, [990 F.2d 33, 35](#) (2d Cir. 1993) (citations omitted)); *see also Armentero v. INS*, [412 F.3d 1088](#) (9th Cir. 2005) (order) (dismissing petition for review because applicant was a fugitive from custody); *Antonio-Martinez v. INS*, [317 F.3d 1089, 1091-93](#) (9th Cir. 2003) (applying the fugitive disentitlement doctrine where applicant had lost contact with his attorney and the agency and all efforts to contact him failed for over two years); *cf. Bhasin v. Gonzales*, [423 F.3d 977, 988-89](#) (9th Cir. 2005) (declining to uphold the BIA’s reliance on the fugitive disentitlement doctrine in denying motion to reopen because applicant failed to receive critical agency documents pertaining to his order of removal).

The fugitive disentitlement doctrine is a “severe sanction that we do not lightly impose.” *Bhasin*, [423 F.3d at 987-88](#) (internal quotation marks omitted).

#### **J. Proper Respondent**

The proper respondent in a petition for review is the Attorney General. [8 U.S.C. § 1252\(b\)\(3\)\(A\)](#). This court has not addressed whether the proper respondent in an immigration habeas petition under [28 U.S.C. § 2241](#) is the Attorney General, the Secretary of the Department of Homeland Security, or the immediate custodian. *See Armentero v. INS*, [340 F.3d 1058, 1071-73](#) (9th Cir. 2003) (Secretary of the Department of Homeland Security and the Attorney General were the proper respondents), *withdrawn*, [382 F.3d 1153](#) (9th Cir. 2004) (order); *see also Rumsfeld v. Padilla*, [542 U.S. 426, 435 n.8](#) (2004) (declining to resolve whether the Attorney General is a proper respondent in an immigration habeas petition).

#### **K. Reorganization of the Immigration and Naturalization Service**

The INS was abolished on March 1, 2003 pursuant to the Homeland Security Act of 2002. *See Hernandez v. Ashcroft*, [345 F.3d 824, 828 n.2](#) (9th Cir. 2003). Immigration functions were transferred to the following agencies within the newly-created Department of Homeland Security (“DHS”):

1. U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement (“ICE”), responsible for alien removal and detention.

2. U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services (“USCIS”), responsible for immigration services such as naturalization, asylum, refugee processing, and adjustment of status.
3. U.S. Customs and Border Protection (“CBP”), responsible for border patrol and processing people through ports of entry.

#### **L. Reorganization of Administrative Regulations**

The administrative regulations governing immigration proceedings have been recodified at [8 C.F.R. § 1003](#) *et seq.*, to reflect the transfer of INS functions to the DHS. *See* [68 Fed. Reg. 9824](#) (Feb. 28, 2003) (Add 1000 to the old regulation cite to find the current regulatory cite). The Executive Office for Immigration Review (“EOIR”), including the Board of Immigration Appeals and the Immigration Judges, remain under the Department of Justice. *Id.*

#### **M. Exclusion Orders**

Before IIRIRA, aliens who had not made an “entry” into the United States were placed in exclusion proceedings. *See Hose v. INS*, [180 F.3d 992, 994](#) (9th Cir. 1999) (en banc). “Under pre-IIRIRA law, the appropriate avenue for judicial review of a final order of exclusion was for the alien to file a petition for a writ of habeas corpus in the district court.” *Id.*; *see also* [8 U.S.C. § 1105a\(b\)](#) (repealed) (“any alien against whom a final order of exclusion has been made . . . may obtain judicial review of such order by habeas corpus proceedings and not otherwise”).

IIRIRA’s permanent rules established a unified “removal” proceeding and eliminated the different jurisdictional tracks for deportation and exclusion proceedings. *See Hose*, [180 F.3d at 994 & n.1](#). IIRIRA’s transitional rules redirected review of exclusion orders from the district courts to the courts of appeal. *See id.* (citing IIRIRA § 309(c)(4)(A)).

#### **IV. LIMITATIONS ON JUDICIAL REVIEW OF DISCRETIONARY DECISIONS**

The IIRIRA permanent rules, applicable to removal proceedings initiated on or after April 1, 1997, bar review of certain discretionary decisions. [8 U.S.C. § 1252\(a\)\(2\)\(B\)](#) states:

##### Denials of discretionary relief

Notwithstanding any other provision of law (statutory or nonstatutory), including section 2241 of Title 28, or any other habeas corpus provision, and sections 1361 and 1651 of such title, and except as provided in subparagraph (D), and regardless whether the judgment, decision, or action is made in removal proceedings, no court shall have jurisdiction to review—

- (i) any judgment regarding the granting of relief under section 1182(h), 1182(i), 1229b, 1229c, or 1255 of this title, or
- (ii) any other decision or action of the Attorney General or the Secretary of Homeland Security the authority for which is specified under this subchapter to be in the discretion of the Attorney General or the Secretary of Homeland Security, other than the granting of relief under section 1158(a) of this title.

The REAL ID Act of 2005, Pub. L. No. 109-13, 119 Stat. 231 (2005) amended the INA by adding [8 U.S.C. § 1252\(a\)\(2\)\(D\)](#), which states:

##### Judicial review of certain legal claims

Nothing in subparagraph (B) . . . or in any other provision of this chapter (other than this section) which limits or eliminates judicial review, shall be construed as precluding review of constitutional

claims or questions of law raised upon a petition for review filed with an appropriate court of appeals in accordance with this section.

Thus, notwithstanding any limitations on judicial review set forth in [8 U.S.C. § 1252\(a\)\(2\)\(B\)](#), the court has jurisdiction to consider questions of law and constitutional questions raised in a petition for review challenging the agency’s discretionary denial of relief. “In short, Congress repealed all jurisdictional bars to our direct review of final removal orders other than those remaining in [8 U.S.C. § 1252](#) (in provisions other than (a)(2)(B) . . . ) following the amendment of that section by the REAL ID Act.” *Fernandez-Ruiz v. Gonzales*, [410 F.3d 585, 587](#) (9th Cir. 2005), *as adopted by* [466 F.3d 1121, 1124](#) (9th Cir. 2006) (en banc).

## **A. Definition of Discretionary Decision**

The Immigration and Nationality Act does not define what constitutes a discretionary decision. *See Hernandez v. Ashcroft*, [345 F.3d 824, 833](#) (9th Cir. 2003). This court has held that “determinations that require application of law to factual determinations are nondiscretionary.” *Id.* at 833-34 ([internal quotation marks and alteration omitted](#)). On the other hand, “an inquiry is discretionary where it is a subjective question that depends on the value judgment of the person or entity examining the issue.” *Romero-Torres v. Ashcroft*, [327 F.3d 887, 891](#) (9th Cir. 2003) ([internal quotation marks omitted](#)) (holding that court lacks jurisdiction to review the BIA’s exceptional and extremely unusual hardship determination).

“When the BIA acts where it has no legal authority to do so, it does not make a discretionary decision, and such a determination is not protected from judicial review.” *Hernandez*, [345 F.3d at 847](#) ([internal citations omitted](#)) (BIA’s decision to deny adjustment based on non-viability of the marriage was contrary to law and therefore not discretionary); *see also Spencer Enters., Inc. v. United States*, [345 F.3d 683, 689](#) (9th Cir. 2003) (“Even if a statute gives the Attorney General discretion, . . . the courts retain jurisdiction to review whether a particular decision is *ultra vires* the statute in question.”).

## **B. Enumerated Discretionary Decisions**

### **1. Subsection (i)–Permanent Rules**

Subsection (i) of section 1252(a)(2)(B) lists the following forms of discretionary relief:

<a href="#">8 U.S.C. § 1182(h)</a>	Section 212(h) Criminal Inadmissibility Waiver
<a href="#">8 U.S.C. § 1182(i)</a>	Section 212(i) Fraud or Misrepresentation Waiver
<a href="#">8 U.S.C. § 1229b</a>	Cancellation of Removal
<a href="#">8 U.S.C. § 1229c</a>	Voluntary Departure
<a href="#">8 U.S.C. § 1255</a>	Adjustment of Status

## 2. Transitional Rules

Section 309(c)(4)(E) of IIRIRA contains a similar limitation on direct judicial review of discretionary decisions, stating that “there shall be no appeal of any discretionary decision under § 212(c), 212(h), 212(i), 244, or 245 of the Immigration and Nationality Act (as in effect as of the date of the enactment of this Act).”

Section 309(c)(4)(E) refers to the following forms of discretionary relief:

Section 212(c)	Discretionary Waiver for long-time permanent residents
Section 212(h)	Criminal Inadmissibility Waiver
Section 212(i)	Fraud or Misrepresentation Waiver
Section 244	Suspension of deportation
Section 245	Adjustment of Status

**Note** that the REAL ID Act directs that a petition for review filed under IIRIRA’s transitional rules shall be treated as though filed under the permanent provisions of [8 U.S.C. § 1252](#). *See* REAL ID Act § 106(d) (uncodified).

## 3. Cases Addressing Jurisdiction over Certain Enumerated Discretionary Decisions

### a. Cancellation of Removal/Suspension of Deportation

The court lacks jurisdiction to review the agency’s discretionary determination that an applicant failed to establish the requisite hardship for cancellation of removal or suspension of deportation. *Martinez-Rosas v.*

*Gonzales*, [424 F.3d 926, 930](#) (9th Cir. 2005) (post-REAL ID Act case); *Romero-Torres v. Ashcroft*, [327 F.3d 887, 888](#) (9th Cir. 2003) (permanent rules case); *Kalaw v. INS*, [133 F.3d 1147, 1152](#) (9th Cir. 1997) (transitional rules case); *see also Hong v. Mukasey*, [518 F.3d 1030, 1034](#) (9th Cir. 2008) (no jurisdiction to review denial of petitioner’s application for cancellation of removal where agency determined petitioner failed to establish hardship, but otherwise exercising jurisdiction over petitioner’s petition for review of her removal order). However, the court retains jurisdiction to review colorable constitutional claims or questions of law pertaining to the agency’s discretionary hardship determination. [8 U.S.C. § 1252\(a\)\(2\)\(D\)](#); *Cabrera-Alvarez v. Gonzales*, [423 F.3d 1006, 1009](#) (9th Cir. 2005) (court has jurisdiction to consider questions of statutory interpretation including whether the hardship standard is consistent with international law); *Ramirez-Perez v. Ashcroft*, [336 F.3d 1001, 1004-06](#) (9th Cir. 2003) (challenge to agency’s interpretation of the hardship standard constitutes a colorable due process claim).

The court lacks jurisdiction to review an abuse of discretion argument merely recharacterized as a due process argument. *Torres-Aguilar v. INS*, [246 F.3d 1267, 1270-71](#) (9th Cir. 2001) (contention that the agency violated due process by misapplying the facts of the case to the applicable law did not state a colorable constitutional claim); *see also Martinez-Rosas*, [424 F.3d at 930](#) (same post-REAL ID Act).

The court also lacks jurisdiction to review the agency’s discretionary good moral character determination. *Lopez-Castellanos v. Gonzales*, [437 F.3d 848, 854](#) (9th Cir. 2006). However, the court retains jurisdiction to review the agency’s determination that an applicant is statutorily precluded from establishing good moral character. *Moran v. Ashcroft*, [395 F.3d 1089, 1091](#) (9th Cir. 2005) (explaining that court has jurisdiction to “to determine whether a petitioner’s conduct falls within a per se exclusion category”).

The court retains jurisdiction to review the agency’s determination as to whether a petitioner met the continuous physical requirement for cancellation of removal or suspension of deportation. *Kalaw*, [133 F.3d at 1150-51](#).

#### **b. Adjustment of status**

The court lacks jurisdiction to review a discretionary denial of adjustment of

status. *Hosseini v. Gonzales*, [471 F.3d 953, 956-57](#) (9th Cir. 2006) (where petitioner did not contend denial was unconstitutional or unlawful). The court lacks jurisdiction to review an abuse of discretion argument recast as a due process argument. *Bazua-Cota v. Gonzales*, [466 F.3d 747, 748-49](#) (9th Cir. 2006) (per curiam order) (contention that the agency violated due process by failing to properly weigh the equities did not constitute a colorable constitutional claim).

### **c. Voluntary Departure**

The court lacks jurisdiction to review the agency's decision to grant or deny voluntary departure, as well as its discretionary decision to reduce a period of voluntary departure. [8 U.S.C. § 1229c\(f\)](#); *Galeana-Mendoza v. Gonzales*, [465 F.3d 1054, 1056 n.5](#) (9th Cir. 2006); *cf. Padilla-Padilla v. Gonzales*, [463 F.3d 972, 976](#) (9th Cir. 2006) (reviewing contention that BIA exceeded its authority by reducing in a streamlined summary affirmance the IJ's period of voluntary departure).

