

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 several substantially similar pro se civil-rights actions filed by a state prisoner against judges and government officials. The court held that the plaintiff could not proceed in forma pauperis under 28 U.S.C. § 1915(g) because he had not shown imminent danger, and that the claims would otherwise be barred by doctrines including Heck, Younger, Demos, and Mullis; the cases were dismissed with prejudice.

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 all four cases with prejudice and directed the clerk to terminate pending motions and close the cases.
PRECEDENTIAL VALUE	Unknown; district-court order designated as 100trialcourt and no precedential status is stated.
PARTIES	Steven Wayne Bonilla v. Alameda County et al.

TOPICS

- section 1983
- post-conviction relief
- federal habeas corpus
- civil procedure
- government liability

PRACTICE AREAS

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 by doctrines including *Heck v. Humphrey*, *Younger v. Harris*, *Demos v. U.S. District Court*, or *Mullis v. U.S. Bankruptcy Court*.
3. 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 § 1915(g) and the complaints did not show that he was under imminent danger of serious physical injury when he filed them.
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.” (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)

“The clerk shall terminate all pending motions and close these cases. The clerk shall return, without filing, any further documents plaintiff submits in these closed cases.” (at 2)

FACTUAL BACKGROUND

Steven Wayne Bonilla, a condemned state prisoner, filed multiple nearly identical pro se civil-rights complaints against federal judges, state judges, and other government officials. The complaints sought relief concerning his underlying conviction and the handling of his other state and federal cases. Bonilla had been disqualified from proceeding in forma pauperis under the three-strikes provision and had pending or represented habeas proceedings in state and federal court.

PROCEDURAL HISTORY

Bonilla filed nearly identical complaints concerning his underlying conviction and the handling of his state and federal court proceedings. The district court determined that he was barred 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 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.