Who ordered opening of fire on anti-Sterlite protesters, asks High Court

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The Madras High Court on Monday wanted to know who ordered the opening of fire by the police on civilians during the May 2018 Thoothukudi anti-Sterlite protests which led to the death of as many as 13 people and left many others injured.

A Division Bench of Justices S.S. Sundar and N. Senthilkumar raised the question during the hearing of a writ petition filed in 2021 by human rights activist Henri Tiphagne against the closure of a complaint lodged by him with the National Human Rights Commission (NHRC).

When a counsel representing the then Deputy

The judges were hearing a writ petition filed in 2021 against the closure of a complaint lodged with the NHRC. FILE PHOTO

Superintendent of Police Linga Thirumaran questioned the maintainability of the writ petition, the senior judge in the Bench retorted that all police officers responsible for the firing incident must have been prosecuted for murder. Since all revenue as well as police officials involved in the incident had

been parties to the petition, Justice Sundar said: "Grave injustice has been done. This is a serious matter. Is this how you want to treat the common public? You all should be prosecuted for murder." Later, the Bench decided to continue the hearing on the writ petition on July 15.

A connected public in-

terest litigation petition filed by J. Vanitha, mother of 17-year old girl J. Snowlin, who was among the 13 protesters shot dead by the police, was listed for hearing before the first Division Bench of Acting Chief Justice R. Mahadevan and Mohammed Shaffiq.

In her plea, the petitioner had sought registration of murder case against all officials responsible for the police firing and to enhance the compensation amount from ₹25 lakh to ₹1 crore to the kin of each victim besides constructing a memorial for them where the incident occurred.

After hearing the arguments, the ACJ replied that necessary administrative orders would be passed on the requests placed by both sides.