### **C. Judicial Review Remains Over Non-Discretionary Determinations**

The limitation on judicial review of discretionary decisions applies only to those decisions involving the exercise of discretion. *See Montero-Martinez v. Ashcroft*, [277 F.3d 1137, 1144](#) (9th Cir. 2002) (concluding that section 1252(a)(2)(B)(i) "eliminates jurisdiction only over decisions by the BIA that involve the exercise of discretion"). Accordingly, the court retains jurisdiction over non-discretionary questions, such as whether the applicant satisfied the continuous physical presence requirement, and whether an adult daughter qualifies as a child. *See id. at 1144-45* (court retained jurisdiction to review the purely legal question of whether the applicant's adult daughter qualified as a "child" for purposes of cancellation of removal).

*See also Morales v. Gonzales*, [478 F.3d 972, 977-78](#) (9th Cir. 2007) (to determine whether jurisdiction exists over final order of removal, court exercised jurisdiction over threshold issue of whether petitioner's act constitutes a crime of moral turpitude); *Kohli v. Gonzales*, [473 F.3d 1061, 1065-70](#) (9th Cir. 2007) (exercising jurisdiction to review the legal question of the sufficiency of the NTA); *Freeman v. Gonzales*, [444 F.3d 1031, 1037](#) (9th Cir. 2006) (court retained jurisdiction to review purely legal claim of whether applicant qualified as a spouse

for purposes of adjustment of status); *Gomez-Lopez v. Ashcroft*, [393 F.3d 882, 884](#) (9th Cir. 2005) (court retained jurisdiction over IJ’s non-discretionary determination that cancellation applicant fell into one of the “per se exclusion categories” and lacked good moral character based on incarceration in county jail); *Lagandaon v. Ashcroft*, [383 F.3d 983, 986-87](#) (9th Cir. 2004) (court retained jurisdiction over statutory question of whether cancellation applicant accrued ten years of physical presence before service of notice to appear); *Perez-Gonzalez v. Ashcroft*, [379 F.3d 783, 788](#) (9th Cir. 2004) (court retained jurisdiction over BIA’s “purely legal, rather than discretionary,” denial of a Form I-212 waiver), *called into question on other grounds by Gonzales v. Dep’t of Homeland Sec.*, [508 F.3d 1227](#) (9th Cir. 2007); *Hernandez v. Ashcroft*, [345 F.3d 824, 833-35](#) (9th Cir. 2003) (court retained jurisdiction over non-discretionary determination that VAWA applicant suffered “extreme cruelty”); *Garcia-Lopez v. Ashcroft*, [334 F.3d 840, 843-44](#) (9th Cir. 2003) (court retained jurisdiction to consider whether applicant was eligible for suspension under the petty offense exception); *Murillo-Salmeron v. INS*, [327 F.3d 898, 901](#) (9th Cir. 2003) (court retained jurisdiction to review legal question of whether applicant’s DUI conviction rendered him inadmissible, thus requiring a § 212(h) waiver of inadmissibility); *Molina-Estrada v. INS*, [293 F.3d 1089, 1093-94](#) (9th Cir. 2002) (court retained jurisdiction to review whether applicant’s mother was a lawful permanent resident); *Dillingham v. INS*, [267 F.3d 996, 1003](#) (9th Cir. 2001) (court retained jurisdiction over BIA’s determination that applicant was statutorily ineligible for adjustment of status); *Pondoc Hernaez v. INS*, [244 F.3d 752, 758](#) (9th Cir. 2001) (court retained jurisdiction under transitional rules to review continuous physical presence requirement for suspension of deportation); *Kalaw v. INS*, [133 F.3d 1147, 1151](#) (9th Cir. 1997) (court retained jurisdiction under transitional rules to review continuous physical presence inquiry and certain statutory moral character determinations); *cf. Martinez-Rosas v. Gonzales*, [424 F.3d 926, 930](#) (9th Cir. 2005) (abuse of discretion argument characterized as due process violation did not confer jurisdiction); *Torres-Aguilar v. INS*, [246 F.3d 1267, 1270-71](#) (9th Cir. 2001) (contention that BIA committed legal error by misapplying BIA precedent to her evidence of extreme hardship did not make the determination non-discretionary).

The court also retains “jurisdiction to review whether the BIA applied the correct discretionary waiver standard in the first instance.” *Murillo-Salmeron v. INS*, [327 F.3d 898, 901](#) (9th Cir. 2003) (holding that IIRIRA § 309(c)(4)(E) did not divest the court of jurisdiction where the BIA purported to affirm a discretionary decision that the IJ did not make) (internal quotation marks omitted);

*see also Cervantes-Gonzales v. INS*, [244 F.3d 1001, 1005](#) (9th Cir. 2001) (court retained jurisdiction to review whether BIA applied the correct standard for determining eligibility for a section 212(i) waiver of inadmissibility).

#### **D. Jurisdictional Bar Limited to Statutory Discretionary Eligibility Requirements**

This court has “interpreted section 309(c)(4)(E) to pertain to the statutory eligibility requirements found in INA § 244(a)(1) and to the ultimate discretionary decision whether to grant the suspension based on the merits of the case.” *Castillo-Perez v. INS*, [212 F.3d 518, 524](#) (9th Cir. 2000). An IJ’s decision to deem an application for suspension to be abandoned, and the BIA’s decision to dismiss a claim of ineffective assistance of counsel are not discretionary decisions under section 244 of the INA, and the court retains jurisdiction over these claims. *Id.* (remanding for application of the law as it existed at the time of applicant’s original hearing).

#### **E. Jurisdiction Over Constitutional Issues and Questions of Law**

The court retains jurisdiction to consider both constitutional questions and questions of law raised in a petition for review of a discretionary decision. [8 U.S.C. § 1252\(a\)\(2\)\(D\)](#); *see also Fernandez-Ruiz v. Gonzales*, [410 F.3d 585, 587](#) (9th Cir. 2005), *as adopted by* [466 F.3d 1121, 1124](#) (9th Cir. 2006) (en banc); *Cabrera-Alvarez v. Gonzales*, [423 F.3d 1006, 1009](#) (9th Cir. 2005) (post-REAL ID Act); *Padilla-Padilla v. Gonzales*, [463 F.3d 972, 978-80](#) (9th Cir. 2006) (reviewing post-REAL ID Act due process and international law challenge to the ten-year physical presence requirement and applicability of the stop-time rule); *Ramirez-Perez v. Ashcroft*, [336 F.3d 1001, 1004-06](#) (9th Cir. 2003) (BIA’s interpretation of the exceptional and extremely unusual hardship standard did not violate due process); *Tovar-Landin v. Ashcroft*, [361 F.3d 1164, 1166-67](#) (9th Cir. 2004) (due process and equal protection challenges to voluntary departure regime); *Falcon Carriche v. Ashcroft*, [350 F.3d 845, 850](#) (9th Cir. 2003) (due process challenge to streamlining procedure); *Reyes-Melendez v. INS*, [342 F.3d 1001, 1006](#) (9th Cir. 2003) (due process challenge based on IJ bias); *Munoz v. Ashcroft*, [339 F.3d 950, 954-57](#) (9th Cir. 2003) (due process, ineffective assistance of counsel, and equitable tolling contentions); *Vasquez-Zavala v. Ashcroft*, [324 F.3d 1105, 1108-09](#) (9th Cir. 2003) (due process claim); *Ramirez-Alejandre v. Ashcroft*, [320 F.3d 858, 869](#) (9th Cir. 2003) (en banc) (due process challenge to

the BIA’s refusal to allow suspension applicant to supplement the record); *Agyeman v. INS*, [296 F.3d 871, 876](#) (9th Cir. 2002) (suspension applicant’s due process claim); *Sanchez-Cruz v. INS*, [255 F.3d 775, 779-80](#) (9th Cir. 2001) (holding that the court would retain jurisdiction over allegations of IJ bias, but that applicant failed to exhaust her due process claim before the BIA); *Larita-Martinez v. INS*, [220 F.3d 1092, 1095](#) (9th Cir. 2000) (due process claim that BIA failed to review all relevant evidence submitted in suspension case); *Antonio-Cruz v. INS*, [147 F.3d 1129, 1131](#) (9th Cir. 1998) (due process claim based on IJ’s “harsh manner and tone”).

“[J]urisdiction over ‘questions of law’ as defined in REAL ID Act includes not only ‘pure’ issues of statutory interpretation, but also application of law to undisputed facts, sometimes referred to as mixed questions of law and fact.” *Ramadan v. Gonzales*, [479 F.3d 646, 648, 650](#) (9th Cir. 2007) (per curiam) (holding that court had jurisdiction to review IJ’s determination that petitioner failed to show changed circumstances to excuse the untimely filing of her asylum application).

#### **F. Authorized and Specified Discretionary Decisions—Subsection (ii)**

Under subsection (ii) of [8 U.S.C. § 1252\(a\)\(2\)\(B\)](#),

no court shall have jurisdiction to review . . . any other decision or action of the Attorney General the authority for which is specified under [\[8 U.S.C. §§ 1151-1378\]](#) to be in the discretion of the Attorney General, other than the granting of relief under section 1158(a) of this title [relating to asylum].

*Spencer Enters., Inc. v. United States*, [345 F.3d 683, 688-92](#) (9th Cir. 2003) (alterations in original) (quoting [8 U.S.C. § 1252\(a\)\(2\)\(B\)\(ii\)](#), and holding that section did not preclude jurisdiction over a challenge to the denial of an immigrant investor visa pursuant to [8 U.S.C. § 1153\(b\)\(5\)](#)).

The *Spencer* court held that § 1252(a)(2)(B)(ii) does not bar review over all discretionary decisions, rather it applies only where the Attorney General’s discretionary authority is “specified” in the statute in question. *Spencer*, [345 F.3d at 689](#). More specifically, for subsection (ii) to apply, “the language of the statute

in question must provide the discretionary authority.” *Id.* Cf. *Sandoval-Luna v. Mukasey*, [526 F.3d 1243, 1246-47](#) (9th Cir. 2008) (court retains jurisdiction to review IJ’s discretionary denial of a continuance because “[a]n immigration judge’s authority to continue a case is not ‘specified under’ the subchapter to be in the discretion of the Attorney General” (quoting *Alsamhour v. Gonzales*, [484 F.3d 117, 122](#) (1st Cir. 2007))).

Moreover, the “authority” to act must be in the discretion of the Attorney General, meaning that “the right or power to act is entirely within his or her judgment or conscience.” *Spencer*, [345 F.3d at 690](#). In order to bar review, the statute must give the Attorney General “pure discretion, rather than discretion guided by legal standards.” *Id.*; see also *Villegas v. Mukasey*, [523 F.3d 984, 987](#) (9th Cir. 2008); *Matsuk v. INS*, [247 F.3d 999, 1002](#) (9th Cir. 2001) (§ 1252(a)(2)(B)(ii) bars review of determination that aggravated felony qualifies as a “particularly serious crime” because statute provides discretionary authority without statutory guidelines). *But see Morales v. Gonzales*, [478 F.3d 972, 980](#) (9th Cir. 2007) (post-REAL ID Act, court retained jurisdiction to review IJ’s denial of withholding of removal based upon IJ’s finding that petitioner’s crime was a “particularly serious crime” because appeal raised legal question regarding what an IJ could consider in making the determination); *Afridi v. Gonzales*, [442 F.3d 1212, 1218](#) (9th Cir. 2006) (post-REAL ID Act, court retained jurisdiction to review whether agency applied correct legal standard in making “particularly serious crime” determination). “In general terms, if a legal standard from an appropriate source governs the determination in question, that determination is reviewable for a clarification of that legal standard.” *ANA Int’l, Inc. v. Way*, [393 F.3d 886, 891](#) (9th Cir. 2004). More specifically, “if the statutory provision granting the Attorney General power to make a given decision also sets out specific standards governing that decision, the decision is not in the discretion of the Attorney General.” *Id.* at 892 (internal quotation marks omitted). Although the court may not look to agency practice as a source for the relevant legal standards, the court may use judicial precedent in order to interpret the relevant statutory standards. See *id.* at 893.

