

UNITED STATES DISTRICT COURT FOR THE NORTHERN DISTRICT OF CALIFORNIA

Mouzon v. Alameda County

Mouzon · No. 24-cv-01907-DMR (PR) · Decided October 3, 2025

SUMMARY

The United States District Court for the Northern District of California issued an order of service in Alfonso Mouzon’s § 1983 action against Alameda County. The court held that the amended complaint stated cognizable Fourteenth Amendment due process and Monell policy-based claims concerning conditions of confinement for civil detainees housed at the Alameda County Jail, and directed service and established case-management procedures.

CASE DETAILS

COURT	United States District Court for the Northern District of California
WRITING FOR THE COURT	Donna M. Ryu
JURISDICTION	United States District Court for the Northern District of California
DECIDED	October 3, 2025
DOCKET	24-cv-01907-DMR (PR)
DISPOSITION	other
PROCEDURAL POSTURE	Order of service following preliminary screening of a pro se amended civil-rights complaint under 28 U.S.C. § 1915A.
STANDARD OF REVIEW	The court applied the preliminary-screening standard under 28 U.S.C. § 1915A, liberally construed the pro se pleading, and assessed whether the amended complaint stated plausible claims under Federal Rule of Civil Procedure 8 and the pleading standards of Twombly and Iqbal.
PRECEDENTIAL VALUE	nonprecedential district-court order

TOPICS

- section 1983
- due process
- municipal liability
- prisoners rights
- pleadings

PRACTICE AREAS

- civil rights
- constitutional law
- civil procedure
- municipal law
- prisoner and civil-detainee conditions of confinement

QUESTIONS PRESENTED

1. Whether the amended complaint plausibly alleged that conditions imposed on Mouzon as a civil detainee were punitive or otherwise violated the Due Process Clause.
2. Whether the amended complaint plausibly alleged municipal liability against Alameda County under Monell based on an unconstitutional policy, custom, or practice.
3. Whether the court should order service of the amended complaint after finding the claims cognizable under 28 U.S.C. § 1915A.

HOLDINGS

1. Liberally construed, the allegations were sufficient to state a cognizable claim under 42 U.S.C. § 1983 that the conditions imposed on Mouzon as a civil detainee denied him protections guaranteed by the Due Process Clause.
2. The amended complaint stated a cognizable policy-based municipal-liability claim against Alameda County under Monell.

KEY QUOTATIONS

“A civil detainee awaiting adjudication is entitled to conditions of confinement that are not punitive;” (II.B)

“Plaintiff states a due process and Monell claim against Defendant Alameda County.” (III)

FACTUAL BACKGROUND

Mouzon was a civil detainee held at Coalinga State Hospital and was housed at the Alameda County Jail from July through September 2021 while awaiting civil-commitment proceedings under California's Sexually Violent Predators Act. He alleged that Alameda County failed to treat sexually violent predator detainees differently from the general prison population and maintained deficient policies, customs, and practices governing their conditions of confinement. He claimed that these conditions violated the Fourteenth Amendment and that the challenged policy was the moving force behind the violation.

PROCEDURAL HISTORY

Alfonso Mouzon filed a pro se action under 42 U.S.C. § 1983 concerning conditions at the Alameda County Jail during his civil-detention proceedings. The amended complaint named Alameda County in its official capacity and sought injunctive relief and damages. After screening, the court found cognizable Fourteenth Amendment due-process and Monell municipal-liability claims and ordered service on Alameda County.

DISPOSITION

other

CASES CITED

- *Balistreri v. Pacifica Police Department*, 901 F.2d 696, 699 (9th Cir. 1990)

- Erickson v. Pardus, 551 U.S. 89, 93 (2007)
- Bell Atlantic Corp. v. Twombly, 550 U.S. 544, 555, 570 (2007)
- Ashcroft v. Iqbal, 556 U.S. 662, 679 (2009)
- West v. Atkins, 487 U.S. 42, 48 (1988)
- Jones v. Blanas, 393 F.3d 918, 934-35 (9th Cir. 2004)
- Monell v. Department of Social Services, 436 U.S. 658, 690-91 (1978)
- Taylor v. List, 880 F.2d 1040, 1045 (9th Cir. 1989)
- Plumeau v. School District #40 County of Yamhill, 130 F.3d 432, 438 (9th Cir. 1997)
- AE v. County of Tulare, 666 F.3d 631, 636-37 (9th Cir. 2012)
- Woods v. Carey, 684 F.3d 934, 935 (9th Cir. 2012)
- Albino v. Baca, 747 F.3d 1162, 1166, 1168 (9th Cir. 2014) (en banc)
- Wyatt v. Terhune, 315 F.3d 1108, 1119 (9th Cir. 2003)
- Rand v. Rowland, 154 F.3d 952, 962-63 (9th Cir. 1998)

