

UNITED STATES OF AMERICA
UNITED STATES DISTRICT COURT
FOR THE WESTERN DISTRICT OF MICHIGAN
NORTHERN DIVISION

Paul W. Tiernan,

Plaintiff,

Case No. 2:11-cv-36

v.

Honorable R. Allan Edgar

Paul Anderson, et al.,

Defendants.

OPINION

This is a civil rights action brought by a state prisoner pursuant to 42 U.S.C. § 1983.

The Court has granted Plaintiff leave to proceed *in forma pauperis*, and Plaintiff has paid the initial partial filing fee. Under the Prison Litigation Reform Act, PUB. L. NO. 104-134, 110 STAT. 1321 (1996), the Court is required to dismiss any prisoner action brought under federal law if the complaint is frivolous, malicious, fails to state a claim upon which relief can be granted, or seeks monetary relief from a defendant immune from such relief. 28 U.S.C. §§ 1915(e)(2), 1915A; 42 U.S.C. § 1997e(c). The Court must read Plaintiff's *pro se* complaint indulgently, *see Haines v. Kerner*, 404 U.S. 519, 520 (1972), and accept Plaintiff's allegations as true, unless they are clearly irrational or wholly incredible. *Denton v. Hernandez*, 504 U.S. 25, 33 (1992). Applying these standards, Plaintiff's action will be dismissed for failure to state a claim.

Factual Allegations

Plaintiff Paul W. Tiernan, an inmate at the Parnall Correctional Facility, filed this *pro se* civil rights action pursuant to 42 U.S.C. § 1983 against Defendants Michigan State Police Trooper Paul Anderson, Detective Sergeant Jean Belanger, Menominee County Sheriff Deputy David Ashby, and Menominee County Sheriff Deputy Gregory Peterson. In his complaint, Plaintiff alleges that on April 11, 2010, Defendants falsely arrested him, failed to read him his rights, and took him to jail when Plaintiff refused to talk to them. A review of Plaintiff's Offender Profile reveals that on February 28, 2011, he was convicted of two counts of "breaking and entering a building with intent" and that the offense occurred on April 3, 2010. (See <http://www.state.mi.us/mdoc/asp/otis2profile.asp?mdocNumber=505466>.) Plaintiff seeks damages and injunctive relief.

Discussion

I. Failure to state a claim

A complaint may be dismissed for failure to state a claim if "it fails to give the defendant fair notice of what the . . . claim is and the grounds upon which it rests." *Bell Atl. Corp. v. Twombly*, 550 U.S. 544, 555 (2007) (quoting *Conley v. Gibson*, 355 U.S. 41, 45-46 (1957)). While a complaint need not contain detailed factual allegations, a plaintiff's allegations must include more than labels and conclusions. *Twombly*, 550 U.S. at 555; *Ashcroft v. Iqbal*, 129 S. Ct. 1937, 1949 (2009) ("Threadbare recitals of the elements of a cause of action, supported by mere conclusory statements, do not suffice."). The court must determine whether the complaint contains "enough facts to state a claim to relief that is plausible on its face." *Twombly*, 550 U.S. at 570. "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." *Iqbal*, 129 S. Ct. at

1949. Although the plausibility standard is not equivalent to a “probability requirement,’ . . . it asks for more than a sheer possibility that a defendant has acted unlawfully.” *Iqbal*, 129 S. Ct. at 1949 (quoting *Twombly*, 550 U.S. at 556). “[W]here the well-pleaded facts do not permit the court to infer more than the mere possibility of misconduct, the complaint has alleged – but it has not ‘show[n]’ – that the pleader is entitled to relief.” *Iqbal*, 129 S. Ct. at 1950 (quoting FED. R. CIV. P. 8(a)(2)); see also *Hill v. Lappin*, 630 F.3d 468, 470-71 (6th Cir. 2010) (holding that the *Twombly/Iqbal* plausibility standard applies to dismissals of prisoner cases on initial review under 28 U.S.C. §§ 1915A(b)(1) and 1915(e)(2)(B)(i)).

To state a claim under 42 U.S.C. § 1983, a plaintiff must allege the violation of a right secured by the federal Constitution or laws and must show that the deprivation was committed by a person acting under color of state law. *West v. Atkins*, 487 U.S. 42, 48 (1988); *Dominguez v. Corr. Med. Servs.*, 555 F.3d 543, 549 (6th Cir. 2009). Because § 1983 is a method for vindicating federal rights, not a source of substantive rights itself, the first step in an action under § 1983 is to identify the specific constitutional right allegedly infringed. *Albright v. Oliver*, 510 U.S. 266, 271 (1994).

