

UNITED STATES DISTRICT COURT FOR THE NORTHERN DISTRICT OF
NEW YORK

Tadd A. Sherwood v. Daniel P. Mazzaella, et al.

Sherwood · No. 6:25-CV-1825 (AMN/DJS) · Decided April 7, 2026

SUMMARY

This Report-Recommendation and Order addresses a pro se plaintiff’s 42 U.S.C. § 1983 claims alleging violations of the Fourth, Eighth, and Fourteenth Amendments arising from encounters and arrests involving New York State Police personnel. The court recommends dismissal of claims against defendants not connected to specific factual allegations, while permitting the remaining claims to proceed and allowing plaintiff an opportunity to amend.

CASE DETAILS

COURT	United States District Court for the Northern District of New York
WRITING FOR THE COURT	Daniel J. Stewart, United States Magistrate Judge
JURISDICTION	United States District Court for the Northern District of New York
DECIDED	April 7, 2026
DOCKET	6:25-CV-1825 (AMN/DJS)
DISPOSITION	other
PROCEDURAL POSTURE	Report-recommendation and order on initial screening of a pro se 42 U.S.C. § 1983 complaint filed in forma pauperis under 28 U.S.C. § 1915(e)(2).
STANDARD OF REVIEW	Under 28 U.S.C. § 1915(e)(2), the Court must dismiss an in forma pauperis action that is frivolous, malicious, fails to state a claim, or seeks monetary relief from an immune defendant. On screening, the Court applies Federal Rule of Civil Procedure 8 and assesses whether the complaint alleges an arguable, facially plausible claim, accepting well-pleaded factual allegations as true but not legal conclusions. Pro se pleadings receive liberal construction and special solicitude.
PRECEDENTIAL VALUE	nonprecedential

TOPICS

- section 1983
- pleadings
- motions to dismiss
- civil procedure

PRACTICE AREAS

civil rights

civil procedure

constitutional law

QUESTIONS PRESENTED

1. Whether the complaint should be dismissed at initial screening under 28 U.S.C. § 1915(e)(2) for failure to state a claim against defendants against whom no specific acts or wrongdoing were alleged.
2. Whether plaintiff should be granted leave to amend the complaint to add factual allegations against those defendants.
3. Whether the remaining allegations were sufficient at the screening stage to warrant service and a responsive pleading.

HOLDINGS

1. A complaint that does not identify particular acts by a defendant or explain how those acts were illegal fails to satisfy Federal Rule of Civil Procedure 8 and may be dismissed as to that defendant.
2. When a liberal reading of a pro se complaint indicates that a valid claim might be stated, dismissal should ordinarily be accompanied by leave to amend.
3. At the initial screening stage, the complaint need only allege an arguable and facially plausible claim; the Court does not decide whether plaintiff will ultimately prevail or whether the complaint would survive a properly filed motion.

KEY QUOTATIONS

“A claim has facial plausibility when the plaintiff pleads factual content that allows the court to draw the reasonable inference that the defendant is liable for the misconduct alleged.” (at 2)

“A court should avoid dismissal of complaints filed by individuals proceeding pro se without first granting leave to amend “when a liberal reading of the complaint gives any indication that a valid claim might be stated.”” (at 4)

FACTUAL BACKGROUND

Plaintiff alleged that, between 2022 and 2025, he had numerous encounters with named New York State Police members that resulted in several arrests. He alleged unlawful stops and searches, improper questioning, and the use of a private citizen to obtain evidence against him. Twelve named defendants were not connected to any specific factual allegations or identified wrongdoing in the complaint.

PROCEDURAL HISTORY

Plaintiff filed a pro se complaint alleging Fourth, Eighth, and Fourteenth Amendment violations arising from encounters with New York State Police personnel. The Court granted plaintiff leave to proceed in forma pauperis by separate order and screened the complaint. It recommended dismissal as to twelve defendants against whom the complaint alleged no specific wrongdoing, while permitting plaintiff to amend and allowing the claims

against the remaining defendants to proceed to responsive pleading. The parties were given fourteen days to object under 28 U.S.C. § 636(b)(1).

DISPOSITION

other

CASES CITED

- Nance v. Kelly, 912 F.2d 605, 606 (2d Cir. 1990) (per curiam)
- Anderson v. Coughlin, 700 F.2d 37, 41 (2d Cir. 1983)
- Bell Atl. Corp. v. Twombly, 550 U.S. 544, 555-70 (2007)
- Ashcroft v. Iqbal, 556 U.S. 662, 678-79 (2009)
- Neitzke v. Williams, 490 U.S. 319, 325 (1989)
- Powell v. Marine Midland Bank, 162 F.R.D. 15, 16 (N.D.N.Y. 1995)
- Branum v. Clark, 927 F.2d 698, 704-05 (2d Cir. 1991)
- Tracy v. Freshwater, 623 F.3d 90, 101 (2d Cir. 2010)
- Rosa v. Doe, 86 F.4th 1001, 1007 (2d Cir. 2023)
- Hardaway v. Hartford Pub. Works Dep't, 879 F.3d 486, 489 (2d Cir. 2018)
- Hill v. Curcione, 657 F.3d 116, 122 (2d Cir. 2011)
- Roldan v. Racette, 984 F.2d 85, 89 (2d Cir. 1993)
- Small v. Sec'y of Health and Human Servs., 892 F.2d 15 (2d Cir. 1989)