

UNITED STATES DISTRICT COURT FOR THE NORTHERN DISTRICT OF CALIFORNIA

Bonilla v. Judge Gonzalez-Rogers

Bonilla · No. 25-cv-11083-PJH; 26-cv-0150-PJH; 26-cv-0682-PJH · Decided January 28, 2026

SUMMARY

The United States District Court for the Northern District of California dismissed with prejudice multiple pro se civil rights actions filed by condemned prisoner Steven Wayne Bonilla against federal judges and state court officials. The court concluded that Bonilla was barred from proceeding in forma pauperis under 28 U.S.C. § 1915(g), that his claims were subject to additional doctrines including Heck, Younger, Demos, or Mullis, and directed the clerk to close the cases and return further filings without filing.

CASE DETAILS

COURT	United States District Court for the Northern District of California
WRITING FOR THE COURT	Phyllis J. Hamilton
JURISDICTION	United States District Court for the Northern District of California
DECIDED	January 28, 2026
DOCKET	25-cv-11083-PJH; 26-cv-0150-PJH; 26-cv-0682-PJH
DISPOSITION	dismissed
PROCEDURAL POSTURE	A state prisoner filed three substantially similar pro se civil-rights complaints under 42 U.S.C. § 1983 against federal judges and state court officials. The district court dismissed the cases with prejudice.
PRECEDENTIAL VALUE	unpublished district-court order; nonprecedential
PARTIES	Steven Wayne Bonilla v. Judge Gonzalez-Rogers et al.

TOPICS

- section 1983
- prisoners rights
- civil procedure
- federal habeas corpus

PRACTICE AREAS

- civil procedure
- civil rights
- prisoner litigation
- federal habeas corpus
- remedies

QUESTIONS PRESENTED

1. Whether Bonilla could proceed in forma pauperis despite his prior disqualification under 28 U.S.C. § 1915(g).
2. Whether the complaints were barred because the requested relief would improperly challenge Bonilla's conviction or interfere with ongoing state or federal judicial proceedings.
3. Whether the three cases should be dismissed with prejudice.

HOLDINGS

1. A prisoner disqualified from proceeding in forma pauperis under 28 U.S.C. § 1915(g) may proceed IFP only if the complaint shows that he was under imminent danger of serious physical injury at the time of filing; Bonilla's allegations did not satisfy that exception.
2. Even if Bonilla were permitted to proceed IFP, the lawsuits were barred under *Heck v. Humphrey*, *Younger v. Harris*, *Demos v. U.S. District Court*, or *Mullis v. U.S. Bankruptcy Court*.

KEY QUOTATIONS

“The allegations in these complaints do not show that plaintiff was in imminent danger at the time of filing. Therefore, he may not proceed IFP.” (at 1)

*“Moreover, even if an IFP application were granted, his lawsuits would be barred under *Heck v. Humphrey*, 512 U.S. 477, 486-87 (1994), *Younger v. Harris*, 401 U.S. 37, 43-54 (1971), *Demos v. U.S. District Court*, 925 F.2d 1160, 1161-62 (9th Cir. 1991) or *Mullis v. U.S. Bankruptcy Court*, 828 F.2d 1385, 1393 (9th Cir. 1987).”* (at 1)

“Accordingly, the cases are dismissed with prejudice.” (at 1)

FACTUAL BACKGROUND

Steven Wayne Bonilla is a condemned state prisoner who had a pending federal habeas petition with appointed counsel and state habeas proceedings with counsel. He filed multiple nearly identical pro se § 1983 complaints naming federal judges and state court officials and seeking relief concerning his conviction or the handling of his other cases. The complaints did not allege that he was in imminent danger of serious physical injury when they were filed.

PROCEDURAL HISTORY

Bonilla filed multiple § 1983 actions seeking relief concerning his underlying conviction and the handling of his state and federal proceedings. The court determined that he was disqualified from proceeding in forma pauperis under 28 U.S.C. § 1915(g) because the complaints did not show imminent danger of serious physical injury. The court further concluded that, even if IFP status were granted, the suits were barred by *Heck*, *Younger*, *Demos*, or *Mullis*, and dismissed the cases with prejudice.

