

UNITED STATES DISTRICT COURT FOR THE SOUTHERN DISTRICT OF
CALIFORNIA

Tyree Raybon Ruffins v. R. Din

Ruffins v. Din · No. 25-cv-00267-AJB-SBC · Decided January 30, 2026

SUMMARY

The United States District Court for the Southern District of California dismissed Tyree Raybon Ruffins’s amended 42 U.S.C. § 1983 complaint against Lieutenant R. Din for failure to state a claim. The court concluded that the amended pleading failed to comply with Federal Rule of Civil Procedure 8 and did not plausibly allege an Eighth Amendment failure-to-protect claim. The court denied further leave to amend as futile, certified that an IFP appeal would not be taken in good faith, and directed entry of final judgment.

CASE DETAILS

COURT	United States District Court for the Southern District of California
WRITING FOR THE COURT	Anthony J. Battaglia
JURISDICTION	United States District Court for the Southern District of California
DECIDED	January 30, 2026
DOCKET	25-cv-00267-AJB-SBC
DISPOSITION	dismissed
PROCEDURAL POSTURE	Screening of a pro se prisoner’s amended 42 U.S.C. § 1983 complaint filed in forma pauperis.
STANDARD OF REVIEW	The court applied the Federal Rule of Civil Procedure 12(b)(6) plausibility standard during mandatory screening under 28 U.S.C. §§ 1915(e)(2) and 1915A(b). Pro se pleadings were construed liberally, but the court could not supply essential elements or facts not pleaded.
PRECEDENTIAL VALUE	unpublished district court order; precedential status unknown
PARTIES	Tyree Raybon Ruffins v. R. Din

TOPICS

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

PRACTICE AREAS

QUESTIONS PRESENTED

1. Whether the amended complaint satisfied Federal Rule of Civil Procedure 8 and stated a plausible claim for relief under 42 U.S.C. § 1983.
2. Whether the amended complaint should be dismissed during mandatory prisoner and in forma pauperis screening under 28 U.S.C. §§ 1915(e)(2)(B)(ii) and 1915A(b)(1).
3. Whether further leave to amend should be denied as futile after Ruffins failed to cure deficiencies identified in the prior dismissal order.

HOLDINGS

1. The amended complaint failed to comply with Rule 8 and failed to state a plausible claim for relief because it did not clearly identify the defendant and claims, allege a jurisdictional basis, provide sufficient factual content connecting Din to actionable misconduct, or request relief.
2. The court was required to dismiss the amended complaint sua sponte because it failed to state a claim upon which relief could be granted.
3. Further leave to amend was properly denied as futile because Ruffins had already been given notice of the pleading deficiencies and failed to cure them in the amended complaint.

KEY QUOTATIONS

“[A]n amended pleading supersedes the original.” (at 3)

“Something labeled a complaint but written more as a press release, prolix in evidentiary detail, yet without simplicity, conciseness and clarity as to whom plaintiffs are suing for what wrongs, fails to perform the essential functions of a complaint.” (at 5)

“Instead, Plaintiff must re-name the parties he intends to sue, and contain within his amended pleading ‘sufficient factual matter, accepted as true, to ‘state a [§ 1983] claim to relief that is plausible on its face.’” (at 6)

FACTUAL BACKGROUND

Ruffins, a state prisoner proceeding pro se and in forma pauperis, alleged that Lieutenant Din mishandled or falsified a CDCR 128-B marriage chrono after Ruffins fought with another prisoner, Wilson. Ruffins asserted that approximately two years later both prisoners were transferred to the same prison, where the chrono allegedly placed him at risk. The amended pleading merely asserted that he had stated valid facts and referred to the chrono, without alleging the injury caused, Din’s knowledge of the future transfers, or facts showing deliberate indifference to a substantial risk of harm.

PROCEDURAL HISTORY

Ruffins initially alleged that Lieutenant R. Din violated his constitutional rights by mishandling a CDCR known-enemy or marriage chrono after a fight between Ruffins and another prisoner. The court previously dismissed the

original complaint under 28 U.S.C. §§ 1915(e)(2)(B)(ii) and 1915A(b)(1), identified pleading deficiencies, and granted leave to amend. Ruffins filed a two-page letter labeled an amended complaint, which supplied less factual detail and did not cure the deficiencies. The court dismissed the amended complaint, denied further leave to amend as futile, certified that an appeal would not be taken in good faith, and directed entry of final judgment.