See also *Sandoval-Luna*, [526 F.3d at 1246-47](#) (§ 1252(a)(2)(B)(ii) does not bar jurisdiction to review IJ’s discretionary denial of a continuance); *Nath v. Gonzales*, [467 F.3d 1185, 1188](#) (9th Cir. 2006) (§ 1252(a)(2)(B)(ii) does not bar jurisdiction over denial of motion to reopen) (citing *Medina-Morales v. Ashcroft*, [371 F.3d 520, 528](#) (9th Cir. 2004)); *Oropeza-Wong v. Gonzales*, [406 F.3d 1135,](#)

[1142-43](#) (9th Cir. 2005) (court retained jurisdiction to consider statutory waiver under [8 U.S.C. § 1186a\(c\)\(4\)](#) to remove conditional basis of permanent resident status because determination not purely discretionary); *Unuakhaulu v. Gonzales*, [416 F.3d 931, 935](#) (9th Cir. 2005) (stating that § 1252(a)(2)(B)(ii) would preclude judicial review over agency’s discretionary determination that offense qualifies as “particularly serious”); *San Pedro v. Ashcroft*, [395 F.3d 1156, 1157-59](#) (9th Cir. 2005) (stating that court would have jurisdiction to review IJ’s statutory denial of section 237(a)(1)(H) waiver of removal but not discretionary denial of waiver); *ANA Int’l, Inc. v. Way*, [393 F.3d 886, 889-95](#) (9th Cir. 2004) (Attorney General’s decision to revoke visa under [8 U.S.C. § 1155](#) not barred by subsection (ii) as specified discretionary decision); *Medina-Morales v. Ashcroft*, [371 F.3d 520, 528-29](#) (9th Cir. 2004) (court retained jurisdiction over denial of motion to reopen to adjust status); *Avendano-Ramirez v. Ashcroft*, [365 F.3d 813, 819](#) (9th Cir. 2004) (§ 1252(a)(2)(B)(ii) barred review of applicant’s claim that IJ should have permitted her to withdraw application for admission under [8 U.S.C. § 1225\(a\)\(4\)](#) because decision committed by statute to discretion of Attorney General); *Nakamoto v. Ashcroft*, [363 F.3d 874, 878](#) (9th Cir. 2004) (court retained jurisdiction over IJ’s marriage fraud determination under [8 U.S.C. § 1227\(a\)\(1\)\(G\)\(ii\)](#) because “the determination of whether a petitioner committed marriage fraud is not a decision the authority for which is specified under the INA to be entirely discretionary”); *Hernandez v. Ashcroft*, [345 F.3d 824, 833-35](#) (9th Cir. 2003) (determination of whether applicant suffered “extreme cruelty” a reviewable legal and factual determination); *Zadvydas v. Davis*, [533 U.S. 678, 688](#) (2001) (court retained jurisdiction to consider legal question regarding extent of Attorney General’s authority under post-removal-period detention statute).

The REAL ID Act clarified that section 1252(a)(2)(B)(ii) applies regardless of whether the “judgment, decision, or action is made in removal proceedings.” [8 U.S.C. § 1252\(a\)\(2\)\(B\)](#) (as amended by the REAL ID Act). *See generally ANA Int’l, Inc. v. Way*, [393 F.3d 886, 891](#) (9th Cir. 2004) (assuming, but not deciding, applicability of subsection (ii) to a visa revocation decision under [8 U.S.C. § 1155](#)); *Spencer Enters., Inc. v. United States*, [345 F.3d 683, 692](#) (9th Cir. 2003) (noting circuit split over whether subsection (ii) applies outside the context of removal proceedings).

## **G. Asylum Relief**

Although asylum is a discretionary form of relief, [8 U.S.C. § 1252\(a\)\(2\)\(B\)\(ii\)](#) explicitly exempts asylum determinations from the jurisdictional bar over discretionary decisions. *Morales v. Gonzales*, [478 F.3d](#)

[972, 979](#) (9th Cir. 2007) (jurisdiction to review denial of petitioner’s asylum application because decisions whether to grant asylum are exempt from § 1252(a)(2)(B)(ii)’s jurisdiction-stripping mandate); *Hosseini v. Gonzales*, [471 F.3d 953, 956](#) (9th Cir. 2006) (jurisdiction to review the BIA’s discretionary denial of asylum application).

### **1. Eligibility Restrictions Generally Not Subject to Review**

Several restrictions on eligibility for asylum, however, are generally not subject to judicial review:

#### **a. One-Year Bar**

Under IIRIRA, effective April 1, 1997, an applicant must demonstrate by clear and convincing evidence that his or her asylum application was filed within one year after arrival in the United States. [8 U.S.C. § 1158\(a\)\(2\)\(B\)](#); *Hakeem v. INS*, [273 F.3d 812, 815](#) (9th Cir. 2001). Pursuant to [8 U.S.C. § 1158\(a\)\(3\)](#), the court lacks jurisdiction to review the agency’s determination that an asylum application is not timely. *Hakeem*, [273 F.3d at 815](#); *Molina-Estrada v. INS*, [293 F.3d 1089, 1093](#) (9th Cir. 2002); *Reyes-Reyes v. Ashcroft*, [384 F.3d 782, 786-87](#) (9th Cir. 2004). Section 106 of REAL ID Act restored jurisdiction over constitutional claims and questions of law. *Fernandez-Ruiz v. Gonzales*, [410 F.3d 585, 587](#) (9th Cir. 2005), *as adopted by* [466 F.3d 1121, 1124](#) (9th Cir. 2006) (en banc). “[Q]uestions of law,’ as it is used in section 106, extends to questions involving the application of statutes or regulations to undisputed facts, sometimes referred to as mixed questions of fact and law.” *Ramadan v. Gonzales*, [479 F.3d 646, 650](#) (9th Cir. 2007) (per curiam) (exercising jurisdiction over “changed circumstances” question because it was a question of the application of a statutory standard to undisputed facts).

If the applicant can show a material change in circumstances or that extraordinary circumstances caused the delay in filing, the limitations period will be tolled. *See* [8 U.S.C. § 1158\(a\)\(2\)\(D\)](#); [8 C.F.R. § 1208.4\(a\)\(4\)](#) & (5). The court held in *Ramadan*, [479 F.3d at 650](#), a case where the facts were undisputed, that it had jurisdiction over the “changed circumstances” question because it was a mixed question of fact and law. *See also* *Chen v. Mukasey*, [524 F.3d 1028, 1031](#) (9th Cir. 2008) (“Under the Real ID Act, this court may review the BIA’s interpretation of the ‘changed circumstances’ exception to the asylum statute.”)

(citation omitted)); *cf. Sillah v. Mukasey*, [519 F.3d 1042, 1043-44](#) (9th Cir. 2008) (per curiam) (mandate pending) (concluding that court lacked jurisdiction to review IJ’s determination that petitioner filed an untimely asylum application where petitioner’s arrival date could not be considered to be an undisputed fact). Similarly, the court has also held that a “claim to ‘extraordinary circumstances’ arising from a legal status maintained until a ‘reasonable period’ before the filing of an asylum application” presented a question of law that may be reviewed where the underlying facts were undisputed. *Husyev v. Mukasey*, [528 F.3d 1172, 1178-83](#) (9th Cir. 2008) (mandate pending) (holding that 364-day delay after alien’s nonimmigrant status expired was not a “reasonable period” in the absence of any explanation); *see also Dhital v. Mukasey*, [532 F.3d 1044, 1050-51](#) (9th Cir. 2008) (per curiam) (mandate pending) (holding that BIA properly concluded alien lost nonimmigrant status when he failed to enroll in a semester of college classes in January 2003, and that alien then failed to file application within a “reasonable period” when he waited 22 months without further explanation for delay). *Contrast Molina-Estrada v. INS*, [293 F.3d 1089, 1093](#) (9th Cir. 2002) (pre-REAL ID and pre-Ramadan case, declining to exercise jurisdiction over extraordinary circumstances question citing [8 U.S.C. § 1158\(a\)\(3\)](#)). In addition, the court does have jurisdiction to review a claim that an IJ failed to address the argument that an asylum application was untimely due to extraordinary circumstances. *Sagaydak v. Gonzales*, [405 F.3d 1035, 1040](#) (9th Cir. 2005) (remanding).

#### **b. Previous-Denial Bar**

An applicant who previously applied for and was denied asylum is barred from receiving a grant of asylum. *See* [8 U.S.C. § 1158\(a\)\(2\)\(C\)](#). The court generally lacks jurisdiction to review this determination. [8 U.S.C. §1158\(a\)\(3\)](#).

#### **c. Safe Third Country Bar**

An applicant has no right to apply for asylum if he or she “may be removed, pursuant to a bilateral or multilateral agreement, to a country (other than the country of the alien’s nationality . . . ) in which the alien’s life or freedom would not be threatened on account of” the statutory grounds. [8 U.S.C. § 1158\(a\)\(2\)\(A\)](#); *see, e.g.,* [8 C.F.R. § 208.30\(e\)\(6\)](#) (implementing bilateral agreement between Canada and the United States). The court generally lacks jurisdiction to review the IJ’s determination under this section. [8 U.S.C. § 1158\(a\)\(3\)](#).

#### **d. Terrorist Activity Bar**

The court generally lacks jurisdiction to review the Attorney General's determination that an applicant is ineligible for asylum based on terrorist activity under 8 [U.S.C. § 1158\(b\)\(2\)\(A\)\(v\)](#). [8 U.S.C. § 1158\(b\)\(2\)\(D\)](#); *Bellout v. Ashcroft*, [363 F.3d 975, 977](#) (9th Cir. 2004). Section 1158(b)(2)(A)(v) eliminates eligibility for asylum if:

the alien is described in subclause (I), (II), (III), (IV), or (VI) of section 1182(a)(3)(B)(i) of this title or removable under section 1227(a)(4)(B) of this title (relating to terrorist activity), unless, in the case only of an alien described in subclause (IV) of section 1182(a)(3)(B)(i) of this title, the Attorney General determines, in the Attorney General's discretion, that there are not reasonable grounds for regarding the alien as a danger to the security of the United States.

**Note** that as to all removal proceedings instituted before, on, or after May 11, 2005, the REAL ID Act expanded the definitions of terrorist organizations and terrorist related activities. *See* Pub. L. No. 109-13, §§ 103-105, 119 Stat. 231 (2005), [8 U.S.C. § 1182\(a\)\(3\)\(B\)](#) and 1227(a)(4)(B) (as amended).

#### **2. Standard of Review**

Under the permanent rules, the Attorney General's discretionary judgment whether to grant asylum relief "shall be conclusive unless manifestly contrary to the law and an abuse of discretion." [8 U.S.C. § 1252\(b\)\(4\)\(D\)](#). "Thus, when refugee status has been established, we review the Attorney General's grant or denial of asylum for abuse of discretion." *Kalubi v. Ashcroft*, [364 F.3d 1134, 1137](#) (9th Cir. 2004).

### **V. LIMITATIONS ON JUDICIAL REVIEW BASED ON CRIMINAL OFFENSES**

#### **A. Judicial Review Framework Before Enactment of the REAL ID Act of 2005**

Before enactment of the REAL ID Act of 2005, Pub. L. No. 109-13, 119 Stat. 231 (2005), this court had limited jurisdiction over final administrative orders against petitioners found removable, deportable or excludable based on enumerated criminal offenses.

Section 440(a) of AEDPA, enacted on April 24, 1996, amended [8 U.S.C. § 1105a\(a\)\(10\)](#) by repealing judicial review over final orders of deportation against most criminal aliens. As amended, section 1105a(a)(10) provided that “[a]ny final order of deportation against an alien who is deportable by reason of having committed a criminal offense covered in section 241(a)(2)(A)(iii), (B), (C), or (D), or any offense covered by section 241(a)(2)(A)(ii) for which both predicate offenses are, without regard to the date of their commission, otherwise covered by section 241(a)(2)(A)(i), shall not be subject to review by any court.” AEDPA, Pub. L. No. 104–132, § 440(a) (as amended by IIRIRA section 306(d)). This court held that section 440(a) is constitutional, and that it applies retroactively to pending cases. *See Duldulao v. INS*, [90 F.3d 396, 399-400](#) (9th Cir. 1996).

“Section 1105a(a)(10) and many other provisions of the Immigration Act were superseded by the Illegal Immigration Reform and Immigrant Responsibility Act of 1996 . . . .” *Eramly v. INS*, [131 F.3d 1284, 1285 n.1](#) (9th Cir. 1997) (per curiam). Section 321 of IIRIRA amended the aggravated felony definition in [8 U.S.C. §§ 1101\(a\)\(43\)\(F\)](#) and 1101(a)(43)(S) by increasing the number of crimes qualifying as aggravated felonies. The aggravated felony amendments apply to “actions taken” on or after the September 30, 1996 enactment of IIRIRA. *See Valderrama-Fonseca v. INS*, [116 F.3d 853, 856-57](#) (9th Cir. 1997) (“actions taken” refers to administrative orders and decisions issued against an applicant, and may include steps taken by the applicant, but do not include acts of the courts); *cf. Park v. INS*, [252 F.3d 1018, 1025](#) (9th Cir. 2001) (aggravated felony amendments applied to actions taken on or after enactment of IIRIRA), *overruled on other grounds by Fernandez-Ruiz v. Gonzales*, [466 F.3d 1121, 1132](#) (9th Cir. 2006) (en banc).

IIRIRA’s transitional rules, applicable to cases in which deportation proceedings were initiated before April 1, 1997, and the final agency order was entered on or after October 31, 1996, limited petition-for-review jurisdiction for individuals found deportable based on enumerated offenses.

IIRIRA section 309(c)(4)(G) provides:

[T]here shall be no appeal permitted in the case of an alien who is inadmissible or deportable by reason of having committed a criminal offense covered in section 212(a)(2) or section 241(a)(2)(A)(iii), (B), (C), or (D) of the Immigration and Nationality Act (as in effect as of the date of the enactment of this Act), or any offense covered by section 241(a)(2)(A)(ii) of such Act (as in effect on such date) for which both predicate offenses are, without regard to their date of commission, otherwise covered by section 241(a)(2)(A)(i) of such Act (as so in effect).