OPINION

1 2 3 UNITED STATES DISTRICT COURT 4 NORTHERN DISTRICT OF CALIFORNIA 5
 ALFONSO MOUZON, 6 Case No. 24-cv-01907-DMR (PR) Plaintiff, 7 ORDER OF SERVICE v.
 8 ALAMEDA COUNTY, 9 Defendant. 10 11 I. INTRODUCTION 12 Plaintiff Alfonso Mouzon,
 who is a civil detainee currently being held at the Coalinga 13 State Hospital, filed a pro se civil
 rights action pursuant to 42 U.S.C. § 1983, alleging Alameda 14 County jail officials violated his
 constitutional rights when he was transferred for three months in 15 2021 to the Alameda County
 Jail (“ACJ”), where he was temporarily housed during the pendency 16 of civil commitment
 proceedings against him under the Sexually Violent Predators Act, see Cal. 17 Welf. & Inst.

Code § 6600 et seq. (“SVPA”). Dkt. 12 at 4.1 This matter has been assigned to the 18 undersigned
 Magistrate Judge. Plaintiff’s motion for leave to proceed in forma pauperis will be 19 granted in a
 separate written Order.

The operative complaint is the amended complaint. Id. 20 In his amended complaint, Plaintiff does
 not name any individual Defendants. Id. Instead, 21 he names Defendant Alameda County in its
 official capacity as the “municipality responsible for 22 the policies or the lack of policies,
 customs and practices guiding and governing on enforcing the 23 conditions of confinement for
 [Sexually Violent Predators (“SVPs”)] within the county jail.” Id. 24 Plaintiff seeks injunctive
 relief and monetary damages.

Id. at 8. 25 Venue is proper because certain events giving rise to the claims are alleged to have 26
 occurred at ACJ, which is located in this judicial district. See 28 U.S.C. § 1391(b). 27 II.
 DISCUSSION 1 A. Standard of Review 2 A federal court must conduct a preliminary screening in

any case in which a prisoner seeks 3 redress from a governmental entity or officer or employee of a governmental entity.

28 U.S.C. 4 § 1915A(a). In its review, the court must identify any cognizable claims and dismiss claims that 5 are frivolous, malicious, fail to state a claim upon which relief may be granted or seek monetary 6 relief from a defendant who is immune from such relief. Id. § 1915A(b)(1), (2). Pro se pleadings 7 must be liberally construed. *Balistreri v. Pacifica Police Dep't*, 901 F.2d 696, 699 (9th Cir.

1988). 8 Federal Rule of Civil Procedure 8(a)(2) requires only “a short and plain statement of the claim 9 showing that the pleader is entitled to relief.” To comport with Rule 8, “[s]pecific facts are not 10 necessary; the statement need only give the defendant fair notice of what the... claim is and the 11 grounds upon which it rests.” *Erickson v. Pardus*, 551 U.S. 89, 93 (2007) (citations omitted).

12 Although to state a claim a complaint “does not need detailed factual allegations,... a plaintiff’s 13 obligation to provide the ‘grounds’ of his ‘entitle[ment] to relief’ requires more than labels and 14 conclusions, and a formulaic recitation of the elements of a cause of action will not do.... 15 Factual allegations must be enough to raise a right to relief above the speculative level.” *Bell Atl.*

16 *Corp. v. Twombly*, 550 U.S. 544, 555 (2007) (citations omitted). A complaint must proffer 17 “enough facts to state a claim to relief that is plausible on its face.” Id. at 570. The Supreme 18 Court explained the “plausible on its face” standard of *Twombly*: “While legal conclusions can 19 provide the framework of a complaint, they must be supported by factual allegations.

When there 20 are well-pleaded factual allegations, a court should assume their veracity and then determine 21 whether they plausibly give rise to an entitlement to relief.” *Ashcroft v. Iqbal*, 556 U.S. 662, 679 22 (2009).

