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PRESS STATEMENT

How long will Tamil Nadu remain a silent spectator to honour killings ? Now between two dalit sub castes ? People's Watch appeals to the Cm and Leader of the Opposition to jointly act.

People Watch condemns the '*honour killing*' of Solairaj and Jothi belonging to Parayar and Pallar 'sub-castes' of the Scheduled Caste communities in Tamil Nadu, taken place ironically in the Samathuvapuram (Equality village) at Keelurpuram in Villathikulam, Tuticorin District named after our great leader Periyar.

This is the third case of an *honour killing* in the past two weeks while the state has seen around 190 such killings in the past years.

When the Tamil Nadu Legislative Assembly is in session, it is high time that all political parties come together to unitedly and unanimously resolve to bring in a special law in the state to prohibit interference with the freedom of matrimonial alliances. But this is no more sufficient. The public no longer will trust political parties in this act after seeing the role caste recently played in the recent elections to our Parliament and Legislature. Therefore, for a long term lasting change, we need to simultaneously introduce the teaching of the core of the Preamble to our Constitution and our fundamental rights especially on the right to equality through a dedicated human rights education curriculum in all schools in Tamil Nadu, whether public, private, aided, non-aided or minority run. This has to be in schools for all our children and by teachers who are in turn specially trained for the same by experts in human rights education.

TamilNadu has already had the unique experience of teaching human rights in schools in both DMK and AIADMK governments. Incidentally, the present Chief

Secretary was the first Director of the Adi Dravidar Welfare Department that granted permission to People's Watch to introduce the teaching of human rights education in all Adi Dravida schools from class 6 to 8. It was thereafter, under the able leadership of Dr. V. Vasanthi Devi (Former Chairperson of the TamilNadu Commission for Women and a Former Vice Chancellor of the MS University) that this experiment of HRE in schools spread from TamilNadu to 21 states in the country engaging with over 15,000 teachers and 15 lakh students with teaching modules in over 8 different Indian languages.

People's Watch believes that no amount of elders in our state alone can sensitize our population – be they judges, academicians, lawyers, teachers or professionals on the values of equality in this state. If this has to be initiated and achieved successfully, it should immediately begin in all our schools immediately without wasting time.

The brutality of the two killings in this case is also telling and shocking. It shows what caste anger could be even within two sub-castes among the SCs. It was not a simple double murder. But one where the inhuman murderers wanted to ensure that both the heads of the husband and wife were chopped off and the hands of the girl were also cut off. This alone indicates the extent to which caste enmity and anger presently exists with the state.

People's Watch wishes to state that it is time for all elders within the SC community in the state – from all SC sub castes – from all political parties, all political movements and all NGOs and civil society organizations to put aside their differences if any, and resolve as leaders, that this cannot be allowed to continue for one day more. It is high time for a body such as the National Campaign on Dalit Human Rights (NCDHR) and its National Dalit Movement for Justice (NDMJ) to take the lead in this in the state. This is also the time for all Dalit leaders to resolve that as a community they will uphold the right of Dalit

women to speak and effectively and equally participate in all matters that affect them and ensure that there is also no violence against them.

People's Watch also calls upon the Hon'ble Chief Minister and Hon'ble Opposition Leader to jointly and urgently call for a meeting of all political parties, whether they are recognised or not, to collectively resolve against any such further practice of interfering in the freedom of matrimonial alliances in the state. Their call should be for zero tolerance towards any such practices in future. If they fail to do this at this crucial hour in a joint manner, they will only be seen to be refusing the role that the citizens of this state expect from its statesmen and political leaders.

People's Watch calls upon all NGOs and civil society organizations working in the nook and corner of the state to also keep a watch on any inter caste marriages that take place in the state and ensure the physical protection, legal support and also moral support that the young couple require so that there are no more honor killings in the state.

People's Watch also demands that the Chief Justice of the Madras High Court along with its Bench in Madurai, the Tamil Nadu State Human Rights Commission (SHRC), the Tamil Nadu State Commission for Women (SCW) , the Tamil Nadu State Legal Services Authority (SLSA) and all District Legal Services Authority (DLSAs) to come forward to take up such cases suo motto and immediately render assistance and ensure pressure on the State Government through their respective actions and recommendations for the bringing in of a special law against such honor killings in the state. It is now clear with case of Solairaj and Jothi that the SC / ST POA 2018 is not sufficient to attend to honor killings.



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