The listed criminal offenses are:

- |                                 |   |
|---------------------------------|---|
| Section 212(a)(2):              | the criminal grounds of inadmissibility   |
| Section 241(a)(2)(A)(i) & (ii): | two or more crimes involving moral turpitude, not arising out of a single scheme of criminal misconduct, for which both crimes carry possible sentences of one year or longer |
| Section 241(a)(2)(A)(iii):      | conviction of an aggravated felony at any time after admission  |
| Section 241(a)(2)(B):           | controlled substance convictions and drug abuse   |
| Section 241(a)(2)(C):           | certain firearm offenses  |
| Section 241(a)(2)(D):           | miscellaneous crimes  |

Likewise, IIRIRA's permanent rules, applicable to removal proceedings initiated on or after April 1, 1997, limited petition for review jurisdiction for individuals found removable based on enumerated offenses.

[8 U.S.C. § 1252\(a\)\(2\)\(C\)](#) provides:

Notwithstanding any other provision of law . . . no court shall have jurisdiction to review any final order of removal against an alien who is removable by reason of having committed a criminal offense covered in section 1182(a)(2) or 1227(a)(2)(A)(iii), (B), (C), or (D) of this title, or any offense covered by section 1227(a)(2)(A)(ii) of this title for which both predicate offenses are, without regard to their date of commission, otherwise covered by section 1227(a)(2)(A)(i) of this title.

The listed criminal offenses are:

- |  |   |
|--|---|
| <a href="#">8 U.S.C. § 1182(a)(2)</a> :                  | the criminal grounds of inadmissibility   |
| <a href="#">8 U.S.C. § 1227(a)(2)(A)(i) &amp; (ii)</a> : | two or more crimes involving moral turpitude, not arising out of a single scheme of criminal misconduct, for which both crimes carry possible sentences of one year or longer |
| <a href="#">8 U.S.C. § 1227(a)(2)(A)(iii)</a> :          | conviction of an aggravated felony at any time after admission  |
| <a href="#">8 U.S.C. § 1227(a)(2)(B)</a> :               | controlled substance convictions and drug abuse   |
| <a href="#">8 U.S.C. § 1227(a)(2)(C)</a> :               | certain firearm offenses  |
| <a href="#">8 U.S.C. § 1227(a)(2)(D)</a> :               | miscellaneous crimes  |

For § 1252(a)(2)(C)'s jurisdiction-stripping provision to apply, its language requires that the agency determine that a petitioner is actually removable on a basis specified in that section. *Alvarez-Santos v. INS*, [332 F.3d 1245, 1249-53](#) (9th Cir. 2003). *See also Lemus-Galvan v. Mukasey*, [518 F.3d 1081, 1083](#) (9th Cir. 2008) ([8 U.S.C. § 1252\(a\)\(2\)\(C\)](#) did not deprive court of jurisdiction "over

denials of deferral of removal under the CAT, which are always decisions on the merits”); *Kelava v. Gonzales*, [434 F.3d 1120, 1122-23](#) (9th Cir. 2006) ([8 U.S.C. § 1252\(a\)\(2\)\(C\)](#) did not preclude judicial review where BIA failed to address IJ’s findings on aggravated felony charge and instead based decision solely on terrorist activity charge); *Unuakhaulu v. Gonzales*, [416 F.3d 931, 936-37](#) (9th Cir. 2005) (exercising jurisdiction because while agency found applicant *removable* based on aggravated felony conviction, removal was not ordered on that basis and alternate grounds of removal were charged).

Under the IIRIRA provisions, if the court determined that the petitioner’s order of removal or denial of relief was predicated on a conviction for an enumerated crime, it lacked direct judicial review over the petition for review. *See Unuakhaulu*, [416 F.3d at 936-37](#); *Alvarez-Santos*, [332 F.3d at 1253](#). However, the court retained jurisdiction to determine its own jurisdiction, *Ye v. INS*, [214 F.3d 1128, 1131](#) (9th Cir. 2000), and to decide three threshold issues: whether the petitioner was [1] an alien, [2] removable, and [3] removable because of a conviction for a qualifying crime, *see Zavaleta-Gallegos v. INS*, [261 F.3d 951, 954](#) (9th Cir. 2001).

Where direct judicial review was unavailable over a final order of deportation or removal, a petitioner could file a petition for writ of habeas corpus in district court under [28 U.S.C. § 2241](#). *See INS v. St. Cyr*, [533 U.S. 289, 314](#) (2001) (AEDPA and IIRIRA did not repeal habeas corpus jurisdiction to challenge the legal validity of a final order of deportation or removal); *Arreola-Arreola v. Ashcroft*, [383 F.3d 956, 964](#) (9th Cir. 2004) (same), *overruled on other grounds by Morales-Izquierdo v. Gonzales*, [486 F.3d 484, 497](#) (9th Cir. 2007).

## **B. The Current Judicial Review Scheme under the REAL ID Act of 2005**

### **1. Expanded Jurisdiction on Direct Review**

In May 2005, Congress amended the INA to expand the scope of direct judicial review over petitions for review brought by individuals removable based on enumerated crimes, and to limit the availability of habeas corpus relief over challenges to final orders of removal, deportation, or exclusion. Congress explicitly made the REAL ID Act’s judicial review amendments retroactive and

directed that they shall apply to all cases in which the final administrative order was issued before, on, or after May 11, 2005, the date of enactment of the Act. *See Alvarez-Barajas v. Gonzales*, [418 F.3d 1050, 1052](#) (9th Cir. 2005).

The REAL ID Act added the following new judicial review provision to [8 U.S.C. § 1252](#):

#### Judicial Review of Certain Legal Claims -

Nothing in subparagraph (B) or (C), or in any other provision of this chapter (other than this section) which limits or eliminates judicial review, shall be construed as precluding review of constitutional claims or questions of law raised upon a petition for review filed with an appropriate court of appeals in accordance with this section.

[8 U.S.C. § 1252\(a\)\(2\)\(D\)](#); REAL ID Act, Pub. L. No. 109-13, § 106(a)(1)(A)(iii), 119 Stat. 231, 310 (2005). Pursuant to this new provision, the court now has jurisdiction to review constitutional claims and questions of law presented in all petitions for review, including those brought by individuals found removable based on certain enumerated crimes. *See Fernandez-Ruiz v. Gonzales*, [410 F.3d 585, 587](#) (9th Cir. 2005), *as adopted by* [466 F.3d 1121, 1124](#) (9th Cir. 2006) (en banc); *see also, e.g., Sandoval-Lua v. Gonzales*, [499 F.3d 1121, 1126](#) (9th Cir. 2007); *Garcia-Jimenez v. Gonzales*, [488 F.3d 1082, 1085](#) (9th Cir. 2007); *Sinotes-Cruz v. Gonzales*, [468 F.3d 1190, 1194](#) (9th Cir. 2006); *Perez-Enriquez v. Gonzales*, [463 F.3d 1007, 1009-10](#) (9th Cir. 2006) (en banc); *Lisbey v. Gonzales*, [420 F.3d 930, 932](#) (9th Cir. 2005); *Parrilla v. Gonzales*, [414 F.3d 1038, 1040](#) (9th Cir. 2005).

“The plain language of the REAL ID Act grants jurisdiction to appellate courts to review questions of law presented in petitions for review of final orders of removal, even those pertaining to otherwise discretionary determinations.” *Afridi v. Gonzales*, [442 F.3d 1212, 1218](#) (9th Cir. 2006) (holding with respect to particularly serious crimes that “[w]hile we cannot reweigh evidence to determine if the crime was indeed particularly serious, we can determine whether the BIA applied the correct legal standard in making its determination”). “[J]urisdiction over ‘questions of law’ as defined in the Real ID Act includes not only ‘pure’

issues of statutory interpretation, but also application of law to undisputed facts, sometimes referred to as mixed questions of law and fact.” *Ramadan v. Gonzales*, [479 F.3d 646, 648](#) (9th Cir. 2007) (per curiam); *see also* *Chen v. Mukasey*, [524 F.3d 1028, 1031](#) (9th Cir. 2008); *Ghahremani v. Gonzales*, [498 F.3d 993, 999](#) (9th Cir. 2007) (applying *Ramadan* to conclude that in assessing equitable tolling, “the due diligence question necessarily falls within *Ramadan*’s ambit as a mixed question of law and fact, requiring merely that we apply the legal standard for equitable tolling to established facts”).

With respect to asylum, withholding of removal, and CAT claims of a petitioner who was convicted of an offense covered by § 1252(a)(2)(C), the court has jurisdiction to review the denial of an asylum application and to review the denial of withholding of removal and CAT relief to the extent that a petitioner raises questions of law, including mixed questions of law and fact, or constitutional claims. *See Morales v. Gonzales*, [478 F.3d 972, 978](#) (9th Cir. 2007). Moreover, as to “factual issues, when an IJ does not rely on an alien’s conviction in denying CAT relief and instead denies relief on the merits, none of the jurisdiction-stripping provisions . . . apply to divest this court of jurisdiction.” *Id.* at 980; *see also* *Villegas v. Mukasey*, [525 F.3d 984, 987-88](#) (9th Cir. 2008); *Arteaga v. Mukasey*, [511 F.3d 940, 942 n.1](#) (9th Cir. 2007).

Thus, whereas the court previously had jurisdiction to evaluate only whether a criminal conviction was a qualifying offense for the purpose of IIRIRA’s jurisdictional bars, the court now has jurisdiction to review the petition for review on the merits, assuming no other provision in the INA limits judicial review. *See Fernandez-Ruiz*, [410 F.3d at 586-87](#), as adopted by [466 F.3d at 1124](#); *see also, e.g., Garcia-Jimenez*, [488 F.3d at 1085](#) (stating that court has jurisdiction over questions of law despite petitioner’s crime involving moral turpitude and controlled substance offense); *Lisbey*, [420 F.3d at 932](#) (concluding that petitioner was convicted of an aggravated felony and denying the petition on the merits); *Parrilla*, [414 F.3d at 1040](#) (same).

## **2. Applicability to Former Transitional Rules Cases**

In addition to restoring direct judicial review and eliminating habeas jurisdiction over final orders of removal in cases involving enumerated criminal offenses, section 106(d) of the REAL ID Act directs that a petition for review filed

in a transitional rules case “shall be treated as if it had been filed as a petition for review under section 242 of the Immigration and Nationality Act ([8 U.S.C. § 1252](#)) [IIRIRA’s permanent rules].” REAL ID Act, Pub. L. No. 109-13, § 106(d), 119 Stat. 231, 311 (2005); *see also Sotelo v. Gonzales*, [430 F.3d 968, 970](#) (9th Cir. 2005) (explaining that jurisdiction over transitional rules cases is now governed by [8 U.S.C. § 1252](#) rather than [8 U.S.C. § 1105\(a\)](#)). Accordingly, the restoration of direct judicial review over cases involving enumerated offenses applies to both transitional rules and permanent rules cases.

### 3. Contraction of Habeas Jurisdiction

In addition to expanding the scope of judicial review for aliens convicted of certain enumerated crimes, the REAL ID Act also “makes the circuit courts the ‘sole’ judicial body able to review challenges to final orders of deportation, exclusion, or removal.” *Alvarez-Barajas v. Gonzales*, [418 F.3d 1050, 1052](#) (9th Cir. 2005); *see also 8 U.S.C. § 1252(a)(5)*; *Momeni v. Chertoff*, [521 F.3d 1094, 1095-96](#) (9th Cir. 2008) (district court lacked habeas jurisdiction over petition filed after effective date of REAL ID Act). “To accomplish this streamlined judicial review, the Act eliminated habeas jurisdiction, including jurisdiction under [28 U.S.C. § 2241](#), over final orders of deportation, exclusion, or removal.” *Alvarez-Barajas*, [418 F.3d at 1052](#).

The REAL ID Act required the district courts to transfer to the appropriate court of appeals all habeas petitions challenging final orders of removal, deportation or exclusion that were pending before the district court on the effective date of the REAL ID Act (May 11, 2005). *See* REAL ID Act, Pub. L. No. 109-13, § 106(b), 119 Stat. 231, 310–11 (2005); *see also Alvarez-Barajas*, [418 F.3d at 1052](#). Although the REAL ID Act did not address appeals of the denial of habeas relief already pending in the court of appeals on the effective date of the Act, this court has held that such petitions shall be treated as timely filed petitions for review. *See Martinez-Rosas v. Gonzales*, [424 F.3d 926, 928-29](#) (9th Cir. 2005); *Alvarez-Barajas*, [418 F.3d at 1052-53](#); *see also Singh v. Gonzales*, [491 F.3d 1090, 1095](#) (9th Cir. 2007) (holding that “a habeas petition is ‘pending’ in the district court within the meaning of [REAL ID Act]’s transfer provision when the notice of appeal was not filed at the time [REAL ID Act] was enacted, but was filed within the sixty day limitations period for filing a timely appeal of a habeas petition under Federal Rules of Appellate Procedure 4(a)(1)(B)”).

