



Ambasamudram custodial torture: FIR registered against IPS officer Balveer Singh

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Nineteen victims, including two minors, have so far accused Singh of torturing them during custody in Ambasamudram, Vikramasingapuram, Kallidaikurichi and Pappakudi police stations.

TIRUNELVELI: Nineteen days after his suspension over allegations of custodial torture, the Tirunelveli district crime branch police have registered a case against Balveer Singh IPS on Monday.

Tirunelveli district superintendent of police N Silambarasan said the **suspended** Ambasamudram ASP has been booked under Sections 324 (voluntarily causing hurt by dangerous weapons or means), 326 and 506 (i) of the IPC. A few other police personnel have also been named as accused in the FIR, sources said.

Nineteen victims, including two minors, have so far **accused Singh of torturing** them during custody in Ambasamudram, Vikramasingapuram, Kallidaikurichi and Pappakudi police stations. At least 10 of them had said that their teeth were removed by Singh and his team of police personnel. One of the victims, Surya, after being allegedly threatened by police, retracted his statement saying that he broke his teeth in a fall. He **has been missing** for the past many days.

On Monday, Chellappa, Esakkimuthu, E Mariappan, M Mariappan, Arunkumar, Ganesan, Subash, Vetha Narayanan and two minor boys met senior IAS officer P Amudha, who was appointed by the state government to carry out a high-level probe into the allegations. The principal secretary of rural development department is holding her inquiry at the Ambasamudram taluk office.

"Singh rubbed my teeth and gums with stone. I was made to sit with my innerwear at the Ambasamudram police station. I explained to Amudha what happened to me during police custody. My statement was also video-recorded with a smart phone. Amudha asked me if I wanted compensation. I told her that I want Singh's dismissal," a minor victim told TNIE after his deposition before the inquiry officer on Monday.

Commenting on the FIR filed against Singh, executive director of People's Watch, Henry Tiphagne, who accompanied some SC victims to the inquiry, demanded the arrest of the IPS officer.

"We will bring up the Ambasamudram police station CCTV camera issue (of recordings going missing) before the Supreme Court on Tuesday. The Madurai Bench of the Madras High Court is also hearing another case related to this custodial torture the same day. To escape from the courts' wrath, the FIR has been filed now," Tiphagne said.

He also demanded that an IG-level officer be appointed as inquiry officer in the case against Singh. "Sections under Scheduled Caste and Scheduled Tribes (Prevention of Atrocity) Act and Juvenile Justice (Care and Protection of Children) Act should be added to the FIR," he said.

Advocate Maharajan, who is assisting eight victims in the case, demanded a CBI inquiry stating that the Tamil Nadu IPS Officers Association may influence the inquiry officer if the investigation is conducted by a state agency.

"Police should include Section 307 of IPC in the FIR as Singh attempted to kill E Mariappan by crushing his testicles. The victim is still under treatment. Separate cases should be registered against Singh for the crimes that took place in various police stations at different times," he said.

Poothapandi Thevar, grandfather of victim Surya, appeared before Amudha and complained that his grandson has been missing after he gave his statement to Cheranmahadevi sub-divisional magistrate MD Shabbir Alam, who was ordered to conduct an inquiry by the collector as per police standing order.

After advocates associated with People' Watch raised objection, state intelligence wing police personnel were asked to stay off the taluk office campus. Advocate S K Venkat Raman said the state government should give the victims treatment and compensation under Section 357 of CrPC.

After the issue came to light on March 26, DGP C Sylendra Babu shifted Singh to vacancy reserve on March 27. After two days, Chief Minister M K Stalin announced in the Assembly that he had ordered Singh to be immediately suspended.

<https://www.newindianexpress.com/states/tamil-nadu/2023/apr/17/ambasamudram-custodial-torture-fir-registered-againstips-officer-balveer-singh-2566859.html>