



People's Watch

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People's Watch demands immediate suspension of all authorities whose wilful negligence led to the 'murder' of three students, including the District Collector.

Peoples Watch condemns the murder of students - T.Monisha, V. Priyanga and Saranya, all 2nd year students of Bachelor of Naturopathy and Yoga Sciences, in SVS College of Yoga, Naturopathy and Homeopathy of Bangaram village, Salem Main Road, Kallakurichi, Villupuram district. This 'murder' is the result of the willful criminal negligence of several officials of the government and justice institutions such as the District Collector, the Chief Minister's Cell, the Anti Corruption Unit of the Police, the District ADW Officer, the State Human Rights Commission, the Tamil Nadu Legal Service Authority, the Dr. MGR Medical University, the Registrar General of the High Court and a host of others.

There have been numerous complaints of discrimination, mismanagement, mal-administration, non-payment of students, scholarship amount etc., criminal cheating in receipt of fees faced by thousands of students, both in several private as well as government higher educational institutions in the state of Tamil Nadu. Very recent examples came from the famous Madras University only sometime ago. These institutions of higher learning are also well known for vacancies of Vice-Chancellors and very senior functionaries for long periods of time .It is further public knowledge that the aspirants for these high positions pay several lakhs of Rupees to obtain these positions. Interference by the Ministers and

elected representatives of the ruling party is the known state of affairs in the State of Tamil Nadu and the murder of these 3 students is only the tip of the iceberg.

The students of S.V.S College have been protesting for several months now. They have also formally approached several institutions for seeking justice that have been listed earlier with written complaints. More specifically, on 24.08.2015, 16 students submitted a petition containing their grievances to Ms. Lakshmi, the District Collector. On 07.09.2015 the students protested before the office of the District Collector, Villupuram. Since there was no response once again, on 14.09.2015 eight students attempted to commit suicide by setting fire to themselves. The District Collector, Ms. Lakshmi assured them of action. However, no action followed on the institution by the Collector who also refused to share a copy of her report with the students. Therefore on 05.10.15 the 6 students including girls consumed poison and attempted suicide and were admitted to the Mundiapakkam Government Medical College and hospital. Thus, the students protest has been a long standing one and they have preferred complaints to several authorities with no response from them.

The University Grants Commission (UGC) has in the year 2012 come out with a Regulation titled, 'UGC, (Promotion of Equity in Higher Educational Institutions) Regulations 2012', which applies to all higher education institutions in India. This regulation focuses on taking measures against discrimination, promoting equity, monitoring harassment, unfavorable treatment and victimization. The UGC Regulation 2012 demands the appointment of Anti-Discrimination Officers. People's Watch categorically accuses that not even one of the 21 universities and 29 deemed universities in Tamil Nadu and no institution of

higher learning follows these regulations and no awareness has been created on the said issue.

People's Watch therefore demands:

- i) That the government of Tamil Nadu immediately suspend all authorities who have been approached by the students over the past few months on the pending issues and in particular the District Collector of Villupuram, and also including the District ADW Officer, the Anti-Corruption unit etc.
- ii) The postmortem in this case has only to be conducted by a team of doctors from outside Villupuram district and video graphed. The bodies should only be buried and not cremated.
- iii) Since the SHRC is seized of the matter (Case No. 8805/2013). People's Watch demands the Honorable Chairperson of the SHRC to immediately intervene in the matter with extraordinary speed, and ensure that all students of the said college are immediately transferred to other colleges run by the State, at State cost without having to pay extra fees or hostel fees. This will prevent further death of students.
- iv) The Tamil Nadu government is to ensure that all vacancies in colleges run by the government or by the Universities in Tamil Nadu are filled up immediately, giving no more reasons for harassment and the subsequent murder /suicide of young students from vulnerable communities in the state.
- v) People's Watch calls upon all State officials responsible for higher education in Tamil Nadu to ensure there is no discrimination victimization, unfavorable treatment and harassment that prevails in

any institutions of higher education in the State and the immediate implementation of the UGC Regulations 2012 in the State.

- vi) People's Watch further calls the Government of Tamil Nadu and in particular the officials of the department of higher education, all Vice Chancellors as well as the Director General of Police to note that the leaders of student unions in the State who fight for democratization on the university campus and for protecting and promoting students' rights are considered and treated with the utmost dignity while they protest as student union leaders, they are also human rights defenders.
- vii) People's Watch finally calls upon the general student fraternity to collectively ensure justice not only to the three students who were murdered in Villupuram district, but to lakhs of other students who continue to suffer silently in the institutions drawn largely from discriminated communities and vulnerable families.

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[Henri Tiphagne]