

UNITED STATES DISTRICT COURT FOR THE EASTERN DISTRICT OF
CALIFORNIA

Janah Dannell Ortiz v. Fresno Federal Courthouse

No. 1:25-cv-0155 JLT SKO (HC), United States District Court for the Eastern District of California (February 27, 2025)

SUMMARY

The United States District Court for the Eastern District of California dismissed without prejudice Janah Dannell Ortiz’s petition for a writ of mandamus concerning ongoing state criminal proceedings. The court adopted the magistrate judge’s findings in part, declined to interfere under Younger abstention principles, directed the Clerk to provide civil-rights forms, and declined to issue a certificate of appealability.

CASE DETAILS

COURT	United States District Court for the Eastern District of California
WRITING FOR THE COURT	Charis E. Tourn
JURISDICTION	United States District Court for the Eastern District of California
DECIDED	February 27, 2025
DOCKET	1:25-cv-0155 JLT SKO (HC)
DISPOSITION	dismissed
PROCEDURAL POSTURE	State pretrial detainee petitioned for a writ of mandamus under 28 U.S.C. § 1361. After the magistrate judge recommended dismissal with prejudice, the district court conducted de novo review, adopted the findings and recommendations in part, dismissed the petition without prejudice, directed the Clerk to provide civil-rights forms, and declined to issue a certificate of appealability.
STANDARD OF REVIEW	De novo review of the magistrate judge's findings and recommendations under 28 U.S.C. § 636(b)(1).
PRECEDENTIAL VALUE	unpublished, nonprecedential district-court order
PARTIES	Janah Dannell Ortiz v. Fresno Federal Courthouse

TOPICS

- habeas corpus
- civil procedure
- civil rights
- federalism

PRACTICE AREAS

Civil procedure

Federal courts

Habeas corpus

Civil rights

QUESTIONS PRESENTED

1. Whether the petition for a writ of mandamus stated a basis for mandamus relief.
2. Whether the federal court should abstain from interfering with Ortiz's ongoing state criminal proceedings.
3. Whether dismissal should be with or without prejudice where the petition potentially implicated civil-rights claims.
4. Whether Ortiz was entitled to a certificate of appealability.

HOLDINGS

1. Mandamus relief was unavailable based on Ortiz's allegations and the relief he sought.
2. The court was required to abstain from interfering with Ortiz's ongoing state criminal proceedings.
3. The petition had to be dismissed without prejudice rather than with prejudice.
4. The court declined to issue a certificate of appealability because Ortiz did not make a substantial showing of the denial of a constitutional right.

KEY QUOTATIONS

“However, dismissal with prejudice could preclude Petitioner from proceeding with a civil rights action implicating the civil rights claims encompassed in the petition, despite the recommendation that the Clerk of Court provide Petitioner a civil rights form to pursue such claims.” (at 2)

“a dismissal on grounds of abstention “must not be with prejudice”” (at 2)

“Reasonable jurists would not find the Court’s determination that Petitioner is not entitled to federal habeas corpus relief debatable, wrong, or deserving of encouragement to proceed further.” (at 3)

FACTUAL BACKGROUND

Ortiz, a state pretrial detainee, alleged a conspiracy involving the Fresno County Police Department, the population, members of Congress, and judges. He also alleged retaliatory action by Judge Wilson and sought release on bail, federal intervention in his ongoing state criminal case, transfer to Georgia, and review of his financial status. The court determined that the requested relief could not be granted through mandamus and that federal intervention was barred by abstention principles.

PROCEDURAL HISTORY

The magistrate judge screened the petition under 28 U.S.C. § 1915A(a) and found the allegations difficult to decipher, mandamus relief unavailable, abstention required because related state criminal proceedings were ongoing, and reclassification as a civil-rights action inappropriate. The magistrate judge recommended dismissal with prejudice. Ortiz filed objections, but did not address the magistrate judge's central findings. The district

court performed de novo review under 28 U.S.C. § 636(b)(1), adopted the findings in part, changed the dismissal to without prejudice, and terminated the action.

DISPOSITION

dismissed

CASES CITED

- Younger v. Harris, 401 U.S. 37 (1971)
- Fiorito v. Entzel, 829 Fed. Appx. 192, 193 (9th Cir. 2020)
- American Trial Lawyers Assoc., New Jersey Branch v. New Jersey Supreme Court, 409 U.S. 467, 469 (1973)
- Orth v. Johnson, 2023 U.S. App. LEXIS 4179, at *1 (9th Cir. Feb. 21, 2023)
- Miller-El v. Cockrell, 537 U.S. 322, 335-336 (2003)
- Slack v. McDaniel, 529 U.S. 473, 484 (2000)
- Barefoot v. Estelle, 463 U.S. 880, 893 (1983)

OPINION

(HC) Ortiz v. Fresno Federal Courthouse

PER CURIAM.