To state a claim under 42 U.S.C. § 1983, a plaintiff must allege two essential elements: 23 (1) that a right secured by the Constitution or laws of the United States was violated, and (2) that 24 the alleged violation was committed by a person acting under the color of state law. *West v. Atkins*, 487 U.S. 42, 48 (1988). 26 B. Legal Claims 27 From July through September 2021, Plaintiff was housed at ACJ while awaiting his civil 1 commitment proceedings.

Dkt. 12 at 4. 2 First, Plaintiff claims that Defendant Alameda County has a policy (“Policy”) of failing to 3 treat persons detained under the SVPA differently from the general prison population, in violation 4 of his Fourteenth Amendment rights. See generally, Dkt. 12; see also *Jones v. Blanas*, 393 F.3d 5 918 (9th Cir. 2004) (discussing similar claims). A civil detainee awaiting adjudication is entitled 6 to conditions of confinement that are not punitive; a presumption of punitive conditions arises 7 where such individual is detained under conditions identical or similar to, or more restrictive than, 8 those under which pretrial criminal detainees are held, or where such

individual is detained under 9 conditions more restrictive than those he would face upon civil commitment.

See Jones, 393 F.3d 10 at 934. If the presumption applies, a defendant is allowed to demonstrate the existence of 11 legitimate, non-punitive interests justifying the conditions under which the detainee was held, and 12 to show the restrictions imposed were not excessive in relation to such interests. See id. at 934-35. 13 Although not every objectionable condition or restriction to which a plaintiff is subjected as a civil 14 detainee violates his federal constitutional rights, the allegations of Plaintiff herein, liberally 15 construed, are sufficient to state a cognizable claim under section 1983 for denial of the 16 protections to which he is entitled under the Due Process Clause.

17 Second, Plaintiff alleges that Defendant Alameda County is liable in its official capacity 18 for instituting and abiding by the aforementioned Policy, which 19 does not state, nor does any of the other policy, on how SVPs are to be treated, this makes the [Policy] deficient enough to cause violation 20 of rights... [as it] has left custom and practice then to become the standard operating procedure on how SVP[s] are to be treated...

21 [and]... these customs and practices do not hold up to the Jones... standard. 22 Dkt. 12 at 7. There is no respondeat superior liability under section 1983, i.e. no liability under 23 the theory that one is liable simply because he employs a person who has violated a plaintiff's 24 rights. See Monell v. Dep't of Soc. Servs., 436 U.S. 658, 691 (1978); Taylor v. List, 880 F.2d 1040, 25 1045 (9th Cir.

1989). Local governments, such as Defendant Alameda County, are "persons" 26 subject to liability under section 1983 where official policy or custom causes a constitutional tort. 27 See Monell, 436 U.S. at 690. To impose municipal liability under section 1983 for a violation of 1 constitutional rights, a plaintiff must show: "(1) that [the plaintiff] possessed a constitutional right 2 of which [he] was deprived; (2) that the municipality had a policy; (3) that this policy amounts to 3 deliberate indifference to the plaintiff's constitutional right; and (4) that the policy is the moving 4 force behind the constitutional violation." See Plumeau v. Sch.

Dist. #40 Cnty. of Yamhill, 130 F.3d 432, 438 (9th Cir. 1997) (citations and internal quotation marks omitted). For municipal 6 liability, a plaintiff must plead sufficient facts regarding the specific nature of the alleged policy, 7 custom or practice to allow the defendant to effectively defend itself, and these facts must 8 plausibly suggest that the plaintiff is entitled to relief.

See AE v. Cnty. of Tulare, 666 F.3d 631, 9 636-37 (9th Cir. 2012). Here, the court finds that, liberally construed, Plaintiff alleges facts 10 showing unconstitutional conditions at the ACJ as well as the Policy, which he claims is the 11 moving force behind the constitutional violation. See generally Dkt. 12.

Therefore, the court 12 finds that Plaintiff has stated cognizable policy-based claim against Defendant Alameda County 13 under Monell. See 436 U.S. at 690. 14 III. CONCLUSION 15 For the foregoing reasons, the court orders as follows: 16 1. Plaintiff states a due process and Monell claim against Defendant Alameda County. 17 2.

The Clerk of the Court shall serve Defendant Alameda County. 18 Service on the listed Defendant(s) shall proceed under the California Department of 19 Corrections and Rehabilitation's ("CDCR") e-service pilot program for civil rights cases from 20 prisoners in CDCR custody.

