

UNITED STATES DISTRICT COURT FOR THE NORTHERN DISTRICT OF
CALIFORNIA

Sauls v. Balli

Sauls · No. 22-cv-06739-WHO (PR) · Decided February 24, 2025

SUMMARY

The court denied defendants’ Rule 12(b)(6) motion to dismiss Eighth Amendment endangerment claims brought by David L. Sauls against S. Balli and J. Crews. The court held that allegations that defendants labeled Sauls a snitch, encouraged threats or attacks by other prisoners, and that Sauls was subsequently threatened were sufficient to state a claim. All other claims and defendants were dismissed, and the court set a schedule for a possible summary judgment motion.

CASE DETAILS

COURT	United States District Court for the Northern District of California
WRITING FOR THE COURT	William H. Orrick
JURISDICTION	United States District Court for the Northern District of California
DECIDED	February 24, 2025
DOCKET	22-cv-06739-WHO (PR)
DISPOSITION	other
PROCEDURAL POSTURE	Defendants moved under Federal Rule of Civil Procedure 12(b)(6) to dismiss the third amended complaint in a prisoner civil-rights action alleging that prison officials endangered plaintiff by labeling him a snitch.
STANDARD OF REVIEW	On a Rule 12(b)(6) motion, dismissal is appropriate when the complaint does not allege enough facts to state a facially plausible claim, lacks a cognizable legal theory, lacks sufficient facts under a cognizable theory, or establishes an affirmative defense from the complaint itself. The court assumed the factual allegations to be true for purposes of the motion.
PRECEDENTIAL VALUE	unpublished
PARTIES	S. Balli, et al. v. David L. Sauls

TOPICS

motions to dismiss

prisoners rights

cruel and unusual punishment

section 1983

civil procedure

PRACTICE AREAS

civil rights

prisoner litigation

constitutional law

civil procedure

QUESTIONS PRESENTED

1. Whether Sauls's allegations that defendants labeled him a snitch in front of other prisoners and thereby subjected him to threats stated an Eighth Amendment endangerment claim under Section 1983.
2. Whether alleged threats occurring outside the Northern District were sufficiently connected to the alleged labeling and endangerment acts occurring at CTF-Soledad to survive a Rule 12(b)(6) motion.
3. Whether claims and defendants not included among the cognizable Eighth Amendment endangerment claims should remain in the action.

HOLDINGS

1. A prisoner states a sufficient Eighth Amendment endangerment claim at the pleading stage by alleging that prison officials labeled him a snitch in front of other prisoners, encouraged prisoners to threaten or attack him, and that he was subsequently threatened by prisoners.
2. Alleged threats occurring outside the Northern District were sufficiently connected to the initiating labeling and endangerment acts at CTF-Soledad to survive a Rule 12(b)(6) motion.
3. Only the Eighth Amendment endangerment claims against Balli and Crews remained in the action; all other claims and defendants were dismissed, and defendants' first motion to dismiss was denied as moot.

KEY QUOTATIONS

“Here, Sauls has alleged sufficient facts to state an Eighth Amendment endangerment claim.” (Discussion at 15-22)

“The only claims in this action are the Eighth Amendment endangerment claims against Balli and Crews. All other claims and defendants are DISMISSED.” (Conclusion at 24-26)

FACTUAL BACKGROUND

Sauls alleges that prison officials at CTF-Soledad and the Substance Abuse Treatment Facility labeled him a snitch in front of other prisoners and encouraged prisoners to threaten or attack him. He alleges that Balli and Crews recruited or conspired with inmates to harm him and that prison officials transferred a group of threatening inmates to the facility where Sauls was housed. Sauls was ultimately threatened by prisoners at the Substance Abuse Treatment Facility.

PROCEDURAL HISTORY

Sauls's original complaint asserted several claims, including COVID-related claims, grievance-related due-process claims, property-deprivation claims, and retaliation and endangerment claims. The court dismissed the original complaint with leave to amend, later dismissed the first amended complaint with leave to amend, and

allowed only cognizable Eighth Amendment endangerment claims to proceed against Balli and Crews. After Sauls filed a third amended complaint, defendants filed the motion addressed in this order; the court denied that motion, dismissed all other claims and defendants, and set a schedule for a possible summary-judgment motion.

DISPOSITION

other

CASES CITED

- Bell Atlantic Corp. v. Twombly, 550 U.S. 544, 570 (2007)
- Balistreri v. Pacifica Police Department, 901 F.2d 696, 699 (9th Cir. 1990)
- Scott v. Kuhlmann, 746 F.2d 1377, 1378 (9th Cir. 1984)
- Valandingham v. Bojorquez
- Green v. Chamberlain, No. 2:19-CV-0109-DMC-P, 2019 WL 3302346, at *7 (E.D. Cal. July 23, 2019)
- Morgan v. MacDonald, 41 F.3d 1291, 1294 (9th Cir. 1994)
- Brummett v. Lopez, Case No. 1:21-cv-00086-DAD-BAM (PC), 2021 WL 3722779, at *3