Exceptions for continuing habeas jurisdiction survive, however, for claims like challenges to indefinite detention: “[I]n cases that do not involve a final order of removal, federal habeas corpus jurisdiction remains in the district court, and on appeal to this Court, pursuant to [28 U.S.C. § 2241](#).” *Nadarajah v. Gonzales*, [443 F.3d 1069, 1076](#) (9th Cir. 2006).

## VI. EXCLUSIVE JURISDICTION PROVISION – [8 U.S.C. § 1252\(g\)](#)

Section 242(g) of IIRIRA, [8 U.S.C. § 1252\(g\)](#), provides:

### Exclusive jurisdiction

Except as provided in this section and notwithstanding any other provision of law . . . no court shall have jurisdiction to hear any cause or claim by or on behalf of any alien arising from the decision or action by the Attorney General to commence proceedings, adjudicate cases, or execute removal orders against any alien under this Act.

“Section 1252(g) is not subject to IIRIRA’s transitional rules; it applies without limitation to claims arising from all past, pending, or future exclusion, deportation, or removal proceedings under the Act.” *Jimenez-Angeles v. Ashcroft*, [291 F.3d 594, 599](#) (9th Cir. 2002) (citing IIRIRA § 306(c)(1)) (internal quotation marks omitted).

In *Reno v. American-Arab Anti-Discrimination Comm.*, the Supreme Court construed Section 1252(g) narrowly, holding that “[t]he provision applies only to three discrete actions that the Attorney General may take: her decision or action to *commence* proceedings, *adjudicate* cases, or *execute* removal orders.” [525 U.S. 471, 482](#) (1999) (internal quotation marks omitted); *see also Shin v. Mukasey*, [519 F.3d 901, 905](#) (9th Cir. 2008) (mandate pending) (no jurisdiction to review Attorney General’s decision to commence proceedings). The Court held that it lacked jurisdiction over the aliens’ selective enforcement claims because these claims fell squarely within the prohibition on review of the Attorney’s General’s decision to “commence proceedings.” *Reno*, [525 U.S. at 486-87](#).

*See also Shin*, [519 F.3d at 905](#) (§ 1252(g) did not bar jurisdiction over

petitioner's equitable estoppel claim that arose from actions taken by a government employee prior to any decision to commence proceedings against petitioner); *Alcaraz v. INS*, [384 F.3d 1150, 1161](#) (9th Cir. 2004) (§ 1252(g) did not bar jurisdiction over repapering claim); *Wong v. United States*, [373 F.3d 952, 965](#) (9th Cir. 2004) (§ 1252(g) did not bar review of actions occurring prior to decision to commence proceedings or execute removal order); *United States v. Hovsepian*, [359 F.3d 1144, 1155](#) (9th Cir. 2004) (en banc) (§ 1252(g) did not bar district court's injunction requiring agency to treat criminal alien under immigration law existing at time of offense); *Jimenez-Angeles v. Ashcroft*, [291 F.3d 594, 598-99](#) (9th Cir. 2002) (§ 1252(g) barred review over claim that agency should have commenced deportation proceedings immediately upon becoming aware of applicant's illegal presence but did not bar review of retroactivity challenge to application of IIRIRA's permanent rules); *Barahona-Gomez v. Reno*, [236 F.3d 1115, 1120-21](#) (9th Cir. 2001) (§ 1252(g) barred review of discretionary, quasi-prosecutorial decisions by asylum officers and INS district directors to adjudicate cases or refer them to IJs for hearing but did not bar review of challenge to agency decision to halt consideration of suspension of deportation applications indefinitely); *Catholic Soc. Servs., Inc. v. INS*, [232 F.3d 1139, 1150](#) (9th Cir. 2000) (en banc) (§ 1252(g) did not deprive district court of jurisdiction to enter preliminary injunction); *Dearinger ex rel. Volkova v. Reno*, [232 F.3d 1042, 1044](#) (9th Cir. 2000) (§ 1252(g) did not deprive district court of habeas jurisdiction); *Barapind v. Reno*, [225 F.3d 1100, 1109-10](#) (9th Cir. 2000) (§ 1252(g) did not affect the availability and scope of habeas review); *Sulit v. Schiltgen*, [213 F.3d 449, 453](#) (9th Cir. 2000) (§ 1252(g) did not bar review of due process claim that green cards were seized improperly without a hearing); *Magana-Pizano v. INS*, [200 F.3d 603, 609](#) (9th Cir. 1999) (§ 1252(g) did not strip district court of habeas jurisdiction); *Walters v. Reno*, [145 F.3d 1032, 1052](#) (9th Cir. 1998) (§ 1252(g) did not prohibit district court from enjoining deportation of aliens who raised general collateral challenges to unconstitutional agency practices).

## **VII. JURISDICTION OVER OTHER PROCEEDINGS**

### **A. Jurisdiction Over Motions to Reopen**

The denial of a motion to reopen is a final administrative decision generally subject to judicial review in the court of appeals. *See Sarmadi v. INS*, [121 F.3d](#)

[1319, 1322](#) (9th Cir. 1997) (“other recent changes to the INA did not alter our traditional understanding that the denial of a motion to reconsider or to reopen generally does fall within our jurisdiction over final orders of deportation”); *Singh v. Ashcroft*, [367 F.3d 1182, 1185](#) (9th Cir. 2004) (permanent rules); *see also* [8 U.S.C. § 1252\(b\)\(6\)](#) (“When a petitioner seeks review of an order under this section, any review sought of a motion to reopen or reconsider the order shall be consolidated with the review of the order.”).

However, jurisdiction over motions to reopen may be limited where the underlying request for relief is discretionary. “Section 1252(a)(2)(B)(i) permits the exercise of jurisdiction in cases in which the BIA rules that a motion to reopen fails to satisfy procedural standards such as the evidentiary requirements specified in [8 C.F.R. § 1003.2\(c\)\(1\)](#), but bars jurisdiction where the question presented is essentially the same discretionary issue originally decided.” *Fernandez v. Gonzales*, [439 F.3d 592, 600](#) (9th Cir. 2006) (footnote omitted). Thus, “[i]f . . . the BIA determines that a motion to reopen proceedings in which there has already been an unreviewable discretionary determination concerning a statutory prerequisite to relief does not make out a prima facie case for that relief, § 1252(a)(2)(B)(I) precludes our visiting the merits, just as it would if the BIA had affirmed the IJ on direct appeal.” *Id.* at 601.

However, “[w]here the relief sought is formally the same as was previously denied but the evidence submitted with a motion to reopen is directed at a different basis for providing the same relief, the circumstances can take the matter out of the realm of § 1252(a)(2)(B)(i).” *Id.* For example, the court would have jurisdiction to review the denial of a motion to reopen seeking consideration of non-cumulative evidence, such as a newly-discovered life threatening medical condition afflicting a qualifying relative. *Id.*

The court also has jurisdiction to review motions to reopen seeking consideration of new requests for discretionary forms of relief. *See de Martinez v. Ashcroft*, [374 F.3d 759, 761](#) (9th Cir. 2004) (court retained jurisdiction to review denial of motion to reopen to apply for adjustment of status); *Medina-Morales v. Ashcroft*, [371 F.3d 520, 527](#) (9th Cir. 2004) (§ 1252(a)(2)(B)(i) did not preclude review of denial of motion to reopen to re-apply for adjustment of status where agency had not previously ruled on discretionary adjustment application); *Zazueta-Carrillo v. Ashcroft*, [322 F.3d 1166, 1169-70](#) (9th Cir. 2003) (§

1252(a)(2)(B)(i) did not bar review of denial of motion to reopen to apply for adjustment of status); *Arrozal v. INS*, [159 F.3d 429, 431-32](#) (9th Cir. 1998) (§ 309(c)(4)(E) of transitional rules did not bar review of denial of motion to reopen to apply in the first instance for suspension of deportation).

Likewise, the court has jurisdiction to review the denial of motions to reopen in which an independent claim of ineffective assistance of counsel is at issue. *Fernandez*, [439 F.3d at 602](#). This is true even where evaluations of ineffectiveness and prejudice require an indirect weighing of discretionary factors. See *id.*; see also *Rodriguez-Lariz v. INS*, [282 F.3d 1218, 1223](#) (9th Cir. 2002).

In sum, [the court has] jurisdiction over motions to reopen regarding cases in which: (1) the agency has not made a prior discretionary determination concerning the relief sought; (2) the agency's denial of a motion to reopen applies a procedural statute, regulation, or rule, as opposed to determining that the movant did not establish a prima facie case for relief that merits reopening a prior decision denying relief on an unreviewable discretionary ground; (3) the evidence submitted addresses a hardship ground so distinct from that considered previously as to make the motion to reopen a request for new relief, rather than for reconsideration of a prior denial; and (4) an independent claim such as ineffective assistance of counsel is at issue. Section 1252(a)(2)(B)(i) bars jurisdiction, however, to review the denial of a motion to reopen that pertains only to the merits basis for a previously-made discretionary determination under one of the enumerated provisions, [8 U.S.C. §§ 1182\(h\), 1182\(i\), 1229b, 1229c, and 1255](#).

*Fernandez*, [439 F.3d at 602-03](#).

The court lacks jurisdiction to review the BIA's decision not to invoke its sua sponte authority to reopen proceedings under [8 C.F.R. § 1003.2\(a\)](#). See *Toufighi v. Mukasey*, [510 F.3d 1059, 1063 n.8](#) (9th Cir. 2007); *Ekimian v. INS*, [303 F.3d 1153, 1159-60](#) (9th Cir. 2002).

## **B. Expedited Removal Proceedings**

Under [8 U.S.C. § 1225\(b\)\(1\)](#), the government may order the expedited removal of certain inadmissible aliens at the port of entry. *See Padilla v. Ashcroft*, [334 F.3d 921, 922-23](#) (9th Cir. 2003) (describing expedited removal procedure); *see also* [8 C.F.R. § 235.3\(b\)](#). Under the expedited removal process, “the officer shall order the alien removed from the United States without further hearing or review unless the alien indicates either an intention to apply for asylum . . . or a fear of persecution.” [8 U.S.C. § 1225\(b\)\(1\)\(A\)\(i\)](#).

Except for limited habeas proceedings, “no court shall have jurisdiction to review . . . any individual determination or to entertain any other cause or claim arising from or relating to the implementation or operation of an [expedited] order of removal pursuant to section 1225(b)(1) of this title.” [8 U.S.C. § 1252\(a\)\(2\)\(A\)-\(a\)\(2\)\(A\)\(i\)](#). Habeas proceedings in the expedited removal context are limited to determinations of:

- (A) whether the petitioner is an alien,
- (B) whether the petitioner was ordered removed under such section, and
- (C) whether the petitioner can prove by a preponderance of the evidence that the petitioner is an alien lawfully admitted for permanent residence, has been admitted as a refugee . . . or has been granted asylum . . . .

[8 U.S.C. § 1252\(e\)\(2\)](#).

### **C. Legalization Denials**

The Immigration Reform and Control Act of 1986 (“IRCA”) established a legalization or “amnesty” program for two groups of aliens: (1) those who entered the United States illegally before January 1, 1982, *see* [8 U.S.C. § 1255a](#), INA § 245A; and (2) Special Agricultural Workers (“SAWs”), *see* [8 U.S.C. § 1160](#), INA § 210.

Judicial review of a § 1255a legalization denial is available only during review of a final order of deportation or removal. *See Pedroza-Padilla v. Gonzales*, [486 F.3d 1362, 1364 n.1](#) (9th Cir. 2007) (jurisdiction to review denial of a § 1255a legalization application in conjunction with judicial review of an order

of deportation); *Guzman-Andrade v. Gonzales*, [407 F.3d 1073, 1075](#) (9th Cir. 2005) (holding that court continues to have jurisdiction to review denial of a § 1255a legalization application when reviewing final removal order of an individual who would have been placed in deportation proceedings prior to passage of IIRIRA); *Noriega-Sandoval v. INS*, [911 F.2d 258, 261](#) (9th Cir. 1990) (per curiam) (court lacked jurisdiction to review Legalization Appeals Unit’s denial of application for adjustment to temporary resident status under IRCA because challenge did not arise in context of review of order of deportation). “Thus, until the INS initiates deportation proceedings against an alien who unsuccessfully applies for legalization, that alien has no access to substantive judicial review of the LAU’s denial.” *Proyecto San Pablo v. INS*, [189 F.3d 1130, 1134](#) (9th Cir. 1999); see also [8 U.S.C. § 1255a\(f\)\(4\)\(A\)](#) (“There shall be judicial review of such a denial only in the judicial review of an order of deportation under section 1105a of this title (as in effect before October 1, 1996).”). The courts lack jurisdiction to review § 1255a legalization denials in exclusion proceedings. *Espinoza-Gutierrez v. Smith*, [94 F.3d 1270, 1278](#) (9th Cir. 1996) (“the plain meaning of the statute precludes review of a legalization application in an exclusion proceeding”).

