

## **Alleged torture by ASP: TN places six policemen in 'vacancy reserve'**

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Under all-round attack for its handling of the case relating to the custodial torture of suspects by ASP Balveer Singh, the Tamil Nadu government on Wednesday placed in "vacancy reserve" six policemen, including three inspectors, under whose police stations the alleged excesses took place.

The action by the government came two days after it shifted Tirunelveli district Superintendent of Police (SP) P Saravanan to the office of the Director General of Police, and put on "compulsory wait". In an order issued on Wednesday, DIG (Tirunelveli range) Pravesh Kumar said inspectors of Ambasamudram, Kallidaikurichi, and V K Puram have been placed in "vacancy reserve."

The shocking allegations of custodial torture was levelled by at least 10 men from Ambasamudram in Tirunelveli district. Many persons, including minor children, alleged that they were tortured by the ASP.

The DIG also transferred three other police personnel - one sub-inspector and two constables -- attached to the Special Branch and placed them in 'vacancy reserve.' The move comes as the Tamil Nadu government is mulling launching criminal action against Balveer Singh, the ASP in Tirunelveli district who is now under suspension for allegedly breaking the teeth of suspects using a cutting plier and subjecting them to torture.

The suspended policemen were working in police stations where the ASP allegedly tortured the suspects.

The DMK government has come under severe criticism from various quarters for its handling of the issue. Though the government placed the ASP under suspension, rights activists and political parties feel the police officer should be punished for his "inhuman activities." However, the government came under pressure from police officers not to go harsh on Singh, keeping in mind the morale of the force.

Pushed to the corner, the government might now file an FIR with the State Human Rights Commission (SHRC) insisting on criminal charges against Singh for his excesses. The SHRC has already investigated the suspended ASP and recorded his statement on the incidents.

The IPS Officers' Association (Tamil Nadu chapter) also waded into the controversy by criticising the media for its coverage and maintaining that "pre-judged reporting may adversely affect the ongoing investigation."

Henry Tiphagne of People's Watch said each of those who have not been transferred but put on a compulsory wait from Ambasamudram Sub Division are those who were engaged directly in "acts of torture against persons including minors" and further threatened victims and witnesses not to depose by offering them bribes.

"All directly engaged in offences u/s 120 B IPC 201 IPC besides other sections concerning acts of torture, SC/ST POA & JJ Act. How long will the DGP wait?" he asked.

Alleged custodial torture of people in police custody isn't new in Tamil Nadu with a slew of such cases reported in the past few years. A father-son duo died in 2020 due to injuries suffered from custodial torture by policemen.

<https://www.deccanherald.com/national/south/alleged-torture-by-asp-tn-places-six-policemen-in-vacancy-reserve-1207041.html>