

UNITED STATES DISTRICT COURT FOR THE EASTERN DISTRICT OF
CALIFORNIA

E.A.P.C. v. Minga Wofford, et al.

E.A.P.C. · No. 1:25-cv-01546-JLT-CDB · Decided December 11, 2025

SUMMARY

The United States District Court for the Eastern District of California granted Petitioner E.A.P.C.’s unopposed motion to proceed under a pseudonym in a habeas action brought under 28 U.S.C. § 2241. The court ordered the parties and counsel to use “E.A.P.C.” in future filings and prohibited disclosure of the petitioner’s true name except as authorized by the court or necessary to litigate the case.

CASE DETAILS

COURT	United States District Court for the Eastern District of California
JURISDICTION	United States District Court for the Eastern District of California
DECIDED	December 11, 2025
DOCKET	1:25-cv-01546-JLT-CDB
DISPOSITION	other
PROCEDURAL POSTURE	Petitioner, a federal detainee proceeding under 28 U.S.C. § 2241, moved unopposed to proceed under a pseudonym. The district court decided the motion on the briefs without oral argument.
STANDARD OF REVIEW	The court applied the Ninth Circuit's balancing framework for requests to proceed under a pseudonym, weighing the threatened harm, reasonableness of the fears, vulnerability to retaliation, prejudice to the opposing party, and the public interest.
PRECEDENTIAL VALUE	unpublished district court order
PARTIES	E.A.P.C. v. Minga Wofford, et al.

TOPICS

- immigration detention
- federal habeas corpus
- civil procedure

PRACTICE AREAS

- civil procedure
- immigration
- habeas corpus

QUESTIONS PRESENTED

1. Whether Petitioner should be permitted to proceed under a pseudonym to protect against potential harassment, retaliation, stigma, and disclosure of sensitive personal health information.
2. Whether the need for anonymity outweighed the presumption that litigants' identities are public information, any prejudice to Respondents, and the public interest.

HOLDINGS

1. A district court may permit a party to proceed under a pseudonym when special circumstances justify secrecy and nondisclosure is necessary to protect the person from harassment, injury, ridicule, or personal embarrassment.
2. Petitioner was entitled to proceed under the pseudonym E.A.P.C. because the potential harm and reasonable fears concerning sensitive mental and physical health information, together with the lack of prejudice to Respondents and the public interest at this stage, outweighed the competing interests in disclosure.

KEY QUOTATIONS

“The court must also determine the precise prejudice at each stage of the proceedings to the opposing party, and whether proceedings may be structured so as to mitigate that prejudice” (at 2)

“the Petitioner’s need for anonymity outweighs the competing interests” (at 3)

“All parties and their counsel shall use the pseudonym “E.A.P.C.” in place of Petitioner’s legal name in all future pleadings and papers filed in this action” (at 4)

FACTUAL BACKGROUND

E.A.P.C. is a federal detainee held by Immigration and Customs Enforcement at the Mesa Verde ICE Processing Center in Bakersfield, California. He asserted that the habeas litigation could require disclosure of sensitive mental and physical health information and that public disclosure of his identity could expose him and his family to harassment, retaliation, stigma, or other harm; he offered to disclose his identity to government counsel.

PROCEDURAL HISTORY

Petitioner initiated a § 2241 habeas action, together with a request for emergency injunctive relief and a motion to proceed via pseudonym, on November 12, 2025. Respondents did not oppose the pseudonym motion, and the court granted it, directing the parties to use E.A.P.C. in future filings and prohibiting disclosure of Petitioner's true name except by court order or as necessary to litigate the case.

DISPOSITION

other

CASES CITED

- Does I thru XXIII v. Advanced Textile Corp., 214 F.3d 1058, 1067-69 (9th Cir. 2000)
- United States v. Doe, 655 F.2d 920, 922 n.1 (9th Cir. 1981)
- Doe v. Kamehameha Schools/Bernice Pauahi Bishop Est., 596 F.3d 1036, 1042 (9th Cir. 2010)
- Doe v. Andrews, No. 1:25-CV-00506-SAB-HC, 2025 WL 1856591, at *3 (E.D. Cal. June 26, 2025)
- Doe v. Andrews, No. 1:25-CV-00333-JLT-HBK (HC), 2025 WL 1531684 (E.D. Cal. May 28, 2025)
- Doe v. Andrews, No. 1:25-CV-00680-SKO (HC), 2025 WL 1636053, at *1 (E.D. Cal. June 9, 2025)

OPINION

Wofford

PER CURIAM.