In accordance with the program, the clerk is directed to serve on 21 CDCR via email the following documents: the operative complaint (Dkt. 12), this order of service, 22 the notice of assignment of prisoner case to a United States magistrate judge and accompanying 23 magistrate judge jurisdiction consent or declination to consent form, a CDCR Report of E-Service 24 Waiver form and a summons.

25 No later than forty (40) days after service of this order via email on CDCR, CDCR shall 26 provide the court a completed CDCR Report of E-Service Waiver advising the court which 27 Defendant(s) listed in this order will be waiving service of process without the need for service by 1 could not be reached. CDCR also shall provide a copy of the CDCR Report of E-Service Waiver 2 and of the notice of assignment of prisoner case to a magistrate judge and accompanying 3 magistrate judge jurisdiction consent or declination to consent form to the California Attorney 4 General's Office, which, within twenty-one (21) days, shall file with the court a waiver of service 5 of process for the Defendant(s) who are waiving service and, within twenty-eight (28) days 6 thereafter, shall file a magistrate judge jurisdiction consent or declination to consent form as to the 7 Defendant(s) who waived service.

8 Upon receipt of the CDCR Report of E-Service Waiver, the clerk shall prepare for each 9 Defendant who has not waived service according to the CDCR Report of E-Service Waiver a 10 USM-205 Form. The clerk shall provide to the USMS the completed USM-205 form and copies 11 of this order, summons, operative complaint and notice of assignment of prisoner case to a 12 magistrate judge and accompanying magistrate judge jurisdiction consent or declination to consent 13 form for service upon each defendant who has not waived service.

The clerk also shall provide to 14 the USMS a copy of the CDCR Report of E-Service Waiver. 15 The clerk shall also mail a copy of the operative complaint and a copy of this order to the 16 State Attorney General's Office in San Francisco. Additionally, the clerk shall mail a copy of this 17 order to Plaintiff. 18 3. Defendant is cautioned that Rule 4 of the Federal Rules of Civil Procedure requires 19 Defendant to cooperate in saving unnecessary costs of service of the summons and operative 20 complaint.

If service is waived, this action will proceed as if Defendant had been served on the 21 date that the waiver is filed, except that pursuant to Rule 12(a)(1)(A)(ii), Defendant will not be 22 required to serve and file an answer before sixty (60) days from the date on which the CDCR 23 provides a copy of the CDCR Report of E-Service Waiver to the California Attorney General's 24 Office.

(This allows a longer time to respond than would be required if formal service of 25 summons is necessary.) If Defendant has not waived service and have instead been served by the 26 USMS, then Defendant shall serve and file an answer within twenty-one (21) days after being 27 served with the summons and operative complaint. 1 Rules of Civil Procedure.

The following briefing schedule shall govern dispositive motions: 2 a. No later than sixty (60) days from the date their answer is due, Defendant 3 shall file a motion for summary judgment or other dispositive motion.

The motion must be 4 supported by adequate factual documentation, must conform in all respects to Federal Rule of 5 Civil Procedure 56, and must include as exhibits all records and incident reports stemming from 6 the events at issue. A motion for summary judgment also must be accompanied by a Rand2 notice 7 so that Plaintiff will have fair, timely and adequate notice of what is required of him in order to 8 oppose the motion.

Woods v. Carey, 684 F.3d 934, 935 (9th Cir. 2012) (notice requirement set out 9 in Rand must be served concurrently with motion for summary judgment). A motion to dismiss 10 for failure to exhaust available administrative remedies must be accompanied by a similar notice. 11 However, the court notes that under the new law of the circuit, in the rare event that a failure to 12 exhaust is clear on the face of the amended complaint, Defendant may move for dismissal under 13 Rule 12(b)(6) as opposed to the previous practice of moving under an unenumerated Rule 12(b) 14 motion.

Albino v. Baca, 747 F.3d 1162, 1166 (9th Cir. 2014) (en banc) (overruling *Wyatt v. 15 Terhune*, 315 F.3d 1108, 1119 (9th Cir. 2003), which held that failure to exhaust available 16 administrative remedies under the Prison Litigation Reform Act should be raised by a defendant as 17 an unenumerated Rule 12(b) motion). Otherwise if a failure to exhaust is not clear on the face of 18 the amended complaint, Defendant must produce evidence proving failure to exhaust in a motion 19 for summary judgment under Rule 56.