DISPOSITION

dismissed

CASES CITED

- Farmer v. Brennan, 511 U.S. 825, 833, 834, 837 (1994)
- Lopez v. Smith, 203 F.3d 1122, 1126–27 (9th Cir. 2000) (en banc)
- Rhodes v. Robinson, 621 F.3d 1002, 1004 (9th Cir. 2010)
- Nordstrom v. Ryan, 762 F.3d 903, 920 n.1 (9th Cir. 2014)
- Long v. Sugai, 91 F.4th 1331, 1336 (9th Cir. 2024)
- Watison v. Carter, 668 F.3d 1108, 1112 (9th Cir. 2012)
- Wilhelm v. Rotman, 680 F.3d 1113, 1121 (9th Cir. 2012)
- Ashcroft v. Iqbal, 556 U.S. 662, 677–78 (2009)
- Shroyer v. New Cingular Wireless Servs., Inc., 622 F.3d 1035, 1041 (9th Cir. 2010)
- Navarro v. Block, 250 F.3d 729, 732 (9th Cir. 2001)
- Hebbe v. Pliler, 627 F.3d 338, 342 n.7 (9th Cir. 2010)
- Chapman v. Pier 1 Imports (U.S.) Inc., 631 F.3d 939, 954 (9th Cir. 2011)
- Gibson v. City of Portland, --- F.5th ---, No. 24-1663, 2026 WL 235118, at *16, *18 (9th Cir. Jan. 29, 2026)
- Watson v. Chessman, 362 F. Supp. 2d 1190, 1194 (S.D. Cal. 2005)
- Berk v. Choy, 607 U.S. ---, --- S. Ct. ---, No. 24-440, 2026 WL 135974, at *4 (U.S. Jan. 20, 2026)
- Bell Atlantic v. Twombly, 550 U.S. 544, 555 & n.3, 570 (2007)
- McHenry v. Renne, 84 F.3d 1172, 1177–78, 1180 (9th Cir. 1996)
- Exmundo v. Kane, 553 F. App’x 742, 743 (9th Cir. 2014)
- Hearn v. San Bernardino Police Dept., 530 F.3d 1124, 1132 (9th Cir. 2008)
- Morrison v. United States, 270 F. App’x 514, 515 (9th Cir. 2008)
- Zucco Partners, LLC v. Digimarc Corp., 552 F.3d 981, 1007 (9th Cir. 2009)

OPINION

Ruffins

PER CURIAM.

1 2 3 4 5 6 7

8 UNITED STATES DISTRICT COURT

9 SOUTHERN DISTRICT OF CALIFORNIA

CDCR #BJ-6459,

12

ORDER DISMISSING AMENDED

Plaintiff,

13 COMPLAINT FOR FAILING TO

v. STATE A CLAIM PURSUANT

14 TO 28 U.S.C. § 1915(e)(2)(B)(ii)

15 AND 28 U.S.C. § 1915A(b)(1)

R. DIN, Lieutenant, 16 Defendant. (Doc. No. 7) 17 18 19 Before the Court is an amended civil rights complaint filed pursuant to 20 U.S.C. § 1983 by Plaintiff Tyree Raybon Ruffins, a prisoner at Mule Creek State Prison, 21 who is proceeding in forma pauperis (“IFP”) and without counsel. (See Doc. No. 7.) 22 Plaintiff’s original complaint alleged R. Din, a correctional lieutenant at Centinela State 23 Prison (“CEN”), violated his constitutional rights in November 2021 by failing to follow 24 proper known-enemy protocol after Plaintiff and another inmate engaged in a fight. (See 25 Doc. No. 1 at 3.) Because Plaintiff failed to allege facts sufficient to state a plausible claim 26 for relief, the Court dismissed his complaint sua sponte pursuant to 28 U.S.C. 27 §§ 1915(e)(2)(B)(ii) and 1915A(b)(1), but provided him notice of his pleading deficiencies 28 and granted him leave to fix them. (See Doc. No. 6.) 1 Plaintiff has since filed a letter addressed to the Court captioned as his amended 2 complaint, but this pleading too fails to state any claim upon which § 1983 relief may be 3 granted. (See Doc. No. 7.) Thus, for reasons explained, the Court now DISMISSES his 4 amended complaint and denies further leave to amend as futile.

