

UNITED STATES DISTRICT COURT FOR THE CENTRAL DISTRICT OF  
ILLINOIS, SPRINGFIELD DIVISION

Angela Eslinger v. Sons of Silence, et al.

Eslinger · No. 26-3091-SEM-DJQ · Decided June 12, 2026

SUMMARY

The United States District Court for the Central District of Illinois screened Angela Eslinger's amended pro se prisoner complaint under 28 U.S.C. § 1915A. The court held that the complaint failed to identify a responsible individual state actor or otherwise state a plausible constitutional claim, and found that further amendment would be futile. The amended complaint was dismissed with prejudice, terminating the case.

CASE DETAILS

|                       |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                          |
|-----------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| COURT                 | United States District Court for the Central District of Illinois, Springfield Division                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                  |
| WRITING FOR THE COURT | Sue E. Myerscough                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                        |
| JURISDICTION          | United States District Court for the Central District of Illinois, Springfield Division                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                  |
| DECIDED               | June 12, 2026                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                            |
| DOCKET                | 26-3091-SEM-DJQ                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                          |
| DISPOSITION           | dismissed                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                |
| PROCEDURAL POSTURE    | Plaintiff, proceeding pro se and in custody, filed an amended civil-rights complaint after the court previously found that her original complaint failed to state a claim and granted leave to amend. The court conducted a renewed screening review under 28 U.S.C. § 1915A.                                                                                            |
| STANDARD OF REVIEW    | Under 28 U.S.C. § 1915A, the court screens a prisoner complaint and dismisses it if it is frivolous, malicious, fails to state a claim upon which relief may be granted, or seeks monetary relief from an immune defendant. For failure to state a claim, the complaint must contain sufficient factual matter, accepted as true, to state a plausible claim for relief. |
| PRECEDENTIAL VALUE    | Unknown; unpublished district court order                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                |
| PARTIES               | Angela Eslinger v. Sons of Silence, et al.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                               |

## TOPICS

pleadings   section 1983   prisoners rights   civil procedure

## PRACTICE AREAS

civil procedure   civil rights   prisoner litigation   constitutional law

## QUESTIONS PRESENTED

1. Whether the amended complaint stated a plausible claim subject to screening under 28 U.S.C. § 1915A.
2. Whether the complaint stated a claim under 42 U.S.C. § 1983 where it failed to identify an individual defendant who caused or participated in an alleged constitutional deprivation.
3. Whether the Sons of Silence and Mastery of Masons could plausibly be treated as state actors for purposes of § 1983 liability.
4. Whether further amendment would be futile after the plaintiff failed to cure the defects identified in the prior order.

## HOLDINGS

1. The amended complaint failed to state a claim and was subject to dismissal under the Prison Litigation Reform Act screening provision.
2. A § 1983 plaintiff must identify an individual defendant who caused or participated in the alleged constitutional deprivation, or who acquiesced in it in a demonstrable way; Eslinger failed to do so.
3. The complaint did not plausibly allege that the Sons of Silence or Mastery of Masons were state actors subject to § 1983 liability.
4. Further amendment was futile, so the amended complaint was properly dismissed with prejudice.

## KEY QUOTATIONS

*“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.”* (at 3)

*“The patent deficiencies of the original Complaint notwithstanding, the Court granted Plaintiff leave to amend.”* (at 5)

*“The Court therefore finds that further amendment would be futile and dismisses Plaintiff’s Amended Complaint with prejudice.”* (at 5)

## FACTUAL BACKGROUND

Eslinger, an incarcerated plaintiff, alleged that the Sons of Silence placed a hit on her and that inmate members harassed, sexually assaulted, or otherwise violated her. She also complained about prison conditions, criminal proceedings, alleged excessive force, and activities by the Sons of Silence and a group she called the Mastery of Masons. The amended complaint did not identify any individual prison official or allege how a particular defendant caused or participated in a constitutional violation.

## PROCEDURAL HISTORY

Eslinger filed the original complaint on March 11, 2026. The court entered a Merit Review Order finding that she had failed to state a claim and gave her 21 days to replead. After she filed an amended complaint, the court concluded that the amended pleading retained the same fundamental defects, that further amendment would be futile, and dismissed the amended complaint with prejudice, terminating the case.

## DISPOSITION

dismissed

## CASES CITED

- Ashcroft v. Iqbal, 556 U.S. 662, 678 (2009)
- Bell Atlantic Corp. v. Twombly, 550 U.S. 544, 570 (2007)
- Gonzalez v. McHenry County, 40 F.4th 824, 828 (7th Cir. 2022)
- Palmer v. Marion County, 327 F.3d 588, 594 (7th Cir. 2003)
- Pepper v. Village of Oak Park, 430 F.3d 805, 810 (7th Cir. 2005)
- Manzanales v. Krishna, 113 F. Supp. 3d 972, 980 (N.D. Ill. 2015)
- Johnson v. Piontek, 799 F. App'x 418, 420 (7th Cir. 2020)
- Denton v. Hernandez, 504 U.S. 25, 32-33 (1992)

## OPINION

UNITED STATES DISTRICT COURTS CENTRAL DISTRICT OF ILLINOIS SPRINGFIELD DIVISION ANGELA ESLINGER, ) Plaintiff, ) ) v. ) Case No. 26-3091-SEM-DJQ ) SONS OF SILENCE, et al., ) Defendants. ) ORDER SUE E. MYERSCOUGH, United States District Judge: Plaintiff Angela Eslinger, proceeding pro se and currently in custody at Logan Correctional Center, filed the original Complaint (#1) in this case on March 11, 2026.

