

CUSTODIAL TORTURE

CCTV cameras alone do not end human rights violations, say activists

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IN view of the International Day in Support of Victims of Torture observed on June 26, victims and activists on Sunday pressed for the strict implementation of the Jeyaraj-Bennicks Act to prevent custodial torture and to ensure that every citizen gets the fundamental rights guaranteed in Article 21 of the Constitution of India.

Though the state government had partly installed CCTVs at all police stations, most custodial torture victims alleged that

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they were tortured at undisclosed places. The victims and activists said merely installing CCTV cameras in police stations may not end human rights violations.

Somu (name changed), said he was tortured at an abandoned building under Pudukottai police station limits, in connection with a murder-attempt case foisted on him. Somu alleged he was tortured after being produced before magistrate and hospital.

Another victim alleged he was brutally assaulted inside a van, while a person from Kovil-

patti claimed he was attacked at a lodge. An advocate dealing with a woman victim said she was stripped naked and tortured at the Kovilpatti police station and the case is pending with Human Rights Commission. "In most violation cases, doctors collude with police to give fitness certificates, covering up injuries," said Saravanan, an activist and advocate from Kovilpatti.

Speaking to *TNIE*, activist Henri Tiphagne said though the state has been slowly implementing Supreme Court and High Court orders to bring all police stations under CCTV surveillance, the premises lack CCTVs at all spots and posters (mandated by SC) displaying the rights of a person to contact human rights panel or authorities in the event of custodial torture.

The Supreme Court, in the case of *Paramvir Singh Saini vs Baljit Singh and others*, had mandated that all police stations should display posters saying 'the station is under surveillance' in English, Hindi, and regional language.

Joint Action Against Custodial Torture state convener Thiyaagu told *TNIE* that laws pertaining to crime investigation have never allowed corporal punishment and illegal detention, after the abolition of the pre-Independence Whipping Act, 1864, by 1955. "Police investigation takes place at undisclosed locations without serving arrest memo to the suspect's family. The Tamil Nadu Prevention of Custodial Torture Act, also called the Jeyaraj-Bennicks Act, was given the name after the death of the father-son duo caught everybody's attention in 2020," Thiyaagu said.