

UNITED STATES DISTRICT COURT FOR THE EASTERN DISTRICT OF
CALIFORNIA

Christopher G. Valencia v. Samantha Medina, et al.

No. 1:22-cv-00569 GSA (PC) (E.D. Cal. Sept. 23, 2025) · No. No. 1:22-cv-00569 GSA (PC) · Decided
September 24, 2025

SUMMARY

The United States District Court for the Eastern District of California vacated its prior screening and service orders concerning Christopher G. Valencia’s second amended complaint. The court found that Claims One and Two stated viable Eighth Amendment claims against Sergeant Samantha Medina for failure to protect and deliberate indifference to serious medical needs. It recommended dismissal of Claim Three, characterized as a torture or excessive-force claim, for failure to state a claim and deemed further amendment futile.

CASE DETAILS

COURT	United States District Court for the Eastern District of California
WRITING FOR THE COURT	Gary S. Austin
JURISDICTION	United States District Court for the Eastern District of California
DECIDED	September 24, 2025
DOCKET	No. 1:22-cv-00569 GSA (PC)
DISPOSITION	other
PROCEDURAL POSTURE	Screening order and findings and recommendations on a state prisoner's second amended 42 U.S.C. § 1983 complaint. The court vacated its prior screening and service orders, found that two claims could proceed to service, and recommended dismissal without leave to amend of a third claim.
STANDARD OF REVIEW	Screening under 28 U.S.C. §§ 1915A and 1915(e)(2)(B), applying the Federal Rule of Civil Procedure 8(a)(2) plausibility standard. Allegations are accepted as true for screening, but legal conclusions and unwarranted inferences are not accepted.
PRECEDENTIAL VALUE	nonprecedential
PARTIES	Christopher G. Valencia v. Samantha Medina

TOPICS

prisoners rights

section 1983

civil rights

cruel and unusual punishment

pleadings

PRACTICE AREAS

civil rights

prisoner civil rights

constitutional law

federal civil procedure

QUESTIONS PRESENTED

1. Whether the second amended complaint plausibly alleged an Eighth Amendment failure-to-protect claim against Sergeant Medina.
2. Whether the second amended complaint plausibly alleged an Eighth Amendment deliberate-indifference-to-serious-medical-needs claim against Sergeant Medina.
3. Whether the allegations plausibly alleged that Sergeant Medina used excessive force or tortured Valencia in violation of the Eighth Amendment.
4. Whether the court should vacate and rescreen its prior screening and service orders because it improperly considered Claims Two and Three together.

HOLDINGS

1. The court vacated the September 2, 2025 screening and related service orders because the prior screening improperly considered Claims Two and Three together, and it rescreened the second amended complaint separately by claim.
2. The allegations plausibly stated an Eighth Amendment failure-to-protect claim because Valencia alleged that Medina left him locked in a contaminated yard for approximately twenty minutes despite the serious risk posed by the CN gas and his inability to escape.
3. The allegations plausibly stated an Eighth Amendment deliberate-indifference claim because Valencia alleged that Medina knew he was suffering from chemical-gas exposure, burning eyes and skin, and breathing problems, yet intentionally failed to summon medical care or decontamination.
4. Claim Three failed to state an Eighth Amendment excessive-force or torture claim because the complaint did not allege that Medina ordered the CN gas deployment or acted with malicious and sadistic intent to cause harm.

KEY QUOTATIONS

“For these reasons, Plaintiff has stated a viable Eighth Amendment failure to protect claim against Defendant Medina.” (at 20)

“Plaintiff has also stated a viable Eighth Amendment deliberate indifference to serious medical need claim against Defendant Medina.” (at 23)

“For these reasons, the Court finds that Plaintiff’s “torture” / excessive force claim fails to state a claim upon which relief may be granted.” (at 31-32)

“The Court’s September 2, 2025, screening order for the second amended complaint (ECF No. 19), as well as the related service order (ECF No. 20), are hereby VACATED;” (at 32)

FACTUAL BACKGROUND

Valencia, a state prisoner at California State Prison–Corcoran, alleged that on March 19, 2022, he was locked in a caged recreational yard while CN gas released on a nearby yard spread into his area. He alleged that Sergeant Medina and other officers did not remove him from the contaminated area despite his requests for assistance, leaving him exposed for approximately twenty minutes. He further alleged that Medina refused to summon medical assistance or decontamination and that he remained without medical care for approximately four days, causing respiratory problems, burning eyes and skin, and other ongoing harm.

