

UNITED STATES DISTRICT COURT FOR THE NORTHERN DISTRICT OF
INDIANA, FORT WAYNE DIVISION

Aaron C. Centurioni v. Brady Thomas, et al.

Centurioni · No. 1:25-CV-561-TLS-AZ · Decided April 23, 2026

SUMMARY

The United States District Court for the Northern District of Indiana dismissed Aaron C. Centurioni’s amended prisoner civil rights complaint under 28 U.S.C. § 1915A for failure to state a claim. The court held that it could not interfere with Centurioni’s pending state criminal proceedings and that jail officials’ inspection and confiscation of his non-privileged mail to ensure compliance with court orders did not violate the First Amendment. The court directed the clerk to close the case.

CASE DETAILS

COURT	United States District Court for the Northern District of Indiana, Fort Wayne Division
WRITING FOR THE COURT	Theresa L. Springmann
JURISDICTION	United States District Court for the Northern District of Indiana, Fort Wayne Division
DECIDED	April 23, 2026
DOCKET	1:25-CV-561-TLS-AZ
DISPOSITION	dismissed
PROCEDURAL POSTURE	A prisoner proceeding without counsel filed an amended complaint after the court previously found that his original complaint failed to state a claim and gave him an opportunity to replead. The district court screened the amended pleading under 28 U.S.C. § 1915A and dismissed the action for failure to state a claim.
STANDARD OF REVIEW	Under 28 U.S.C. § 1915A, the court must dismiss a prisoner's pleading if it is frivolous or malicious, fails to state a claim upon which relief may be granted, or seeks monetary relief from an immune defendant. The court liberally construes allegations filed by a self-represented litigant and applies the facial-plausibility standard under Bell Atlantic Corp. v. Twombly and Ashcroft v. Iqbal.
PRECEDENTIAL VALUE	nonprecedential

PARTIES

Aaron C. Centurioni v. Brady Thomas, et al.

TOPICS

prisoners rights

first amendment

civil rights

civil procedure

pleadings

PRACTICE AREAS

prisoner civil rights

constitutional law

civil procedure

criminal procedure

QUESTIONS PRESENTED

1. Whether the amended complaint stated a constitutional claim based on jail officials opening and confiscating Centurioni's mail.
2. Whether the federal court could dismiss or otherwise interfere with Centurioni's pending state criminal charges.
3. Whether Centurioni had a First Amendment right to send mail that interfered with his pending criminal cases or violated orders prohibiting communication.
4. Whether the amended complaint should be dismissed under 28 U.S.C. § 1915A after Centurioni had already been given an opportunity to amend.

HOLDINGS

1. The federal court may not dismiss or otherwise interfere with Centurioni's pending state criminal charges under the principles of Younger abstention.
2. Opening and inspecting mail sent to a family member outside the prisoner's presence does not, by itself, violate the First Amendment.
3. A detainee does not have an unfettered First Amendment right to send mail that interferes with ongoing criminal cases or harasses persons with whom the detainee is prohibited from communicating.
4. The amended complaint failed to state a claim upon which relief could be granted and was subject to dismissal under 28 U.S.C. § 1915A.

KEY QUOTATIONS

“To proceed beyond the pleading stage, a complaint must “state a claim to relief that is plausible on its face.””

“A claim has facial plausibility when the plaintiff pleads factual content that allows the court to draw the reasonable inference that the defendant is liable for the misconduct alleged.”

“Additionally, mail to a family member—like the letters he sent to his father—can be opened and inspected even outside of his presence without violating the First Amendment.”

FACTUAL BACKGROUND

Centurioni was detained at the DeKalb County Jail pending trial on multiple criminal charges, and a no-contact order was issued in those proceedings. He also faced a separate charge based on allegedly sending letters from jail to his father that were intended for his wife and minor daughters, despite a civil protective order prohibiting such communications. He alleged that jail staff opened and confiscated his mail without permission and asserted that he should not face criminal charges because of that conduct. The court found that the mail was opened to enforce the no-contact order and that the challenged mail involved communications to a family member and communications prohibited by court orders.