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8 UNITED STATES DISTRICT COURT

9 EASTERN DISTRICT OF CALIFORNIA

10 11 E.A.P.C., Case No. 1:25-cv-01546-JLT-CDB 12 Petitioner, ORDER GRANTING
PETITIONER’S

UNOPPOSED REQUEST TO PROCEED VIA

13 v. PSEUDONYM AS TO PETITIONER E.A.P.C. 14 MINGA WOFFORD, et al., (Doc. 3)

15 Respondents. 16

17 Relevant Background 18 Petitioner E.A.P.C. (“Petitioner”), a federal detainee proceeding by
counsel, initiated this 19 action by filing a petition for writ of habeas corpus pursuant to 28 U.S.C.
§ 2241, a related request 20 for emergency injunctive relief, and the pending motion to proceed via
pseudonym on November 21 12, 2025. (Docs. 1-3). Petitioner filed the instant petition while in the
custody of the Immigration 22 and Customs Enforcement (“ICE”) at the Mesa Verde ICE
Processing Center in Bakersfield, 23 California. (Doc. 1 ¶ 28). 24 Petitioner’s Unopposed Motion
to Proceed via Pseudonym 25 Pending before the Court is Petitioner’s motion to proceed via
pseudonym, filed on

26 November 12, 2025, which Respondents do not oppose. (Doc. 3; Doc. 15 at 2). The motion is
27 submitted on the record and briefs without oral argument. See Local Rule 230(g). For the
reasons 28 set forth below, the Court will grant Petitioner’s unopposed motion. 1 A. Petitioner’s
Contentions 2 Petitioner requests the Court to permit him to proceed in this case via pseudonym
using his 3 initials to protect his identity and his family from risk of harassment and retaliation.
(Doc. 3 at 2). 4 Petitioner asserts that he will disclose his identity to appearing counsel for the
government in this 5 case. Id. Petitioner asserts that he should not be required to expose himself to
retaliation, public 6 vitriol, or further harm to vindicate his legal rights. Id. 7 Petitioner asserts that
relevant factors weigh in favor of granting his motion because the 8 litigation concerns
information of a sensitive and highly personal nature, there is no risk of 9 prejudice to Defendants,
and allowing him to proceed under pseudonym is in the public interest.

10 Id. at 3-4. Specifically, Petitioner argues that this litigation may require disclosure of his highly

11 personal private mental and physical health information and the disclosure of such “could lead to 12 stigma and further harm” to Petitioner and that his “family members may face harm if [his] name 13 is disclosed. Id. at 3. Petitioner contends that allowing him to proceed anonymously here causes 14 no prejudice as his identity is not itself a material fact in the action and that he will disclose his 15 identity to counsel for the government upon counsel’s appearance. Id. at 4. Lastly, Petitioner 16 contends that the public interest weighs in favor of allowing him to proceed using a pseudonym as 17 the ramifications of forcing him to reveal his identity publicly to pursue his claims arising from 18 government misconduct “would be sweeping and would limit access to the courts for any citizen 19 with a legitimate fear of mistreatment or retaliation by the government.” Id. at 4-5. 20 B. Governing Authority 21 “[M]any federal courts, including the Ninth Circuit, have permitted parties to proceed 22 anonymously when special circumstances justify secrecy.” Does I thru XXIII v. Advanced Textile 23 Corp., 214 F.3d 1058, 1067 (9th Cir. 2000). “In this circuit... parties [may] use pseudonyms in the 24 ‘unusual case’ when nondisclosure of the party’s identity ‘is necessary...to protect a person from 25 harassment, injury, ridicule or personal embarrassment.’” Id. at 1067-68 (quoting United States v. 26 Doe, 655 F.2d 920, 922 n.1 (9th Cir. 1981)). “[A] district court must balance the need for 27 anonymity against the general presumption that parties’ identities are public information and the 28 risk of unfairness to the opposing party.” Id. at 1068. 1 The Ninth Circuit has identified three situations in which parties have been allowed to 2 proceed under pseudonyms: “(1) when the identification creates a risk of retaliatory physical or 3 mental harm; (2) when anonymity is necessary to preserve privacy in a matter of sensitive and 4 highly personal nature; and (3) when the anonymous party is compelled to admit [his or her] 5 intention to engage in illegal conduct, thereby risking criminal prosecution...” Id. (citations and 6 internal quotations marks omitted). In evaluating such a request, courts should consider the 7 following factors: (1) the severity of the threatened harm; (2) the reasonableness of the anonymous 8 party’s fears; and (3) the anonymous party’s vulnerability to such retaliation. Id. 9 “The court must also determine the precise prejudice at each stage of the proceedings to the 10 opposing party, and whether proceedings may be structured so as to mitigate that prejudice ... [as 11 well as] decide whether the public’s interest in the case would be best served by requiring that the 12 litigants reveal their identities.” Id. at 1068-69. “To determine whether to allow a party to proceed 13 anonymously when the opposing party has objected, a district court must balance five factors: ‘(1) 14 the severity of the threatened harm, (2) the reasonableness of the anonymous party’s fears ... (3) 15 the anonymous party’s vulnerability to such retaliation,’ (4) the prejudice to the opposing party, 16 and (5) the public interest.’” Doe v. Kamehameha Schools/Bernice Pauahi Bishop Est., 596 F.3d 17 1036, 1042 (9th Cir. 2010) (quoting Advanced Textile Corp., 214 F.3d at 1068). 18 C. Analysis 19 The Court has reviewed Petitioner’s unopposed motion and finds the reasons advanced for 20 proceeding under pseudonym warrant granting the relief requested. As Respondents do not oppose 21 Petitioner’s request to proceed pseudonymously and do not identify any actual, threatened, or risk 22 of