For SAW denials, judicial review is available during review of a final order of deportation or exclusion. See [8 U.S.C. § 1160\(e\)\(3\)\(A\)](#) (“There shall be judicial review of such a denial only in the judicial review of an order of exclusion or deportation under section 1105a of this title (as in effect before October 1, 1996).”); see also *Espinoza-Gutierrez*, [94 F.3d at 1278](#) (noting that for SAW applicants, “Congress did provide for judicial review of LAU denials in exclusion proceedings”). The SAW judicial review provision applies to judicial review of a final order of removal under [8 U.S.C. § 1252\(a\)\(1\)](#). *Perez-Martin v. Ashcroft*, [394 F.3d 752, 757-58](#) (9th Cir. 2005). The BIA lacks jurisdiction to review the denial of SAW status. *Id. at 758*. However, the court has jurisdiction under [8 U.S.C. § 1252\(a\)\(2\)\(D\)](#) to review questions of law. *Perez-Enriquez v. Gonzales*, [463 F.3d 1007, 1009-10](#) (9th Cir. 2007) (en banc) (reviewing question of whether petitioner’s admissibility was determined not only as of the date of his admission to lawful temporary status under section 1160(a)(1), but also as of the date of his adjustment to lawful permanent resident status under section 1160(a)(2)).

#### **D. Registry**

The transitional rules do not bar review of the denial of an application for registry under [8 U.S.C. § 1259](#). See *Beltran-Tirado v. INS*, [213 F.3d 1179, 1182-83](#) (9th Cir. 2000).

### **E. In Absentia Removal Orders**

Any petition for review from an in absentia order of removal “shall . . . be confined to (i) the validity of the notice provided to the alien, (ii) the reasons for the alien’s not attending the proceeding, and (iii) whether or not the alien is removable.” [8 U.S.C. § 1229a\(b\)\(5\)\(D\)](#); see also *Lo v. Ashcroft*, [341 F.3d 934, 936](#) (9th Cir. 2003). These limitations do not apply if the applicant claims to be a national of the United States. See [8 U.S.C. § 1229a\(b\)\(5\)\(D\)](#) (excluding cases described in [8 U.S.C. § 1252\(b\)\(5\)](#)).

### **F. Reinstated Removal Proceedings**

[8 U.S.C. § 1231\(a\)\(5\)](#) provides:

Reinstatement of removal orders against aliens illegally reentering

If the Attorney General finds that an alien has reentered the United States illegally after having been removed or having departed voluntarily, under an order of removal, the prior order of removal is reinstated from its original date and is not subject to being reopened or reviewed, the alien is not eligible and may not apply for any relief under this chapter, and the alien shall be removed under the prior order at any time after the reentry.

*Id.* (enacted in 1996, replacing the former reinstatement provision at [8 U.S.C. § 1252\(f\)](#) (repealed 1996)).

Jurisdiction over reinstatement orders lies in the court of appeals. See *Castro-Cortez v. INS*, [239 F.3d 1037, 1043-44](#) (9th Cir. 2001) (holding that new reinstatement provision does not apply to aliens who reentered the United States before April 1, 1997), *abrogated on other grounds by Fernandez-Vargas v. Gonzales*, [548 U.S. 30](#) (2006).

This court has addressed the revised reinstatement provisions in the following cases: *Martinez-Merino v. Mukasey*, [525 F.3d 801, 803-805](#) (9th Cir. 2008) (petitioner failed to demonstrate prejudice resulting from reinstatement or a “gross miscarriage of justice”); *Reynoso-Cisneros v. Gonzales*, [491 F.3d 1001, 1002](#) (9th Cir. 2007) (per curiam) ([8 C.F.R. § 1003.2\(d\)](#) does not preclude jurisdiction over motions to reopen filed by petitioners who had been lawfully removed after the completion of immigration proceedings); *Morales-Izquierdo v. Gonzales*, [486 F.3d 484, 495-96](#) (9th Cir. 2007) (en banc) (reinstatement procedures in [8 C.F.R. § 241.8](#) constitute a valid interpretation of the INA and do not offend due process); *Lin v. Gonzales*, [473 F.3d 979, 982-983](#) (9th Cir. 2007) (agency erred in finding that original deportation order was automatically reinstated upon petitioner’s illegal reentry where the agency did not comply with [8 C.F.R. § 241.8\(a\)](#) and (b)); *Perez-Gonzalez v. Ashcroft*, [379 F.3d 783, 784](#) (9th Cir. 2004) (reinstatement provisions are not impermissibly retroactive when applied to pre-1996 deportation orders), *called into question by Gonzales v. Dep’t of Homeland Sec.*, [508 F.3d 1227](#) (9th Cir. 2007); *Padilla v. Ashcroft*, [334 F.3d 921, 924](#) (9th Cir. 2003) (declining to decide whether reinstated expedited removal order violates due process because alien could not show prejudice); *Alvarenga-Villalobos v. Ashcroft*, [271 F.3d 1169, 1173-74](#) (9th Cir. 2001) (reinstatement of prior removal order did not violate due process because alien already had one full and fair hearing); *Gallo-Alvarez v. Ashcroft*, [266 F.3d 1123, 1128-29](#) (9th Cir. 2001) (INS may reinstate order of deportation pertaining to alien granted voluntary departure in lieu of deportation).

## **G. Discretionary Waivers**

### **1. Three and Ten-year Unlawful Presence Bars**

“No court shall have jurisdiction to review a decision or action by the Attorney General regarding a waiver” of the three and ten-year unlawful presence bars set forth in [8 U.S.C. § 1182\(a\)\(9\)\(B\)\(i\)](#). [8 U.S.C. § 1182\(a\)\(9\)\(B\)\(v\)](#) (“The Attorney General has sole discretion to waive [the bars] in the case of an immigrant who is the spouse or son or daughter of a United States citizen or of an alien lawfully admitted for permanent residence, if it is established . . . that the refusal of admission to such immigrant alien would result in extreme hardship to the citizen or lawfully resident spouse or parent of such alien.”).

### **2. Document Fraud Waiver**

“No court shall have jurisdiction to review a decision of the Attorney General to grant or deny a waiver” of the document fraud ground of inadmissibility in [8 U.S.C. § 1182\(a\)\(6\)\(F\)\(i\)](#). [8 U.S.C. § 1182\(d\)\(12\)](#).

### **3. Criminal Inadmissibility Waivers**

“No court shall have jurisdiction to review a decision of the Attorney General to grant or deny a [Section 212(h)] waiver . . . .” [8 U.S.C. § 1182\(h\)](#).

### **4. Fraud Waivers**

“No court shall have jurisdiction to review a decision or action of the Attorney General regarding a [Section 212(i)] waiver.” [8 U.S.C. § 1182\(i\)\(2\)](#).

## **H. Inadmissibility on Medical Grounds**

An individual may not appeal an IJ’s removal decision that is based solely on a medical certification that he or she is inadmissible under the health-related grounds in [8 U.S.C. § 1182\(a\)\(1\)](#). *See* [8 U.S.C. § 1252\(a\)\(3\)](#) (“No alien shall have a right to appeal from a decision of an immigration judge which is based solely on a certification described in section 1229a(c)(1)(B) of this title.”).

## **VIII. SCOPE AND STANDARD OF REVIEW**

### **A. Scope of Review**

#### **1. Where BIA Conducts De Novo Review**

Where the BIA conducts its own review of the evidence and law rather than adopting the IJ’s decision the court’s “review is limited to the BIA’s decision, except to the extent that the IJ’s opinion is expressly adopted.” *Hosseini v. Gonzales*, [471 F.3d 953, 957](#) (9th Cir. 2006) (internal quotation marks omitted); *see also Mendez-Mendez v. Mukasey*, [525 F.3d 828, 832](#) (9th Cir. 2008). Where the BIA conducts a de novo review, “[a]ny error committed by the IJ will be rendered harmless by the Board’s application of the correct legal standard.” *Ghaly v. INS*, [58 F.3d 1425, 1430](#) (9th Cir. 1995).

## 2. Where BIA Conducts Abuse of Discretion Review

“If . . . the BIA reviews the IJ’s decision for an abuse of discretion, we review the IJ’s decision.” *de Leon-Barrios v. INS*, [116 F.3d 391, 393](#) (9th Cir. 1997); *see also Yepes-Prado v. INS*, [10 F.3d 1363, 1366-67](#) (9th Cir. 1993).

## 3. Where BIA Incorporates IJ’s Decision

“Where . . . the BIA has reviewed the IJ’s decision and incorporated portions of it as its own, we treat the incorporated parts of the IJ’s decision as the BIA’s.” *Molina-Estrada v. INS*, [293 F.3d 1089, 1093](#) (9th Cir. 2002); *see also Fakhry v. Mukasey*, [524 F.3d 1057, 1062](#) (9th Cir. 2008); *Blanco v. Mukasey*, [518 F.3d 714, 718](#) (9th Cir. 2008).

## 4. Burbano Adoption and Affirmance

Where the BIA cites its decision in *Matter of Burbano*, [20 I. & N. Dec. 872](#) (BIA 1994), and does not express disagreement with any part of the IJ’s decision, the BIA adopts the IJ’s decision in its entirety. *See Abebe v. Gonzales*, [432 F.3d 1037, 1040](#) (9th Cir. 2005) (en banc); *see also Orozco v. Mukasey*, [521 F.3d 1068, 1070](#) (9th Cir. 2008) (mandate pending) (explaining that where BIA expressed no disagreement with IJ’s decision the court reviews the IJ’s decision as if it were a decision of the BIA). Unlike a streamlined summary affirmance (discussed below), which signifies only that the result the IJ reached was correct and any errors were harmless or nonmaterial, a *Burbano* affirmance signifies that the BIA has conducted an independent review of the record and has determined that its conclusions are the same as those articulated by the IJ. *See Abebe*, [432 F.3d at 1040](#); *see also Arreguin-Moreno v. Mukasey*, [511 F.3d 1229, 1232](#) (9th Cir. 2008) (explaining that “when the BIA cites *Burbano* in its decision, all issues presented before the IJ are deemed to have been presented to the BIA.”). If the BIA intends to constrict the scope of its opinion to apply to only certain grounds upon which the IJ’s decision rested, the BIA can and should specifically state that it is so limiting its opinion. *See Abebe*, [432 F.3d at 1040](#) (citing *Tchoukhrova v. Gonzales*, [404 F.3d 1181](#) (9th Cir. 2005), *vacated on other grounds*, [127 S.Ct. 57](#)

(2006)).

## 5. Where BIA's Standard of Review is Unclear

Where it is unclear whether the BIA conducted a de novo review, the court may also “look to the IJ’s oral decision as a guide to what lay behind the BIA’s conclusion.” *Avetova-Elisseva v. INS*, [213 F.3d 1192, 1197](#) (9th Cir. 2000) (reviewing both opinions even though the BIA’s “phrasing seems in part to suggest that it did conduct an independent review of the record,” because “the lack of analysis that the BIA opinion devoted to the issue at hand – its simple statement of a conclusion – also suggests that the BIA gave significant weight to the IJ’s findings”); *see also Ahmed v. Keisler*, [504 F.3d 1183, 1190-91](#) (9th Cir. 2007) (reviewing IJ’s decision as a guide to the BIA’s conclusion given the ambiguity as to whether BIA conducted a de novo review); *Ornelas-Chavez v. Gonzales*, [458 F.3d 1052, 1058](#) (9th Cir. 2006) (reviewing IJ decision denying CAT relief as a guide to BIA’s conclusion where the BIA’s decision lacked analysis and did not expressly state it conducted de novo review of the IJ’s decision).

## 6. Single Board Member Review

Although appeals of the IJ’s denial of relief were previously heard by three-member BIA panels, an appeal may now be reviewed by a single member of the BIA pursuant to [8 C.F.R. § 1003.1\(e\)\(5\)](#). A single BIA member is charged with the task of deciding an appeal and issuing a brief order, unless the member determines that an opinion is necessary and therefore designates the case for decision by a three-member panel under [8 C.F.R. § 1003.1\(e\)\(6\)](#). *See Garcia-Quintero v. Gonzales*, [455 F.3d 1006, 1012-13](#) (9th Cir. 2006) (comparing BIA single-member and three-panel member review). A case must be decided by a three-member panel if it presents “[t]he need to establish a precedent construing the meaning of laws, regulations, or procedures.” [8 C.F.R. § 1003.1\(e\)\(6\)\(ii\)](#).

The BIA’s unpublished one-member decisions are not entitled to *Chevron* deference. *Garcia-Quintero*, [455 F.3d at 1011-14](#). However, unpublished decisions may be eligible for some deference under *Skidmore v. Swift & Co.*, [323 U.S. 134, 140](#) (1944). *Id.* at 1014-15.