DISPOSITION

dismissed

CASES CITED

- Bonilla v. Ayers, Case No. 08-0471 YGR
- In re Bonilla, Case No. 20-2986 PJH, Docket No. 1 at 7
- In re Steven Bonilla, Case No. 11-3180 CW
- Bonilla v. Dawson, Case No. 13-0951 CW
- Heck v. Humphrey, 512 U.S. 477, 486-87 (1994)
- Younger v. Harris, 401 U.S. 37, 43-54 (1971)
- Demos v. U.S. District Court, 925 F.2d 1160, 1161-62 (9th Cir. 1991)
- Mullis v. U.S. Bankruptcy Court, 828 F.2d 1385, 1393 (9th Cir. 1987)
- United States v. Holland, 519 F.3d 909, 912 (9th Cir. 2008)

OPINION

Bonilla

PER CURIAM.

1 2 3

4 UNITED STATES DISTRICT COURT

5 NORTHERN DISTRICT OF CALIFORNIA

6 7 STEVEN WAYNE BONILLA, Case Nos. 25-cv-11083-PJH Plaintiff, 26-cv-0150-PJH 8 26-
cv-0682-PJH v. 9 10 JUDGE GONZALEZ-ROGERS et. al.,

ORDER DISMISSING MULTIPLE

11 Defendants. CASES WITH PREJUDICE 12 13 14 Plaintiff, a state prisoner, filed multiple pro
se civil rights complaints under 42 15 U.S.C. § 1983. Plaintiff is a condemned prisoner who also
has a pending federal habeas 16 petition in this court with appointed counsel. See Bonilla v. Ayers,
Case No. 08-0471 17 YGR. Plaintiff is also represented by counsel in state court habeas
proceedings. See In 18 re Bonilla, Case No. 20-2986 PJH, Docket No. 1 at 7. 19 Plaintiff presents
nearly identical claims in these actions. He names as 20 defendants various federal judges and
state court officials. He seeks relief regarding his 21 underlying conviction or how his other cases
were handled by the state and federal 22 courts. 23 To the extent that plaintiff seeks to proceed in
forma pauperis (IFP) in these cases, 24 he has been disqualified from proceeding IFP under 28
U.S.C. § 1915(g) unless he is 25 “under imminent danger of serious physical injury” at the time he
filed his complaint. 28 26 U.S.C. 1915(g); In re Steven Bonilla, Case No. 11-3180 CW; Bonilla v.
Dawson, Case 27 No. 13-0951 CW. 1 The allegations in these complaints do not show that
plaintiff was in imminent 2 danger at the time of filing. Therefore, he may not proceed IFP.
Moreover, even if an 3 IFP application were granted, his lawsuits would be barred under Heck v.
Humphrey, 512 4 U.S. 477, 486-87 (1994), Younger v. Harris, 401 U.S. 37, 43-54 (1971), Demos
v. U.S. 5 District Court, 925 F.2d 1160, 1161-62 (9th Cir. 1991) or Mullis v. U.S. Bankruptcy
Court, 6 828 F.2d 1385, 1393 (9th Cir. 1987). Accordingly, the cases are dismissed with 7
prejudice. The court notes that plaintiff has an extensive history of filing similar frivolous 8

cases.¹ ⁹ Furthermore, these are not cases in which the undersigned judge's impartiality ¹⁰ might be reasonably questioned due to the repetitive and frivolous nature of the filings. ¹¹ See *United States v. Holland*, 519 F.3d 909, 912 (9th Cir. 2008) (absent legitimate ¹² reasons to recuse himself or herself, a judge has a duty to sit in judgment in all cases ¹³ assigned to that judge).² ¹⁴ The clerk shall terminate all pending motions and close these cases. The clerk ¹⁵ shall return, without filing, any further documents plaintiff submits in these closed cases. ¹⁶ IT IS SO ORDERED. ¹⁷ Dated: January 28, 2026 ¹⁸ ¹⁹

PHYLLIS J. HAMILTON

²⁰ United States District Judge ²¹ ²² ²³ ²⁴ ²⁵ ²⁶ ¹ The undersigned is the fourth judge assigned cases filed by plaintiff. This is the 83rd order issued by the undersigned since April 30, 2020, pertaining to 1,309 different cases. ²⁷ Plaintiff filed 962 other cases with the three other judges since 2011. ² Plaintiff names the undersigned as a defendant in one of these cases, though presents