

UNITED STATES DISTRICT COURT FOR THE SOUTHERN DISTRICT OF
TEXAS, CORPUS CHRISTI DIVISION

Robbie Dow Goodman v. Lorie Davis, et al.

Civil Action No. 2:12-CV-00166 · No. Civil Action No. 2:12-CV-00166 · Decided January 12, 2026

SUMMARY

The United States District Court for the Southern District of Texas adopted a magistrate judge’s Memorandum and Recommendation and denied Defendants’ motion to dismiss a construed civil contempt proceeding. The proceeding concerns alleged violations of a prior injunction protecting prisoners’ religiously motivated hair-length practices under RLUIPA. The Court ordered the defendants to answer the contempt motion and show cause why they should not be held in contempt.

CASE DETAILS

COURT	United States District Court for the Southern District of Texas, Corpus Christi Division
JURISDICTION	United States District Court for the Southern District of Texas, Corpus Christi Division
DECIDED	January 12, 2026
DOCKET	Civil Action No. 2:12-CV-00166
DISPOSITION	other
PROCEDURAL POSTURE	The district court reviewed a magistrate judge's memorandum and recommendation concerning defendants' motion to dismiss a construed civil-contempt proceeding. After de novo review of the specifically objected-to portions, the district court overruled the objections, adopted the recommendation, denied the motion to dismiss, and ordered the defendants to answer the contempt motion and show cause.
STANDARD OF REVIEW	Under Federal Rule of Civil Procedure 72(b), the district court reviews de novo those portions of a magistrate judge's proposed findings and recommendations on dispositive matters to which specific written objections are made. Unobjected-to portions are reviewed for clear error as to factual findings and conclusions of law.
PRECEDENTIAL VALUE	unpublished district-court order

TOPICS

contempt

motions to dismiss

injunctions

remedies

civil rights

PRACTICE AREAS

Civil procedure

Contempt

Civil rights

Injunction enforcement

Remedies

QUESTIONS PRESENTED

1. Whether the alleged violation of the injunction was moot because no additional haircut order had been issued since 2022.
2. Whether the existence of a permanent injunction foreclosed additional injunctive or declaratory relief.
3. Whether the construed contempt proceeding had to be dismissed because punitive, compensatory, or coercive damages were unavailable or barred by limitations applicable to the underlying RLUIPA claim.
4. Whether defendants' motion to dismiss should be denied at this stage because plaintiff could potentially obtain contempt-related relief.

HOLDINGS

1. The contempt matter was not shown to be moot merely because no additional haircut order had issued since 2022; the possibility of another transfer or recurrence at the current facility prevented dismissal on mootness grounds at this stage.
2. Dismissal was improper because defendants had not demonstrated that plaintiff had no possible avenue for relief based on the alleged violation of the court's injunction.
3. The existing permanent injunction did not, on the present record, foreclose additional injunctive or declaratory relief, including relief requiring adequate communication of plaintiff's exemption among facilities.
4. The court declined to dismiss the proceeding on the ground that the amount pleaded was necessarily punitive or that punitive sanctions were categorically unavailable, because the proceeding had not been finally characterized and the court could construe it as criminal contempt or impose criminal contempt sanctions with appropriate protections.
5. Defendants failed to establish that limitations applicable to the underlying RLUIPA claim barred potential compensatory relief in the contempt proceeding.
6. The court declined to decide at the motion-to-dismiss stage whether coercive damages were unavailable, because the matter was not moot and the need for prospective coercion had not been resolved.

KEY QUOTATIONS

"In exercising the power to impose prospective relief, "federal courts are not reduced to issuing injunctions against state officers and hoping for compliance"" (at 8)

"If there is an avenue for recovery of relief, then dismissal is improper." (at 4)

FACTUAL BACKGROUND

The underlying litigation challenged the Texas Department of Criminal Justice–Correctional Institutions Division's male grooming policy under RLUIPA and resulted in a permanent injunction prohibiting enforcement of the policy against the plaintiffs. Plaintiff alleged that, after being transferred to another prison unit, officials required him to cut his hair in violation of that injunction. He further alleged that the injunction and his exemption were not adequately communicated among TDCJ facilities, creating a possibility of a recurring violation.

PROCEDURAL HISTORY

The underlying action involved a permanent injunction entered after a bench trial concerning TDCJ-CID's grooming policy and plaintiffs' rights under RLUIPA. Plaintiff alleged that prison officials violated the injunction after his transfer to another facility by requiring him to cut his hair. The Northern District of Texas severed and transferred the injunction-violation claims to this court, where the magistrate judge construed the complaint as a motion for civil contempt and recommended denial of defendants' motion to dismiss. The district court adopted that recommendation.

DISPOSITION

other

REMAND INSTRUCTIONS

Defendants must file an answer to plaintiff's contempt motion, admitting or denying the allegations, and show cause why they should not be held in contempt.

CASES CITED

- Ashcroft v. Iqbal, 556 U.S. 662, 678 (2009)
- Bell Atlantic Corp. v. Twombly, 550 U.S. 544, 557 (2007)
- Travelhost, Inc. v. Blandford, 68 F.3d 958, 961 (5th Cir. 1995)
- Waffenschmidt v. MacKay, 763 F.2d 711, 716 (5th Cir. 1985)
- Battle v. U.S. Parole Commission, 834 F.2d 419, 421 (5th Cir. 1987)
- Edmonds v. Collins, 8 F.3d 290, 293 n.7 (5th Cir. 1993)
- Shambaugh & Son, L.P. v. Steadfast Insurance Co., 91 F.4th 364, 369 (5th Cir. 2024)
- United States v. Wilson, 864 F.2d 1219, 1221 (5th Cir. 1989) (per curiam)
- Oliver v. Scott, 276 F.3d 736, 742 (5th Cir. 2002)
- In re Bradley, 588 F.3d 254, 263, 265 (5th Cir. 2009)
- National Maritime Union v. Aquaslide 'N' Dive Corp., 737 F.2d 1395, 1400 (5th Cir. 1984)
- M. D. by Stukenberg v. Abbott, 119 F.4th 373, 379, 382-83 (5th Cir. 2024)
- International Union, United Mine Workers of America v. Bagwell, 512 U.S. 821, 826, 831 (1994)
- Ravago Americas L.L.C. v. Vinmar International Ltd., 832 F. App'x 249, 254, 256 (5th Cir. 2020)
- NASCO, Inc. v. Calcasieu Television & Radio, Inc., 894 F.2d 696, 702 (5th Cir. 1990)

- **Hutto v. Finney**, 437 U.S. 678, 690 (1978)

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