

HC: Don't pass any final orders in proceedings against agitators

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Madurai: Observing that it is the fundamental right of the people to protest in a peaceful manner, the Madurai bench of the Madras high court has directed the sub-divisional magistrate/ sub-collector of Tuticorin not to pass any final orders in the proceedings initiated under Sections 107 and 111 CrPC against anti-Sterlite protesters. It further directed the police not to issue summons to the protesters.

The court said this while hearing a petition filed by S Mohan, a resident of Tuticorin who is the joint director of an NGO, People's Watch. Mohan stated that recently the high court granted permission to 500 people to take part in the function organised to pay homage to the 13 people who were killed in a police firing on May 22, last year.

He submitted that while this being so, the superintendent of police in an attempt to curtail the people from participating in the meeting, had recommended the sub-divisional magistrate/ sub-collector to initiate action under Sections 107 and 111 of CrPC in the name of maintaining law and order. Mohan said the sub-collector had issued summons to various people in which it was mentioned that mere participation is an offence and termed the persons as offenders.

The officials are serving notices to the family members of the deceased even without respecting the fact that the court had granted permission for the meeting. He stated that the officials are harassing the people in the guise of law and order situation.

Hence, the petitioner prayed to the court to prohibit the sub-collector from continuing process under Sections 107 and 111 CrPC with regard to the Sterlite unit issue and consequently direct the officials not to harass the people of Tuticorin who are democratically protesting against the Sterlite unit.

When the petition was heard on Wednesday, a division bench of justice S S Sundar and justice R Hemalatha made these observations.