5 I. PROCEDURAL BACKGROUND

6 Plaintiff original complaint was sparse and conclusory, but the Court construed it 7 liberally, when read together with his attached exhibits, to allege that Lt. Din’s mishandled 8 a CDCR 128-B “marriage chrono” sometime after Plaintiff and another inmate named 9 Wilson had a fight at CEN. (See Doc. No. 6 at 5–6, citing Doc. No. 1 at 2–3.) Plaintiff 10 appeared to claim Din falsified this document to suggest Plaintiff and Wilson were not in 11 fact enemies, but had instead agreed to “get along.” (Id. at 7.) Approximately two years 12 later, after both Plaintiff and Wilson transferred to California State Prison in Lancaster 13 (“LAC”), Plaintiff alleged he was “plac[ed] in danger” due to the “non-enemy concern 14 chrono” Din is alleged to have placed in his file. (Id. at 6–7, n. 4.) 15 The Court found Plaintiff’s complaint failed to state any plausible claim for relief 16 against Din because his allegations were primarily focused on Din’s alleged failure to 17 follow CDCR rules and regulations. (Id. at 6.) The Court further found that to the extent 18 Plaintiff sought to hold Din liable for failing to protect him from harm in violation of the 19 Eighth Amendment, he failed to include any facts to plausibly show Din acted with 20 deliberate indifference to any known and substantial risk to his safety. (Id. at 6–7 (citing 21 Farmer v.

Brennan, 511 U.S. 825, 833, 834, 837 (1994)).) Specifically, the Court 22 concluded Plaintiff's Eighth Amendment claims fell short because he failed to allege: 23 "(1) he was injured as a result of the allegedly false marriage chrono; (2) that Lt. Din knew 24 he would later be transferred to LAC; (3) that Din knew Wilson would be also be 25 transferred there; or (4) that Lt. Din actually drew the inference that Wilson would later be 26 identified as Plaintiff's known enemy and therefore pose a substantial risk of harm to him." 27 (Id. at 8, citing Farmer, 511 U.S. at 837.) The Court granted Plaintiff leave to amend, and 28 cautioned that his amended complaint "must be complete by itself without reference to his 1 original pleading." (Id. at 9 (citing S.D. Cal. CivLR 15.1; Hal Roach Studios, Inc. v. 2 Richard Feiner & Co., Inc., 896 F.2d 1542, 1546 (9th Cir. 1989) ("[A]n amended pleading 3 supersedes the original.")).) 4 In response, Plaintiff filed an amended complaint, but it includes even less, not more, 5 factual detail with respect to his claims against Lt. Din. (Doc. No. 7.) In fact, as discussed 6 below, Plaintiff's current 2-page letter pleading fails to function as an amended complaint 7 at all, and instead is comprised of argument as to why his original pleading was "valid." 8 (Id.)

9 II. SCREENING

10 A. Standard of Review 11 Because Plaintiff remains a prisoner and is proceeding IFP, his purported amended 12 complaint, like his original, requires a preliminary screening pursuant to 28 U.S.C. 13 § 1915(e)(2) and § 1915A(b). Under these statutes, the Court must sua sponte dismiss a 14 prisoner's IFP complaint, or any portion found frivolous, malicious, failing to state a claim, 15 or seeking damages from defendants who are immune. See *Lopez v. Smith*, 203 F.3d 1122, 16 1126–27 (9th Cir. 2000) (en banc) (discussing 28 U.S.C. § 1915(e)(2)); *Rhodes v. 17 Robinson*, 621 F.3d 1002, 1004 (9th Cir. 2010) (discussing 28 U.S.C. § 1915A(b)). "The 18 purpose of [screening] is 'to ensure that the targets of frivolous or malicious suits need not 19 bear the expense of responding.'" *Nordstrom v. Ryan*, 762 F.3d 903, 920 n.1 (9th Cir. 2014) 20 (citation omitted). 21 "The standard for dismissal for prisoner claims at screening is the 'same as the 22 Federal Rule of Civil Procedure 12(b)(6) standard for failure to state a claim.'" *Long v. 23 Sugai*, 91 F.4th 1331, 1336 (9th Cir. 2024) (quoting *Watison v. Carter*, 668 F.3d 1108, 24 1112 (9th Cir. 2012) (citation omitted)); see also *Wilhelm v. Rotman*, 680 F.3d 1113, 1121 25 (9th Cir. 2012) (noting that screening pursuant to § 1915A "incorporates the familiar 26 standard applied in the context of failure to state a claim under Federal Rule of Civil

