

No. _____

IN THE

SUPREME COURT OF THE UNITED STATES

STEVEN RIAD JALLOUL, Petitioner,

v.

UNITED STATES OF AMERICA, Respondent

PETITION FOR WRIT OF CERTIORARI
TO THE UNITED STATES COURT OF APPEALS FOR THE FIFTH CIRCUIT
No. 21-10434

(Mr.) Leigh W. Davis
Counsel of Record

1901 Central Drive, Suite 708
Bedford, Texas 76021
817.868.9500
817.887.2401 (fax)
Texas Bar No. 24029505
Member, Supreme Court Bar

QUESTION PRESENTED

This Court should grant this petition to address the degree of specificity required for the language in a defendant's plea agreement to be construed as an agreement to pay restitution. Here, the Fifth Circuit found an admonishment about restitution coupled with an agreement to pay whatever was ordered was an agreement by Jalloul to pay restitution not otherwise authorized by statute. Is this sufficiently specific to support an agreement by Jalloul to pay restitution?

LIST OF PARTIES

All parties appear in the caption of the case on the cover page.

All parties do not appear in the caption of the case on the cover page. A list of all parties to the proceeding in the court whose judgment is the subject of this petition is as follows:

DIRECTLY RELATED PROCEEDINGS

none

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The petitioner, Steven Riad Jalloul, respectfully petitions this Court for a writ of certiorari to review the judgment and opinion of the United States Court of Appeals for the Fifth Circuit filed on September 6, 2022.

OPINIONS BELOW

The opinion of the United States Court of Appeals for the Fifth Circuit is *United States of America v. Steven Riad Jalloul*, No. 21-10434 (unpublished). This opinion, which is not designated for publication, is reproduced in Appendix A. The judgment entered by the district court is reproduced in Appendix B.

JURISDICTION

This Court's jurisdiction is invoked under 28 U.S.C. § 1257(a). The Court of Appeals for the Fifth Circuit issued its opinion on September 6, 2022 making this petition timely under Supreme Court Rule 13.1.

CONSTITUTIONAL AND STATUTORY PROVISIONS INVOLVED

Title 18, United States Code, Section 3663

(a)

(1)

(A) The court, when sentencing a defendant convicted of an offense under this title, section 401, 408(a), 409, 416, 420, or 422(a) of the Controlled Substances Act (21 U.S.C. 841, 848(a), 849, 856, 861, 863) (but in no case shall a participant in an offense under such sections be considered a victim of such offense under this section), or section 5124, 46312, 46502, or 46504 of title 49, other than an offense described in section 3663A(c), may order, in addition to or, in the case of a misdemeanor, in lieu of any other penalty authorized by law, that the defendant make restitution to any victim of such offense, or if the victim is deceased, to the victim's estate. The court may also order, if agreed to by the parties in a plea agreement, restitution to persons other than the victim of the offense.

(B)

(i) The court, in determining whether to order restitution under this section, shall consider—

(I) the amount of the loss sustained by each victim as a result of the offense; and

(II) the financial resources of the defendant, the financial needs and earning ability of the defendant and the defendant's dependents, and such other factors as the court deems appropriate.

(ii) To the extent that the court determines that the complication and prolongation of the sentencing process resulting from the fashioning of an order of restitution under this section outweighs the need to provide restitution to any victims, the court may decline to make such an order.

(2) For the purposes of this section, the term "victim" means a person directly and proximately harmed as a result of the commission of an offense for which restitution may be ordered includ-

ing, in the case of an offense that involves as an element a scheme, conspiracy, or pattern of criminal activity, any person directly harmed by the defendant's criminal conduct in the course of the scheme, conspiracy, or pattern. In the case of a victim who is under 18 years of age, incompetent, incapacitated, or deceased, the legal guardian of the victim or representative of the victim's estate, another family member, or any other person appointed as suitable by the court, may assume the victim's rights under this section, but in no event shall the defendant be named as such representative or guardian.

