Kamal Haasan Demands Murder Charges Over Tamil Nadu Police Custody Deaths

The incident has triggered widespread outrage across the country, with many calling Jeyaraj and his son the "George Floyds of India"

Chennai:

Actor-politician Kamal Haasan has demanded Tamil Nadu Chief Minister Edappadi K Palaniswami file murder charges against those accused in the custodial deaths of two men in the town of Tuticorin - a father and son who were allegedly tortured by local police officers before being sent to jail.

Kamal Haasan's representatives visited the family on Sunday, after which the MNM (Makkal Needhi Maiam) chief said "a government and chief minister who blindly support police murders are also prime accused".

"Don't shirk your responsibility by handing over the case to the CBI (Central Bureau of Investigation). Uphold justice. Don't wait for people to forget and don't add this to the list of cases in cold storage," Kamal Haasan tweeted Monday morning

He was referring to the deaths of 13 people during police firing at an anti-Sterlite protest in Tuticorin two years ago. That case was also given to the CBI. No headway has been made in the case since.

Several activists have also said the Tamil Nadu government's decision to hand the case to CBI is unlikely to ensure speedy justice.

"First the state government (s)ought to alter the suspicious death case into a murder case. Otherwise what case is there to transfer?" Henry Tiphagne, the Executive Director of People's Watch, a human rights watchdog, said.

Mr Tiphagne said a court-monitored SIT (special investigation team) headed by a senior police officer was more likely to ensure justice.

The opposition DMK, which threatened to move the court seeking a CBI probe if the state did not investigate properly, called the government "spineless".
"The Chief Minister, who heads the police, is afraid to take action against erring officials. NHRC (National Human Rights Commission) guidelines for a probe by a premier agency in the state haven't been followed. This is how they dilute a case," A Saravanan, the party's spokesperson, said.

Jeyaraj and his son, charged with criminal intimidation and verbally abusing police officers, were arrested June 19 for keeping their mobile phone shop open beyond permitted hours amid the lockdown. They died in hospital four days later but relatives have alleged they were tortured, pointing to injuries to the rectum.

Family members, who have also demanded murder charges, have said they will wait on the decision of the Madurai Bench of the Madras High Court, which has ordered a Judicial Magistrate's probe.

Jignesh Mevani
@jigneshmevani80

Dear Bollywood celebrities, have you heard what happened in Tamil Nadu or does your Instagram activism only extend for other countries? The George Floyds of India are far too many. The story of such police violence & sexual abuse is just heartbreaking.
#JusticeForJeyarajAndFenix
8:24 PM · Jun 26, 2020

11.6K

4.6K people are Tweeting about this

The incident has triggered widespread outrage across the country, with many calling Jeyaraj and his son the "George Floyds of India". Bollywood actress Priyanka Chopra, cricketer Shikhar Dawan and Jignesh Mevani, an independent MLA from Gujarat, were among those who spoke out on the issue.