

UNITED STATES DISTRICT COURT FOR THE EASTERN DISTRICT OF
CALIFORNIA

Kevin Massengale v. Kern County Sheriff Detentional Facility

Massengale v. Kern County Sheriff Detentional Facility · No. 1:24-cv-00010-SKO · Decided January 12, 2026

SUMMARY

The document contains findings and recommendations by a magistrate judge recommending dismissal without leave to amend of Kevin Massengale’s second amended civil-rights complaint. The court concludes that the complaint fails to state a claim under 42 U.S.C. § 1983 and related theories because it lacks sufficient factual detail, fails to identify responsible actors or establish causation, and asserts claims barred by applicable doctrines. The court also finds that further amendment would be futile and provides a 14-day objection period.

CASE DETAILS

COURT	United States District Court for the Eastern District of California
WRITING FOR THE COURT	Sheila K. Oberto
JURISDICTION	United States District Court for the Eastern District of California
DECIDED	January 12, 2026
DOCKET	1:24-cv-00010-SKO
DISPOSITION	other
PROCEDURAL POSTURE	A pro se former county jail inmate proceeding in forma pauperis filed a second amended complaint under 42 U.S.C. § 1983. Following mandatory prisoner screening, the magistrate judge recommended dismissal without leave to amend for failure to state a claim.
STANDARD OF REVIEW	The complaint was reviewed under the mandatory screening standard of 28 U.S.C. § 1915A. The court accepted factual allegations as true but did not accept legal conclusions, and assessed whether the complaint stated a plausible claim for relief under Rules 8(a) and 9 and applicable substantive law.
PRECEDENTIAL VALUE	Nonprecedential findings and recommendations of a federal magistrate judge; not a final district-court judgment in the source text.

TOPICS

- pleadings
- civil procedure
- section 1983
- prisoners rights
- due process

PRACTICE AREAS

prisoner civil rights

federal civil procedure

constitutional litigation

pleading and screening

QUESTIONS PRESENTED

1. Whether the second amended complaint stated a claim for relief under 42 U.S.C. § 1983 and satisfied Federal Rule of Civil Procedure 8(a).
2. Whether the complaint adequately alleged personal participation, causation, or municipal and supervisory liability.
3. Whether the allegations concerning religious diet, detention conditions, false imprisonment, double jeopardy, and related constitutional claims were sufficiently factual and legally cognizable.
4. Whether state-law claims were barred or inadequately pleaded because Plaintiff did not allege compliance with the California Government Claims Act.
5. Whether Plaintiff's challenge to the duration of his confinement was cognizable under § 1983 or instead had to be brought through habeas corpus, including under the favorable-termination rule.
6. Whether further leave to amend would be futile.

HOLDINGS

1. The second amended complaint failed to state a claim because it consisted largely of legal conclusions, lacked sufficient factual matter to make the asserted claims plausible, and did not give the defendants fair notice of the claims and their grounds.
2. Plaintiff failed to state a § 1983 claim because he did not allege a causal connection between any specific defendant's conduct and the claimed constitutional deprivation.
3. Plaintiff did not adequately plead supervisory or Monell municipal liability because he alleged no specific unconstitutional action by a supervisor and no policy or custom established by an authorized policymaker that caused the deprivation.
4. The second amended complaint failed to state a religious-diet or related conditions-of-confinement claim because Plaintiff did not adequately allege a substantial burden on sincerely held religious beliefs or that the challenged conduct lacked a rational relationship to a legitimate penological interest.
5. The false-imprisonment and intentional-infliction-of-emotional-distress allegations failed to state claims because Plaintiff pleaded only conclusory elements and did not allege compliance with the California Government Claims Act.
6. Plaintiff could not proceed under § 1983 on a claim that he was falsely imprisoned beyond his prior sentence because success would necessarily imply the invalidity of his confinement or its duration, triggering the favorable-termination rule.
7. Further leave to amend should be denied because Plaintiff had received two prior screening orders explaining the deficiencies and still failed to provide sufficient factual allegations; amendment would therefore be futile.

KEY QUOTATIONS

“when a state prisoner is challenging the very fact or duration of physical imprisonment, and the relief [the prisoner] seeks is a determination that is entitled to immediate release or a speedier release from that imprisonment, sole remedy is a writ of habeas corpus.” (at 13-14)

“a state prisoner's § 1983 action is barred (absent prior invalidation) – no matter the relief sought (damages or equitable relief), no matter the target of the prisoner's suit (state conduct leading to conviction or internal prison proceedings) – if success in that action would necessarily demonstrate the invalidity of confinement or its duration” (at 14)

FACTUAL BACKGROUND

Plaintiff, a former county jail inmate, alleged that he was detained for 28 days beyond an earlier criminal sentence, transported between facilities multiple times, and denied a religious diet and adequate food. He named Donny Youngblood in his official capacity and the Kern County Sheriff Department Detention Facility, but generally attributed conduct to unspecified “Defendants.” He asserted federal civil-rights, constitutional, RICO, false-imprisonment, and intentional-infliction-of-emotional-distress theories, supported primarily by conclusory allegations and grievance documents.