27 Procedure 12(b)(6)"). Federal Rules of Civil Procedure 8(a) and 12(b)(6) together require 28 a complaint to "contain sufficient factual matter, accepted as true, to state a claim to relief 1 that is plausible on its face." *Ashcroft v. Iqbal*, 556 U.S. 662, 678 (2009) (internal quotation 2 marks omitted); *Wilhelm*, 680 F.3d at 1121. A complaint fails to state a claim if it lacks a 3 "cognizable legal theory" or "sufficient facts . . . to support a cognizable legal theory." 4 *Shroyer v. New Cingular Wireless Servs., Inc.*, 622 F.3d 1035, 1041 (9th Cir. 2010) 5 (quoting *Navarro v. Block*, 250 F.3d 729, 732 (9th Cir. 2001)). Detailed factual allegations 6 are not required, but "[t]hreadbare recitals of the elements of a cause of action, supported 7 by mere conclusory

statements, do not suffice.” *Iqbal*, 556 U.S. at 678. 8 Finally, while the court “ha[s] an obligation where the petitioner is pro se, 9 particularly in civil rights cases, to construe the pleadings liberally and to afford [him] the 10 benefit of any doubt,” *Hebbe v. Pliler*, 627 F.3d 338, 342, n.7 (9th Cir. 2010), it “may not 11 supply essential elements of the claim that were not initially pled,” *Chapman v. Pier 1 12 Imports (U.S.) Inc.*, 631 F.3d 939, 954 (9th Cir. 2011) (citations omitted). 13 B. Discussion 14 The Court finds Plaintiff’s amended complaint fails to comply with Rule 8 and still 15 fails to state a plausible claim for relief against Lt. Din. Therefore, it too must be dismissed 16 sua sponte pursuant to 28 U.S.C. §§ 1915(e)(2)(B)(ii) and 1915A(b)(1). See *Iqbal*, 556 17 U.S. at 677–78. 18 Every complaint must contain: “(1) a short and plain statement of the grounds for 19 the court’s jurisdiction, . . . (2) a short and plain statement showing that the pleader is 20 entitled to relief; and (3) a demand for the relief sought.” Fed. R. Civ. P. 8(a)(1)-(3); *Gibson 21 v. City of Portland*, --- F.5th ---, No. 24-1663, 2026 WL 235118, at *16 (9th Cir. Jan. 29, 22 2026). Unlike his original complaint, which was filed pursuant to 42 U.S.C. § 1983, named 23 Lt. Din as a defendant, and arguably invoked Plaintiff’s Eighth Amendment right to remain 24 free from a substantial risk of harm at the hand of another prisoner, (see Doc. No. 1 at 1– 25 3), his current pleading, while captioned as his “Amended Complaint,” (see Doc. No. 7 at 26 1), is not a complaint at all. It fails to clearly identify any defendant, see Fed. R. Civ. P. 27 10(a) (“[T]he title of the complaint must name all the parties”), fails to allege federal 28 subject matter jurisdiction under § 1983, see *Watson v. Chessman*, 362 F. Supp. 2d 1190, 1 1194 (S.D. Cal. 2005) (“The court will not . . . infer allegations supporting federal 2 jurisdiction; federal subject matter [jurisdiction] must always be affirmatively alleged.”), 3 fails to contain “factual content that allows the court to draw the reasonable inference that 4 [any] defendant is liable for the misconduct alleged” in it, and fails to contain any claim 5 for relief whatsoever. *Iqbal*, 556 U.S. at 678.

6 Rule 8 “prescribes the information a plaintiff must provide about the merits of his 7 claim at the outset of litigation.” *Berk v. Choy*, 607 U.S. ---, --- S. Ct. ---, No. 24-440, 8 2026 WL 135974, at *4 (U.S. Jan. 20, 2026). While detailed factual allegations are not 9 required, at a minimum, a complaint must contain some factual content sufficient to 10 provide “fair notice” of both the claim being asserted and the legal “grounds upon which 11 [the claim] rests.” *Bell Atlantic v. Twombly*, 550 U.S. 544, 555 & n.3 (2007) (citation and 12 quotation marks omitted). “Something labeled a complaint but written more as a press 13 release, prolix in evidentiary detail, yet without simplicity, conciseness and clarity as to 14 whom plaintiffs are suing for what wrongs, fails to perform the essential functions of a 15 complaint.” *McHenry v. Renne*, 84 F.3d 1172, 1180 (9th Cir. 1996). 16 Here, Plaintiff’s amended complaint simply asserts he “has stated & or alleged [] 17 valid facts,” refers again to a “128-B marriage chrono” that he only “supposedly signed,” 18 and accuses Lt. Din of “disregard[ing] the necessities.” (See Doc. No. 7 at 2 (emphasis 19 added).) However, Plaintiff makes “no attempt . . . to match up the specific factual 20 allegations [with any] specific legal claim[.]” *McHenry*, 84 F.3d at 1177. Moreover, he 21 cannot amend by merely incorporating previously-named defendants or prior factual 22 allegations into his amended

