

Independent team puts toll of Tuticorin violence at 15

Shanmughasundaram.J@timesgroup.com

Chennai: Calling the police firing in Tuticorin on May 22 and 23 a case of “unjustified and unwanted” murder, the final report of the 23-member people’s inquest stated that it was a fallout of the total breakdown of civilian authority.

“Police repression is continuing even today. The Tuticorin police continue the terror regime and people are not allowed to participate in programmes on the police firing,” said retired high court judge D Hariparanthaman after releasing the 260-page report, “The Day Tuticorin Burned,” at a function in Loyola College here on Sunday.

The report would be submitted to the families of the victims on July 22 in Tuticorin, said the members of the inquest team.

“By deliberately absenting themselves from the vicinity on May 22, the entire administration abnegated its duties in a cowardly manner and ceded all civilian authority and power to the police,” said the inquest team in the final report, adding, “It amounts to dereliction of duty of public servants and was strongly contributory for the violence of the illfated day and resulted in the deaths of innocent people.”

It also stated that police did not adhere to the standard operating procedures to disperse the crowd and questioned the presence of sharpshooters who were placed strategically. It said there was evidence of premeditated police planning with a view to maim or kill the protesters.

The report insisted on a criminal investigation to fix the responsibility on the authorities who unleashed the havoc and gunned down 13 people. “All deaths must be treated as murders at the FIR stage in line with prevalent law, and investigation must proceed on these lines until evidence points otherwise,” Hariparanthaman said. He criticised the

judiciary for allowing the authorities to impose Section 144 and demanded an end to the intimidation and arbitrary arrests of random people under the 'open' FIRs registered against numerous unnamed people.

Several people had been detained illegally till date, said Henri Tiphagne of the team, adding that 15 people were killed in the police firing and related incidents.

<https://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/india/unjustified-murders-by-cops-tuticorin-report/articleshow/65002409.cms>