

UNITED STATES DISTRICT COURT FOR THE NORTHERN DISTRICT OF
INDIANA, HAMMOND DIVISION AT SOUTH BEND

Terrence T. Miller-Bey v. Ron Neal, et al.

Miller-Bey v. Neal · No. 3:25-CV-159-PPS-JEM · Decided April 20, 2026

SUMMARY

In this prisoner civil-rights screening order, the court permits Terrence T. Miller-Bey to proceed on First Amendment and RLUIPA claims concerning halal meals, Muslim holiday celebratory meals, and religious services for the Moorish Science Temple of America community. The court also permits related claims for damages against certain individual defendants and injunctive relief against the warden in his official capacity. The court dismisses the remaining claims, including the claims concerning medical care and equal protection, and dismisses three medical defendants.

CASE DETAILS

COURT	United States District Court for the Northern District of Indiana, Hammond Division at South Bend
WRITING FOR THE COURT	Philip P. Simon
JURISDICTION	United States District Court for the Northern District of Indiana, Hammond Division at South Bend
DECIDED	April 20, 2026
DOCKET	3:25-CV-159-PPS-JEM
DISPOSITION	other
PROCEDURAL POSTURE	Pro se prisoner civil-rights complaint screened under 28 U.S.C. § 1915A.
STANDARD OF REVIEW	Under 28 U.S.C. § 1915A, the court accepts well-pleaded factual allegations and reasonable inferences in the prisoner's favor and dismisses claims that are frivolous, malicious, fail to state a claim, or seek monetary relief from an immune defendant. A pro se complaint is liberally construed.
PRECEDENTIAL VALUE	unpublished, nonprecedential district-court opinion
PARTIES	Terrence T. Miller-Bey v. Ron Neal, Dawn Buss, David Liebel, Anne Walker, Nancy Marthakis, Kimberly Pflughaupt, Tiffany Turner

TOPICS

civil procedure

pleadings

first amendment

free exercise clause

establishment clause

PRACTICE AREAS

prisoner civil rights

constitutional law

religious freedom

medical malpractice and deliberate indifference

QUESTIONS PRESENTED

1. Whether Miller-Bey plausibly stated First Amendment Free Exercise claims based on denial of a diet consistent with his sincere religious beliefs.
2. Whether Miller-Bey plausibly stated First Amendment Establishment Clause claims based on unequal provision of religious holiday meals and discontinuation of MSTA religious services.
3. Whether Miller-Bey plausibly stated RLUIPA claims for injunctive relief concerning religious meals, holiday observances, and religious services.
4. Whether Miller-Bey plausibly stated a Fourteenth Amendment Equal Protection claim based on alleged disparate treatment of the MSTA Community.
5. Whether Miller-Bey plausibly stated Eighth Amendment deliberate-indifference claims based on allegedly inadequate medical care.

HOLDINGS

1. The complaint plausibly alleged that denial of a diet consistent with Miller-Bey's sincere religious beliefs substantially burdened his religious exercise, allowing damages claims against Liebel and Walker in their individual capacities and injunctive relief against Neal in his official capacity to proceed.
2. Miller-Bey plausibly stated an RLUIPA claim for injunctive relief against Neal in his official capacity concerning a diet consistent with his sincere religious beliefs, including halal meat and food prepared by Muslims, to the extent required by RLUIPA.
3. Miller-Bey plausibly alleged that prison officials treated the MSTA Community less favorably than Christian and other Islamic groups in providing celebratory meals, allowing a damages claim against Liebel and official-capacity injunctive relief against Neal to proceed.
4. Miller-Bey plausibly stated First Amendment claims against Buss, Liebel, and Walker for discontinuing MSTA religious services and official-capacity injunctive claims against Neal under the First Amendment and RLUIPA.
5. Miller-Bey failed to plausibly allege an Equal Protection violation because he did not plead facts showing that defendants purposefully singled out the MSTA Community and intentionally discriminated against him because of his Muslim faith.
6. Miller-Bey failed to plausibly allege that Marthakis, Pflughaupt, Turner, Liebel, or Walker were deliberately indifferent to his medical needs.

