

**Activists demand Assembly session to table commission report on police firing in Thoothukudi Official sources told DH that the Commission has recommended the initiation of criminal and departmental action against the officials**



Anti-Sterlite activists on Friday demanded that the Tamil Nadu government convene the Assembly to discuss the contents of the Justice (retired) Aruna Jegadeesan Commission, which according to reports, has pinned the blame on the police for the May 22, 2018, firing on protesters in Thoothukudi that killed 13 civilians.

Justice Jegadeesan submitted an interim report in May 2021 immediately after the DMK assumed office in the state and followed it up with a detailed 3,000-page final report on its inquiry into the police firing on people who were protesting against expansion plans of Sterlite Copper, a Vedanta-owned company, in the port city of Thoothukudi, 620 km from here.

An English news magazine on Thursday night reported that the Commission's final report has blamed senior police officers and the then Thoothukudi district Collector for "lack of coordination and using excessive lethal force on the rally taken out to mark the 100th day of the protest."

Official sources told DH that the Commission has recommended the initiation of criminal and departmental action against the officials. It is believed that the Commission has concluded that police fired at the "unarmed" protesters without any provocation and has named 17 police officers, including the then IG (South), DIG, district SP, and others.

The Commission was constituted after 13 people were killed in police firing on anti-Sterlite protesters in Thoothukudi. The then AIADMK government closed down the sprawling smelter unit owned by Vedanta, which is now planning to sell the plant. Prof Fathima Babu, one of the first to move the court against Sterlite Copper, told DH that the government should place the full report before the Assembly and hold a detailed discussion on the incidents that took place in Thoothukudi on May 22 and 23, 2018.

"We welcome whatever has been reported in the media. But we want to know the truth on why there was a firing on protesters and who gave instructions to the police. As

many as 13 innocent lives were lost and we want the government to act against those involved in the firing. Justice has to be ensured for our brethren,” she said.

Henri Tiphagne of People’s Watch said the Commission’s findings have once again established that the CBI clearly “messed up” indicting only one DSP for the violence and killings and the NHRC “shamefully closed its case.”

“We demand that Chief Minister M K Stalin urgently convene the TN Legislative Assembly as it has been three months since the report was submitted to the government. The government should release the report to the public to live up to the DMK’s election promise of action against police officers and administrators responsible for the violence,” he said.

G Sundarrajan of Poovulagin Nanbargal said it was “unfair” to put the blame just on police officers. “The then Chief Minister Edappadi K Palaniswami, then Chief Secretary Girija Vaidyanathan, and then DGP should also be investigated,” he said.

<https://www.deccanherald.com/national/south/activists-demand-assembly-session-to-table-commission-report-on-police-firing-in-thoothukudi-1137581.html>