

## Who ordered opening of fire against anti Sterlite protesters in Thoothukudi? asks Madras High Court

Judge also remarks that all police officers responsible for the loss of 13 civilian lives must have been prosecuted for murder

Published - July 01, 2024 09:08 pm IST - CHENNAI

The Madras High Court on Monday wanted to know who ordered the opening of fire by the police against civilians during the [May 2018 Thoothukudi anti Sterlite protests](#) which led to the death of as many as 13 people and left many others injured.

A Division Bench of Justices S.S. Sundar and N.

Senthilkumar raised the question during the hearing of a 2021 writ petition filed by human rights activist Henri Tiphagne against the closure of a complaint lodged by him before the National Human Rights Commission.



When a counsel representing the then Deputy Superintendent of Police Linga Thirumaran questioned the maintainability of the writ petition, the senior judge in the Bench retorted that all police officers responsible for the firing incident must have been prosecuted for murder.

Since all revenue as well as police officials involved in the incident had been parties to the petition, Justice Sundar said: "Grave injustice has been done. This is a serious matter. Is this how you want to treat the common public? You all should be prosecuted for murder."

The judge lamented that so far none of the officers had shown remorse or felt sorry for the loss of 13 lives. Later, the Bench decided to continue the hearing on the writ petition on July 15 since many counsel for many other police as well as revenue officials had to be heard.

Plea to transfer the case

In the meantime, a connected public interest litigation petition filed by J. Vanitha, mother of 17-year old girl J. Snowlin, who was among the 13 protesters shot dead by the police, was listed for hearing before the first Division Bench of Acting Chief Justice R. Mahadevan and Mohammed Shaffiq.

In her plea, the petitioner had sought registration of murder case against all officials responsible for the police firing and to enhance the compensation amount from ₹25 lakh to ₹1 crore to the families of each of the deceased besides constructing a memorial for them near the place of occurrence.

The petitioner's counsel A. Rajini said she had made a request to the Registry to tag her case along with Mr. Tiphagne's writ petition and list it before the Bench led by Justice Sundar. On the other hand, Additional Public Prosecutor R. Muniyapparaj said the State had made a request to tag the case pending before Justice Sundar along with the PIL petition before the ACJ.

After hearing them, the ACJ replied that necessary administrative orders would be passed on the requests placed by both sides.

<https://www.thehindu.com/news/national/tamil-nadu/who-ordered-opening-of-fire-against-anti-sterlite-protesters-in-thoothukudi-asks-madras-high-court/article68356056.ece>