

2018 Thoothukudi firing: Police acted at behest of ‘one industrialist’, says Madras HC

The court ordered Tamil Nadu’s Directorate of Vigilance and Anti-Corruption to probe the assets of all officers stationed there at the time.

[Scroll Staff](#) | Jul 15, 2024 · 08:42 pm

The [Madras High Court](#) on Monday remarked verbally that it believed that the 2018 police firing outside the Sterlite copper plant in Tamil Nadu’s Thoothukudi was carried out by authorities at the behest of “one industrialist”, *Bar and Bench* reported.



Thirteen unarmed persons were killed in the police firing.

A bench of Justices SS Sundar and N Senthil Kumar also said that the Tamil Nadu government should investigate whether the officers involved in the incident had made any monetary gains.

“All these things happened because one particular industrialist wanted it to happen,” the court said, according to *Bar and Bench*. “You [police and district authorities] all acted on his behest. He wanted to teach the people a lesson and you facilitated it.”

The court added: “Any place where 100, 200 or 500 people gather routinely, should they now start doing so with fear that they might lose their lives any day? Can the court shut its eyes to this?”

The court then directed the state’s Directorate of Vigilance and Anti-Corruption to investigate the assets of all officials, including officers of the Indian Police Service and the Indian Administrative Service, who were stationed in Thoothukudi at that time and named as respondents in the case being heard.

[Thirteen protestors](#) were killed in the police firing on May 22, 2018, causing national outrage and the subsequent closure of the plant. The demonstrators had alleged that the Sterlite Copper plant contaminated the region's air and water resources.

Sterlite Copper owned the copper smelter. It was a subsidiary of the Vedanta Group, one of the world's largest mining and metals conglomerates.

On July 1, the Madras High Court said that police officials responsible for the firing should be ["prosecuted for committing murder"](#).

The court was hearing a petition filed by activist Henri Tiphagne, seeking that the investigation into the incident conducted by the National Human Rights Commission, which was closed on October 25, 2018, be reopened.

In 2021, Tiphagne filed a petition challenging the human rights panel's closure of its own investigation into the incident.

On Monday, the Madras High Court said that the assets of the officers who are respondent in the matter should be assessed.

"We want to know where their current assets stand at," the court said, according to *Bar and Bench*. "One of the protesters was shot less than seven kilometres from the collector's office. We suspect some of the police officials have let the firing happen out of an agenda."

The court should be informed about the [assets owned](#) by the officers, their spouses and close relatives during the two years before and two years after the incident, *Live Law* reported.

The Directorate of Vigilance and Anti-Corruption was asked to submit an initial report within two weeks.

<https://scroll.in/latest/1070684/2018-thoothukudi-firing-police-acted-at-behest-of-one-industrialist-says-madras-hc>