material prejudice that could result from Petitioner’s use of a pseudonym, and given Petitioner 23 provides in his request that he does not seek to withhold his identity from Respondents, the Court 24 finds that Respondents would not suffer any prejudice if Petitioner were allowed to proceed under 25 pseudonym. Therefore, this factor weighs in favor of Petitioner’s requested relief. See Doe v. 26 Andrews, No. 1:25-CV-00506-SAB-HC, 2025 WL 1856591, at *3 (E.D. Cal. June 26, 2025) 27 (granting request to proceed under pseudonym where respondents “have not attempted to —and 28 cannot—argue that they would suffer any prejudice if Petitioner were allowed to proceed under 1 pseudonym given Petitioner’s identity is known to the Court and Respondents.”). 2 While the Court is mindful of the public’s interest in knowing the identity of the parties, 3 after reviewing the record and considering the nature of the potential harm to which Petitioner may 4 be exposed, the reasonableness of Petitioner’s fears relating to the sensitive nature of private mental 5 and physical health information at issue, and any potential prejudice to Respondents as well as the 6 public’s interest in this action, the Court finds that, at this early stage of the litigation, the 7 Petitioner’s need for anonymity outweighs the competing interests. See *Advanced Textile Corp.*, 8 214 F.3d at 1067-68 (“In this circuit, we allowed parties to use pseudonyms in the ‘unusual case’ 9 when nondisclosure of the party’s identity ‘is necessary ... to protect a person from harassment, 10 injury, ridicule, or personal embarrassment.’”) (citing *United States v. Doe*, 655 F.2d 920, 922 n.1 11 (9th Cir. 1981)); *Doe v. Andrews*, No. 1:25-CV-00333-JLT-HBK (HC), 2025 WL 1531684 (E.D. 12 Cal. May 28, 2025) (noting that “Courts regularly grant leave to proceed under a pseudonym in 13 cases related to asylum proceedings,” collecting cases, and granting immigration detainee’s 14 pseudonym request) (citing 8 C.F.R. § 208.6); see also *Doe v. Andrews*, No. 1:25-CV-00680-SKO 15 (HC), 2025 WL 1636053, at *1 (E.D. Cal. June 9, 2025) (granting immigration detainee’s 16 pseudonym request, finding no prejudice to Respondent, and noting “Petitioner ... applied for 17 protection under the Convention Against Torture. He fears persecution and retaliation from a 18 criminal gang ... he is aware that individuals in Jamaica look for information about him online. 19 Petitioner’s fears are credible and satisfy the first three factors”). Therefore, the Court will grant 20 Petitioner’s unopposed motion to proceed under pseudonym in this action. 21 Conclusion and Order 22 Accordingly, it is HEREBY ORDERED: 23 1. Petitioner’s unopposed motion to proceed via pseudonym (Doc. 3) is GRANTED. All 24 parties and their counsel shall use the pseudonym “E.A.P.C.” in place of Petitioner’s 25 legal name in all future pleadings and papers filed in this action; and 26 /// 27 /// 28 /// 1 2. The parties are prohibited from disclosing or publishing the true name of the Petitioner 2 except by order of this Court and as necessary toward the prosecution or defense of the 3 case. 4 | IT IS SO ORDERED. Dated: _ December 11, 2025 | ww ED R~

6 UNITED STATES MAGISTRATE JUDGE

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