

UNITED STATES DISTRICT COURT FOR THE DISTRICT OF PUERTO RICO

Ramos-David v. United States

Ramos-David · No. Civil No. 22-1633 (FAB); related to Criminal No. 17-263 (FAB) · Decided March 20, 2026

SUMMARY

The United States District Court for the District of Puerto Rico denied Darwin Ramos-David’s pro se motion under 28 U.S.C. § 2255 to vacate, set aside, or correct his sentence, and denied his request for an evidentiary hearing. The court addressed his claims concerning the voluntariness of his guilty plea, alleged actual innocence, competency, coercion, and the circumstances surrounding his plea withdrawal request.

CASE DETAILS

COURT	United States District Court for the District of Puerto Rico
WRITING FOR THE COURT	Francisco A. Besosa
JURISDICTION	United States District Court for the District of Puerto Rico
DECIDED	March 20, 2026
DOCKET	Civil No. 22-1633 (FAB); related to Criminal No. 17-263 (FAB)
DISPOSITION	dismissed
PROCEDURAL POSTURE	Petitioner moved under 28 U.S.C. § 2255 to vacate, set aside, or correct his federal sentence and requested an evidentiary hearing. The district court denied both requests and dismissed the § 2255 proceeding with prejudice.
STANDARD OF REVIEW	Section 2255 relief is available for constitutional or jurisdictional errors, sentences exceeding the statutory maximum, or other fundamental defects resulting in a complete miscarriage of justice. Claims not raised on direct appeal are procedurally defaulted absent cause and actual prejudice. Ineffective-assistance claims are governed by Strickland v. Washington, and a petitioner seeking an evidentiary hearing must show entitlement to § 2255 relief and to a hearing.
PRECEDENTIAL VALUE	unpublished district court opinion
PARTIES	Darwin Ramos-David v. United States of America

TOPICS

federal habeas corpus

post-conviction relief

actual innocence

ineffective assistance

double jeopardy

PRACTICE AREAS

federal post-conviction relief

criminal procedure

federal sentencing

ineffective assistance of counsel

double jeopardy

QUESTIONS PRESENTED

1. Whether Ramos-David established actual innocence sufficient to overcome procedural barriers or obtain relief under § 2255.
2. Whether the alleged state-federal cooperation and transfer of the prosecution constituted a sham prosecution under the Bartkus exception to the dual-sovereignty doctrine and violated double jeopardy.
3. Whether the absence of an injured victim deprived the federal court of standing, a case or controversy, or subject-matter jurisdiction.
4. Whether the indictment sufficiently alleged federal offenses and whether the district court had jurisdiction under 18 U.S.C. § 3231.
5. Whether trial and appellate counsel rendered ineffective assistance by failing to challenge jurisdiction, alleged factual discrepancies, or corrections to the plea agreement.
6. Whether counsel had a conflict of interest by allegedly encouraging Ramos-David to make false statements during proffer sessions or the plea colloquy.
7. Whether Ramos-David was entitled to an evidentiary hearing.

HOLDINGS

1. A petitioner asserting actual innocence must present new reliable evidence showing that, in light of all the evidence, it is more likely than not that no reasonable juror would have convicted him. Ramos-David did not meet that standard because he presented no new evidence and his sworn admissions and other record evidence contradicted his claim.
2. Ramos-David failed to establish that either the Commonwealth or federal government so thoroughly dominated or manipulated the other sovereign's prosecution that the federal prosecution was a sham. Mere cooperation, overlap, or an allegation that a state lineup should have been suppressed did not satisfy the Bartkus exception.
3. Ramos-David's contention that the offenses caused no injury and that the case lacked a case or controversy was meritless. The indictment alleged federal criminal offenses, and the court had jurisdiction under 18 U.S.C. § 3231.
4. Ramos-David did not establish ineffective assistance because he failed to show deficient performance and resulting prejudice under Strickland. Counsel was not ineffective for failing to raise meritless jurisdictional, factual-discrepancy, or plea-agreement arguments.
5. Ramos-David was not entitled to an evidentiary hearing because he failed to establish entitlement to § 2255 relief or a hearing.

KEY QUOTATIONS

“In order for a petitioner to establish actual innocence, he must meet various requirements.” (at 27)

“To establish ineffective assistance of counsel, a defendant must show that: 1. His attorney’s performance was deficient, and 2. The deficient performance prejudiced his defense.” (at 34)

“For the reasons stated, petitioner Darwin Ramos-David’s Motion under 28 U.S.C. § 2255 (Civil Docket No. 1) is DENIED. This case is DISMISSED with prejudice.” (at 42)

FACTUAL BACKGROUND

Ramos-David pleaded guilty to aiding and abetting a firearm offense and carjacking arising from a January 3, 2017 incident, and to an armed Hobbs Act robbery and another carjacking arising from March 2017 incidents. His plea agreement included stipulated facts, an appeal waiver for a sentence of 162 months or less, and a sentencing recommendation. He later asserted that he was innocent, that his plea was induced by stress and coercion related to his mother's illness and an alleged jail beating, and that counsel had conflicts and provided ineffective assistance. The court relied on his written admissions, sworn plea-colloquy admissions, proffer statements, the presentence report, and the absence of new exculpatory evidence.

