

UNITED STATES DISTRICT COURT FOR THE DISTRICT OF MONTANA,
MISSOULA DIVISION

Christopher Andrew Maldonado v. Peterson, et al.

CV 25-160-M-DLC · No. CV 25-160-M-DLC · Decided December 23, 2025

SUMMARY

The United States District Court for the District of Montana dismissed Christopher Andrew Maldonado’s amended complaint alleging due process and racial discrimination violations at the Missoula County Detention Center. The court held that the allegations failed to state a plausible constitutional claim, directed the clerk to close the case, denied pending motions as moot, and ordered that the dismissal count as a strike under 28 U.S.C. § 1915.

CASE DETAILS

COURT	United States District Court for the District of Montana, Missoula Division
JURISDICTION	United States District Court for the District of Montana, Missoula Division
DECIDED	December 23, 2025
DOCKET	CV 25-160-M-DLC
DISPOSITION	dismissed
PROCEDURAL POSTURE	Maldonado's amended complaint alleging constitutional violations at the Missoula County Detention Center was dismissed for failure to state a claim after the court had previously permitted him to amend.
STANDARD OF REVIEW	The court evaluated whether the amended complaint stated a plausible claim for relief under Federal Rule of Civil Procedure 8(a)(2) and the pleading principles discussed in <i>Ashcroft v. Iqbal</i> .
PRECEDENTIAL VALUE	unpublished district court order

TOPICS

- pleadings civil procedure due process civil rights prisoners rights

PRACTICE AREAS

- civil procedure constitutional law civil rights prisoner rights

QUESTIONS PRESENTED

1. Whether the amended complaint stated a plausible federal constitutional claim based on Maldonado's classifications and movements at the detention center.
2. Whether allegations that two white detainees were treated differently for similar violations stated a plausible racial-discrimination claim.
3. Whether alleged violations of detention-center regulations, policies, or procedures were sufficient to state a constitutional claim.

HOLDINGS

1. Allegations that prison or detention-center regulations, policies, or procedures were violated, without more, do not suffice to plead a constitutional claim.
2. The amended complaint failed to state a due process claim because Maldonado did not allege facts showing that the classifications and movements related to his conduct at the detention center violated due process.
3. The allegation that two white individuals were treated differently for similar violations was too vague and amounted only to a possibility of misconduct, not a plausible entitlement to relief.

KEY QUOTATIONS

“Allegations of purported violations of state prison regulations, policies or procedures do not suffice to plead a constitutional claim.”

“Factual allegations are not entitled to the assumption of truth if they are “merely consistent with liability,” or “amount to nothing more than a ‘formulaic recitation of the elements’ of a constitutional” claim.”

“do not permit the court to infer more than the mere possibility of misconduct, the complaint has alleged—but it has not ‘show[n]’ – ‘that the pleader is entitled to relief.’” (Doc. 9 at 17–18)

FACTUAL BACKGROUND

Maldonado was a pretrial detainee at the Missoula County Detention Center. He alleged that classifications and movements related to his conduct at the detention center violated due process and that he was treated differently based on race after two white detainees allegedly received different treatment for similar violations. His amended complaint added factual detail and quoted county policies, but the court found the allegations insufficiently specific to establish constitutional violations.

PROCEDURAL HISTORY

Maldonado initially filed a complaint alleging violations of federal due process rights and Montana constitutional provisions. The court determined that the original complaint failed to state a federal claim but allowed amendment. After reviewing the amended complaint, the court again found no claim for relief, dismissed the action, denied pending motions as moot, directed the Clerk to close the case and enter judgment, and ordered that any appeal would not be taken in good faith.

DISPOSITION

dismissed

CASES CITED

- Cousins v. Lockyer, 568 F.3d 1063, 1070 (9th Cir. 2009)
- Ashcroft v. Iqbal, 556 U.S. 662, 678–681 (2009)

OPINION

IN THE UNITED STATES DISTRICT COURT FOR THE DISTRICT OF MONTANA
MISSOULA DIVISION CHRISTOPHER ANDREW CV 25-160-M-DLC MALDONADO,
Plaintiff, ORDER vs. PETERSON, ET AL., Defendants. Plaintiff Christopher Andrew Maldonado
filed a Complaint alleging violations of his constitutional rights at Missoula County Detention
Center. (Doc. 2.)

The Complaint failed to state a federal claim for relief, but Maldonado was allowed to amend. (Doc. 6.) His Amended Complaint also fails to state a claim for relief and is dismissed. (Doc. 9.) Maldonado is a pretrial detainee at Missoula County Detention Center in Missoula, Montana. His Amended Complaint, like his original Complaint, alleges violations of his federal due process rights and various Montana Constitutional provisions at Missoula County Detention Center.

(Doc. 9.) His Amended Complaint elaborates his claims quite a bit, quoting various policies of Missoula County and increasing the detail of his allegations, but, in the end, he has failed to state a claim. Allegations of purported violations of state prison regulations, policies or procedures do not suffice to plead a constitutional claim. Cousins v. Lockyer, 568 F.3d 1063, 1070 (9th Cir.

2009). For the reasons explained in the Court’s prior Order and incorporated here, Maldonado has not alleged facts to show his due process rights were violated by his various classifications and movements related to his conduct in the detention center. Maldonado also elaborated his allegations regarding racial discrimination. (Doc. 9 at 17 – 18.) He has identified himself as Hispanic, a detail missing from his original Complaint.

In his Amended Complaint, he alleges that two other white individuals were “written up on similar violations, and were not treated” the same as Maldonado was. (Doc. 9 at 17.) Factual allegations are not entitled to the assumption of truth if they are “merely consistent with liability,” or “amount to nothing more than a ‘formulaic recitation of the elements’ of a constitutional” claim.

Ashcroft v. Iqbal, 556 U.S. 662, 679 – 681 (2009). A complaint stops short of the line between probability and the possibility of relief where the facts pled are merely consistent with a defendant’s liability. Id. at 678. Maldonado’s factual assertions are too vague, given the fact-intensive aspect of any disciplinary action. Even if the allegation that two particular white inmates

were treated differently is accepted as true, Maldonado’s allegations “do not permit the court to infer more than the mere possibility of misconduct, the complaint has alleged—but it has not ‘show[n]’ – ‘that the pleader is entitled to relief.’” Id. citing Fed.

R. Civ. P. 8(a)(2). He fails to allege sufficient facts to state a plausible claim. Accordingly, it is HEREBY ORDERED: 1. Maldonado’s Amended Complaint is DISMISSED for failure to state a claim. The Clerk of Court is directed to close the case and enter judgment. All pending motions are denied as moot. 2.

The Clerk of Court shall have the docket reflect that the appeal of this matter would not be taken in good faith. This dismissal counts as a strike against Maldonado within the meaning of 28 U.S.C. § 1915. DATED this 23rd day of December, 2025.