

SC/ST Commission criticised for inaction towards welfare of conservancy workers

The Commission failed to ensure justice to victims of manual scavenging and manhole deaths, alleges human rights activist Henri Tiphagne

July 28, 2023 09:21 pm | Updated 09:21 pm IST – COIMBATORE



Tamil Nadu State Commission for the Scheduled Castes and the Scheduled Tribes has failed to ensure justice to victims of manual scavenging and manhole deaths, alleged executive director of People's Watch and human

rights activist Henri Tiphagne in Coimbatore on Friday.

Speaking at a State-level public hearing organised by the Social Awareness Society for Youths (SASY) seeking justice for victims of manhole deaths, Mr. Tiphagne alleged that no member from the Commission spared time to attend the meeting.

“An SC/ST Commission was set up in the State by the present government. But it is inactive. It is a dysfunctional Commission,” Mr. Tiphagne charged, adding that compensation was not awarded to several families of conservancy workers who died in the line of duty.

Conservancy workers from several districts and family members of the victims of manhole deaths submitted their grievances at the public hearing led by a panel comprising Mr. Tiphagne, advocate B.B. Mohan, Ponnusamy of Resilience organisation, assistant professor Semmalar Selvi from Loyola College, and journalist Kavin Malar.

V.A. Ramesh Nathan, director of SASY, said that a large number of conservancy workers have not been given the ID card by Tamil Nadu Sanitation Workers' Welfare Board that prevents them from getting various benefits. Such workers do not have a service registry. "The SC/ST Commission should intervene in such matters and recommend suggestions to the government, which it is not doing," he said.

According to a report prepared by SASY, it conducted field visits for 33 incidents of SC/ST atrocities, manual scavenging and manhole deaths that were reported from November 2021 to June 2023 in the State. A total of 43 conservancy workers died during this period.

R. Murugan, State coordinator of SASY, said the process of obtaining ID cards from the welfare board remains a time-consuming process that was yet to be digitalised.

Athi Thamizhar Peravai founder Athiyaman and SASY programme coordinator K. Palanisamy also spoke.

<https://www.thehindu.com/news/cities/Coimbatore/scst-commission-criticised-for-inaction-towards-welfare-of-conservancy-workers/article67132612.ece>