PROCEDURAL HISTORY

The court's first screening order found that the original complaint violated Federal Rule of Civil Procedure 9 and failed to state a claim, but granted leave to amend. After the first amended complaint, a second screening order identified deficiencies in asserted Monell, statutory, First Amendment, Thirteenth Amendment, Fourteenth Amendment, and RICO claims and granted one final opportunity to amend. Plaintiff filed a second amended complaint, which again failed to provide sufficient factual allegations, identify responsible defendants, establish causation, or satisfy applicable pleading requirements. The magistrate judge recommended dismissal without leave to amend and advised that the recommendation would be submitted to the assigned district judge under 28 U.S.C. § 636(b)(1).

DISPOSITION

other

REMAND INSTRUCTIONS

No remand was ordered. The magistrate judge recommended that the second amended complaint be dismissed without leave to amend and directed that the findings and recommendations be submitted to the assigned district judge for review under 28 U.S.C. § 636(b)(1)(C).

CASES CITED

- *Balistreri v. Pacifica Police Department*, 901 F.2d 696, 699 (9th Cir. 1990)
- *Swierkiewicz v. Sorema N.A.*, 534 U.S. 506, 512-13 (2002)
- *Ashcroft v. Iqbal*, 556 U.S. 662, 676-78 (2009)

- Bell Atl. Corp. v. Twombly, 550 U.S. 544, 555, 570 (2007)
- Hebbe v. Pliler, 627 F.3d 338, 342 (9th Cir. 2010)
- Neitzke v. Williams, 490 U.S. 319, 330 n.9 (1989)
- Bruns v. National Credit Union Administration, 122 F.3d 1251, 1257 (9th Cir. 1997)
- Doe I v. Wal-Mart Stores, Inc., 572 F.3d 677, 681 (9th Cir. 2009)
- Rizzo v. Goode, 423 U.S. 362, 373-75 (1976)
- Johnson v. Duffy, 588 F.2d 740
- Simmons v. Navajo County, Arizona, 609 F.3d 1011, 1020-21 (9th Cir. 2010)
- Castro v. County of Los Angeles, 833 F.3d 1060, 1070 (9th Cir. 2016)
- Jones v. Williams, 297 F.3d 930, 934 (9th Cir. 2002)
- Taylor v. List, 880 F.2d 1040, 1045 (9th Cir. 1989)
- Corales v. Bennett, 567 F.3d 554, 570 (9th Cir. 2009)
- Starr v. Baca, 652 F.3d 1202, 1205-06 (9th Cir. 2011)
- Redman v. County of San Diego, 942 F.2d 1435, 1446 (9th Cir. 1991)
- Farmer v. Brennan, 511 U.S. 825 (1970)
- Waggy v. Spokane County Washington, 594 F.3d 707, 713 (9th Cir. 2010)
- Fayle v. Stapley
- Ivey v. Board of Regents, 673 F.2d 266, 268 (9th Cir. 1982)
- Young v. County of Los Angeles, 655 F.3d 1156, 1169 (9th Cir. 2011)
- Easton v. Sutter Coast Hospital, 80 Cal. App. 4th 485, 496 (Ct. App. 2000)
- Lawler v. Montblanc North America, LLC, 704 F.3d 1235, 1245 (9th Cir. 2013)
- Hughes v. Pair, 46 Cal. 4th 1035, 1050 (2009)
- Butler v. Rueter, No. 2:22-cv-01301 KJN P, 2023 WL 1991591, at *6 (E.D. Cal.)
- Klein v. City of Laguna Beach, 533 F. App'x 772, 774 (9th Cir. 2013)
- State of California v. Superior Court (Bodde), 32 Cal. 4th 1234, 1240 (2004)
- Preiser v. Rodriguez, 411 U.S. 475, 500 (1973)
- Skinner v. Switzer, 562 U.S. 521, 525 (2011)
- Simpson v. Thomas, 528 F.3d 685, 692-93 (9th Cir. 2008)
- Ramirez v. Galaza, 334 F.3d 850, 855-56 (9th Cir. 2003)
- Bogovich v. Sandoval, 189 F.3d 999, 1002-03 (9th Cir. 1999)
- Neal v. Shimoda, 131 F.3d 818, 824 (9th Cir. 1997)
- Trimble v. City of Santa Rosa, 49 F.3d 583, 586 (9th Cir. 1995) (per curiam)
- Edwards v. Balisok, 520 U.S. 641, 646-48 (1997)
- Szajer v. City of Los Angeles, 632 F.3d 607, 611-12 (9th Cir. 2011)
- Cabrera v. City of Huntington Park, 159 F.3d 374, 380 (9th Cir. 1998) (per curiam)
- Hartman v. CDCR, 707 F.3d 1114, 1129-30 (9th Cir. 2013)
- Wilkerson v. Wheeler, 772 F.3d 834, 839 (9th Cir. 2014)

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