KEY QUOTATIONS

“Giving Miller-Bey the inferences to which he is entitled at this stage of the proceedings, I find he has stated plausible First Amendment Free Exercise claims against Religious Director Liebel and Chaplain Walker in their individual capacities for compensatory and punitive damages for denying him a diet consistent with his sincere religious beliefs beginning in July 2023.” (ECF 1 at 2-4)

“Because Miller-Bey has not alleged facts that show that any of the defendants purposefully singled out the MSTA Community and intentionally discriminated against him on the basis of his Muslim faith, he may not proceed here.” (ECF 1 at 11-13)

FACTUAL BACKGROUND

Miller-Bey, incarcerated at Indiana State Prison since March 2023, alleged that prison officials denied his request for a halal or kosher diet despite his sincere Muslim and Moorish Science Temple of America beliefs. He alleged that the prison provided celebratory meals for Christian and other Islamic groups but not for MSTA holidays, and that MSTA religious services were discontinued after prison officials could not approve a facilitator. He also alleged that eating the standard diet caused serious gastrointestinal and related symptoms, but the court found the allegations insufficient to show deliberate indifference by the medical defendants.

PROCEDURAL HISTORY

Miller-Bey filed a complaint alleging violations of the First, Fourteenth, and Eighth Amendments and RLUIPA based on denial of religious meals, denial of Muslim holiday meals, discontinuation of MSTA religious services, and allegedly inadequate medical care. On screening, the court allowed specified First Amendment and RLUIPA claims to proceed, dismissed the remaining claims, dismissed three defendants, and directed service on the remaining defendants.

DISPOSITION

other

CASES CITED

- Erickson v. Pardus, 551 U.S. 89, 94 (2007)
- Kaufman v. Pugh, 733 F.3d 692, 696 (7th Cir. 2013)
- Thompson v. Holm, 809 F.3d 376, 379-80 (7th Cir. 2016)
- O'Lone v. Shabazz, 482 U.S. 342, 349 (1987)
- Gonzalez v. Feinerman, 663 F.3d 311, 315 (7th Cir. 2011)
- Grayson v. Schuler, 666 F.3d 450, 451 (7th Cir. 2012)
- Holt v. Hobbs, 574 U.S. 352, 360-61 (2015)
- Cutter v. Wilkinson, 544 U.S. 709, 720 n.8, 723 (2005)
- Koger v. Bryan, 523 F.3d 789, 796 (7th Cir. 2008)
- Nelson v. Miller, 570 F.3d 868, 880-82, 886-89 (7th Cir. 2009)
- Sossamon v. Texas, 563 U.S. 277, 285-86 (2011)

- Cruz v. Beto, 405 U.S. 319, 322-23 (1972)
- Kaufman v. McCaughtry, 419 F.3d 678, 683-84 (7th Cir. 2005)
- Maddox v. Love, 655 F.3d 709, 719-20 (7th Cir. 2011)
- Henderson v. Frank, 190 Fed. App'x 507, 509 (7th Cir. 2006)
- Emad v. Dodge County, 71 F.4th 649, 653 (7th Cir. 2023)
- Lisle v. Welborn, 933 F.3d 705, 719-20 (7th Cir. 2019)
- Wolff v. McDonnell, 418 U.S. 539, 556 (1974)
- Ortiz v. Werner Enterprises, Inc., 834 F.3d 760 (7th Cir. 2016)
- David K. v. Lane, 839 F.2d 1265, 1271-72 (7th Cir. 1988)
- Estelle v. Gamble, 429 U.S. 97, 104 (1976)
- Farmer v. Brennan, 511 U.S. 825, 834 (1994)
- Greeno v. Daley, 414 F.3d 645, 653 (7th Cir. 2005)
- Board v. Farnham, 394 F.3d 469, 478 (7th Cir. 2005)
- Jackson v. Kotter, 541 F.3d 688, 697 (7th Cir. 2008)
- Walker v. Wexford Health Sources, Inc., 940 F.3d 954, 965 (7th Cir. 2019)
- Forbes v. Edgar, 112 F.3d 262, 267 (7th Cir. 1997)