

UNITED STATES DISTRICT COURT FOR THE SOUTHERN DISTRICT OF
FLORIDA

John Doe v. Marco Rubio et al.

Doe v. Rubio · No. 25-cv-61621-STRAUSS · Decided December 22, 2025

SUMMARY

The United States District Court for the Southern District of Florida denied the plaintiff’s motion to proceed under a pseudonym, finding that the plaintiff had not sufficiently substantiated specific risks of harm. The court granted in part and denied in part the motions for an extension of time and leave to amend, setting deadlines for service and filing a compliant amended complaint.

CASE DETAILS

COURT	United States District Court for the Southern District of Florida
WRITING FOR THE COURT	United States Magistrate Judge Jared M. Strauss
JURISDICTION	United States District Court for the Southern District of Florida
DECIDED	December 22, 2025
DOCKET	25-cv-61621-STRAUSS
DISPOSITION	other
PROCEDURAL POSTURE	The court considered the plaintiff's motions to proceed under a pseudonym, for an extension of time to perfect service and an order to show cause, and for leave to file an amended complaint.
STANDARD OF REVIEW	The court applied the substantial-privacy-right and totality-of-the-circumstances standards governing pseudonymous litigation, the good-cause standard under Rule 4(m), and the liberal amendment standard under Rule 15(a)(2).
PRECEDENTIAL VALUE	unpublished district court order
PARTIES	John Doe v. Marco Rubio et al.

TOPICS

- service of process
- motion to amend
- pleadings
- civil procedure

PRACTICE AREAS

- civil procedure
- civil rights
- constitutional law

QUESTIONS PRESENTED

1. Whether plaintiff established a sufficient privacy interest and specific risk of harm to proceed under a pseudonym.
2. Whether plaintiff showed sufficient grounds for a further extension of the deadline to perfect service and whether defendants should be ordered to show cause for failing to respond.
3. Whether plaintiff should receive leave to amend and whether the proposed amended complaint could be treated as the operative complaint.

HOLDINGS

1. Plaintiff did not satisfy the high burden required to overcome the strong presumption that parties must identify themselves in federal pleadings. The pseudonym motion was denied, although plaintiff could renew it with specific substantiation of the risks he personally faces.
2. The court granted plaintiff a final two-week extension to perfect service, through January 5, 2026, but denied the requested sixty-day extension and declined to issue an order to show cause directed to defendants.
3. Leave to amend was granted, but the proposed amended complaint was not accepted as the operative complaint. Plaintiff was required to file a new complaint by January 12, 2026, complying with Rules 8 and 10 and including his real name unless a renewed pseudonym motion was supported.

KEY QUOTATIONS

“This creates a strong presumption in favor of parties proceeding in their own names.”

“The court should freely give leave when justice so requires.”

“The unifying characteristic of all types of shotgun pleadings is that they fail to . . . give the defendants adequate notice of the claims against them and the grounds upon which each claim rests.”

FACTUAL BACKGROUND

Plaintiff filed a lengthy complaint under a pseudonym alleging corruption, fraud, human-rights abuses, extrajudicial killings, and related misconduct in Bolivia and elsewhere. He asserted that disclosure of his identity and the identities of other alleged plaintiffs would expose them to significant harm, but provided only generalized allegations and no specific evidence of the particular risks faced by the named plaintiff or other individuals. Plaintiff had not perfected service despite a prior extension, and his proposed amended complaint incorporated the original complaint and repeated or compounded its pleading deficiencies.

PROCEDURAL HISTORY

Plaintiff filed the action on August 11, 2025, using the pseudonym J. Doe and asserting claims on behalf of himself and numerous others. The court previously extended the service deadline, then ordered plaintiff to show cause after the extended deadline passed. Plaintiff responded with a further extension motion and moved for leave to amend. The court denied pseudonymous treatment, granted a final two-week extension for service, and granted leave to amend subject to filing a new complaint complying with the Federal Rules of Civil Procedure.

DISPOSITION

other

CASES CITED

- In re Chiquita Brands International, Inc., 965 F.3d 1238, 1247-48 (11th Cir. 2020)
- Doe v. Frank, 951 F.2d 320, 322-23 (11th Cir. 1992)
- Plaintiff B v. Francis, 631 F.3d 1310, 1315-16 (11th Cir. 2011)
- Weiland v. Palm Beach County Sheriff's Office, 792 F.3d 1313, 1320-23 (11th Cir. 2015)
- McNeil v. United States, 508 U.S. 106, 113 (1993)
- Albra v. Advan, Inc., 490 F.3d 826, 829 (11th Cir. 2007)
- Loren v. Sasser, 309 F.3d 1296, 1304 (11th Cir. 2002)

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