(3)The court may also order restitution in any criminal case to the extent agreed to by the parties in a plea agreement.

(b)The order may require that such defendant—

(1)in the case of an offense resulting in damage to or loss or destruction of property of a victim of the offense—

(A)return the property to the owner of the property or someone designated by the owner; or

(B)if return of the property under subparagraph (A) is impossible, impractical, or inadequate, pay an amount equal to the greater of—

(i)the value of the property on the date of the damage, loss, or destruction, or

(ii)the value of the property on the date of sentencing, less the value (as of the date the property is returned) of any part of the property that is returned;

(2)in the case of an offense resulting in bodily injury to a victim including an offense under chapter 109A or chapter 110

—

(A)pay an amount equal to the cost of necessary medical and related professional services and devices relating to physical, psychiatric, and psychological care, including nonmedical care and treatment rendered in accordance with a method of healing recognized by the law of the place of treatment;

(B)pay an amount equal to the cost of necessary physical and occupational therapy and rehabilitation; and

(C)reimburse the victim for income lost by such victim as a result of such offense;

(3)in the case of an offense resulting in bodily injury also results in the death of a victim, pay an amount equal to the cost of necessary funeral and related services;

(4)in any case, reimburse the victim for lost income and necessary child care, transportation, and other expenses related to participation in the investigation or prosecution of the offense or attendance at proceedings related to the offense;

(5)in any case, if the victim (or if the victim is deceased, the victim's estate) consents, make restitution in services in lieu of mon-

ey, or make restitution to a person or organization designated by the victim or the estate; and

(6) in the case of an offense under sections 1028(a)

(7) or 1028A(a) of this title, pay an amount equal to the value of the time reasonably spent by the victim in an attempt to remediate the intended or actual harm incurred by the victim from the offense.

(c)

(1) Notwithstanding any other provision of law (but subject to the provisions of subsections (a)(1)(B)(i)(II) and (ii), [1] when sentencing a defendant convicted of an offense described in section 401, 408(a), 409, 416, 420, or 422(a) of the Controlled Substances Act (21 U.S.C. 841, 848(a), 849, 856, 861, 863), in which there is no identifiable victim, the court may order that the defendant make restitution in accordance with this subsection.

(2)

(A) An order of restitution under this subsection shall be based on the amount of public harm caused by the offense, as determined by the court in accordance with guidelines promulgated by the United States Sentencing Commission.

(B) In no case shall the amount of restitution ordered under this subsection exceed the amount of the fine which may be ordered for the offense charged in the case.

(3) Restitution under this subsection shall be distributed as follows:

(A) 65 percent of the total amount of restitution shall be paid to the State entity designated to administer crime victim assistance in the State in which the crime occurred.

(B) 35 percent of the total amount of restitution shall be paid to the State entity designated to receive Federal substance abuse block grant funds.

(4) The court shall not make an award under this subsection if it appears likely that such award would interfere with a forfeiture under chapter 46 or chapter 96 of this title or under the Controlled Substances Act (21 U.S.C. 801 et seq.).

(5) Notwithstanding section 3612(c) or any other provision of law, a penalty assessment under section 3013 or a fine under subchapter C of chapter 227 shall take precedence over an order of restitution under this subsection.

(6) Requests for community restitution under this subsection may be considered in all plea agreements negotiated by the United States.

(7)

(A) The United States Sentencing Commission shall promulgate guidelines to assist courts in determining

the amount of restitution that may be ordered under this subsection.

(B)No restitution shall be ordered under this subsection until such time as the Sentencing Commission promulgates guidelines pursuant to this paragraph.

(d)An order of restitution made pursuant to this section shall be issued and enforced in accordance with section 3664.

