

Demands High Court-monitored investigation

Madurai-based human rights organisation People's Watch has decided to form a high-level committee comprising eminent women from civil society to conduct an enquiry into the Pollachi sexual abuse case.

Addressing media persons here on Wednesday, the NGO's executive director, Henri Tiphagne, said the committee would announce a dedicated phone number and other details through which the victims could report incidents with absolute confidentiality.

"Nineteen persons, including retired IPS officer G. Thilagavathy, retired IAS officer Qudsia Gandhi, academician V. Vasanthi Devi and advocates Sudha Ramalingam Geeta Ramaseshan and Arulmozhi have already agreed to be part of the committee. We have requested a few more," he said.

Arguing that there was no reason to trust the State police with a fair investigation as evident from the manner in which they had handled the case so far, he expressed hope that the enquiry by the high-level committee would encourage more victims to come forward.

"The enquiry will pressure the police to keep the investigation on the right track," he said.

People's Watch appealed to the Madras High Court (MHC) to initiate suo motu cognisance of the issue and appoint a Special Investigation Team (SIT) under its monitoring to investigate the case. "The MHC has the largest number of women judges in the country and it is headed by a woman Chief Justice. It will be appropriate if the court takes cognisance and appoint an SIT," he said.

Coming down heavily on Superintendent of Police R. Pandiarajan for the manner in which the case was being handled, and mainly for revealing

the name of the complainant, he said the SP was in contempt of a Supreme Court order.

“In the judgment delivered in December 2018 in Nipun Saxena and another versus Union of India case, the SC ordered that no person can reveal the name of the victim or even in a remote manner disclose any facts that can identify the victim. Here, an SP officially discloses the victim’s name in a statement,” he said.

Highlighting that the SP already had a history of assaulting a woman during a protest, Mr. Tiphagne demanded that he be removed from the post and punitive action be initiated.

<https://www.thehindu.com/todays-paper/tp-national/tp-tamilnadu/womens-committee-to-be-formed-in-pollachi-case-peoples-watch/article26527577.ece>