

TAMIL NADU

A year on, Thoothukudi families await justice



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Probes into riot and subsequent police excesses have not attained finality

A year since the [gunning down of 13 persons by the police during the anti-Sterlite agitation in Thoothukudi](#), justice eludes the families of the victims. The probes – both by the CBI and a commission headed by retired judge Aruna Jagadeesan – into the riot and subsequent police gunfire that also left hundreds injured, have not attained finality.

The National Human Rights Commission (NHRC), which launched an independent inquiry, had closed its report.

“Since adequate compensation has been paid to the victims and appropriate steps have

been taken by the State government to bring the law and order situation under control, and the Judicial Commission is already looking into the angle of use of force/police excesses, if any, no further intervention in the matter is required. Report is taken on record and the case stands closed,” the NHRC concluded. However, People’s Watch sees this action of the NHRC as of no consequence.

The Hindu explains: Sterlite protests



The NHRC, an ‘A’ status National Human Rights Institution (NHRI) as accredited by the Global Alliance of NHRIs, “in this case, chose to be toothless,” it has said.

“[The NHRC] has failed to use its own powers under the Protection of Human Rights, which is more wide and powerful than the Terms of Reference of the Judicial Commission appointed by the Government of [Tamil Nadu](#),” it said, in a report released on the eve of the first anniversary of the violence and police action that shook the State.

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Thoothukudi not
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says Sterlite
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Meanwhile, the National Commission for Scheduled Castes, which conducted a probe as members of the SC community were among those killed, and the Tamil Nadu Commission for Protection of Child Rights, which conducted an inquiry on the ‘illegal detention’ of children in a police firing range, have not made their reports public.

The CBI, which took up the investigation following an order of the Madurai Bench of the Madras High Court on August 14 last, was initially given four months to complete its inquiry.

However, even after nine months, the probe is on, without a chargesheet being filed.

 The police are trying to stop meetings organised to condole the deaths of the 13 people killed in the firing on the first-year anniversary of Tamil Nadu's worst-ever human rights violation. No justice has been done to the families of those killed so far

M.H. JAWAHIRULLAH,
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 The killing of the 13 people shocked the whole world. Although one year has already gone by since the shootings, it is sad that there has been no justice for the families, nor has any action been taken against the police personnel who shot them. We condemn the anti-people Edappadi Palaniswami government for its inaction

K. BALAKRISHNAN, CPI(M)



As of May, the Aruna Jagadeesan Commission has completed its inquiry with 329 witnesses, including the kin of the deceased / injured.

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The State provided jobs to 19 relatives of the deceased and those grievously injured. While 17 were employed as Village Assistant, which has a pay of around ₹12,000 per month, two were offered jobs as noon meal cook's assistants for around ₹5,000 monthly.

"I was earlier posted near Perurani, and I could not afford bus expenses from the meagre pay I was getting. After I asked for a transfer, I was posted at Mappillaiyurani," says G. Maheswari, mother of Kaliappan, who was killed.

Precedent not followed

While the precedent of providing better-paying jobs as Junior Assistants to family members of seven persons killed in the 2011 Paramakudi police firing exists, this was not done in Thoothukudi.

G. Princeton, who had his right leg amputated after a bullet pierced through it, is yet to receive any government guarantee that the maintenance cost of around ₹7 lakh for his prosthetic leg would be taken care of.

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People's Watch, in its report 'A year after Thoothukudi burned', has noted that counselling was not given to traumatised family members. Further, the ex-gratia of ₹5 lakh paid to those grievously injured was inadequate as it was even difficult to meet their medical expenses. Enhancement of compensation to those grievously injured was also recommended by the NHRC.

Those injured were given temporary ‘persons with disabilities’ card but not briefed on how to use them, the NGO said.

Henri Tiphagne, executive director, People’s Watch, charged that even now police permission was not being granted for those wanting to pay homage to the victims and instead they were being booked. “On the other hand, Sterlite Copper is giving prasadam at Tiruchendur temple,” he alleged.

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