PROCEDURAL HISTORY

Centurioni filed a prisoner civil-rights action concerning the opening and confiscation of his mail and related pending criminal and protective-order proceedings. The court found that his original complaint was subject to dismissal under § 1915A but allowed him to amend. He filed a one-page document labeled an amended complaint that did not reproduce the entire pleading as required by the local rules. Although the court proceeded to screen the filing because the substance of the claim was discernible, it dismissed the action and directed the clerk to close the case.

DISPOSITION

dismissed

CASES CITED

- Erickson v. Pardus, 551 U.S. 89, 94 (2007)
- Bell Atlantic Corp. v. Twombly, 550 U.S. 544, 570 (2007)
- Ashcroft v. Iqbal, 556 U.S. 662, 678 (2009)
- State of Indiana v. Centurioni, No. 17D02-2507-F3-000008 (DeKalb Sup. Ct. filed July 14, 2025)
- State of Indiana v. Centurioni, No. 17D02-2508-CM-000547 (DeKalb Sup. Ct. filed Aug. 26, 2025)
- Sweeney v. Bartow, 612 F.3d 571, 573 (7th Cir. 2010)
- Younger v. Harris, 401 U.S. 37 (1971)
- Tobey v. Chibucos, 890 F.3d 634, 647–48 (7th Cir. 2018)
- Richman v. Sheahan, 270 F.3d 430, 436–37 (7th Cir. 2001)
- Henry v. Farmer City State Bank, 808 F.2d 1228, 1238–39 (7th Cir. 1986)
- Kaufman v. McCaughtry, 419 F.3d 678, 686 (7th Cir. 2005)
- Rowe v. Shake, 196 F.3d 778, 782 (7th Cir. 1999)
- Turner v. Safley, 482 U.S. 78, 89 (1987)
- Koutnik v. Brown, 456 F.3d 777, 784 (7th Cir. 2006)
- Newson v. Superior Ct. of Pima Cnty., 784 F. App'x 964, 965 (7th Cir. 2019)
- Luevano v. Wal-Mart, 722 F.3d 1014, 1022 (7th Cir. 2013)

OPINION

Centurioni

PER CURIAM.

UNITED STATES DISTRICT COURT
NORTHERN DISTRICT OF INDIANA
FORT WAYNE DIVISION

AARON C. CENTURIONI,

Plaintiff,

v. CAUSE NO. 1:25-CV-561-TLS-AZ

BRADY THOMAS, et al., Defendants.

OPINION AND ORDER

Aaron C. Centurioni, a prisoner without a lawyer, filed a document labeled, “Amended Complaint.” (ECF 12.) The Court determined that his original complaint did not state a claim for relief and was subject to dismissal under 28 U.S.C. § 1915A but gave him an opportunity to replead before the case was dismissed. (ECF 11.) He responded with the present filing. As a preliminary matter, he did not use the Court’s approved complaint form for prisoner civil rights cases, nor is his filing a complete document. See N.D. Ind. L.R. 7-6 (explaining that the Court can require litigants representing themselves to use clerk-supplied complaint forms when available). Instead, his filing is one page long and reads more like a letter responding to the Court’s screening order. (ECF 12.) This does not comply with the Local Rules of this District, which require an amended complaint to “reproduce the entire pleading as amended” rather than simply incorporating a prior pleading by reference. N.D. Ind. L.R. 15-1(b)(1). Nevertheless, because the crux of his claim is discernible from this document, the Court will proceed to screen his pleading as drafted.¹ 1 Because Centurioni is proceeding without counsel, the Court must give his allegations liberal construction. *Erickson v. Pardus*, 551 U.S. 89, 94 (2007). The Court must screen and dismiss his pleading if it is frivolous or malicious, fails to state a claim upon which relief may be granted, or seeks monetary relief against a defendant who is immune from such relief. 28 U.S.C. § 1915A. To proceed beyond the pleading stage, a complaint must “state a claim to relief that is plausible on its face.” *Bell Atlantic Corp. v. Twombly*, 550 U.S. 544, 570 (2007). “A claim has facial plausibility when the plaintiff pleads factual content that allows the court to draw the reasonable inference that the defendant is liable for the misconduct alleged.” *Ashcroft v. Iqbal*, 556 U.S. 662, 678 (2009). As explained in the original screening order, Centurioni is being detained at the Dekalb County Jail pending trial on charges of possession of child pornography, child exploitation, fondling a child under age 14, child seduction, and other offenses.² See *State of Indiana v. Centurioni*, No. 17D02-2507-F3-000008 (Dekalb Sup. Ct. filed July 14, 2025). A no-contact order was issued in the criminal case. *Id.* (docket entry July 16, 2025). In August 2025, Centurioni was charged with the separate offense of invasion of privacy/violation of a protective order after he sent letters from the jail to his father that were intended for his wife and minor daughters, despite the existence of a civil protective order prohibiting such communications. State