Id. If undisputed evidence viewed in the light most 20 favorable to Plaintiff shows a failure to exhaust, Defendant is entitled to summary judgment under 21 Rule 56. *Id.* But if material facts are disputed, summary judgment should be denied and the 22 district judge rather than a jury should determine the facts in a preliminary proceeding. *Id.* at 23 1168. 24 If Defendant is of the opinion that this case cannot be resolved by summary judgment, they 25 shall so inform the court prior to the date the summary judgment motion is due.

All papers filed 26 with the court shall be promptly served on Plaintiff. 27 1 b. Plaintiff's opposition to the dispositive motion shall be filed with the court 2 and served on Defendant no later than twenty-eight (28) days after the date on which Defendant's 3 motion is filed. 4 c. Plaintiff is advised that a motion for summary judgment under Rule 56 of 5 the Federal Rules of Civil Procedure will, if granted, end your case.

Rule 56 tells you what you 6 must do in order to oppose a motion for summary judgment. Generally, summary judgment must 7 be granted when there is no genuine issue of material fact—that is, if there is no real dispute about 8 any fact that would affect the result of your case, the party who asked for summary judgment is 9 entitled to judgment as a matter of law, which will end your case.

When a party you are suing 10 makes a motion for summary judgment that is properly supported by declarations (or other sworn 11 testimony), you cannot simply rely on what your complaint says. Instead, you must set out 12 specific facts in declarations, depositions, answers to interrogatories, or authenticated documents, 13 as provided in Rule 56(e), that contradicts the facts shown in the defendant's declarations and 14 documents and show that there is a genuine issue of material fact for trial.

If you do not submit 15 your own evidence in opposition, summary judgment, if appropriate, may be entered against you. 16 If summary judgment is granted, your case will be dismissed and there will be no trial. *Rand*, 154 17 F.3d at 962-63. 18 Plaintiff also is advised that—in the rare event that Defendant argues that the failure to 19 exhaust is clear on the face of the amended complaint—a motion to dismiss for failure to exhaust 20 available administrative remedies under 42 U.S.C. § 1997e(a) will, if granted, end your case, albeit 21 without prejudice.

To avoid dismissal, you have the right to present any evidence to show that 22 you did exhaust your available administrative remedies before coming to federal court. Such 23 evidence may include: (1) declarations, which are statements signed under penalty of perjury by 24 you or others who have personal knowledge of relevant matters; (2) authenticated documents— 25 documents accompanied by a declaration showing where they came from and why they are 26 authentic, or other sworn papers such as answers to interrogatories or depositions; (3) statements 27 in your complaint insofar as they were made under penalty of perjury and they show that you have 1 dismiss for failure to exhaust under Rule 12(b)(6) or failure to exhaust in a summary judgment 2 motion under Rule 56, the district judge may hold a preliminary proceeding and decide disputed 3 issues of fact with regard to this portion of the case.

Albino, 747 F.3d at 1168. 4 (The notices above do not excuse Defendant's obligation to serve similar notices again 5 concurrently with motions to dismiss for failure to exhaust available administrative remedies and 6 motions for summary judgment. *Woods*, 684 F.3d at 935.) 7 d.

Defendant shall file a reply brief no later than fourteen (14) days after the date Plaintiff's opposition is filed.

9 e. The motion shall be deemed submitted as of the date the reply brief is due. 10 No hearing will be held on the motion unless the court so orders at a later date. 11 5. Discovery may be taken in this action in accordance with the Federal Rules of Civil 12 Procedure. Leave of the court pursuant to Rule 30(a)(2) is hereby granted to Defendant to depose 13 Plaintiff and any other necessary witnesses confined in prison.

14 6. All communications by Plaintiff with the court must be served on Defendant or 15 their counsel, once counsel has been designated, by mailing a true copy of the document to them. 16 7. It is Plaintiff's responsibility to prosecute this case. Plaintiff must keep the court 17 informed of any change of address and must comply with the court's orders in a timely fashion.

18 Pursuant to Northern District Local Rule 3-11 a party proceeding pro se whose address changes 19 while an action is pending must promptly file a notice of change of address specifying the new 20 address. See L.R. 3-11(a).

The court may dismiss without prejudice a complaint when: (1) mail 21 directed to the pro se party by the court has been returned to the court as not deliverable, and 22 (2) the court fails to receive within sixty days of this return a written communication from the pro 23 se party indicating a current address. See L.R. 3-11(b). 24 8. Upon a showing of good cause, requests for a reasonable extension of time will be 25 granted provided they are filed on or before the deadline they seek to extend.

26 IT IS SO ORDERED. 27 Dated: October 3, 2025

DONNA M. RYU