

## Fact-finding team urges CM Stalin to inquire into action taken in Thoothukudi firing case

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MADURAI: The members of the Public Hearing Coordination Committee for the Thoothukudi firing incident on Wednesday urged the Tamil Nadu Chief Minister MK Stalin to inquire into the action taken against the accused, and justice delivered to the victims and protesters involved in the incident that occurred in the district on May 22, 2018. They also sought immediate intervention.

Committee Chief Coordinator AWD Tilak, in his press statement, said the jury members of the fact-finding team, including retired High Court Judges, police department officials, and journalists, were deployed to look into the Thoothukudi police firing incident. "This fact-finding team sent a memorandum to the Chief Minister MK Stalin. In their report, they said the National Human Rights Commission of India (NHRC) had taken a suo motu cognizance of the incident on May 23, 2018, but closed the same on October 25, 2018, under the principal pretext that adequate compensation had been paid to the victims, and that appropriate steps had been taken by the then-state government to restore normalcy and peace in this regard within a short period," he said

"Subsequently, Henri Tiphagne, Executive Director of People's Watch, filed a writ petition before the Madras High Court, praying for the re-opening of the case, following which a notice in this regard was issued simultaneously to the NHRC, which has not responded. The matter is still pending disposal," he added.

The memorandum further stated though several petitions were filed through the CBI, which was entrusted with the task of investigating the issue, they are still pending at the Madurai Bench of the Madras High Court and the Magistrate Court in Thoothukudi.

The official further said the Commission of Inquiry (CoI) dealt with all aspects of the incidents thoroughly as per the terms of reference and gave its detailed findings. "It is pertinent to mention that Justice Aruna Jagadeesan visited the spots where the violence had taken place, and the family members of the victims, and looked into the records maintained by the government authorities reflecting the insensitive behaviour of the officers concerned, who despite knowing well that there would be a public protest, engaged in a shootout," he said, adding that when the report was tabled in the Legislative Assembly, the general public was shocked to learn about the developments that occurred on May 22, as well as the events that both preceded and followed the grave incidents.

"CM Stalin, who facilitated the CoI, had made it clear that it was accepted by the state government and that appropriate action as per its recommendations will be taken against the erring officials and others. Unfortunately, this promise, which was made in the assemble, to initiate action against persons who committed the crime of killing 13 innocent civilians, remains unfulfilled," he added.

The jury members suggested that if the government considers that there cannot be two CBI investigations of the same incident, they could approach the Madras High Court for a direction, citing the change in circumstances and the recommendations as per the CoI.

They want to also bring to CM's attention that the inaction by the government on the issue could become a topic of discussion during the upcoming election. They requested the chief minister to consider the memorandum with utmost urgency and take the necessary action as per the recommendations of the CoI.

<https://www.newindianexpress.com/states/tamil-nadu/2023/may/18/fact-finding-team-urges-cm-stalin-to-inquire-into-action-taken-in-thoothukudi-firing-case-2576054.html>