NONPRECEDENTIAL DISPOSITION
To be cited only in accordance with FED. R. APP. P. 32.1

United States Court of Appeals

For the Seventh Circuit
Chicago, Illinois 60604

Submitted February 16, 2024*
Decided February 20, 2024

Before

MICHAEL Y. SCUDDER, *Circuit Judge*

THOMAS L. KIRSCH II, *Circuit Judge*

DORIS L. PRYOR, *Circuit Judge*

No. 23-2486

ROMARIS WALTON,
Plaintiff-Appellant,

v.

CHRISTOPHER WALTZ, et al.,
Defendants-Appellees.

Appeal from the United States District Court for the Southern District of Illinois.

No. 22-cv-2238-DWD

David W. Dugan,
Judge.

O R D E R

Romaris Walton, an Illinois prisoner, sued officials at Lawrence Correctional Center for violating his constitutional rights in their handling of a scheduled video call.

* The Appellees were not served with process and are not participating in this appeal. We have agreed to decide the case without oral argument because the brief and record adequately present the facts and legal arguments, and oral argument would not significantly aid the court. FED. R. APP. P. 34(a)(2)(C).

See 42 U.S.C. § 1983. The district court dismissed Walton's complaint for failure to state a claim. We affirm.

As set forth in his complaint, the allegations of which we accept as true, *Dorsey v. Varga*, 55 F.4th 1094, 1098–99 (7th Cir. 2022), Walton had to miss a scheduled video visit with a "loved one" so that he could attend an appointment for necessary medical treatment. Although he instructed prison officials to tell the relevant staff member of his changed plans, the call proceeded as scheduled. An unauthorized prisoner jumped on the call and spoke for several minutes with Walton's friend, making "advances" towards her. The incident greatly upset Walton and his friend, who refused to participate in another video call for the remainder of Walton's time at the prison—a year or so. Walton alleged that the defendants (1) violated his Eighth Amendment rights by allowing the call to occur; (2) violated his First Amendment rights by retaliating for grievances and lawsuits he had filed against them; and (3) improperly denied the grievance he filed about the incident, also in retaliation for his pending grievances.

The district court screened the complaint, *see* 28 U.S.C. § 1915A, and dismissed it for failure to state a claim. Relevant here, the court concluded that even if the officials knowingly allowed the incident to occur, the conduct did not "shock the conscience" and thus did not implicate the Eighth Amendment. As for his First Amendment retaliation claims, the court stated that Walton failed to suggest any causal link between the defendants' actions and his pending or prior grievances.

Walton amended his complaint to add allegations that (1) the defendants' actions deterred him from using the grievance process; (2) the video incident caused him to suffer because he was unable to speak to his loved one for a year and had uncomfortable interactions with other prisoners about the call; (3) the defendants denied his grievance without a proper investigation in violation of his due process rights; and (4) the defendants were rumored to have allowed the video incident to occur because of grievances he filed about them.

The district court dismissed the amended complaint for failure to state a claim and entered judgment against Walton.[1] The court explained that the "primary theme" of

[1] The judgment specifies that the dismissal was "without prejudice," a disposition that may deprive us of appellate jurisdiction. *Schering-Plough Healthcare Prods., Inc. v. Schwarz Pharma, Inc.*, 586 F.3d 500, 506 (7th Cir. 2009). But when the case does end in the district court—as apparent here, given the court's express determination that amendment would be futile and that the Clerk of Court was to "CLOSE this case on

his complaint was unfairness in the prison's grievance process, but Walton could not state a due process claim because he had no constitutionally protected liberty interest in a particular grievance outcome. Next, the court reiterated that Walton had not suggested how the defendants violated the Eighth Amendment. And Walton had not stated a retaliation claim because the rumor did not plausibly suggest a connection between Walton's previous grievances and the video incident.

On appeal, Walton essentially repeats the allegations of his complaint with some additional details. But the court correctly determined that Walton did not state a claim. He did not state an Eighth Amendment claim because he has not suggested how the prison officials' actions here denied him minimal civilized necessities. *See Jaros v. Ill. Dep't of Corr.*, 684 F.3d 667, 670–71 (7th Cir. 2012). Nor can he state a due process claim regarding the prison officials' purported mishandling of his grievance, given that a state's grievance procedure confers no liberty interest on a prisoner. *See Owens v. Evans*, 878 F.3d 559, 563 (7th Cir. 2017) (citing *Antonelli v. Sheahan*, 81 F.3d 1422, 1430 (7th Cir. 1996)). Finally, he did not state a First Amendment claim because he did not plausibly allege a connection between his protected speech (filing grievances and lawsuits) and the defendants' actions. *See Zimmerman v. Bornick*, 25 F.4th 491, 492 (7th Cir. 2022).

We have considered the rest of his arguments; none merits discussion.

AFFIRMED

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the Court's docket"—we are confident the court was finished with the case, making it ripe for appeal. *Id.*