Title 18, United States Code, Section 3663A

(a)

(1)Notwithstanding any other provision of law, when sentencing a defendant convicted of an offense described in subsection (c), the court shall order, in addition to, or in the case of a misdemeanor, in addition to or in lieu of, any other penalty authorized by law, that the defendant make restitution to the victim of the offense or, if the victim is deceased, to the victim's estate.

(2)For the purposes of this section, the term "victim" means a person directly and proximately harmed as a result of the commission of an offense for which restitution may be ordered including, in the case of an offense that involves as an element a scheme, conspiracy, or pattern of criminal activity, any person directly harmed by the defendant's criminal conduct in the course of the scheme, conspiracy, or pattern. In the case of a victim who is under 18 years of age, incompetent, incapacitated, or deceased, the legal guardian of the victim or representative of the victim's estate, another family member, or any other person appointed as suitable by the court, may assume the victim's rights under this section, but in no event shall the defendant be named as such representative or guardian.

(3)The court shall also order, if agreed to by the parties in a plea agreement, restitution to persons other than the victim of the offense.

(b)The order of restitution shall require that such defendant—

(1)in the case of an offense resulting in damage to or loss or destruction of property of a victim of the offense—

(A)return the property to the owner of the property or someone designated by the owner; or

(B)if return of the property under subparagraph (A) is impossible, impracticable, or inadequate, pay an amount equal to—

(i)the greater of—

(I)the value of the property on the date of the damage, loss, or destruction; or

(II)the value of the property on the date of sentencing, less

- (ii)the value (as of the date the property is returned) of any part of the property that is returned;
- (2)in the case of an offense resulting in bodily injury to a victim—
 - (A)pay an amount equal to the cost of necessary medical and related professional services and devices relating to physical, psychiatric, and psychological care, including nonmedical care and treatment rendered in accordance with a method of healing recognized by the law of the place of treatment;
 - (B)pay an amount equal to the cost of necessary physical and occupational therapy and rehabilitation; and
 - (C)reimburse the victim for income lost by such victim as a result of such offense;
- (3)in the case of an offense resulting in bodily injury that results in the death of the victim, pay an amount equal to the cost of necessary funeral and related services; and
- (4)in any case, reimburse the victim for lost income and necessary child care, transportation, and other expenses incurred during participation in the investigation or prosecution of the offense or attendance at proceedings related to the offense.

(c)

- (1)This section shall apply in all sentencing proceedings for convictions of, or plea agreements relating to charges for, any offense—
 - (A)that is—
 - (i)a crime of violence, as defined in section 16;
 - (ii)an offense against property under this title, or under section 416(a) of the Controlled Substances Act (21 U.S.C. 856(a)), including any offense committed by fraud or deceit;
 - (iii)an offense described in section 3 of the Rodchenkov Anti-Doping Act of 2019;
 - (iv)an offense described in section 1365 (relating to tampering with consumer products); or
 - (v)an offense under section 670 (relating to theft of medical products); and
 - (B)in which an identifiable victim or victims has suffered a physical injury or pecuniary loss.
- (2)In the case of a plea agreement that does not result in a conviction for an offense described in paragraph (1), this section shall apply only if the plea specifically states that an offense listed under such paragraph gave rise to the plea agreement.
- (3)This section shall not apply in the case of an offense described in paragraph (1)(A)(ii) or (iii) if the court finds, from facts on the record, that—
 - (A)the number of identifiable victims is so large as to make restitution impracticable; or

(B)determining complex issues of fact related to the cause or amount of the victim's losses would complicate or prolong the sentencing process to a degree that the need to provide restitution to any victim is outweighed by the burden on the sentencing process.

(d)An order of restitution under this section shall be issued and enforced in accordance with section 3664.