## 7. Streamlined Cases

One member of the BIA may summarily affirm or “streamline” an IJ’s decision, without opinion, under [8 C.F.R. § 1003.1\(e\)\(4\)](#) (formerly codified at [8 C.F.R. § 3.1\(e\)\(4\)](#)). If the BIA member determines that the decision should be affirmed without opinion, the BIA shall issue an order stating “The Board affirms, without opinion, the result of the decision below. The decision below is, therefore, the final agency determination.” [8 C.F.R. § 1003.1\(e\)\(4\)\(ii\)](#). Moreover, “[a]n order affirming without opinion . . . shall not include further explanation or reasoning.” *Id.* This court has held that a streamlined decision that included a footnote disavowing the IJ’s adverse credibility determination, although in violation of the regulation, was nothing more than harmless surplusage and caused no prejudice. *See Kumar v. Gonzales*, [439 F.3d 520, 523-24](#) (9th Cir. 2006). However, this court has also explained that when the BIA issues a streamlined decision, it is required to affirm the entirety of the IJ’s decision. *See Padilla-Padilla v. Gonzales*, [463 F.3d 972, 980-81](#) (9th Cir. 2006) (BIA’s reduction of voluntary departure period in streamlined decision constituted an abuse of discretion).

“The practical effect of streamlining is that, unless the BIA opts for three-judge review, the IJ’s decision becomes the BIA’s decision and we evaluate the IJ’s decision as we would that of the Board.” *Lanza v. Ashcroft*, [389 F.3d 917, 925](#) (9th Cir. 2004) (internal quotation marks omitted); *see also Perez v. Mukasey*, [516 F.3d 770, 773](#) (9th Cir. 2008). Even though the IJ’s decision becomes the final agency determination, “summary affirmance does not necessarily mean that the BIA has adopted or approved of the IJ’s reasoning, only that the BIA approves the result reached.” *Camposeco-Montejo v. Ashcroft*, [384 F.3d 814, 821](#) (9th Cir. 2004). “[W]hen the BIA invokes its summary affirmance procedures, it pays for the opacity of its decision by taking on the risk of reversal in declining to articulate a different or alternate basis for the decision should the reasoning proffered by the IJ prove faulty.” *Reyes-Reyes v. Ashcroft*, [384 F.3d 782, 786](#) (9th Cir. 2004) (internal quotation marks and alterations omitted); *see also Perez v. Mukasey*, [516 F.3d 770, 773](#) (9th Cir. 2008).

The BIA’s summary affirmance procedure does not violate due process. *See Falcon Carriche v. Ashcroft*, [350 F.3d 845, 848](#) (9th Cir. 2003) (cancellation of removal); *see also Garcia-Martinez v. Ashcroft*, [371 F.3d 1066, 1078-79](#) (9th Cir. 2004) (same in asylum context); *see also Valencia-Alvarez v. Gonzales*, [469 F.3d 1319, 1323](#) (9th Cir. 2006) (rejecting challenge to BIA’s streamlining because

streamlining does not violate due process, and petitioner failed to show that court could not adequately determine BIA's reasons for denying relief, or that BIA abused its own regulations in streamlining). *But see Montes-Lopez v. Gonzales*, [486 F.3d 1163, 1165](#) (9th Cir. 2007) (remanding where BIA erred in applying summary affirmance procedure when petitioner challenged procedural irregularity of IJ proceedings).

**a. Jurisdiction Over Regulatory or “As-Applied” Challenges to Streamlining**

Where the decision on review is a discretionary hardship determination, the court lacks jurisdiction over a challenge that the BIA's decision to streamline a case violated the regulations. *See Falcon Carriche v. Ashcroft*, [350 F.3d 845, 852-54](#) (9th Cir. 2003); *see also Salvador-Calleros v. Ashcroft*, [389 F.3d 959, 962](#) (9th Cir. 2004).

The court retains jurisdiction over regulatory challenges to streamlining in other contexts. *See, e.g., Camposeco-Montejo v. Ashcroft*, [384 F.3d 814, 821-22](#) (9th Cir. 2004); *Chen v. Ashcroft*, [378 F.3d 1081, 1086-88](#) (9th Cir. 2004) (retaining jurisdiction over regulatory challenge to streamlining and concluding that BIA erred in summarily affirming IJ's denial of application for adjustment of status under Chinese Student Protection Act because legal issue presented not squarely controlled by existing BIA or federal court precedent); *Vukmirovic v. Ashcroft*, [362 F.3d 1247, 1253](#) (9th Cir. 2004) (holding that regulatory challenge to streamlining in asylum case is not beyond judicial review, but declining to reach the question because the court granted the petition); *Falcon Carriche*, [350 F.3d at 852-53](#) (rejecting the government's contention that the BIA's decision to streamline a case is inherently discretionary, and therefore never subject to review).

However, where the court reaches the merits of the agency decision, it is “unnecessary and duplicative” to review the BIA's decision to streamline. *Nahrvani v. Gonzales*, [399 F.3d 1148, 1154-55](#) (9th Cir. 2005); *see also Garcia-Martinez v. Ashcroft*, [371 F.3d 1066, 1078](#) (9th Cir. 2004) (review of the BIA's decision to streamline decision would be “superfluous” under rationale set forth in

*Falcon Carriche*).

### **b. Streamlining and Multiple Grounds**

Where the BIA’s summary affirmance without opinion leaves the court unable to discern whether it affirmed the IJ on a reviewable ground or an unreviewable ground, the court will remand the case to the BIA for clarification of the grounds for its decision. *See Lanza v. Ashcroft*, [389 F.3d 917, 924](#) (9th Cir. 2004) (remanding asylum case where it was unclear whether the BIA’s affirmance without opinion was based on a reviewable ground – the merits of the asylum claim – or an unreviewable ground – untimeliness); *Diaz-Ramos v. Gonzales*, [404 F.3d 1118, 1118](#) (9th Cir. 2005) (per curiam order) (granting government’s motion to remand for clarification of grounds for summary affirmance without opinion of denial of cancellation of removal); *San Pedro v. Ashcroft*, [395 F.3d 1156, 1157-59](#) (9th Cir. 2005) (remanding streamlined appeal for determination of whether BIA affirmed IJ’s denial of waiver of removal on statutory or discretionary grounds); *see also Falcon Carriche v. Ashcroft*, [350 F.3d 845, 855 n.10](#) (9th Cir. 2003) (noting, but not reaching, the “potentially anomalous situation . . . where both discretionary and non-discretionary issues are presented to the BIA and the BIA’s streamlining procedure prevents us from discerning the reasons for the BIA’s decision”).

However, where the court must necessarily decide the merits of the reviewable ground in the course of deciding the other claims for relief, “jurisprudential considerations that weighed in favor of remand to the BIA in *Lanza* do not apply.” *Kasnecovic v. Gonzales*, [400 F.3d 812, 815](#) (9th Cir. 2005) (IJ denied asylum based on the non-reviewable one-year bar and reviewable adverse credibility grounds and this court affirmed the adverse credibility determination in reviewing the denial of withholding of removal and CAT relief).

### **c. Novel Legal Issues**

The BIA errs in streamlining an appeal in the presence of novel legal questions not squarely controlled by existing BIA or federal court precedent, factual and legal questions that are not insubstantial, a complex factual scenario, and applicability to numerous other aliens. *See Chen v. Ashcroft*, [378 F.3d 1081, 1086-87](#) (9th Cir. 2004) (remanding to the BIA for consideration of a novel and

substantial legal issue in the first instance).

#### **d. Streamlining and Motions to Reopen**

“[W]here the BIA entertains a motion to reopen in the first instance, and then fails to provide specific and cogent reasons for its decision, we are left without a reasoned decision to review.” *Movsisian v. Ashcroft*, [395 F.3d 1095, 1098](#) (9th Cir. 2005). Accordingly, the BIA abuses its discretion when it summarily denies a motion to reopen without explanation. *Id.* (rejecting government’s contention that BIA’s summary denial of a motion was consistent with BIA’s streamlining procedures).

#### **8. Review Limited to BIA’s Reasoning**

“[T]his court cannot affirm the BIA on a ground upon which it did not rely.” *Navas v. INS*, [217 F.3d 646, 658 n.16](#) (9th Cir. 2000); *see also Hasan v. Ashcroft*, [380 F.3d 1114, 1122](#) (9th Cir. 2004) (rejecting government’s contention that applicants were ineligible for asylum because they could have relocated because agency did not rely on that basis in denying asylum relief). In other words, “we must decide whether to grant or deny the petition for review based on the Board’s reasoning rather than our own independent analysis of the record.” *Azanor v. Ashcroft*, [364 F.3d 1013, 1021](#) (9th Cir. 2004); *see also Andia v. Ashcroft*, [359 F.3d 1181, 1184](#) (9th Cir. 2004) (per curiam) (“In reviewing the decision of the BIA, we consider only the grounds relied upon by that agency. If we conclude that the BIA’s decision cannot be sustained upon its reasoning, we must remand to allow the agency to decide any issues remaining in the case.”).

#### **9. Review Generally Limited to Administrative Record**

This court’s review is generally limited to the information in the administrative record. *See Fisher v. INS*, [79 F.3d 955, 963](#) (9th Cir. 1996) (en banc) (court is “statutorily prevented from taking judicial notice of the Country Report” that petitioner did not submit to the BIA). “We may review out-of-record evidence only where (1) the Board considers the evidence; or (2) the Board abuses its discretion by failing to consider such evidence upon the motion of an applicant.” *Id. at 964*; *see also Altawil v. INS*, [179 F.3d 791, 792](#) (9th Cir. 1999) (order) (denying motion to reconsider order striking supplemental excerpts of

record).

## 10. Judicial and Administrative Notice

However, this court is not precluded from taking judicial notice of an agency's own records. *See Lising v. INS*, [124 F.3d 996, 998-99](#) (9th Cir. 1997) (taking judicial notice of application for naturalization). This court may take judicial notice of “dramatic foreign developments” that occur after the BIA's determination. *See Gafoor v. INS*, [231 F.3d 645, 655-57](#) (9th Cir. 2000) (taking judicial notice of Fijian coup which occurred after the BIA's decision), *superseded by statute on other grounds as stated by Parussimova v. Mukasey*, No. 06-75217, – F.3d –, [2008 U.S. App. LEXIS 15931](#), \*10-\*12 (9th Cir. Jul. 24, 2008) (mandate pending). This court may also take judicial notice under [Federal Rule of Evidence 201](#) of adjudicative facts not subject to reasonable dispute. *Singh v. Ashcroft*, [393 F.3d 903, 905-07](#) (9th Cir. 2004) (taking judicial notice of existence and operations of Indian counter-terrorism agency and reversing negative credibility finding based on insufficient corroborative evidence).

When the agency takes administrative notice of events occurring after the merits hearing, it must provide notice to the parties, and in some cases, an opportunity to respond. *See Circu v. Gonzales*, [450 F.3d 990, 994-95](#) (9th Cir. 2006) (en banc) (IJ violated due process by taking judicial notice of a new country report without providing notice and an opportunity to respond). Notice of intent to take administrative notice is all that is required if extra-record facts and questions are “legislative, indisputable, and general.” *See Getachew v. INS*, [25 F.3d 841, 846](#) (9th Cir. 1994); *Castillo-Villagra v. INS*, [972 F.2d 1017, 1029](#) (9th Cir. 1992). However, “more controversial or individualized facts require *both* notice to the alien that administrative notice will be taken *and* an opportunity to rebut the extra-record facts or to show cause why administrative notice should not be taken of those facts.” *Circu*, [450 F.3d at 993](#) (emphasis in original, but internal quotation marks and alternation omitted). An example of an indisputable fact is a political party's victory in an election, whereas a controversial fact would be “whether the election has vitiated any previously well-founded fear of persecution.” *Id.* [at 994 \(internal quotation marks omitted\)](#).

## 11. No Additional Evidence

Under [8 U.S.C. § 1252\(a\)\(1\)](#), “the court may not order the taking of

additional evidence under section 2347(c) of Title 28.” *See also Altawil v. INS*, [179 F.3d 791, 792-93](#) (9th Cir. 1999) (order) (denying motion for leave to adduce additional evidence); *Reyes-Melendez v. INS*, [342 F.3d 1001, 1006](#) (9th Cir. 2003).

## **12. Waiver**

“Issues raised in a brief that are not supported by argument are deemed abandoned.” *Martinez-Serrano v. INS*, [94 F.3d 1256, 1259-60](#) (9th Cir. 1996) (challenge to denial of motion to reopen, referred to in statement of the case but not discussed in body of the opening brief, was waived); *see also Chebchoub v. INS*, [257 F.3d 1038, 1045](#) (9th Cir. 2001) (petitioner failed to brief denial of motion to reopen); *Bazuaye v. INS*, [79 F.3d 118, 120](#) (9th Cir. 1996) (per curiam) (declining to reach issue raised for the first time in the reply brief).

