



22.12.2021

**People's Watch welcomes the order of the SHRC and appeals for zero tolerance to violence by uniformed services**

People's Watch has the greatest pleasure to welcome and acknowledge the Tamil Nadu State Human Rights Commission (SHRC) for its order dated 21.12.2021 upholding the version of victims Lakshmi, Rathika, Vaigeswari and Karthika, members of the Irular community, about acts of molestation, assault, torture, unlawful detention and false implication in theft cases that was made out totally against fifteen victims by the then Inspector of Police, Thirukovilur, Mr. R. Srinivasan, along with four other policemen. It is appreciated that not only compensation was recommended but the Hon'ble Commission has also directed speedy departmental action against the police officials in three months and the immediate filing of a final report in the criminal case registered against the policemen in the Thirukovilur Police Station under several provisions of the IPC including 376 and the provisions of the SC/ST PoA Act, 2016, ten years ago. It is pertinent to note that the then Superintendent of Police Villupuram, Mr. Baskaran IPS, in his report to the SHRC dated 1.12.2011 had no particulars and contained no findings. People's Watch wishes to recall that Mr. Baskaran IPS, the then SP, had on 27<sup>th</sup> October, 2011 also issued a press statement denying such an occurrence and that the said versions of Lakshmi and others were only made to escape from the false cases of theft that had been registered against them.

The order of the SHRC coming just after the film Jai Bhim and the fact that even today such false cases against members of the Irula, Kuravar and Kal Ottar communities continue not only in the northern, but also in the central and the southern districts indicates there are serious obligations for the Hon'ble Chief Minister to pay attention to. People's Watch together with public spirited citizens like Prof. Kalyani and the work of SASY headed by Dr. V.A. Ramesh Nathan at Tindivanam stand proof to the fact that such cases of torture, implications in false theft cases and the criminalization of

members of the Irula, Kuravar, Kal Ottar communities and other denotified tribes continue till date with total impunity.

People's Watch therefore demands that the Government of Tamil Nadu not only pays the SHRC ordered compensation of Rs.75,00,000 but also ensure that the disciplinary action is completed within the stipulated time, the chargesheet against the policemen is laid immediately and trial completed as contemplated under the SC/ST PoA Act, 2016 within the next three months i.e before 31<sup>st</sup> March 2022. Delayed justice is justice denied. This case needs a public condemnation of such continuing atrocities and should serve as a wake up call to all IGs and the ADGP (L&O) of Tamil Nadu so that these acts of violence by our uniformed services are not continued.

People's Watch is appalled to also note that it has taken ten long years for such an important complaint to be completed by the SHRC which presently suffers from more than 30 vacancies in its staff members and appeals to the Hon'ble Chief Minister that if justice has to be done to the members of the Irula, Kuravar, Kal Ottar communities and other denotified tribes, it needs a robust, well staffed, well funded, well trained and financially well supported State Human Rights Commission (SHRC), State Commission for Women (SCW), State Commission for Minorities (SCM), State Commission for the Protection of the Rights of the Child (SCPCR), State Commission for SC/STs (SC SC/STs), State Commissioner for Persons with Disabilities (SCPwDs) and a State Information Commission (SIC). We no longer need name sake commissions but independent, diverse, accountable, effective and transparent State Human Rights Institutions (SHRIs) which adhere to the UN Guidelines known as the Paris Principles, 1991.



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