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8 UNITED STATES DISTRICT COURT

9 EASTERN DISTRICT OF CALIFORNIA

10 11 JANAH DANNELL ORTIZ, Case No. 1:25-cv-0155 JLT SKO (HC) 12 Petitioner, ORDER
ADOPTING IN PART FINDINGS

AND RECOMMENDATIONS; DISMISSING

13 v. PETITION FOR WRIT OF MANDAMUS;

AND DIRECTING CLERK OF COURT TO

14 FRESNO FEDERAL COURTHOUSE, ENTER JUDGMENT, CLOSE CASE AND
PROVIDE PETITIONER WITH BLANK CIVIL

15 Respondent. RIGHTS FORMS

16 ORDER DECLINING TO ISSUE

CERTIFICATE OF APPEALABILITY

17 18 Janah Dannel Ortiz is a state pretrial detainee proceeding with a petition for writ of 19
mandamus pursuant to 28 U.S.C. § 1361. The magistrate judge screened the petition pursuant to
20 28 U.S.C. § 1915A(a), and observed the claims raised were “very difficult to decipher.” (Doc. 5
21 at 1, 2.) The magistrate judge observed that Petitioner alleged he was “the subject of a
22 conspiracy 22 between the Fresno County Police Department, ‘the population,’ ‘Congress
members,’ and 23 judges.” (Id. at 2.) Petitioner also asserts that Judge Wilson took retaliatory
action and denied 24 Petitioner’s request to be released on bail. (Id.) The magistrate judge found it

is clear mandamus relief is unavailable based upon these allegations. (Id. at 2-3.) In addition, the magistrate judge noted that “the state proceedings are clearly ongoing,” and “the Court should abstain from interfering in state proceedings” pursuant to *Younger v. Harris*, 401 U.S. 37 (1971). (Id.) Finally, the magistrate judge found reclassification of the action to a civil rights matter was not appropriate because “Petitioner does not name the proper defendants, and the claims are not amenable to conversion on their face.” (Id. at 4.) Therefore, the magistrate judge recommended the Court dismiss the action with prejudice and the Clerk of Court provide a blank civil rights form to Petitioner. (Id.) On February 25, 2025, Petitioner filed a document entitled “Points and Authorities of Mandamus,” which the Court construes as objections to the Findings and Recommendations. (Doc. 6.) However, Petitioner essentially restates the claims from his petition for mandate. For example, Petitioner seeks federal intervention into his ongoing state criminal case, a transfer of his person to Georgia, and review of his financial status. As discussed by the magistrate judge, the Court is unable to grant the relief Petitioner seeks. Petitioner does not address these findings of the magistrate judge. According to 28 U.S.C. § 636(b)(1), this Court performed a de novo review of this case. Having carefully reviewed the matter, the Court concludes the findings are supported by the record and proper analysis. However, dismissal with prejudice could preclude Petitioner from proceeding with a civil rights action implicating the civil rights claims encompassed in the petition, despite the recommendation that the Clerk of Court provide Petitioner a civil rights form to pursue such claims. Consequently, the Court finds the proper dismissal is without prejudice. See *Fiorito v. Entzel*, 829 Fed. Appx. 192, 193 (9th Cir. 2020) (affirming dismissal of a petition without prejudice where the claims in the petition implicated civil rights violations); see also *American Trial Lawyers Assoc., New Jersey Branch v. New Jersey Supreme Court*, 409 U.S. 467, 469 (1973) (a dismissal on grounds of abstention “must not be with prejudice”); *Orth v. Johnson*, 2023 U.S. App. LEXIS 4179, at *1 (9th Cir. Feb. 21, 2023) (finding the district court erred in dismissal without prejudice of a petition brought by a pretrial detainee where the state criminal proceedings were ongoing and holding “the dismissal should have been without prejudice”). In addition, the Court declines to issue a certificate of appealability. A prisoner seeking a writ of habeas corpus has no absolute entitlement to appeal a district court’s denial of his petition, and an appeal is only allowed in certain circumstances. *Miller-El v. Cockrell*, 537 U.S. 322, 335-336 (2003). If the Court denies a petition, it may only issue a certificate of appealability when a petitioner makes a substantial showing of the denial of a constitutional right. 28 U.S.C. § 2253(c)(2). To make a substantial showing, the petitioner must establish that “reasonable jurists could debate whether (or, for that matter, agree that) the petition should have been resolved in a different manner or that the issues presented were ‘adequate to deserve encouragement to proceed further.’” *Slack v. McDaniel*, 529 U.S. 473, 484 (2000) (quoting *Barefoot v. Estelle*, 463 U.S. 880, 893 (1983)). In the present case, the Court finds that Petitioner did not make the required substantial showing of the denial of a constitutional right to justify the issuance of a certificate of appealability.

Reasonable jurists would not find the Court's determination that Petitioner is not 9 | entitled to federal habeas corpus relief debatable, wrong, or deserving of encouragement to 10 || proceed further. Thus, the Court ORDERS: 11 1. The Findings and Recommendations issued on February 11, 2025 (Doc. 5) are 12 ADOPTED in part. 13 2. The petition for writ of mandate is DISMISSED without prejudice. 14 3. The Clerk of Court is directed to mail Petitioner the Court's forms for filing a civil 15 rights action. 16 4. The Clerk of Court is directed to enter judgment and close the case. 17 5. The Court declines to issue a certificate of appealability. 18 This order terminates the action in its entirety. 19 20 IT IS SO ORDERED. 21 | Dated: _February 26, 2025 Charis [Tourn
TED STATES DISTRICT JUDGE
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