PROCEDURAL HISTORY

Valencia filed a second amended complaint against Sergeant Samantha Medina alleging Eighth Amendment failure-to-protect, deliberate-indifference-to-serious-medical-needs, and torture or excessive-force claims arising from exposure to CN gas at Corcoran State Prison. On September 2, 2025, the court screened the complaint and issued related service orders, but it had considered Claims Two and Three together. Valencia objected, and the court construed the filing as a motion for reconsideration, concluding that the prior treatment of the claims was erroneous. The court vacated the September 2 orders, rescreened the complaint, allowed Claims One and Two to proceed, and recommended dismissal of Claim Three.

DISPOSITION

other

CASES CITED

- Ashcroft v. Iqbal, 556 U.S. 662, 676, 678-79 (2009)
- Bell Atlantic Corp. v. Twombly, 550 U.S. 544, 555 (2007)
- Whitaker v. Tesla Motors, Inc., 985 F.3d 1173, 1176 (9th Cir. 2021)
- Doe I v. Wal-Mart Stores, Inc., 572 F.3d 677, 681 (9th Cir. 2009)
- Moss v. United States Secret Service, 572 F.3d 962, 969 (9th Cir. 2009)
- Wilder v. Virginia Hospital Ass'n, 496 U.S. 498, 508 (1990)
- Graham v. Connor, 490 U.S. 386, 393-94 (1989)
- West v. Atkins, 487 U.S. 42, 48 (1988)
- Ketchum v. Alameda County, 811 F.2d 1243, 1245 (9th Cir. 1987)
- Jones v. Williams, 297 F.3d 930, 934 (9th Cir. 2002)
- Ortez v. Washington County, State of Oregon, 88 F.3d 804, 809 (9th Cir. 1996)
- Taylor v. List, 880 F.2d 1040, 1045 (9th Cir. 1989)
- DeShaney v. Winnebago County Department of Social Services, 489 U.S. 189, 199-200 (1989)
- Farmer v. Brennan, 511 U.S. 825, 832-37, 842, 844-45, 847 (1994)
- Frost v. Agnos, 152 F.3d 1124, 1128 (9th Cir. 1998)
- Wilson v. Seiter, 501 U.S. 294, 297 (1991)
- Hearn v. Terhune, 413 F.3d 1036, 1040 (9th Cir. 2005)

- Hudson v. McMillian, 503 U.S. 1, 6-9 (1992)
- Jett v. Penner, 439 F.3d 1091, 1096 (9th Cir. 2006)
- Wilhelm v. Rotman, 680 F.3d 1113, 1122 (9th Cir. 2012)
- Lemire v. California Department of Corrections and Rehabilitation, 726 F.3d 1062, 1081 (9th Cir. 2013)
- Simmons v. Navajo County, 609 F.3d 1011, 1017-18 (9th Cir. 2010)
- Whitley v. Albers, 475 U.S. 312, 320-21, 327 (1986)
- Clement v. Gomez, 298 F.3d 898, 903 (9th Cir. 2002)
- Wilkins v. Gaddy, 559 U.S. 34, 37-38 (2010)
- Sandin v. Conner, 515 U.S. 472, 482 (1995)
- Wolff v. McDonnell, 418 U.S. 539, 566 (1974)
- Wheeler v. City of Santa Clara, 894 F.3d 1046, 1059 (9th Cir. 2018)
- Carrico v. City and County of San Francisco, 656 F.3d 1002, 1008 (9th Cir. 2011)
- Wilkerson v. Wheeler, 772 F.3d 834, 839 (9th Cir. 2014)
- Martinez v. Ylst, 951 F.2d 1153 (9th Cir. 1991)