

## Vignesh custodial death: Eyewitness, family and lawyers recall chilling details

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After nearly 10 days of Vignesh's alleged custodial death, the key eyewitness in the case and the deceased's family gave details about the case and demanded justice.

The deceased's counsel too raised a few questions and [demanded the police officers be suspended](#). The eyewitness, auto driver Prabhu, who was taking Vignesh and Suresh alias Ramesh, recalls the horrors he faced.

### **EYEWITNESS PRABHU'S ACCOUNT**

Narrating the incident of April 18, Prabhu said, "I was returning after a drop from Retteri and I saw these two (Suresh and Vignesh) walking near Padi bridge. They wanted me to take them to Government Hospital. I asked them how much they would pay and

they said Rs 150. I stay in Semenchery, so I thought this would anyway be a drop on the way to my house. But near Kelly's, the police stopped my vehicle."

He said the police stopped them and started asking questions. "They asked Suresh to remove his mask and took a photo. They realised Suresh had served time in prison before and they started beating him up. At that time, Vignesh was standing on one side. The police asked me how I knew them. I said 'I only know them as passengers'," Prabhu said.

Further, Prabhu revealed that when police started inquiring Vignesh, he gave up the knife in his possession. "Vignesh had a knife with him which he then kept on the police vehicle. The police asked Vignesh why he was carrying the knife, to which he said that he was a horse trainer and the knife was for cutting the horse's nails and for hoof trimming. The police then started hitting Vignesh. He was not able to even get up," Prabhu said. He added that the police thrashed Suresh and Vignesh on the road till around 2:30am.

"Police had taken them to the station around 2:50 am. I was at the station till nearly 3:15 and when I was leaving they asked me to give my number. But I said I lost my number and gave them my wife's number. The police inspector, Mohandas, called my wife and asked her to tell me to show up at the station.. but I was scared and so I didn't go to the station, but I went to court to meet my lawyer."

Prabhu met Suresh's mother at court and dropped her at the Ayyanavaram K2 police station. But the police informed her that Suresh was not there. Suresh's mother went back to Prabhu and told him that Suresh wasn't in the station.

"I told her that till 3am I was there in the station with them. Then my wife called and said that I was being called to come to the station. I told my wife that they were calling me only because the boy is dead. I told her that I will speak for the boy," added Prabhu.

The police enquired about Prabhu for whom he works. Prabhu went into hiding since the day of Vignesh's death for fear that he too might be targeted by the police.

## VIGNESH'S FAMILY'S ACCOUNT

On April 19, Vignesh's elder brother Vinoth was taking a bath when police officials barged into his house. Vinoth narrates, "I was bathing when Rajashwari madam came in and asked me to put on a shirt and leave immediately. When I asked 'what wrong have I done?' and 'Why am I being taken?', she said it is for an inquiry."

Vinoth along with his younger brother were taken in an autorickshaw to Pattinampakkam police station and on the way the auto was stopped and Vinoth was informed that his younger brother, that Vignesh, was dead.



The deceased's family gave details of the fateful night of Vignesh's custodial death.

"They said my brother was heavily drunk and created a ruckus with the police. He was arrested by the police and the following morning he died of fits. I was the one who brought up Vignesh, and I would have known if he had fits."

Vinoth and his younger brother, Veera, were taken to the police station and later Vinoth was approached by a man, Ranjith, offering cash for our silence.

"Inspector Mohandas called Ranjith, the man for whom my brother worked, and Ranjith said the police would help with some money for cremation and last rites and so I asked Ranjith Rs 20,000 but the police gave Rs one lakh. So I suspected foul play then. Why did they give us so much money? They also threatened my younger brother Veera,

that he would be booked in a case if he doesn't keep quiet. I had Rs 1 lakh cash in my pocket. They kept moving us to different mansions all through the night," he said.

The following morning, Vinoth and two of his brothers were taken to the hospital. "When I went inside the postmortem room I found Vignesh's jaw broken. His hands were broken and legs swollen and there were injuries on his back bone too," said Vinoth." he recalled.

He continued, "The judge was recording the proceedings on the camera and I asked him as well to see how they had beaten my brother up."

Vinoth says the police officials with him had kept asking them to cremate Vignesh. "But I had threatened that I would immolate myself and I said the same to the judge. The judge wrote that my brother had to be buried. There were some 200 odd policemen there at the crematorium. The police did everything there, from arranging the priest to the garland. They hardly gave us any time to see Vignesh or mourn for him one last time," he said.

Vinoth and his four brothers have been facing a lot of pressure since Vignesh's death. While one of the brothers has been threatened with a legal case, Vinoth has been facing other hurdles.

He had been evicted from the house where he was staying. At present, they spent the night on the road outside his aunt's place. "The police have been trying to reach us but we are keeping our phones off. They tried threatening by calling Prabhu, the eyewitness's wife. The landlord of my house evicted me and, similarly, my brothers were thrown out of their homes."

The family demands justice, "Justice for my brother. We want all the officials involved to be punished," he said.

### **BRUTAL TORTURE, SAYS VIGNESH'S COUNCIL**

Henry, one of the lawyers for Vignesh's family, said, "It was blatant, brutal torture in public. All the CCTV cameras in Kelly's were witness to this incident but it might have even been erased by now."

The lawyers point at a list of discrepancies. Starting from being stopped by police and then beaten up, to being taken to Ayyanavaram police station first and then moved to G5 station. "Why were the two moved from one station to another?," they asked.

Vignesh is alleged to have been taken to a private hospital and then to the government hospital. "Why was he taken to a private hospital?," they wondered.

In Suresh's case, the police lied to his mother about him not being in Ayyanavaram police station and why didn't the police inform the mother about him being moved to another station?

Also, Rs 50000 was given in the police station by an officer. Why was that amount given?

"Why were Vignesh's brothers and aunt kept in custody? Will the DGP answer this? What was the magistrate doing? The magistrate is equally responsible as the body was not shown to Vinoth as per the regulations given. The video and postmortem report was not given to the family. Is the judicial magistrate hand in glove with the police?," questioned Henry.

Advocate Ajitha, another lawyer for Vignesh's family said: "There are several discrepancies. There should have been an FIR for the custodial death of Vignesh and that is not made known to the family. We have been making representation to the court from last Wednesday. that is the earliest we did. We have written to dean of KMC for the copy of the autopsy and the video recording. Only from there can we start our case on how a normal healthy man caught in a traffic junction could have sustained so many injuries. We know there are several injuries as Vinoth has seen the body. He was an eyewitness to the body at the time of the inquest.

She alleged that this was a case of custodial torture, custodial death. "Yesterday we were able to get only the crime no of the FIR of custodial death. They have another FIR registered against Vignesh. But those details are blocked for now. There was a lot of pressure on the family to cremate him and only due to the threat given by Vignesh has this not happened. From day one, nothing has gone as per law. We are now trying to get proper treatment for Suresh," she said.

Vignesh's council have demanded that CB-CID register a case under section 302 of the IPC. They have demanded action against suspended officers. They also demanded that the police officers who were on night round must be arrested. "Officer Mohandas and Rajeswari should be arrested. Monitored CB-Cid enquiry is needed," they said.

They have also sort for SC/ST act be included in the case.

The council said, "So far it is a conscious delay. The IO for CB-CID has not presented himself to the court. There is undue delay and lethargic attitude in this case," said Ajitha.

<https://www.indiatoday.in/crime/story/vignesh-custodial-death-details-eyewitness-family-lawyers-1944109-2022-05-01>