

UNITED STATES DISTRICT COURT FOR THE NORTHERN DISTRICT OF CALIFORNIA

Steven Wayne Bonilla v. Alameda County et al.

Bonilla · No. 25-cv-9526-PJH; 25-cv-9936-PJH; 25-cv-9937-PJH; 25-cv-10598-PJH · Decided December 22, 2025

SUMMARY

The United States District Court for the Northern District of California dismissed with prejudice multiple civil rights actions filed by condemned state prisoner Steven Wayne Bonilla. The court held that Bonilla could not proceed in forma pauperis under 28 U.S.C. § 1915(g) because he did not allege imminent danger, and that the claims would also be barred by doctrines including Heck, Younger, Demos, or Mullis. The court directed the clerk to terminate pending motions, close the cases, and return further submissions 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	December 22, 2025
DOCKET	25-cv-9526-PJH; 25-cv-9936-PJH; 25-cv-9937-PJH; 25-cv-10598-PJH
DISPOSITION	dismissed
PROCEDURAL POSTURE	A state prisoner filed multiple pro se civil rights complaints under 42 U.S.C. § 1983. The district court dismissed the cases with prejudice and directed the clerk to terminate pending motions and close the cases.
PRECEDENTIAL VALUE	unpublished

TOPICS

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

PRACTICE AREAS

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

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 alleged that Bonilla was under imminent danger of serious physical injury when he filed them.
3. Whether the actions were barred by *Heck v. Humphrey*, *Younger v. Harris*, *Demos v. U.S. District Court*, or *Mullis v. U.S. Bankruptcy Court*.
4. Whether the cases should be dismissed with prejudice and closed.

HOLDINGS

1. Bonilla could not proceed in forma pauperis because he had been disqualified under 28 U.S.C. § 1915(g) and his complaints did not show that he was under imminent danger of serious physical injury at the time of filing.
2. Even if an IFP application were granted, the actions were barred under *Heck v. Humphrey*, *Younger v. Harris*, *Demos v. U.S. District Court*, or *Mullis v. U.S. Bankruptcy Court*.
3. The four cases were dismissed with prejudice, pending motions were terminated, and the cases were closed.

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.” (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).”* (1)

FACTUAL BACKGROUND

Bonilla, a condemned state prisoner, filed multiple nearly identical pro se complaints under 42 U.S.C. § 1983. He sued various federal judges, state judges, and other government officials and sought relief concerning his underlying conviction and the handling of other state and federal proceedings. He also had pending federal and state habeas proceedings, including a federal habeas petition for which he had appointed counsel.

PROCEDURAL HISTORY

Steven Wayne Bonilla filed four substantially similar prisoner civil-rights actions naming federal judges, state judges, and other government officials. The district court determined that Bonilla 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 actions were barred by *Heck v. Humphrey*, *Younger v. Harris*, *Demos v. U.S. District Court*, or *Mullis v. U.S. Bankruptcy Court*, 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

1 2 3 4 UNITED STATES DISTRICT COURT 5 NORTHERN DISTRICT OF CALIFORNIA 6 7 STEVEN WAYNE BONILLA, Case Nos. 25-cv-9526-PJH Plaintiff, 25-cv-9936-PJH 8 25-cv-9937-PJH v. 9 25-cv-10598-PJH 10 ALAMEDA COUNTY 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, state judges, and other government officials. He 21 seeks relief regarding his underlying conviction or how his other cases were handled by 22 the state and federal 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: December 22, 2025 18 19 /s/ Phyllis J. Hamilton
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 82nd 27 order issued by the undersigned since April 30, 2020, pertaining to 1,306 different cases.