

All 9 Cops Convicted In Tamil Nadu Father-Son Custodial Death Case

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Madurai:

A court in Tamil Nadu's Madurai district on Monday convicted all nine police personnel accused in the custodial deaths of trader P Jayaraj and his son J Benicks in 2020. The court will decide on the punishment on March 30.

Among the convicted are Inspector S Sridhar, Sub-Inspectors P Raghu Ganesh and K Balakrishnan, head constables S Murugan and A Saamidurai, and constables M Muthuraj, S Chelladurai, X Thomas Francis, and S Veilumuthu. Pal Durai, a constable, had died amid the pandemic when the trial was on. A female head constable's deposition as a witness turned crucial for the conviction.

The custodial torture dates back to June 19, 2020, when Jayaraj and Benicks, who ran a mobile shop, were arrested for allegedly keeping their shop open beyond permitted hours during the lockdown, a claim later found to be false.

The men were tortured at the Sattankulam Police Station in Thoothukudi district the whole night till early morning, and were then put behind bars in the Kovilpatti Sub Jail after a local magistrate remanded them to judicial custody, ignoring their severe injuries from torture. However, over the next two days, both complained of breathlessness and died in a hospital on June 22 and 23.

The family welcomed the verdict and thanked the judiciary for the support. Jayaraj's eldest daughter, Percy, said that the family is expecting capital punishment. "This verdict should stand as a warning against all custodial murders that have happened so far," said Percy.

"Justice has definitely been served", said Henri Tiphagne, Executive Director of People's Watch, which had spearheaded the case. He acknowledged the stand taken by the judiciary, including the Supreme Court, which had ensured the accused weren't out on bail. "Madurai doesn't have a vulnerable witness deposition centre, and despite this, the witnesses deposed without fear only because the accused were not out and granting bail in such cases goes against the root of justice," said Tiphagne.

Besides torture, there were allegations of destruction of evidence and abuse of power. The men who suffered torture were forced to clean their own blood, while authorities disposed of blood-stained clothes. Relatives of the men had also alleged torture by insertion of a police lathi into the rectum.

The Madurai Bench of the Madras High Court took suo motu cognisance and issued multiple directives to ensure a fair investigation. Following public outrage, the Tamil Nadu government had ordered a CBI probe and transferred 24 police personnel.

(With inputs from Mithraa Anand)

, [Madurai Court](#), [Father Son Custody Deaths](#)