STATEMENT OF THE CASE

Proceedings Below

On February 21, 2019, a grand jury in the Northern District of Texas handed up an indictment charging Jalloul with twelve counts of filing false tax returns. On March 4, 2019, Jalloul appeared before a magistrate judge who allowed him to remain free on conditions of release. Jalloul was arraigned on the indictment at that time. After several continuances, Jalloul pleaded guilty. Jalloul executed a factual resume admitting his guilt Counts Eleven and Twelve, each of which charged a violation of filing a false tax return. He then executed another Factual Resume correcting a typographical error—his defense lawyer was misnomered. He also executed a plea agreement including an appeal waiver. The government enforced the appeal waiver, but the Court of Appeals found this issue without the appeal waiver.

Jalloul entered his guilty pleas before a magistrate judge. The magistrate judge issued a report and recommendation on the pleas. The district judge entered an order accepting the pleas. The district judge also entered a scheduling order for sentencing.

Before sentencing, the government moved to revoke Jalloul's pretrial release based on his committing another offense—making false statements to a

bank in violation of 18 U.S.C. § 1014. Jalloul waived a detention hearing and remained in custody pending sentencing.

The district judge conducted a sentencing hearing on April 20, 2021. The district judge sentenced Jalloul to 36 months on each count to run consecutively. The district judge also ordered Jalloul to pay \$14,100,029.87 of restitution as a criminal monetary penalty and additionally included payment of that restitution as a condition of supervised release.

Notice of appeal was timely. A panel of the United States Court of Appeals for the Fifth Circuit affirmed in an unpublished opinion.

Statement of Relevant Facts

Jalloul's plea agreement included an admonishment of the maximum penalties the court could impose. It mentioned restitution. More specifically,

The maximum penalties the Court can impose on each of counts eleven and twelve include: ... e. restitution to victims or to the community, which may be mandatory under the law, and which the defendant agrees may include restitution arising from all relevant conduct, not limited to that arising from the offense of conviction alone[.]

The plea agreement also included an agreement to pay monies owed:

The defendant fully understands that any financial obligation imposed by the Court, including a restitution order and/or the implementation of a fine is due and payable immediately. In the event the Court imposes a schedule for payment of restitution, the defendant agrees that such a schedule represents a minimum payment obligation and does not preclude the U.S. Attorney's Office from pursuing any other means by which to satisfy the defendant's full and immediately enforceable financial obligation. The defendant understands that the defendant has a continuing obligation to pay in full as soon as possible any financial obligation imposed by the Court.

The PSR calculated the restitution to be \$14,100,029.87. Agents first looked at the returns prepared by Jalloul to determine which “contained false credits for EIC, American Opportunity Credit, and Refundable Education Credit, the dollar amounts for those credits, and the corresponding annual percentages.” Agents then “used local Dallas and Fort Worth, Texas, preparer statistics to estimate an acceptable number of the returns that should include EIC, American Opportunity Credit, and Refundable Education Credit.” Then, “[a]n acceptable annual dollar amount for EIC, American Opportunity Credit, and Refundable Education Credit was calculated by multiplying Jalloul's average EIC, American Opportunity Credit, and Refundable Education Credit dollar amounts per return by the acceptable number of returns that should include those credits.” Finally, “the acceptable credit dollar amounts” were subtracted “from the actual credit dollar amounts reported in the federal tax returns.” This resulted in the \$14,100,029.87 restitution amount.

Jalloul did not object to this calculation in the PSR.

The district court ordered this amount of restitution as a criminal monetary penalty and made payment of this restitution a special condition of supervised release. No objection was lodged at sentencing.

REASONS FOR GRANTING THE PETITION

This Court should grant this petition to address the degree of specificity required for the language in a defendant's plea agreement to be construed as an agreement to pay restitution. Here, the Fifth Circuit found an admonishment about restitution coupled with an agreement to pay whatever was ordered was an agreement by Jalloul to pay restitution not otherwise authorized by statute. Is this sufficiently specific to support an agreement by Jalloul to pay restitution?