of *Indiana v. Centurioni*, No. 17D02-2508-CM-000547 (DeKalb Sup. Ct. filed Aug. 26, 2025). This charge also remains pending. *Id.* Centurioni repeats his allegation that DeKalb County Jail staff improperly opened his mail and that he should not have to face a criminal charge because of this. As he was previously told, the Court does not have authority to dismiss or otherwise interfere with the pending criminal charges. *Sweeney v. Bartow*, 612 F.3d 571, 573 (7th Cir. 2010) (citing *Younger v. Harris*, 401 U.S. 37 (1971)). Nor can he sue jail officials simply for enforcing a court order. See 2 The Court is permitted to take judicial notice of public records at the pleading stage. See Fed. R. Evid. 201; *Tobey v. Chibucos*, 890 F.3d 634, 647–48 (7th Cir. 2018). *Richman v. Sheahan*, 270 F.3d 430, 436–37 (7th Cir. 2001); *Henry v. Farmer City State Bank*, 808 F.2d 1228, 1238–39 (7th Cir. 1986). He complains that jail staff opened and confiscated his mail without his permission, but it is evident they did so to ensure compliance with the no- contact order. Additionally, mail to a family member—like the letters he sent to his father—can be opened and inspected even outside of his presence without violating the First Amendment. *Kaufman v. McCaughtry*, 419 F.3d 678, 686 (7th Cir. 2005); *Rowe v. Shake*, 196 F.3d 778, 782 (7th Cir. 1999). He also does not have an unfettered right under the First Amendment to send mail that interferes with his ongoing criminal cases or harasses others with whom he is prohibited from communicating. See *Turner v. Safley*, 482 U.S. 78, 89 (1987); *Koutnik v. Brown*, 456 F.3d 777, 784 (7th Cir. 2006). Therefore, the amended complaint does not state a claim for relief. “[L]itigants in this circuit are ordinarily given the chance to amend their pleadings once as a matter of course” before a case is dismissed. *Newson v. Superior Ct. of Pima Cnty.*, 784 F. App’x 964, 965 (7th Cir. 2019); see also *Luevano v. Wal-Mart*, 722 F.3d 1014, 1022 (7th Cir. 2013). Centurioni was already given this opportunity, and the Court finds no reason to conclude that if given another opportunity, he is likely to state a viable constitutional claim consistent with what he has already alleged. For these reasons, the Court **DISMISSES** this action pursuant to 28 U.S.C. § 1915A for failure to state a claim upon which relief can be granted, and **DIRECTS** the clerk to close the case. **SO ORDERED** on April 23, 2026. s/ Theresa L. Springmann
JUDGE THERESA L. SPRINGMANN
UNITED STATES DISTRICT COURT