The court subsequently entered a Merit Review Order (#13), finding that Plaintiff had failed to state a claim and granting 21 days to replead. Plaintiff has now filed an Amended Complaint (#17), so the court proceeds once more to a merit review. BACKGROUND Plaintiff's Amended Complaint proves difficult to parse. She alleges that an organization known as the Sons of Silence put a 1 "hit" on her, which was executed daily and nightly by inmate members of the club.

Plaintiff also alleges that she has "been hit/harassed/raped falsely accused and violated sexually," though she does not say by whom. She sent a complaint to the John Howard Association about the 70 sexual batteries she suffered, but she was only sent a standard form in response. Plaintiff raises a series of allegations that appear to relate to her underlying criminal proceedings.

Namely, she filed an appeal to the Edgar County Courthouse but was ignored. And her petition of actual innocence was not taken seriously. Plaintiff takes exception to certain practices within the

prison as well. She complains of graffiti on the walls and alleges that a tariff is being imposed on “state pay.” Plaintiff writes “excessive force” in one bullet point in her Amended Complaint, but never expounds on that.

Other allegations in the Complaint skew more fanciful. Plaintiff alleges that the Sons of Silence have been conducting seances in the prison. She also maintains that a “secret society”<sup>2</sup> known as Mastery of Masons has been operating within the prison’s walls. Plaintiff is concerned that Masons are being bused into the prison from other areas. Plaintiff also makes a vague reference to “kill[ing] or poach[ing] human.” Analysis Pursuant to 28 U.S.C. § 1915A, the court must “screen” Plaintiff’s complaint and, through such process, identify and dismiss any legally insufficient claim or the entire action if warranted.

A claim is defective if it “(1) is frivolous, malicious, or fails to state a claim upon which relief may be granted; or (2) seeks monetary relief from a defendant who is immune from such relief.” 28 U.S.C. § 1915A. “[A] complaint must contain sufficient factual matter, accepted as true, to ‘state a claim to relief that is plausible on its face.’” *Ashcroft v. Iqbal*, 556 U.S. 662, 678 (2009) (quoting *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.” *Id.* 3 Plaintiff has again failed to state a claim.

As explained in the Court’s prior Order, to establish liability under section 1983, “the plaintiff must show that the relevant official ‘caused the constitutional deprivation at issue’ or ‘acquiesced in some demonstrable way in the alleged constitutional violation.’” *Gonzalez v. McHenry County*, 40 F.4th 824, 828 (7th Cir. 2022) (quoting *Palmer v. Marion County*, 327 F.3d 588, 594 (7th Cir.

2003)). Put another way, a plaintiff must allege that the individual defendant “caused or participated in a constitutional deprivation.” *Pepper v. Village of Oak Park*, 430 F.3d 805, 810 (7th Cir. 2005). Plaintiff’s Amended Complaint does not even name an individual associated with the prison, let alone one who might be held liable for the harm Plaintiff has suffered.<sup>1</sup> The primary targets of Plaintiff’s allegations seem to be the Sons of Silence and the Mastery of Masons, societies or clubs operating within the prison.

But, setting aside the question of what these organizations may have done to deprive Plaintiff of her 1 Nor is it at all clear who Plaintiff seeks to hold responsible for ignoring her appeal or not taking seriously her actual innocence claim. 4 constitutional rights, there is no plausible inference to be drawn that they might be considered “state actors” for the purposes of attaching liability under section 1983.

See *Manzanales v. Krishna*, 113 F. Supp. 3d 972, 980 (N.D. Ill. 2015) (“Section 1983 encompasses government employees and, under certain circumstances, also non-government employees who are employed by a private entity but provide services to the government.”).

As the Court noted in its prior Order, courts should generally allow pro se litigants an opportunity to amend their complaint before dismissing a case. See *Johnson v. Piontek*, 799 F. App'x 418, 420 (7th Cir. 2020) (“Courts should grant pro se litigants leave to amend a complaint at least once, unless it is certain from the face of the complaint that amendment would be futile or otherwise unwarranted.”).

The patent deficiencies of the original Complaint notwithstanding, the Court granted Plaintiff leave to amend. In doing so, the Court wrote: [I]f Plaintiff files a proposed amended complaint, Plaintiff should pay attention to the dictates of this Order and should identify the person or persons who allegedly violated her Constitutional rights, and Plaintiff should allege how that person or those persons violated her Constitutional rights.

If Plaintiff does not comply with this Order or if she does not submit a proposed amended complaint timely, the Court will dismiss this case. Plaintiff's Amended Complaint suffers from the same fundamental shortcomings as her original pleading. She has not complied with the Court's clear instructions. Furthermore, the Court is concerned by the increase in frivolous allegations in Plaintiff's latest filing.

See *Denton v. Hernandez*, 504 U.S. 25, 32–33 (1992) (defining frivolous allegations as those that are clearly baseless, fanciful, fantastic, or delusional). The Court therefore finds that further amendment would be futile and dismisses Plaintiff's Amended Complaint with prejudice. IT IS THEREFORE ORDERED: 1. Plaintiff's Amended Complaint (#17) is dismissed with prejudice.

2. This matter is terminated. ENTERED June 12, 2026. s/ Sue E. Myerscough  
\_\_\_\_\_  
SUE E. MYERSCOUGH UNITED STATES DISTRICT  
JUDGE 6