

Tamil Nadu custodial torture victim who retracted statement missing, claims grandfather

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Incidentally, Surya, a resident of Zamin Singampatti village in Tirunelveli, was the first victim to share the details of the torture suffered at the hands of the police officer.



TIRUNELVELI: Grandparents of Surya, one of the victims allegedly tortured in police custody by suspended Ambasamudram ASP Balveer Singh, said their grandson has been missing for the past few days and police should reveal his whereabouts.

Incidentally, Surya, a resident of Zamin Singampatti village in Tirunelveli, who was the first victim to share the details of the torture suffered at the hands of the police officer—including removal of teeth with pliers—on social media, had later changed his statement and told reporters on Wednesday that he fell down and broke his teeth.

Surya's neighbours said they last saw him on Sunday (March 26).

"He was brought to the office of sub-divisional magistrate (SDM) MD Shabbir Alam for an inquiry in a tehsildar's vehicle on Wednesday. After appearing before the SDM, Surya was taken to Cheranmahadevi Government Hospital for a medical examination and was later taken to an unknown place in another vehicle which did not have a rear number plate," sources said.

Surya's grandfather Poothapandi Thevar and his wife Ramalakshmi told reporters on Saturday that their grandson might be in trouble.

"Last week, Surya was taken to Kallidaikurichi police station for an inquiry in connection with the breaking of CCTV cameras in Zamin Singampatti. He returned home and told us that police personnel had removed some of his teeth. Our relatives decided to take up the matter with the state government. We then took him to a private hospital for treatment. Later on, he was again taken away by police officials. On Wednesday, I was shocked to know through newspapers that Surya had said that he lost his teeth in a fall. Surya's father died seven years ago. He is married and has a four-month-old child. The police should reveal his whereabouts," Poothapandi said.



We have sought CCTV footage under RTI: People's Watch

Meanwhile, two human rights organisations, People's Watch and Joint Action Against Custodial Torture, have sought CCTV footage of Ambasamudram police station, one of the three stations where the alleged custodial torture had taken place, under the Right to

Information (RTI) Act within 48 hours.

Speaking to reporters in Tirunelveli, Henri Tiphagne, executive director of People's Watch, said, "We sought the CCTV footage under RTI on March 28. If the police department refuses to give us the footage, we will bring the issue to the notice of the Supreme Court on April 18 when a case related to the installation of CCTV footage in police stations is to be heard by the court."

The activist said as chairman of the District Level Oversight Committee (DLOC) formed on February 20, 2021, in Tamil Nadu based on the direction of the SC, district collector K P Karthikeyan has the responsibility to ensure the proper functioning of CCTV cameras at police stations. He also said the collector should have not ordered the SDM inquiry in the case as he is the complaint authority to conduct an inquiry.

On Saturday, the victims of the alleged custodial torture, Esakkimuthu, Chellappa, Marimuthu, Anthony, Vetha Narayanan and Subash visited the SDM office in Cheranmahadevi. Till 7 pm, the SDM videographed the statement of Vetha Narayanan and Chellappa and also received a written statement from them. Nethaji Subash Sena president and advocate Maharajan accompanied the victims.

<https://www.newindianexpress.com/states/tamil-nadu/2023/apr/02/tamil-nadu-custodial-torture-victim-who-retracted-statement-missing-claims-grandfather-2561875.html>