

TAMIL NADU

Thoothukudi protesters being harassed even now: rights group

STAFF REPORTER

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‘Proceedings initiated against 100 people who protested against Sterlite’

The Thoothukudi district administration and the police have initiated proceedings against at least 100 people who took part in the protests against Sterlite Copper, said People’s Watch, a human rights organisation, in Madurai on Monday.

The organisation said the police were invoking Section 107 of the Cr.PC against them. The provision deals with action to be initiated against any person “who is likely to commit a breach of the peace or disturb the public tranquillity.”

Alleging that it was a continuation of a series of ‘tactics’ used by the police and district administration to harass the protesters, Henri Tiphagne, executive director of People’s Watch, pointed out that the proceedings termed participation in anti-Sterlite protests as a ‘criminal activity.’

One of the summons, sent to K. Vasanthi from Pandarampatti by the Sub-Collector of Thoothukudi, read that the person had participated in anti-Sterlite protests in the past and that she was likely to indulge in ‘similar criminal activities’ again, thereby disrupting public peace and tranquillity.

Meeting tomorrow

The initiation of these proceedings comes in the backdrop of meeting planned in Thoothukudi on May 22 in remembrance of police firing on the same day last year, in which 13 people were shot dead. Permission had been obtained for the meeting from the Madurai Bench of Madras High Court.

Importantly, the proceedings have been initiated against Fatima Babu and S.

Jenarose, who were among the petitioners who moved the High Court seeking permission for the meeting.

“The police and district administration tried everything they could to stop the meeting. Since the court has granted permission now, they are trying to intimidate people to prevent them from attending the meeting,” Mr. Tiphagne said.

As per section 107 of the Cr. PC, a person who is likely to commit wrongful act, can be asked to execute a bond for good conduct (with or without sureties) for a maximum period of one year. Any breach of the conditions imposed in the bond can result in imprisonment.

Mr. Tiphagne said the proceedings were an indication that the harassment of the protesters had not stopped even after one year since the firing. “Initially, the police used the FIRs filed against the protesters to harass them under the pretext of enquiry. Since all cases were transferred to the CBI, they are using these other tactics,” he said.

“The government, on the one hand, is claiming to be determined to keep Sterlite Copper shut. On the other hand, it is harassing everyone who participated in the protest,” he alleged, adding that the protesters were still living in constant fear.

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