

‘Stop encounter model’: Human rights org slams TN govt over extrajudicial killings

The organisation, JAACT, has demanded the suspension of the Chennai Commissioner of Police and Additional Director General of Police (Law and Order).

Published on: 24 Sep 2024, 11:35 am

As anger escalates across Tamil Nadu at the second alleged extrajudicial killing in the state in two weeks, several human rights organisations including the Joint Action Against Custodial Torture - Tamil Nadu (JAACT) have slammed the actions of the police and demanded that the state government end the “encounter model of preserving law and order.”



In their statement, JAACT urged the Madras High Court to take suo-motu cognisance of the matter and order a commission of inquiry to investigate the three extrajudicial killings. They also asked the State Human Rights Commission (SHRC) to intervene and conduct an independent inquiry and demanded that the Greater Chennai Police (GPC) commissioner and Davidson Devasirvatham IPS, Additional Director General of Police (Law and Order), be suspended.

On September 23, a history sheeter identified as ‘Seizing’ Raja was shot by police in an allegedly encounter-style extrajudicial killing in Chennai. This comes only a week after another history-sheeter, Kakathoppu Balaji, was killed.

This is the third such extrajudicial killing in Chennai in recent times. On July 14, one of the accused in the murder of Tamil Nadu BSP president K Armstrong, Thiruvengatam was shot and killed by police.

Condemning the shootings, JAACT said, “We are shocked to note that this is the third incident of an extra-judicial killing by Greater Chennai Police (GCP) in less than ten weeks since Arun IPS assumed office as the Commissioner on 8 July 2024, days after the murder of Armstrong—the then state president of Bahujan Samaj Party. Arun, while assuming office as CoP, told the media that ‘We will speak in a language that rowdies will understand’ in response to a question on curbing rowdyism. We as a civil society collective against torture, remain concerned and condemn such a blatant and irresponsible statement by the highest police officer of Chennai city who is responsible uphold law and order in the city.”

Initially it was believed that Raja was arrested and killed allegedly in connection with the Armstrong murder, but police later said that the cases were not related. On September 22, Raja’s wife released a video saying that her he had stepped out of the house to buy food at 9 am and failed to return. It was only in the evening that she came to know of her husband’s arrest, she says in the video and alleges that police had threatened to kill Raja in a “fake encounter”.

In their statement, JAACT said, “While we completely understand the sensitivity in the investigation of Armstrong’s murder, use of extra-judicial measures including ‘encounters’ will not bring the perpetrators to justice. Since last night, Seizing Raja was said to be a person of interest in Armstrong's murder investigation, but after his killing, the GCP clarified that Raja was not apprehended related to this case. This clarification raises many questions and will lead to the public losing confidence in the police investigation in Armstrong’s murder investigation. The recent incidents reveal the nexus between rowdies and members of political parties including those practising law, hence the onus is on the government to conduct impartial investigation to prosecute the real perpetrators which will infill confidence on the police force among the public.”

JAACT said according to the data collated by them, this is the 16th extrajudicial killing since the DMK came to power in 2021. “We would like to reiterate that extra-judicial killings or custodial torture should not be tolerated in a progressive society like Tamil Nadu and the government should put an end to its 'encounter model' of preserving law and order. This also denotes that the government has lost its faith in effective prosecution of perpetrators and are relying on illegal and extrajudicial measures to cover up the incompetence,” the statement said.

<https://www.thenewsminute.com/kerala/kerala-actor-mla-mukesh-arrested-and-released-on-bail>