

# Vedaranyam caste violence: NGO seeks to invoke SC/ST Act

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Madurai: Human rights body People's Watch (PW) , a Madurai based NGO, has pressed for proper use of the Scheduled Caste and Scheduled Tribes (Prevention of Atrocities) Act 2018, in the violence between the thevars and dalits at Vedaranyam in Nagapattinam district on August 25.

Appreciating the district administration and the police for preventing the violence from spreading by installing a new Ambedkar statue in less than a day after one was vandalised by anti-social elements on August 25, PW executive director Henri Tiphagne has expressed concern over not using the SC/ST Act against the miscreants.

Three days after the incident, the district collector and the top police officers have not taken steps to invoke Sections 3(1)(t), 3(1)(u), 3(1)(v) of the Act that deals with damaging or defying any object generally known to be held with high esteem by the member of the SC/ST communities, he said.

He said that 3(1)(t) deals with damaging, destroying or defying such an object, 3(1)(u) for words written, spoken or by signs to promote feeling of enmity, hatred or ill-will against members of the SC/ST community and 3(1)(v) writing or words disrespecting a late person held in high esteem by members of those communities. The activist stated that amendment in the Act was carried out in 2015 to include new provisions to attract such incidents of caste violence of the above said nature. Expressing concern over the top officers not invoking the specific sections of the Act, he added that political parties and dalit leaders too have not pressed for such provisions. "Instead they only demanded the arrest of the accused and detention under Goondas Act," he said.