

UNITED STATES DISTRICT COURT FOR THE NORTHERN DISTRICT OF CALIFORNIA

Chikodi Chima v. State of California, et al.

Chima · No. 25-cv-10294-TSH · Decided December 2, 2025

SUMMARY

The United States District Court for the Northern District of California grants Chikodi Chima’s application to proceed in forma pauperis but finds the complaint deficient under 28 U.S.C. § 1915(e). The court identifies pleading deficiencies under Federal Rule of Civil Procedure 8, questions the applicability of 42 U.S.C. § 1983 to certain California defendants and private actors, and grants leave to amend. Plaintiff must file a first amended complaint by January 2, 2026.

CASE DETAILS

COURT	United States District Court for the Northern District of California
WRITING FOR THE COURT	Thomas S. Hixson
JURISDICTION	United States District Court for the Northern District of California
DECIDED	December 2, 2025
DOCKET	25-cv-10294-TSH
DISPOSITION	other
PROCEDURAL POSTURE	Plaintiff filed a civil-rights complaint under 42 U.S.C. § 1983 and an application to proceed in forma pauperis. The district court granted in forma pauperis status but screened the complaint sua sponte under 28 U.S.C. § 1915(e), found the complaint deficient, and granted leave to amend.
STANDARD OF REVIEW	For screening under 28 U.S.C. § 1915(e)(2)(B)(ii), the court applied the Federal Rule of Civil Procedure 12(b)(6) standard, requiring factual allegations sufficient to state a plausible claim. The court also required compliance with Federal Rule of Civil Procedure 8.
PRECEDENTIAL VALUE	unknown

PARTIES

Chikodi Chima v. State of California, Judicial Council of California, Superior Court of California, County of San Francisco, Doe Agencies 1-10, City and County of San Francisco, San Francisco Sheriff's Office, San Francisco City Attorney's Office, Doe Agencies 11-20, Callahan, Thompson, Sherman & Caudill

TOPICS

section 1983 pleadings civil procedure eleventh amendment immunity first amendment

PRACTICE AREAS

civil rights federal civil procedure constitutional law

QUESTIONS PRESENTED

1. Whether the plaintiff qualified to proceed in forma pauperis under 28 U.S.C. § 1915(a)(1).
2. Whether the complaint stated a plausible claim and complied with Federal Rule of Civil Procedure 8 sufficiently to survive screening under 28 U.S.C. § 1915(e)(2).
3. Whether the complaint adequately alleged the elements of a claim under 42 U.S.C. § 1983 against each defendant.
4. Whether claims against the State of California and its agencies were barred by Eleventh Amendment immunity absent waiver or abrogation.
5. Whether claims against private actors plausibly alleged conduct fairly attributable to the State.

HOLDINGS

1. The plaintiff demonstrated that he could not pay the filing fees, so the court granted his application to proceed in forma pauperis.
2. The complaint failed to state a claim because it did not allege facts plausibly establishing each defendant's liability and did not comply with Rule 8's requirement of a short and plain statement.
3. To state a § 1983 claim, a plaintiff must allege that a person deprived him of a right secured by the Constitution or federal law and acted under color of state law.
4. Claims against the State of California and its agencies are barred by Eleventh Amendment immunity absent a valid abrogation or express waiver, unless the plaintiff establishes another jurisdictional basis for the claims.
5. A plaintiff seeking to pursue a § 1983 claim against private actors must plausibly allege that the challenged conduct is fairly attributable to the State and therefore constitutes state action.

KEY QUOTATIONS

“A court must dismiss an in forma pauperis complaint before service of process if it “(i) is frivolous or malicious; (ii) fails to state a claim on which relief may be granted; or (iii) seeks monetary relief against a

defendant who is immune from such relief.”” (at 2)

“A complaint must also comply with Federal Rule of Civil Procedure 8, which requires the complaint to contain a “short and plain statement of the claim showing that the pleader is entitled to relief.”” (at 3)

“To state a claim under § 1983, a plaintiff must allege two essential elements: (1) that a person violated a right secured by the Constitution or laws of the United States and (2) that said person acted under the color of state law when they committed the alleged violation.” (at 4)

“Purely private conduct, no matter how wrongful, is not covered under § 1983.” (at 6)

FACTUAL BACKGROUND

Chikodi Chima alleged that the defendants engaged in retaliatory harassment and interfered with his filing of a federal civil-rights lawsuit after another action he filed in the district was dismissed on November 5, 2025. He named the State of California and several agencies, the City and County of San Francisco and departments, and a private law corporation. He asserted one claim under 42 U.S.C. § 1983 for First Amendment retaliation and denial of access to courts, but generally referred to the defendants collectively and did not connect particular defendants to particular acts.

PROCEDURAL HISTORY

Chima initiated the action in the Northern District of California and alleged First Amendment retaliation and denial of access to courts. The court granted the application to proceed in forma pauperis, determined that the complaint failed to state a claim and did not adequately identify each defendant's alleged conduct, and ordered a first amended complaint by January 2, 2026. The court warned that failure to cure the deficiencies could result in dismissal.

DISPOSITION

other

CASES CITED

- *Watson v. Carter*, 668 F.3d 1108, 1112 (9th Cir. 2012)
- *Bell Atl. Corp. v. Twombly*, 550 U.S. 544, 555-57 (2007)
- *Ashcroft v. Iqbal*, 556 U.S. 662, 678 (2009)
- *Pena v. Gardner*, 976 F.2d 469, 471 (9th Cir. 1992)
- *McHenry v. Renne*, 84 F.3d 1172, 1177, 1179 (9th Cir. 1996)
- *Erickson v. Pardus*, 551 U.S. 89, 93 (2007)
- *Wilder v. Virginia Hosp. Ass'n*, 496 U.S. 498, 508 (1990)
- *Albright v. Oliver*, 510 U.S. 266, 271 (1994)
- *West v. Atkins*, 487 U.S. 42, 48 (1988)
- *Naffe v. Frey*, 789 F.3d 1030, 1035-36 (9th Cir. 2015)

- In re Mitchell, 209 F.3d 1111, 1115-16 (9th Cir. 2000)
- Hans v. Louisiana, 134 U.S. 1, 15 (1890)
- Florida Dep't of State v. Treasure Salvors, Inc., 458 U.S. 670 (1982)
- Pennhurst State Sch. & Hosp. v. Halderman, 465 U.S. 89, 101 (1984)
- Dittman v. State of California, 191 F.3d 1020, 1025-26 (9th Cir. 1999)
- Lugar v. Edmondson Oil Co., 457 U.S. 922, 936-37 (1982)
- Naoko Ohno v. Yuko Yasuma, 723 F.3d 984, 993 (9th Cir. 2013)
- Ouzts v. Maryland Nat'l Ins. Co., 505 F.2d 547, 550 (9th Cir. 1974)
- Ferdik v. Bonzelet, 963 F.2d 1258, 1262 (9th Cir. 1992)

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