

Book ASP Balveer Singh, probe cover-up attempt, say outfits

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Tirunelveli: Various political parties and human rights organisations including CPM, SDPI, People's Watch and Joint Action committee Against Custodial Torture (JAACT-TN), on Saturday jointly demanded registration of FIR against former Ambasamudram ASP Balveer Singh, who is accused of resorting to

custodial torture and plucking out suspects' teeth.

At a press meet, representatives of the organisations said an IPS officer is not above the law and hence an FIR must be registered and an investigation done. Pointing out that the victims were being threatened, they sought a fair probe and action against anyone, including police officers, involved in covering up the torture.

Henri Tiphagne, executive director, People's Watch, said that according to Police Reforms Act, 2013, the district collector has the authority to conduct an investigation as he heads the district police complaint authority. "Instead, he designated the sub-collector based on police standing order, which is an outdated practice. The collector has failed to carry out his responsibility and was negligent in handling the complaint," he added.

The activist also observed that though People's Watch asked for CCTV camera footage from stations, they are yet to receive it. "In December 2020, the Supreme Court ordered that CCTV cameras must be installed in all police stations, covering all angles in all rooms, with audio, video, and night vision.

"If any CCTV camera is not functioning, the particular police station SHO or inspector must communicate it to the district collector and should also report the arrests and interrogations in the meantime," he said.

Tiphagne noted that the district collector or the SP who is a member of DLOC should have got the CCTV camera footage of Ambasamudram police station. "There is also failure on the part of the judicial magistrate. Under section 54 of CrPC, a medical exam has to be performed before the accused is produced before the judicial magistrate and a report has to be submitted stating they are fit for remand. If remand of the accused is being pushed at 11 pm at night, the judicial magistrate should have taken notice. If he had interacted properly, the victims may have spoken out," he said.

He added that under section 55A CrPC, it is the duty of the person having the custody of an accused to take reasonable care of their health.

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