In this case, Plaintiff asserts that his rights were violated during his arrest. Plaintiff was subsequently convicted of two counts of “breaking and entering with intent” as a result of this arrest. Section 1983 provides a cause of action for “the deprivation of any rights, privileges, or immunities secured by the Constitution and laws” by any person acting “under color of any statute, ordinance, regulation, custom, or usage, of any State or Territory.” 42 U.S.C. § 1983. The Supreme Court, however, has limited the availability of § 1983 actions for prisoners in a series of cases, the most pertinent of which is *Heck v. Humphrey*, 512 U.S. 477 (1994). The Sixth Circuit explained the bar that *Heck* places on § 1983 suits brought by prisoners:

Federal courts have long recognized the potential for prisoners to evade the habeas exhaustion requirements by challenging the duration of their confinement under 42 U.S.C. § 1983, rather than by filing habeas petitions. Consequently, the Supreme Court recognized a “habeas exception” to § 1983 in *Preiser v. Rodriguez*, 411 U.S. 475, 93 S.Ct. 1827, 36 L. Ed. 2d 439 (1973), when it held that suits challenging the fact or duration of confinement fall within the traditional scope of habeas corpus and accordingly are not cognizable under § 1983. The Court expanded the habeas exception to § 1983 in *Heck v. Humphrey*, 512 U.S. 477, 114 S. Ct. 2364, 129 L. Ed. 2d 383 (1994), and *Edwards v. Balisok*, 520 U.S. 641, 117 S. Ct. 1584, 137 L. Ed. 2d 906 (1997). In *Heck*, the Court determined that, unless a prisoner's conviction or sentence were previously set aside by a separate legal or administrative action, § 1983 would not countenance claims for damages if a finding for the plaintiff would *necessarily invalidate* a conviction or sentence. And in *Balisok*, the Court concluded that a prisoner cannot use § 1983 to challenge prison procedures employed to deprive him of good-time credits when the . . . procedural defect alleged would, if established, “necessarily imply the invalidity of the punishment imposed.” 520 U.S. at 648, 117 S. Ct. at 1584.

Thomas v. Eby, 481 F.3d 434, 438 (6th Cir. 2007) (emphasis in original).

It appears that Plaintiff is attempting to circumvent *Heck* by omitting any mention of his criminal convictions. Rather, Plaintiff asserts that Defendants acted improperly during his arrest by telling Plaintiff that if he loved his children, he should just confess to his wrongdoing. However, Plaintiff did not respond to Defendants’ questions. Unless Plaintiff is asserting that Defendants’ conduct led to his conviction, he cannot show that the conduct violated his rights or that he suffered any damages as the result of such conduct. Alternatively, as noted above, if Plaintiff is claiming that he was damaged because of his criminal convictions, such a claim is barred by *Heck*. Therefore, the court will dismiss Plaintiff’s complaint for lack of merit.

Conclusion

Having conducted the review now required by the Prison Litigation Reform Act, the Court determines that Plaintiff’s action will be dismissed for failure to state a claim pursuant to 28 U.S.C. §§ 1915(e)(2) and 1915A(b), and 42 U.S.C. § 1997e(c).

The Court must next decide whether an appeal of this action would be in good faith within the meaning of 28 U.S.C. § 1915(a)(3). *See McGore v. Wrigglesworth*, 114 F.3d 601, 611 (6th Cir. 1997). For the same reasons that the Court dismisses the action, the Court discerns no good-faith basis for an appeal. Should Plaintiff appeal this decision, the Court will assess the \$455.00 appellate filing fee pursuant to § 1915(b)(1), *see McGore*, 114 F.3d at 610-11, unless Plaintiff is barred from proceeding *in forma pauperis*, e.g., by the “three-strikes” rule of § 1915(g). If he is barred, he will be required to pay the \$455.00 appellate filing fee in one lump sum.

This is a dismissal as described by 28 U.S.C. § 1915(g).

A Judgment consistent with this Opinion will be entered.

Dated: 6/21/2011

/s/ R. Allan Edgar
R. Allan Edgar
United States District Judge