

**UNITED STATES DISTRICT COURT  
EASTERN DISTRICT OF MISSOURI  
SOUTHEASTERN DIVISION**

REGINALD SHUMPERT,

Plaintiff,

v.

P. KAROL, et al.,

Defendants.

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No. 1:16-CV-248 SNLJ

**MEMORANDUM AND ORDER**

Plaintiff, a prisoner, seeks leave to proceed in forma pauperis in this civil action under 42 U.S.C. § 1983. Having reviewed plaintiff’s financial information, the Court assesses a partial initial filing fee of \$15, which is twenty percent of his average monthly deposit. See 28 U.S.C. § 1915(b). Additionally, this case is dismissed under 28 U.S.C. § 1915(e).

**Standard of Review**

Under 28 U.S.C. § 1915(e), the Court is required to dismiss a complaint filed in forma pauperis if it is frivolous, malicious, or fails to state a claim upon which relief can be granted. To state a claim for relief, a complaint must plead more than “legal conclusions” and “[t]hreadbare recitals of the elements of a cause of action [that are] supported by mere conclusory statements.” *Ashcroft v. Iqbal*, 556 U.S. 662, 678 (2009). A plaintiff must demonstrate a plausible claim for relief, which is more than a “mere possibility of misconduct.” *Id.* at 679. “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.” *Id.* at 678. Determining whether a complaint states a plausible claim for relief is a

context-specific task that requires the reviewing court to draw on its judicial experience and common sense. *Id.* at 679.

When reviewing a complaint under 28 U.S.C. § 1915(e), the Court accepts the well-pled facts as true. Furthermore, the Court liberally construes the allegations.

### **The Complaint**

Plaintiff is an inmate at the Ste. Genevieve County Detention Center. On September 15, 2016, defendant Unknown Elms, who is a deputy, failed to deliver his mail to the mail room. Plaintiff alleges that Elms was retaliating against him for a previous grievance. Plaintiff does not allege, however, that his mail remained undelivered. Plaintiff says that defendant P. Karol conspires with other officials to deny inmates' grievances.

### **Discussion**

To succeed on his § 1983 retaliation claim, plaintiff must prove that he engaged in protected activity and that defendants, to retaliate for the protected activity, took adverse action against plaintiff that would chill a person of ordinary firmness from engaging in that activity. See *Revels v. Vincenz*, 382 F.3d 870, 876 (8th Cir. 2004), cert. denied, 546 U.S. 860 (2005). Elm's failure to deliver plaintiff's mail on one occasion would not chill a person of ordinary firmness from engaging in the grievance process. As a result, the allegations fail to state a claim upon which relief can be granted.

To properly plead a claim for civil conspiracy under § 1983, a plaintiff must include factual allegations showing a "meeting of the minds" concerning unconstitutional conduct; although an express agreement between the purported conspirators need not be alleged, there must be something more than the summary allegation of a conspiracy before such a claim can withstand a motion to dismiss. See *Mershon v. Beasely*, 994 F.2d 449, 451 (8th Cir. 1993).

Plaintiff has not alleged any facts demonstrating a conspiracy. Moreover, denying an inmate's grievance does not constitute a constitutional violation. See *George v. Smith*, 507 F. 3d 605, 609 (7th Cir. 2007). Therefore, this claim is frivolous.

Finally, plaintiff did not specify whether he is suing defendants in their official or individual capacities. Where a "complaint is silent about the capacity in which [plaintiff] is suing defendant, [a district court must] interpret the complaint as including only official-capacity claims." *Egerdahl v. Hibbing Community College*, 72 F.3d 615, 619 (8th Cir. 1995); *Nix v. Norman*, 879 F.2d 429, 431 (8th Cir. 1989). Naming a government official in his or her official capacity is the equivalent of naming the government entity that employs the official. *Will v. Michigan Dep't of State Police*, 491 U.S. 58, 71 (1989). To state a claim against a municipality or a government official in his or her official capacity, plaintiff must allege that a policy or custom of the government entity is responsible for the alleged constitutional violation. *Monell v. Dep't of Social Services*, 436 U.S. 658, 690-91 (1978). The instant complaint does not contain any allegations that a policy or custom of a government entity was responsible for the alleged violations of plaintiff's constitutional rights. As a result, the complaint fails to state a claim upon which relief can be granted.

Accordingly,

**IT IS HEREBY ORDERED** that plaintiff's motion to proceed in forma pauperis [ECF No. 2] is **GRANTED**.

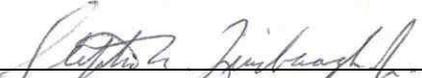
**IT IS FURTHER ORDERED** that the plaintiff must pay an initial filing fee of \$15 within thirty (30) days of the date of this Order. Plaintiff is instructed to make his remittance payable to "Clerk, United States District Court," and to include upon it: (1) his name; (2) his

prison registration number; (3) the case number; and (4) that the remittance is for an original proceeding.<sup>1</sup>

**IT IS FURTHER ORDERED** that this action is **DISMISSED** without prejudice.

An Order of Dismissal will be filed separately

Dated this 18<sup>th</sup> day of October, 2016.

  
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STEPHEN N. LIMBAUGH, JR.  
UNITED STATES DISTRICT JUDGE

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<sup>1</sup> Prisoners must pay the full amount of the \$350 filing fee. After payment of the initial partial filing fee, the prisoner is required to make monthly payments of 20 percent of the preceding month's income credited to the prisoner's account. The agency having custody of the prisoner will deduct the payments and forward them to the Court each time the amount in the account exceeds \$10. 28 U.S.C. § 1915(b)(2).