

UNITED STATES DISTRICT COURT FOR THE MIDDLE DISTRICT OF
FLORIDA, FORT MYERS DIVISION

Demetrious D. Johnson v. Lee County Sheriff's Office et al.

Johnson v. Lee County Sheriff's Office · No. 2:26-cv-26-SPC-NPM · Decided January 9, 2026

SUMMARY

The United States District Court for the Middle District of Florida dismissed Demetrious D. Johnson’s civil-rights complaint without prejudice during screening under 28 U.S.C. § 1915(e)(2). The court found that the complaint failed to comply with Federal Rule of Civil Procedure 10 and improperly joined multiple unrelated claims and defendants, and it allowed Johnson 21 days to file an amended complaint pursuing one related incident.

CASE DETAILS

COURT	United States District Court for the Middle District of Florida, Fort Myers Division
JURISDICTION	United States District Court for the Middle District of Florida, Fort Myers Division
DECIDED	January 9, 2026
DOCKET	2:26-cv-26-SPC-NPM
DISPOSITION	dismissed
PROCEDURAL POSTURE	The court screened a pro se pretrial detainee's complaint after granting leave to proceed in forma pauperis and dismissed it without prejudice for pleading and joinder deficiencies, allowing amendment within 21 days.
STANDARD OF REVIEW	Screening under 28 U.S.C. § 1915(e)(2), including whether the complaint is frivolous or malicious, fails to state a claim, or seeks monetary relief from an immune defendant.
PRECEDENTIAL VALUE	unpublished district-court order

TOPICS

- pleadings
- joinder
- civil procedure
- section 1983
- prisoners rights

PRACTICE AREAS

- civil procedure
- civil rights
- prisoner litigation

QUESTIONS PRESENTED

1. Whether the complaint complied with Federal Rule of Civil Procedure 10's requirement that claims and defenses be stated in numbered paragraphs limited, as practicable, to a single set of circumstances.
2. Whether the complaint improperly joined unrelated claims against separate defendants under Federal Rule of Civil Procedure 20(a)(2).
3. Whether dismissal without prejudice and an opportunity to amend were appropriate remedies for the pleading and joinder deficiencies.

HOLDINGS

1. A civil-rights complaint must organize its factual allegations into separate, numbered paragraphs, with each paragraph limited as far as practicable to a single set of circumstances; Johnson's complaint failed to satisfy that requirement.
2. A plaintiff may pursue only related claims in one civil-rights complaint; unrelated claims against different defendants may not be joined unless they arise out of the same transaction or occurrence and satisfy the applicable joinder requirements. Johnson could pursue only one of the apparently unrelated incidents in this action.
3. When a complaint has pleading and joinder deficiencies that prevent meaningful screening, the court may dismiss it without prejudice and permit the plaintiff to file an amended complaint correcting those deficiencies.

KEY QUOTATIONS

“A plaintiff may set forth only related claims in one civil rights complaint.”

“multiple claims against a single party are fine, but Claim A against Defendant 1 should not be joined with unrelated Claim B against Defendant 2. Unrelated claims against different defendants belong in different suits[.]”

FACTUAL BACKGROUND

Johnson is a pretrial detainee in the Lee County Jail who sought monetary damages against several jail officials. His complaint appeared to assert at least six unrelated claims arising from separate incidents and did not organize the factual allegations into separate numbered paragraphs. The court required correction of these defects before conducting a meaningful statutory screening review.

PROCEDURAL HISTORY

Johnson filed a civil-rights complaint seeking monetary damages against several Lee County Jail officials. After granting in forma pauperis status, the court reviewed the complaint under 28 U.S.C. § 1915(e)(2), found that it violated Federal Rule of Civil Procedure 10 and improperly joined unrelated claims against separate defendants under Rule 20(a)(2), dismissed the complaint without prejudice, and granted leave to amend.

DISPOSITION

dismissed

CASES CITED

- Rosado v. Nichols, 2:18-CV-195-JES-MRM, 2017 WL 1476255, at *6 (M.D. Fla. 2017)
- George v. Smith, 507 F.3d 605, 607 (7th Cir. 2007)

OPINION

Demetrious D. Johnson v. Lee County Sheriff's Office et al.

PER CURIAM.

UNITED STATES DISTRICT COURT

MIDDLE DISTRICT OF FLORIDA

FORT MYERS DIVISION

DEMETRIOUS D. JOHNSON,

Plaintiff, v. Case No.: 2:26-cv-26-SPC-NPM

LEE COUNTY SHERIFF'S

OFFICE et al., Defendants. /

OPINION AND ORDER

Before the Court is Plaintiff Demetrious D. Johnson's Complaint (Doc. 1). Johnson is a pretrial detainee in Lee County Jail, and he seeks monetary damages against several jail officials. The Court granted him leave to proceed in forma pauperis, so it must review the complaint to determine whether it is frivolous or malicious, fails to state a claim, or seeks monetary damages from anyone immune from such relief. See 28 U.S.C. § 1915(e)(2). Johnson must correct certain deficiencies in his complaint before the Court can conduct a meaningful review. First, the Complaint does not comply with Federal Rule of Civil Procedure 10, which requires a party to "state its claims or defenses in numbered paragraphs, each limited as far as practicable to a single set of circumstances." This rule is important. It enables defendants to respond to each factual claim, which alerts the court and the parties to the factual claims that are in dispute. To proceed with this action, Johnson must organize his factual allegations into separate, numbered paragraphs as required by Rule 10. Second, the complaint asserts at least six unrelated claims against separate defendants. Johnson's claims cannot be joined together in a single action because they did not arise out of the same transaction or occurrence. See Fed. R. Civ. P. 20(a)(2). "A plaintiff may set forth only related claims in one civil rights complaint." Rosado v. Nichols, 2:18-CV-195-JES-MRM, 2017 WL 1476255, at *6 (M.D. Fla. 2017). As the Seventh Circuit observed, "multiple claims against a single party are fine, but Claim A against Defendant 1 should not be joined with unrelated Claim B against Defendant 2. Unrelated claims against different defendants belong in different suits[.]" George v. Smith, 507 F.3d 605, 607 (7th Cir. 2007). To continue this action, Johnson must file an amended complaint that states his factual allegations in separate, numbered

paragraphs. Johnson's claims against the defendants appear to arise from at least six separate incidents, so he can only pursue one in this action. To pursue more than one unrelated claim, Johnson must file separate complaints. Accordingly, it is now ORDERED: Plaintiff Demetrious D. Johnson's Complaint (Doc. 1) is DISMISSED without prejudice. The Clerk is DIRECTED to send Johnson a civil-rights complaint form. Johnson may file an amended complaint within 21 days of this Order. Otherwise, the Court will enter judgment and close this case. DONE and ORDERED in Fort Myers, Florida on January 9, 2026.

UNITED STATES DISTRICT JUDGE

SA: FTMP-1

Copies: All Parties of Record