Introduction

On appeal, Jalloul argued that the district court plainly erred by ordering restitution as a criminal penalty. (Restitution was ordered as a condition of supervised release, but that was not at issue on appeal.) More specifically, he contended that restitution was not authorized for his offenses of conviction and that his plea agreement's admonishment of possible punishments was not sufficient to constitute an agreement to pay restitution. The Fifth Circuit disagreed and affirmed. The Ninth Circuit would have affirmed, but the Seventh Circuit would have reversed. Generally, language about restitution must be specific.

Jalloul's Plea Agreement language regarding restitution, restitution for tax offenses, and the Fifth Circuit's affirming the order of restitution.

Jalloul signed a plea agreement. Page 2 of Jalloul's plea agreement admonishes him of the range of punishment for his offenses. Paragraph 3 of the plea agreement stated "The maximum penalties the Court can impose on each of counts eleven and twelve include: . . ." Then paragraph 3 listed all of those possible punishments. One of the penalties the court "can" impose was restitution, which "may be mandatory under the law" and "may include restitution arising from all relevant conduct." Subsection e of para-

graph 3 discusses restitution in the context of a possible punishment. That subsection provides as follows: “[R]estitution to victims or to the community, which may be mandatory under the law, and which the defendant agrees may include restitution arising from all relevant conduct, not limited to that arising from the offense of conviction alone[.]”

Jalloul pleaded guilty to two tax offenses. Counts Eleven and Twelve charged him with filing false tax returns as part of a tax preparation business. Generally, restitution is not allowed for tax offenses. *See United States v. Stout*, 32 F.3d 901, 905 (5th Cir. 1994) (holding that § 3663 only permits separate restitution orders for offenses under Title 18 or 49 and vacating restitution award ordered for offense under Title 26). This was not a Mandatory Victim’s Restitution Act case. *See* 18 U.S.C. § 3663A. Nor was restitution optional under 18 U.S.C. § 3663. *See* 18 U.S.C. § 3663(a)(1)(A). Thus, restitution could only be ordered in this case as a criminal penalty if Jalloul agreed. 18 U.S.C. § 3663(a)(3) (allowing a district court to “order restitution in any criminal case to the extent agreed to by the parties in a plea agreement.”).

The Fifth Circuit affirmed finding that the language regarding possible restitution coupled with his agreement to meet any financial obligation imposed by the court constituted an agreement to pay restitution.

Jalloul’s plea agreement stated that the district court could impose “restitution to victims or to the community, which may be mandatory under the law, and which the defendant agrees may include restitution arising from all relevant conduct, not limited to that arising from the offense of conviction alone.” Further, the paragraph detailing the defendant’s agreement stipulated, “The defendant fully understands that any financial obligation imposed by the Court, including a restitution order and/or the implementation of a fine, is due and payable immediately. . . . The defendant understands that the

defendant has a continuing obligation to pay in full as soon as possible any financial obligation imposed by the Court.”

Slip Op. at 3. The Fifth Circuit held “that identical plea language unambiguously constituted an agreement to pay restitution.” Slip Op. at 3 (citing *United States v. Miller*, 406 F.3d 323, 330 (5th Cir. 2005)).

At least two circuits treating similar language have reached opposite results.

Ninth Circuit precedent matches the Fifth Circuit.

At least one Ninth Circuit case has adopted the same position as the Fifth. In *United States v. Bloom*, No. 10-30007 (9th Cir. July 20, 2012) (not for pub.), the Ninth Circuit held that a plea agreement with language that “the Court may order the defendant to pay restitution” authorized restitution even though the plea agreement also stated that “[n]o restitution is involved in this case.” *Id.* at 2.

Under Seventh Circuit precedent, Jalloul would have gotten relief.

