

Custodial torture victims are threatened, says People's Watch

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With one of the custodial torture victims denying that Ambasamudram Assistant Superintendent of Police Balveer Singh had subjected them to inhuman treatment, People's Watch Executive Director Henri Tiphagne said the statement from the victim was expected as the victims were being threatened by the local police officers.

Earlier, People's Watch had condemned the inhuman treatment meted out to a group of persons accused in an attempt to murder case by a team of police officers, led by Balveer Singh, who is under suspension now.

“Why did the Tirunelveli Superintendent of Police not take control of the CCTV footage at the police station. It will speak more than anything else. Why the District Collector, in his capacity as the District Police Complaint Authority, did not initiate any action?,” he asked. He also questioned why no *suo motu* action was initiated by the District Judge, the District Prosecutor and the SP and why protection was not given to the victims under the Witness Protection Scheme. The victims and the witnesses should have been given adequate protection, he said.

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The custodial torture incident was a fit matter, like the Sattankulam incident, for the High Court to initiate *suo motu* proceedings. The Cheranmahadevi Judicial Magistrate, like the then Sattankulam Judicial Magistrate, had failed to notice the grievous injuries resulting out of torture while remanding the accused. The Judicial Magistrates could not mechanically remand the accused, he said.

As part of the bail conditions imposed on the accused, they had to appear and sign before the very same police personnel who tortured them. They were being threatened and tutored by the local police officer to go back on their statements, he added.

PUCL condemns incident

In a statement, People's Union for Civil Liberties (PUCL) strongly condemned the custodial torture. Its president S. Sankaralingam and general secretary A. John Vincent said it was pertinent to note that India signed the Convention Against Torture in 1997, but still it had not ratified it.

Stating that torture had become the culture of the police, the PUCL said so far judiciary and the SP had failed to take any substantial action. The police personnel involved in the incident should be booked and they should be subjected to trial, the PUCL said.

<https://www.thehindu.com/news/cities/Madurai/custodial-torture-victims-are-being-threatened-says-peoples-watch/article66676364.ece>