

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PRECEDENTIAL VALUE	unpublished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)

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