*Cf. Mamouzian v. Ashcroft*, [390 F.3d 1129, 1136](#) (9th Cir. 2004) (holding that applicant did not waive challenge to future persecution finding, and refusing to “pars[e] her brief’s language in a hyper technical manner”); *Ndom v. Ashcroft*, [384 F.3d 743, 750-51](#) (9th Cir. 2004) (rejecting government’s contention that applicant waived asylum and withholding of removal claims by failing to articulate proper standard of review or argue past persecution), *superseded by statute on other grounds as stated by Parussimova v. Mukasey*, No. 06-75217, – F.3d –, [2008 U.S. App. LEXIS 15931](#), \*10-\*12 (9th Cir. Jul. 24, 2008) (mandate pending); *Guo v. Ashcroft*, [361 F.3d 1194, 1199](#) (9th Cir. 2004) (rejecting government’s contention that asylum applicant waived challenge to negative credibility finding because issue sufficiently argued in opening brief); *Mejia v. Ashcroft*, [298 F.3d 873, 876](#) (9th Cir. 2002) (“failure to recite the proper standard of review does not constitute waiver of a properly raised merits issue”).

### **a. Exceptions to Waiver**

#### **(i) No Prejudice to Opposing Party**

The court has discretion to review an issue not raised in a petitioner’s briefs “if the failure to raise the issue properly did not prejudice the defense of the opposing party.” *Alcaraz v. INS*, [384 F.3d 1150, 1161](#) (9th Cir. 2004) (internal quotation marks omitted) (reviewing repapering issue raised first in Fed. R. App. P. 28(j) letter and discussed at oral argument and in post-argument supplemental

briefs); *see also* *Ndom v. Ashcroft*, [384 F.3d 743, 751](#) (9th Cir. 2004) (noting lack of prejudice because government briefed issue); *Singh v. Ashcroft*, [361 F.3d 1152, 1157 n.3](#) (9th Cir. 2004) (reviewing appropriateness of summary dismissal because issue briefed by government).

## (ii) Manifest Injustice

The court may also “review an issue not raised in a petitioner’s opening brief if a failure to do so would result in manifest injustice.” *Alcaraz v. INS*, [384 F.3d 1150, 1161](#) (9th Cir. 2004) (internal quotation marks omitted) (failure to review applicant’s repapering issue would result in manifest injustice).

### 13. Agency Bound by Scope of 9th Circuit’s Remand

The BIA is bound by the scope of this court’s remand in situations where the scope of the remand is clear. *Mendez-Gutierrez v. Gonzales*, [444 F.3d 1168, 1173](#) (9th Cir. 2006) (BIA did not err in refusing to entertain issue beyond scope of this court’s remand).

### 14. Where Agency Ignores a Procedural Defect

“When the BIA has ignored a procedural defect and elected to consider an issue on its substantive merits, [this court] cannot then decline to consider the issue based upon this procedural defect.” *Abebe v. Gonzales*, [432 F.3d 1037, 1041](#) (9th Cir. 2005) (en banc).

## B. Standards of Review

The proper standard of review in immigration proceedings depends on the nature of the decision being reviewed. *See Manzo-Fontes v. INS*, [53 F.3d 280, 282](#) (9th Cir. 1995) (discussing standards); *see also* [8 U.S.C. § 1252\(b\)\(4\)](#) and Ninth Circuit Standards of Review Outline.

### 1. De Novo Review

Questions of law are reviewed de novo. *See, e.g., Cerezo v. Mukasey*, [512 F.3d 1163, 1166](#) (9th Cir. 2008) (whether conviction is a crime involving moral

turpitude); *Hernandez-Gil v. Gonzales*, [476 F.3d 803, 804 n.1](#) (9th Cir. 2007) (whether IJ violated statutory right to counsel); *Chavez-Perez v. Ashcroft*, [386 F.3d 1284, 1287](#) (9th Cir. 2004) (equal protection challenge); *Rosales-Rosales v. Ashcroft*, [347 F.3d 714, 717](#) (9th Cir. 2003) (whether offense constitutes an aggravated felony); *Kankamalage v. INS*, [335 F.3d 858, 861-62](#) (9th Cir. 2003) (whether regulation had retroactive effect); *Vasquez-Zavala v. Ashcroft*, [324 F.3d 1105, 1107](#) (9th Cir. 2003) (due process challenge); *Taniguchi v. Schultz*, [303 F.3d 950, 955](#) (9th Cir. 2002) (district court’s decision whether to grant or deny a petition for writ of habeas corpus); *Montero-Martinez v. Ashcroft*, [277 F.3d 1137, 1145](#) (9th Cir. 2002) (legal determination of whether applicant’s daughter was a qualifying “child”).

“The BIA’s interpretation of immigration laws is entitled to deference[, but] we are not obligated to accept an interpretation clearly contrary to the plain and sensible meaning of the statute.” *Kankamalage*, [335 F.3d at 861](#) (citation omitted). Additionally, the court “will not defer to BIA decisions that conflict with circuit precedent.” *Melkonian v. Ashcroft*, [320 F.3d 1061, 1065](#) (9th Cir. 2003). Moreover, the court will not defer to the BIA’s interpretation of statutes that it does not administer. *See Garcia-Lopez v. Ashcroft*, [334 F.3d 840, 843](#) (9th Cir. 2003) (court would not give deference to agency interpretation of the California Penal Code).

## 2. Substantial Evidence Review

The IJ’s or BIA’s factual findings are reviewed for substantial evidence. *See, e.g., Zehatye v. Gonzales*, [453 F.3d 1182, 1184-85](#) (9th Cir. 2006) (reviewing denial of asylum and withholding for substantial evidence); *Mohammed v. Gonzales*, [400 F.3d 785, 791](#) (9th Cir. 2005) (ineffective assistance of counsel). For instance, the BIA’s determination that an applicant is not eligible for asylum “can be reversed only if the evidence presented by [the applicant] was such that a reasonable factfinder would have to conclude that the requisite fear of persecution existed.” *INS v. Elias-Zacarias*, [502 U.S. 478, 481 & n.1](#) (1992) (noting that “[t]o reverse the BIA finding we must find that the evidence not only *supports* that conclusion, but *compels* it”); *see also Khourassany v. INS*, [208 F.3d 1096, 1100](#) (9th Cir. 2000) (“Under our venerable standards of review of BIA decisions, we may grant the petition for review only if the evidence presented . . . is such that a reasonable fact-finder would be compelled to conclude that the requisite fear of

persecution existed.”). *But see Singh v. Ilchert*, [63 F.3d 1501, 1506](#) (9th Cir. 1995) (reviewing de novo the BIA’s determination that petitioner’s harm was not on account of political opinion because the question involved “the application of established legal principles to undisputed facts”), *superseded by statute on other grounds as stated by Parussimova v. Mukasey*, No. 06-75217, – F.3d –, [2008 U.S. App. LEXIS 15931](#), \*10-\*12 (9th Cir. Jul. 24, 2008) (mandate pending).

The permanent rules define the substantial evidence standard by stating that “the administrative findings of fact are conclusive unless any reasonable adjudicator would be compelled to conclude to the contrary.” [8 U.S.C. § 1252\(b\)\(4\)\(B\)](#); *see also Tawadrus v. Ashcroft*, [364 F.3d 1099, 1102](#) (9th Cir. 2004) (quoting [8 U.S.C. § 1252\(b\)\(4\)\(B\)](#)). The previous jurisdictional statute provided that “findings of fact, if supported by reasonable, substantial, and probative evidence on the record considered as a whole, shall be conclusive.” [8 U.S.C. § 1105a\(a\)\(4\)](#) (repealed 1996).

### **3. Abuse of Discretion Review**

The BIA’s denial of a motion to reopen or reconsider is reviewed for abuse of discretion. *See Cano-Merida v. INS*, [311 F.3d 960, 964](#) (9th Cir. 2002); *see also Movsisian v. Ashcroft*, [395 F.3d 1095, 1098](#) (9th Cir. 2005) (same standard for denial of motion to remand). The discretionary decision to deny asylum to an eligible petitioner is also reviewed for abuse of discretion. *See Kalubi v. Ashcroft*, [364 F.3d 1134, 1137](#) (9th Cir. 2004); *see also 8 U.S.C. § 1252(b)(4)(D)* (“the Attorney General’s discretionary judgment whether to grant relief under section 1158(a) of this title shall be conclusive unless manifestly contrary to the law and an abuse of discretion”).

The BIA abuses its discretion when it acts “arbitrarily, irrationally, or contrary to the law.” *See Singh v. INS*, [213 F.3d 1050, 1052](#) (9th Cir. 2000); *see also Cerezo v. Mukasey*, [512 F.3d 1163, 1166](#) (9th Cir. 2008) (“The BIA abuses its discretion when it makes an error of law.”). “The BIA abuses its discretion when it fails to comply with its own regulations.” *Iturribarria v. INS*, [321 F.3d 889, 895](#) (9th Cir. 2003).

#### **a. Failure to Provide Reasoned Explanation**

The court has “long held that the BIA abuses its discretion when it fails to provide a reasoned explanation for its actions.” *Movsisian v. Ashcroft*, [395 F.3d 1095, 1098](#) (9th Cir. 2005) (BIA abused its discretion by denying motion to remand without any explanation); *see also Franco-Rosendo v. Gonzales*, [454 F.3d 965, 967-68](#) (9th Cir. 2006) (remanding for explanation of the BIA’s reasoning); *Singh v. Gonzales*, [416 F.3d 1006, 1015](#) (9th Cir. 2005) (remanding in light of the BIA’s unexplained failure to address applicant’s ineffective assistance of counsel claim); *Kalubi v. Ashcroft*, [364 F.3d 1134, 1141](#) (9th Cir. 2004) (explaining that conclusory statements are insufficient and BIA must provide an explanation showing that it “heard, considered, and decided” the issue (internal quotation marks omitted)); *Rodriguez-Lariz v. INS*, [282 F.3d 1218, 1227](#) (9th Cir. 2002) (remanding motion to reopen to apply for suspension of deportation where BIA did not engage in substantive analysis or articulate any reasons for its decision); *Arrozal v. INS*, [159 F.3d 429, 432](#) (9th Cir. 1998) (“The BIA abuses its discretion when it fails to state its reasons and show proper consideration of all factors when weighing equities and denying relief” (internal quotation marks and emphasis omitted)); *but cf. Almaghzar v. Gonzales*, [457 F.3d 915, 921-22](#) (9th Cir. 2006) (IJ’s generalized statement that he considered all the evidence was sufficient).

#### **b. Failure to Consider Arguments or Evidence**

“IJs and the BIA are not free to ignore arguments raised by [a party].” *Sagaydak v. Gonzales*, [405 F.3d 1035, 1040](#) (9th Cir. 2005) (IJ erred by failing to consider extraordinary circumstances proffered to excuse untimely asylum application); *see also Montes-Lopez v. Gonzales*, [486 F.3d 1163, 1165](#) (9th Cir. 2007) (explaining that BIA is not free to ignore arguments raised by petitioner and concluding that “by summarily affirming the IJ’s decision, the BIA ignored – and denied review of – [petitioner’s]” procedural due process claim). “Immigration judges, although given significant discretion, cannot reach their decisions capriciously and must indicate how they weighed factors involved and how they arrived at their conclusion.” *Sagaydak*, [405 F.3d at 1040](#) (internal quotation marks and alteration omitted). *See also Singh v. Gonzales*, [494 F.3d 1170, 1173](#) (9th Cir. 2007) (remanding where the BIA failed to consider and address affidavits submitted by petitioner and his attorney); *Franco-Rosendo v. Gonzales*, [454 F.3d 965, 967-68](#) (9th Cir. 2006) (BIA abused its discretion by failing to identify and evaluate favorable factors in support of motion to reopen); *Singh v. Gonzales*, [416 F.3d 1006, 1015](#) (9th Cir. 2005) (remanding in light of the BIA’s unexplained failure to address ineffective assistance of counsel claim); *Chen v. Ashcroft*, [362](#)

[F.3d 611, 620](#) (9th Cir. 2004) (IJ erred by failing to consider explanation for witness's failure to testify at hearing). *But see Almaghzar v. Gonzales*, [457 F.3d 915, 921-22](#) (9th Cir. 2006) (explaining that individualized consideration does not require an IJ to discuss every piece of evidence, and accepting the IJ's general statement that he considered all the evidence before him); *Fernandez v. Gonzales*, [439 F.3d 592, 603-04](#) (9th Cir. 2006) (noting that any concerns about the court's ability to review inadequately reasoned or cursory decisions do not apply where the court has already determined it lacks jurisdiction to review the agency's decision on the merits).

### **C. Boilerplate Decisions**

“[W]e do not allow the Board to rely on ‘boilerplate’ opinions ‘which set out general legal standards yet are devoid of statements that evidence an individualized review of the petitioner’s circumstances.’” *Ghaly v. INS*, [58 F.3d 1425, 1430](#) (9th Cir. 1995) (quoting *Castillo v. INS*, [951 F.2d 1117, 1121](#) (9th Cir. 1991)). The BIA’s decision “must contain a statement of its reasons for denying the petitioner relief adequate for us to conduct our review.” *Ghaly*, [58 F.3d at 1430](#).