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Those who fired were not in uniform: People's Watch

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MADURAI: Violation of human rights in the police firing on Tuesday was total and those who fired the shots at the people were not in police uniform, alleged human rights activist and executive director of People's Watch, Henry Tiphagne, who was witnessed to what he called police excesses.

Q: Were you present during the protest in Tuticorin on Tuesday?

HT: Yes, we went there to monitor the protest and had informed the superintendent of police of Tuticorin as well as the State Human Rights Commission of our move to do so.

Q: What did you see?

No formal procedure was followed before the police firing. Lathicharge and tear gas should have preceded the police firing if any, but both happened only outside the collectorate premises. It was direct firing inside the collectorate.

Q: Did firing take place at any other place except the collectorate?

HT: Yes, there was firing in Therespuram also.

Q: Did you see the police open fire?

HT: I saw some persons open fire, but I do not know if they were police as they were not in uniform. No proper public

announcement was made before the police firing and it was indiscriminate.

Q: Would you say that the firing was not done with an intent to disperse the crowds?

HT: Yes, for one if at all the police wanted to disperse the crowds they should have used pellets and not bullets. The fact that some of the victims received the bullets in their mouth is proof that the motive of the police was to kill.

Q: Were the protesters the reason for opening fire?

HT: No. They were not out of control and continued to march towards the collectorate, but it was only after the police opened fire that they entered the Sterlite staff quarters and set fire to vehicles.

Q: What is your immediate demand?

HT: The inquiry should be conducted only by NHRC and SHRC and not a retired judge, as commissions headed by retired judges have failed to deliver justice in many cases.