



People's Watch

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A Network Towards Human Rights Monitoring, Intervention, Campaign, Research and Documentation
(A Programme Unit of the Centre for Promotion of Social Concerns)

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People's Watch's open response to the statement of the Tamil Nadu IPS officers' Association President, Mr. Abhash Kumar IPS DGP

People's Watch in its history of working for decades on issues concerning impunity, custodial violence and torture by the State authorities, has at times even gone out of its comfort zone to maintain our organization's credibility and reputation. We have ensured to speak no ill about police officers. That has been our reputation which we have been adhering to with care and caution.

People's Watch has definitely been critical of police when we felt the need to be, of its actions, however, we have always been in the front to hail upright, honest and straightforward police officers in the State. People's Watch is not an anti-police organization, in fact, we believe in a society that respects the rule of law and an active democratic police system.

We are shocked to see the statement signed by Thiru Abhash Kumar IPS, [DGP and Director, Fire and Rescue Services] President of the Tamil Nadu IPS Officers Association (Tamil Nadu Chapter). We hesitate to even believe that is the opinion of all IPS officers in Tamil Nadu. The President of the TNIPSA has come out with a statement with the subject stating *media trial regarding allegation of custodial violence against "Balveer Singh, IPS"*. In a country where freedom of expression and opinion is upheld as a fundamental right, we are appalled to read a part of the statement which mentions that *"various vested interests are being propagated in social media to influence evidence, witnesses, investigating agencies and the public"*.

What would Abhash Kumar, IPS have to say about police parading "alleged criminals" before the media many a times even before an FIR is registered and no investigation is carried out? IPS officers need to know that this is not only a case of gruesome torture that has taken place in Kallidaikurichi, Ambasamudram and Vikramasingapuram police stations by the now suspended Assistant Superintendent of Police Balveer Singh IPS, who was initially in uniform and later changed into a T-shirt, short pants and white gloves.

Let me list to the IPS officers Association some of the major violations that have taken place in this whole investigation:

- 1) Firstly, as far as the Collector and SP are concerned, why was there no immediate inquiry by the District Police Complaints Authority in which both of them are members? Why?
- 2) The PSO enquiry now undertaken does not relate to Crime No. 49 of 2023 of Ambasamudram police station or Crime No. 63 of 2023 of V.K. Puram PS but relates to FIR in Crime No. 69 of 2023 of Kallidaikurichi PS.
- 3) Why was the power under the District Police Complaints Authority not used by the District Collector and SP and only a PSO enquiry under Crime No. 69 of 2023 of Kallidaikurichi police station resorted to. Was it to avoid the registration of an FIR in a case against an IPS officer. The statement of the TNIPSA almost substantiates this.
- 4) Has the IPS Officers' Association verified Tamil Nadu Government's G.O. No 45 dated 09.02.2021 following the judgement in the case of Paramvir Singh Saini v. Baljit Singh & Others [Special Leave Petition (Criminal) No. 3543 of 2020 dated December 2, 2020] on whether all directions about CCTV and its locations and formation of the State Level Oversight Committee [SLOC] and District Level Oversight Committee [DLOC] has been followed or not. Before issuing such a statement, please verify whether the Ambasamudram police station has followed all directions of the said CCTV judgement.
- 5) Have you verified the existence of the CCTV footage of Kallidaikurichi, Ambasamudram and Vikramasingapuram police stations where this grave torture has taken place leading to full room being blood stained which were later to be forcibly wiped by the victims themselves?
- 6) Why have not you verified the reasons behind keeping two juveniles (names withheld) in the police station under the custody of policemen in uniform; later tortured, handcuffed and transported in private vehicles at the cost of their family members [just as it happened in the Sathankulam case] which is totally contrary to the mandates under Juvenile Justice Act, 2015. Is this the reputation of your TNIPSA?

7) Does the TNIPSA not know that the victims, in this case, belong to various communities including SC/ST and some of them were selectively abused by the officials using their caste?

The list is extremely long and will become longer if an FIR into the incident of torture at three different locations - Kallidaikurichi, Ambasamudram and Vikramasingapuram police stations – as well as at the Central Prison, Palayamkottai is not registered against Balveer Singh along with other officers and police personnel responsible for directly engaging in acts of torture and doing away with the evidence, threatening the victims not to depose in front of the doctor and the Judicial Magistrate and all this kept secret from 10 to 24 March 2023.

Clean your house – Mr. Abhash Kumar IPS – before issuing this kind of a statement. We are all aware that there are many skeletons in your cupboard. I also acknowledge the fact that there are very straightforward and honest IPS officers in the State who will not agree with this statement which you have released today under the aegis of the TNIPSA. All this have taken place when the Tamil Nadu Legislative Assembly is in session.

Media exposition and public pressure alone have led to the few follow-ups that we are witnessing today - whether it is the suspension of Balveer Singh IPS and putting him on a compulsory waitlist; placing SP Saravanan again on compulsory wait; SP CIDs and SB CID being transferred etc.. Why was your TNIPSA silent when a woman IPS officer was sexually harassed by a male IPS officer of a very high rank?

The Chief Minister of this State owes an apology from your TNIPSA for misguiding him with your statement and this statement is proof of your members tampering with witnesses, ensuring one of your brothers is not taken into custody. The anti-torture and human rights movements across the globe will be following the actions taken up in this regard and will not remain a mute spectator to this pathetic incident of an IPS officer of your stature running to the rescue and using the position as president of TNIPSA to protect a subordinate officer from illegal actions they have committed.



(Henri Tiphagne)

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