

Collector, SP negligent in duty: Rights group

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TIRUNELVELI, APRIL 1

The Tirunelveli district collector, superintendent of police and the judicial magistrate were on Saturday accused of negligence of duty in connection with the allegation of recent custodial torture led by former Ambasamudram ASP Balveer Singh.

Speaking on behalf of the Joint Action Against Custodial Torture-Tamil Nadu (JAACT-TN), human rights activist Henry Tiphane has accused the Tirunelveli collector of ordering a bland sub-divisional magistrate inquiry as per an old police standing order. "Collector Karthikeyan should have conducted an inquiry into the issue as he is the chairman of the district police complaints authority as per the amended Tamil Nadu police (reforms) Act 2013," said Mr Tiphane, who

added that the collector was neither compliant with the Supreme Court direction as the head of the district-level oversight committee (DLOC). Had the district collector, in his capacity as the DLOC head, periodically reviewed the CCTV footages, which is his responsibility, in the police stations under his jurisdiction, the alleged human rights violations committed by the Ambasamudram ASP could have been prevented, according to the rights activist, who thereby accused the Tirunelveli collector of negligence of duty.

Mr Tiphane also did not spare the district police superintendent and the judicial magistrate, who ordered the remand of the accused, whose teeth were plucked and testicles crushed during interrogation. Both the collector and SP as the chairman and member of the DLOC

and of the district level police complaints authority that have been constituted to inquire into complaints of rape, death and grievous hurt caused to people in police custody, utterly failed in their responsibility and hence they should also be made to repent, demanded the JAACT, whose members alleged that top police officers were misleading the chief minister in issues of police excess. "They did the same in the custodial death of Vignesh a few months ago," said the activists.

Tamil Nadu CPM state committee member K.G. Baskar, who is also part of the JAACT-TN, termed the sub-divisional magistrate inquiry into the issue inadequate, as the Cheranmahadevi sub-collector, who heads the inquiry and the accused IPS officer are of the same cadre, and demanded a free and fair inquiry by a sitting high court judge.