pleading by reference. See S.D. Cal. CivLR 15.1.a (“Every 23 pleading to which an amendment is permitted as a matter of right or has been allowed by 24 court order, must be complete in itself without reference to the superseded pleading.”); Hal 25 Roach, 896 F.2d at 1546 (holding that “[t]he fact that a party was named in the original 26 complaint is irrelevant; an amended pleading supersedes the original.”). This approach 27 leaves the “defendant[] and th[e] court . . . literally guessing as to what facts support the 28 legal claims being asserted[.]” McHenry, 84 F.3d at 1177. Instead, Plaintiff must re-name 1 the parties he intends to sue, and contain within his amended pleading “sufficient factual 2 matter, accepted as true, to ‘state a [§ 1983] claim to relief that is plausible on its face.” 3 Iqbal, 556 U.S. at 678 (citing Twombly, 550 U.S. at 570). 4 He has not. Instead, Plaintiff’s amended complaint fails to address any of the 5 pleading deficiencies clearly and specifically identified in the Court’s prior Order. He still 6 fails to allege what injury Din’s allegedly false marriage chrono caused, how or whether 7 Lt. Din knew he would later be transferred to LAC, or include any factual content which 8 plausibly suggests Lt. Din actually drew the inference Wilson would later be identified as 9 Plaintiff’s known enemy and therefore pose a substantial risk of harm to him at another 10 prison two years in the future. (See Doc. No. 6 at 8, citing Farmer, 511 U.S. at 837.) In 11 fact, while his amended pleading refers to Lt. Din, it fails to set forth, clearly and concisely, 12 any factual allegations or context sufficient to provide notice of just “who is being sued, 13 for what relief, and on what theory, with enough detail to guide discovery.” McHenry, 84 14 F.3d at 1177–78; see also Exmundo v. Kane, 553 F. App’x 742, 743 (9th Cir. 2014) 15 (affirming district court dismissal of § 1983 claims where plaintiff’s allegations “were 16 unclear as to the timing and nature of [the defendant’s] actions”). “[I]t is not the district 17 court’s job to stitch together cognizable claims for relief from [a] wholly deficient 18 pleading.” Hearn v. San Bernardino Police Dept., 530 F.3d 1124, 1132 (9th Cir. 2008) 19 (citation omitted); see also Morrison v. United States, 270 F. App’x 514, 515 (9th Cir. 20 2008) (affirming Rule 8 dismissal of pro se complaint “contain[ing] a confusing array of 21 vague and undeveloped allegations,” and which “did not allege sufficient facts or 22 jurisdictional basis for any federal claim for relief.”). Nor is it “the job of the district courts 23 to make sense of the pleading, to supply facts to support the claim, or to imagine the claims 24 that might fit the facts.” Gibson, 2026 WL 235118, at *18. 25 C. Leave to Amend 26 Accordingly, because Plaintiff’s amended complaint lacks both a “cognizable legal 27 theory” or “sufficient facts . . . to support a cognizable legal theory,” Shroyer, 622 F.3d at 28 1041, contains only “the-defendant-unlawfully-harmed-me accusation[s],” Iqbal, 556 U.S. | 678, and he has already been provided a short and plain explanation of his pleading 2 || deficiencies, yet has failed to take advantage of his opportunity to amend them, the Court 3 || finds further amendment would be futile. See Zucco Partners, LLC v. Digimarc Corp., 552 4 981, 1007 (9th Cir. 2009) (“[W]here the plaintiff has previously been granted leave 5 ||to amend and has subsequently failed to add the requisite particularity to its claims, [t]he 6 || district court’s discretion to deny leave to amend is particularly broad.” (internal quotation 7 ||marks omitted) (second alteration in original)).

8 CONCLUSION

9 For the reasons discussed, the Court DISMISSES Plaintiff's amended complaint 10 ||(ECF No. 7)
for failing to state a claim upon which § 1983 relief can be granted pursuant 11 28 U.S.C. §
1915(e)(2)(B)(i1) and § 1915A(b)(1), CERTIFIES that an IFP appeal would 12 || not be taken in
good faith pursuant to 28 U.S.C. § 1915(a)(3), and DIRECTS the Clerk of 13 || Court to enter a
final judgment of dismissal and close the file. 14 IT IS SO ORDERED. 15 Dated: January 30,
2026 © 16 Hon, Anthony J.Battaglia 17 United States District Judge 18 19 20 21 22 23 24 25 26
27 28 7 a