PROCEDURAL HISTORY

Ramos-David pleaded guilty in the underlying criminal case to four counts arising from armed carjackings and an armed robbery. He later sought to withdraw his guilty plea, obtain a competency evaluation, and challenge his conviction and sentence; the district court denied those requests, and the First Circuit affirmed. Ramos-David then filed this timely § 2255 motion asserting actual innocence, jurisdictional and double-jeopardy violations, lack of standing and case or controversy, ineffective assistance of counsel, and a conflict of interest. The district court denied collateral relief and an evidentiary hearing, dismissed the case with prejudice, and declined to issue a certificate of appealability.

DISPOSITION

dismissed

CASES CITED

- United States v. Ramos-David, 16 F.4th 326 (1st Cir. 2021)
- Clay v. United States, 537 U.S. 522, 524 (2003)
- David v. United States, 134 F.3d 470, 474, 477-78 (1st Cir. 1998)
- Hill v. United States, 368 U.S. 424, 426-27 (1962)
- Foster v. Chatman, 136 S. Ct. 1737, 1758 (2016)
- Bucci v. United States, 662 F.3d 18, 27 (1st Cir. 2011)
- United States v. Frady, 456 U.S. 152, 167-68 (1982)
- Bousley v. United States, 523 U.S. 614, 623 (1998)
- McQuiggin v. Perkins, 569 U.S. 383, 386 (2013)

- Schlup v. Delo, 513 U.S. 298, 324, 329 (1995)
- House v. Bell, 547 U.S. 518, 538 (2006)
- Riva v. Ficco, 803 F.3d 77, 84 (1st Cir. 2015)
- United States v. Parrilla-Tirado, 22 F.3d 368, 373 (1st Cir. 1994)
- United States v. Alegría, 192 F.3d 179, 186 (1st Cir. 1999)
- Bartkus v. Illinois, 359 U.S. 121, 123-24 (1959)
- United States v. Ayala, 47 F. Supp. 2d 196, 200 (D.P.R. 1999)
- United States v. Guzmán, 85 F.3d 823, 826-27 (1st Cir. 1996)
- United States v. Félix, 503 U.S. 378, 386 (1992)
- United States v. G.P.S. Automotive Corp., 66 F.3d 483, 494-95 (2d Cir. 1995)
- United States v. Jordan, 870 F. Supp. 1313, 1323 (D. Me. 1990)
- United States v. Prado, 933 F.3d 121, 134 (2d Cir. 2019)
- United States v. Balde, 943 F.3d 73, 89 (2d Cir. 2019)
- United States v. Stringer, 730 F.3d 120, 124 (2d Cir. 2013)
- Strickland v. Washington, 466 U.S. 668, 687-94 (1984)
- Moreno-Espada v. United States, 666 F.3d 60, 64 (1st Cir. 2012)
- Scarpa v. Dubois, 38 F.3d 1, 8 (1st Cir. 1994)
- Padilla v. Kentucky, 130 S. Ct. 1473, 1482 (2010)
- López-Nieves v. United States, 917 F.2d 645, 648 (1st Cir. 1990)
- United States v. Natanel, 938 F.2d 302, 309 (1st Cir. 1991)
- Watson v. United States, 37 F.4th 22, 28 (1st Cir. 2022)
- Argencourt v. United States, 78 F.3d 14, 16 (1st Cir. 1996)
- Wong v. Belmontes, 558 U.S. 15, 27 (2009) (per curiam)
- Wilder v. United States, 806 F.3d 653, 658 (1st Cir. 2015)
- Turner v. United States, 699 F.3d 578, 584 (1st Cir. 2012)
- González-Soberal v. United States, 244 F.3d 273, 278 (1st Cir. 2001)
- Bobby v. Van Hook, 558 U.S. 4, 12-13 (2009) (per curiam)
- Hill v. Lockhart, 474 U.S. 52, 59 (1985)
- United States v. Carrigan, 724 F.3d 39, 44 (1st Cir. 2013)
- Acha v. United States, 910 F.2d 28, 32 (1st Cir. 1990)
- United States v. Michaud, 901 F.2d 5, 6 (1st Cir. 1990)
- Singleton v. United States, 26 F.3d 233, 240 (1st Cir. 1994)
- United States v. Jiménez, 498 F.3d 83 (1st Cir. 2007)
- Cody v. United States, (1st Cir. 2001)
- Reyes v. United States, 421 F. Supp. 2d 426, 430 (D.P.R. 2006)

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