



Custodial torture: Tamil Nadu orders new probe by senior IAS officer; victims livid

Several victims, however, are upset over being forced to share their plight with multiple authorities and the delay in filing FIR in the case.

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CHENNAI: The Tamil Nadu government on Friday ordered a detailed inquiry by senior IAS officer P Amudha into allegations of custodial torture by suspended ASP Balveer Singh and other police personnel across various police stations in the Ambasamudram division of Tirunelveli district. The officer has been ordered to submit her report within a month.

Several victims, however, are upset over being forced to share their plight with multiple authorities and the delay in filing FIR in the case. A lawyer, who is offering legal aid to seven of the victims, said the men would not appear for inquiry before the officer and the move by the state could be an attempt to delay the filing of an FIR in the case.

Cheranmahadevi sub-divisional magistrate MD Shabbir Alam, who was probing into the issue as per the orders of the district collector, had submitted his preliminary report on April 3, a government press release issued on Friday said. Several victims of the alleged torture had already deposited before the SDM.

“Collector, K P Karthikeyan, ordered an inquiry by the SDM into the allegations that Singh and other police personnel removed the teeth of persons named in crime number 69/2023 of Kallidaikurichi police station as per police standing order 151 on March 26. Singh was suspended on March 29 and eight other police personnel, including inspectors Chandrasekaran (Ambasamudram), Rajakumari (Kallidaikurichi) and Perumal (V K Puram), were transferred to Armed Reserve. The collector in a letter to the government on April 4 had recommended another inquiry by an officer of higher rank based on Alam’s report and after complaints were received about instances of torture in other police stations in Ambasamudram division,” the release said.

Accepting his recommendation, the state government has ordered a detailed inquiry by P Amudha, principal secretary, rural development and panchayat raj department,” the release said. Reacting to the order, Vetha Narayanan, one of the victims, told TNIE, “I could not drive my auto for 13 days as I had to appear before the SDM in Cheranmahadevi and the State

Human Rights Commission in Chennai to escape from police threats. I lost my livelihood and had to suffer mental agony. Now, the government is asking us to show our damaged teeth to one more officer. The state government should immediately register an FIR against Singh and other police personnel who tortured me.”

Advocate Maharajan said the seven victims, to whom he is offering legal aid, will not appear before Amudha. “To avoid registration of FIR against Singh, the government is ordering inquiry after inquiry. The government should understand that it was voted to power by people of Tamil Nadu not IPS officers,” he said.

Henry Tiphagne, executive director, People’s Watch, who is assisting a minor and SC victims in the case, said the Tamil Nadu government is undertaking a circuitous route to avoid registering FIR against Singh and other police personnel even after a prima facie case has been made out. “Why did the district collector not include crime number 49/2023 of Ambasamudram police station and 65/2023 of V K Puram police station in the SDM inquiry while details about custodial torture in both cases were already in public domain? It is clear that a powerful IPS lobby is at work in the case. We demand that this process of disrespecting the victims by asking them to depose before different authorities be stopped immediately. The victims who were not provided with dental care, counselling and interim compensation are forced to face another inquiry,” he said in a statement. Tiphagne also requested the HC to take suo motu cognizance of the case as it did in the Sathankulam custodial death case in 2020.

‘For a broader probe’

“The collector in a letter to the govt had recommended inquiry by an officer of higher rank after complaints were received about torture in other police stations in the Ambasamudram division.”

<https://www.newindianexpress.com/states/tamil-nadu/2023/apr/08/custodial-torture-tamil-nadu-orders-new-probe-by-senior-ias-officer-victims-livid-2563784.html>