

**UNITED STATES DISTRICT COURT  
EASTERN DISTRICT OF MICHIGAN  
SOUTHERN DIVISION**

STEVEN JAMES-EL,

Plaintiff,

Case Number: 5:17-cv-10791  
HON. JOHN CORBETT O'MEARA

v.

DETROIT POLICE DEPARTMENT, ET  
AL.,

Defendants.

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**ORDER OF SUMMARY DISMISSAL**

Plaintiff Steven James-El is presently confined at the Carson Correctional Facility in Carson City, Michigan. He has filed a *pro se* complaint challenging the conduct of police officers during his arrest in connection with the conviction for which he is currently incarcerated. Plaintiff is proceeding without prepayment of the filing fee in accordance with 28 U.S.C. § 1915(a)(1). The Court dismisses Plaintiff's complaint, pursuant to 28 U.S.C. § 1915(e)(2),<sup>1</sup> because Plaintiff's claims are barred by *Heck v. Humphrey*, 512 U.S. 477 (1994).

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<sup>1</sup> 28 U.S.C. § 1915(e)(2) provides, in pertinent part:

Notwithstanding any filing fee, or any portion thereof, that may have been paid, the court shall dismiss the case at any time if the court determines that –

. . .

(B) the action or appeal –

. . .

(ii) fails to state a claim upon which relief may be granted . . .

## I. Standard

Federal Rule of Civil Procedure 8(a) requires that a complaint set forth “a short and plain statement of the claim showing that the pleader is entitled to relief,” as well as “a demand for the relief sought.” Fed. R. Civ. P. 8(a)(2), (3). The purpose of this rule is to “give the defendant fair notice of what the . . . claim is and the grounds upon which it rests.” *Bell Atlantic Corp. v. Twombly*, 550 U.S. 544, 555 (2007) (quoting *Conley v. Gibson*, 355 U.S. 41, 47 (1957) and Fed. R. Civ. P. 8(a)(2)). The notice pleading standard requires more than the bare assertion of legal conclusions or “an unadorned, the-defendant-unlawfully-harmed-me accusation.” *Ashcroft v. Iqbal*, 556 U.S. 662, 678 (2009). “A pleading that offers ‘labels and conclusions’ or ‘a formulaic recitation of the elements of a cause of action will not do.’” *Id.* (quoting *Twombly*, 550 U.S. at 555). “Nor does a complaint suffice if it tenders ‘naked assertion[s]’ devoid of ‘further factual enhancement.’” *Id.* at 1949 (quoting *Twombly*, 550 U.S. at 557).

Plaintiff has been granted leave to proceed without prepayment of the filing fee for this action. Under the Prison Litigation Reform Act (“PLRA”), the court is required to *sua sponte* dismiss an *in forma pauperis* complaint before service on a defendant if it determines that the action is frivolous or malicious, fails to state a claim upon which relief can be granted, or seeks monetary relief against a defendant who is immune from such relief. *See* 42 U.S.C. § 1997e(c); 28 U.S.C. § 1915(e)(2)(B). Similarly, the court is required to dismiss a complaint seeking redress against government entities, officers, and employees that it finds to be frivolous or malicious, fails to state a claim upon which

relief may be granted, or seeks monetary relief from a defendant who is immune from such relief. See 28 U.S.C. § 1915A(b).

To state a federal civil rights claim, a plaintiff must allege that (1) he was deprived of a right, privilege, or immunity secured by the federal Constitution or laws of the United States, and (2) the deprivation was caused by a person acting under color of state law. *Flagg Bros. v. Brooks*, 436 U.S. 149, 155-57 (1978). A *pro se* civil rights complaint is to be construed liberally. *Haines v. Kerner*, 404 U.S. 519, 520-21 (1972).

## **II. Discussion**

Plaintiff's complaint concerns the circumstances surrounding his arrest in Detroit on October 5, 2014. Following the arrest and a jury trial, he was convicted of carrying a concealed weapon, felon in possession of a firearm, possession of a firearm during the commission of a felony, and unlawful possession of marijuana. He names as defendants the Detroit Police Department and the four police officers involved in his arrest. Plaintiff alleges that defendants Zeolla, Harnphanich, and Banks manufactured evidence, the officers lacked probable cause to arrest him, destroyed the patrol car video evidence, and that the Detroit Police Department failed to properly train its staff.

Plaintiff's claims necessarily challenge the validity of his related criminal convictions. A claim under § 1983 is an appropriate remedy for a state prisoner challenging a condition of his imprisonment. See *Preiser v. Rodriguez*, 411 U.S. 475, 499 (1973). In *Heck v. Humphrey*, 512 U.S. 477 (1994), the Supreme Court established that a state prisoner does not state a cognizable civil rights claim challenging his imprisonment

if a ruling on his claim would necessarily render his continuing confinement invalid, until and unless the reason for his continued confinement has been reversed on direct appeal, called into question by a federal court's issuance of a writ of habeas corpus under 28 U.S.C. § 2254, or otherwise invalidated. *Id.* at 486-87. Because Plaintiff has not achieved a favorable termination of his criminal case, this complaint is barred by *Heck*.

### **III. Conclusion**

For the reasons stated, the Court concludes that the complaint fails to state a claim upon which relief may be granted. Accordingly, IT IS ORDERED that the complaint is dismissed pursuant to 28 U.S.C. § 1915(e)(2)(B).

IT IS FURTHER ORDERED, that if Plaintiff elects to appeal this decision, he may not proceed without prepayment of the fees and costs on appeal because an appeal would be frivolous and could not be taken in good faith. 28 U.S.C. § 1915(a)(3); *Coppedge v. United States*, 369 U.S. 438, 445 (1962).

s/John Corbett O'Meara  
United States District Judge

Date: June 2, 2017

I hereby certify that a copy of the foregoing document was served upon the parties of record on this date, June 2, 2017, using the ECF system and/or ordinary mail.

s/William Barkholz  
Case Manager