

TAMIL NADU

Lois Sofia files petition seeking return of her passport; NGO alleges irregularities in her arrest

**STAFF REPORTER**

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Lois Sofia, the research scholar who was arrested and subsequently released on bail for raising slogans against the BJP in the presence of the party's State unit president Tamilsai Soundararajan, filed a petition before a magistrate's court here on Thursday, seeking return of her passport seized by the police.

Her advocate E. Athisaya Kumar said that the police had held on to her expired passport without giving a receipt. He said the old passport had a valid U.S. visa. The petition will come up for hearing in the Judicial Magistrate-III

court next Monday.

On Wednesday, Ms. Sofia, who is pursuing her Ph.D at the University of Montreal in Canada, was issued a summons by the Pudukottai police, requesting her to hand over her new passport as well, on Friday.

Henry Tiphagne, executive director of People's Watch, an NGO, said that Ms. Sofia was given neither an arrest memo nor a summons when she was taken to the Pudukottai police station.

Speaking to reporters here after meeting Ms. Sofia, Mr. Tiphagne said that there were a number of irregularities in her arrest. He said that the police asked for her signature on a document that said Section 290 (Public nuisance) of the IPC and Section 75(1)(C) (Behaviour that could cause breach of public peace) of the Tamil Nadu City Police Act had been slapped on her.

“However, they added section 505 (Intent to cause fear or alarm), which is non-bailable, using a pen on a printed document after getting her signature,” he said. Later, Judicial Magistrate-III struck down the section while hearing her remand petition.

He also criticised the magistrate for not hearing the bail petition after putting her on remand at her residence.

“The magistrate also asked her father to withdraw the complaint against Tamilisai Soundararajan,” he claimed.

Further, he said she was held from 1.30 p.m. to 7.30 p.m. at the Pudukottai all-women police station. However, in the records, he said that they brought her in for questioning only at 5 p.m.

He said that her father, A.A. Samy, would appear before the Pudukottai police in response to the summons issued asking for Ms. Sofia's current passport.