

JAACT claims 'Savukku' Shankar was tortured in custody, condemns police action

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The association also criticised Savukku Shankar for using derogatory language against women working in police and the media.

Human rights organisation Joint Action Against Custodial Torture (JAACT) on Friday, May 15, claimed that Tamil Youtuber 'Savukku' Shankar was subjected to custodial torture by Coimbatore police. Issuing a statement in this regard, they said that "torture, in any



situation for any reason, is strictly condemnable." While condemning the police torture, they also censured Shankar's derogatory comments against women police personnel.

'Savukku' Shankar was arrested by the Coimbatore police on May 4 for alleging that women police officers were giving sexual favours to a senior police officer to get promoted. "Does a female sub-inspector fall in love with an IG because of his looks? Everywhere [a high-ranking male officer] goes, subordinate officers who are women fall in love with him. Is it because of his looks? It's because if they adjust with him, they can get a good posting, that's why," he had said. He made these objectionable comments during an interview with Felix Gerald, editor of YouTube channel RedPix.

JAACT also condemned the arrest of Felix Gerald.

"Coimbatore police officials have brutally tortured YouTuber Savukku Shankar by wrapping a cloth around him and beating him. His left arm has been broken. The torture happened in the presence and command of the Coimbatore Police Superintendent Senthilkumar, which JAACT has confirmed. The police officials have not denied any of the allegations levelled against them," the statement read.

However, the Department of Prisons and Correctional Services had denied that Savukku was assaulted in Central Prison. "No prisoner has been assaulted in Central Prison, Coimbatore, either by prison personnel or by other prison inmates," a press release said.

Criticising Savukku Shankar for using derogatory language against women working in police and the media, JAACT wrote, "This is a serious human rights violation. We condemn these statements. Also, he has justified police torture in several events and has many times stood against the victims. Additionally, in connection with Srimathi's death, his support for the principal cannot be forgotten."

However, they maintained that it is the responsibility of the judiciary to decide whether Savukku Shankar was guilty or not. "Following proper investigation, let the court give its judgement. But punishing an accused without any judgment cannot be simply allowed."

Shortly after the arrest of Shankar, the police also arrested Gerald for allowing the offensive content to be streamed without exercising caution. He was named as the second accused in the case.

Commenting on the arrest of Gerald, the association said an appropriate "transit warrant" was not acquired when the Tamil Nadu police arrested him in Delhi. A 'transit remand order' refers to a judicial magistrate's order remanding an arrested person to police custody for their transit to another state.

"Apart from the improper arrest, he was called to the Delhi Airport but then was transported in an unreserved train to Chennai. This is a violation of human rights. It does not follow Article 20 (protection in respect of conviction for offences) and Article 22 (protection against arrest and detention in certain cases) of the Indian Constitution." the statement added. The Supreme Court had earlier noted that police must secure transit remand for arrests outside their jurisdiction to safeguard rights under Article 22 of the constitution.

As many as seven FIRs have been filed against Shankar. The police have also invoked the notorious Goondas Act against him recently. He has been booked for several offences, including for possession of ganja, forgery, stalking and harassment of women.

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