The Seventh Circuit considered a similar case in *United States v. Randle*, 324 F.3d 550 (7th Cir. 2003). In *Randle*, a bankruptcy fraud case, the defendant’s plea agreement included language similar to Jalloul’s. “Third, the agreement recited that Randle understood the maximum penalties he faced under the statute, including imprisonment and a fine, ‘as well as any restitution ordered by the Court.’ Finally, the agreement stated that ‘Defendant will cooperate fully with the United States Attorney’s Office and the United States Probation Office in their determination of the appropriate amount of restitution to be ordered by the Court.’” *Id.* at 554. Randle was ordered to

pay restitution to three victims. *Id.* On plain error review, he challenged the order of restitution as to two of the three victims contending that restitution was not authorized for them. *Id.* at 555. He argued that they were not victims for the offense of conviction. *Id.* The court agreed and specifically rejected the notion that he had agreed to pay restitution. The court held that the plea agreement's reference to "any restitution ordered by the Court" and "the appropriate amount of restitution to be ordered by the Court" did not amount to an agreement by Randle to pay restitution not authorized by law. *Id.* at 557. Further, the court rejected any idea of an implied agreement to pay restitution as the parties failed to include in the plea agreement a specific agreement to pay an amount of restitution or to pay restitution for a specific purpose. *See id.* at 557–58. The unauthorized restitution affected Randle's substantial rights, and the court exercised its discretion to grant relief. *Id.* at 558.

Other circuits require an agreement to pay restitution be explicit.

In *United States v. Gordon*, 480 F.3d 1205 (10th Cir. 2007), the Tenth Circuit addressed whether an agreement to pay restitution to victims of the offense authorized restitution for victims beyond the offense of conviction and concluded that it did not. Ms. Gordon committed multiple instances of credit card fraud—at least seven instances—but pleaded guilty to only one count. *Id.* at 1207. Her plea agreement stated: "the Court must order the payment of restitution to the victim(s) of the offense." *Id.* The district court ordered restitution for all seven victims. *Id.* On appeal, she challenged the restitution for the other victims for which she was not convicted. Interpret-

ing the Mandatory Victim Restitution Act to be limited to the victim(s) of the offense of conviction, the Tenth Circuit vacated the restitution ordered for the victims of Gordon’s conduct for which she was not convicted: “But, in this case, the plain language of the plea agreement shows Ms. Gordon did not agree to pay restitution beyond the amount causally linked to the single count to which she pled guilty.” *Id.* at 1211–12.

In *United States v. Gottesman*, 122 F.3d 150 (2nd Cir. 1997), the Second Circuit addressed whether an agreement to pay back taxes vested the district court with authority to order restitution. Gottesman pleaded guilty to making false applications for automatic extension of time to file tax returns and failure to file tax returns. His plea agreement included the following language: “Gottesman will pay past taxes due and owing to the IRS,... on such terms and conditions as will be agreed upon between ... Gottesman and the IRS[.]” *Id.* at 151. The district court—then Judge Sotomayor—ordered “Gottesman [to] sign a confession of judgment and make full restitution of the \$249,442. Further, the district court “ordered that Gottesman pay the government 10% of his income until the full tax debt was paid.” Emphasizing the need for precise language, the Second Circuit held that this plea agreement language was not an agreement to pay restitution. *Id.* at 152–53.

This Court should grant this petition

This case presents this Court with the question of how much specificity is required for language in a defendant’s plea agreement to be construed as an agreement to pay restitution. Here, the Fifth Circuit affirmed restitution in

Jalloul's case. The Ninth Circuit would also have affirmed given the plea agreement language at issue. However, the Seventh Circuit would have reversed. Generally, plea agreement language regarding restitution must be clear and specific. Thus, this case is an ideal opportunity to resolve a circuit split and provide clarity on this issue.

CONCLUSION

For the reasons set forth above, a writ of certiorari should issue to review the judgment and opinion of the Court of Appeals for the Fifth Judicial Circuit.

Dated: December 5, 2022.

Respectfully submitted,

(Mr.) Leigh W. Davis
1901 Central Drive, Suite 708
Bedford, Texas 76021
817.868.9500
817.591.4701 (fax)
Texas Bar No. 24029505
Member, Supreme Court Bar