

Custodial death: Victim's brothers seek justice

Chennai: While the custodial death of V Vignesh is being investigated by a judicial magistrate and the CB-CID separately, the forum for Joint Action Against Custodial Torture-Tamil Nadu, made the brothers of the deceased, and the auto driver, narrate the ordeal since Vignesh's death.

'Police forced us to accept cash to see Vignesh's face'

V Sathya (20), one of the five brothers of Vignesh and second to the youngest among the siblings, said, "The police told us they wouldn't let us see Vignesh's body if we refused to accept the cash. We accepted the cash out of helplessness. Now we want to return the money to the authorities concerned. We want justice for my brother."

Their mother died soon after the younger brother Surya was born. Sathya's elder brothers Vinoth (30), Vijay (28), Vignesh (25) and Veera Ganapathy (23) took care of them after their father Vadivelu, a construction labourer, died five years ago.

"Marina beach is our home. We grew up there. Vinoth and Vijay worked at balloon shooting stalls at the beach, while Vignesh and Veera worked for Ranjith and rode his horses for visitors in the beach. I dropped out of school after Class 9 in 2019 due to the pandemic and all of us took up odd jobs like construction work for livelihood, but my younger brother Suriya has completed Class 10," adds Sathya.

According to him, Vignesh is very reserved and not addicted to drugs or alcohol.

"Once he was booked in an assault case and that too because his employer Ranjith asked him to accept the offence. He made Rs 300 per day by riding horses and would get additional income when he took part in movie shootings," explains Sathya.

Last week, Vignesh was part of a movie shooting and had made extra money, with which he bought dresses for Vijay's five-month-old daughter on April 18. "That was the last time we saw him. He told us that he was going for a movie the same day. The next day, police told us that he died," rues Sathya.

Vinoth was not aware of Vignesh's arrest and death until police knocked on his room in Otteri on April 19. "Foreshore Inspector Rajeshwari and a few other cops in plainclothes came with my brother Surya and took me to the nearby police station. From there, we were taken in an autorickshaw when we were first told about Vignesh's

death. Later, we were kept in the Secretariat Colony police station, where Veera was also brought in. Around 4 pm, Thousand Lights Inspector Mohandoss reached the station and threatened us to accept the cash and made Vignesh's employer Ranjith convince us over the phone. We were given bundles of Rs 500, Rs 200, 100 notes for the cremation. The next day, the other two brothers too reached the station," says Vinoth, fighting tears.

Vinoth says he saw Vignesh's jaw broken and injuries all over the body when he and Vijay were taken to the Kilpauk Medical College Hospital to see the body after post-mortem.

"The other brothers were directly brought to Krishnampet crematorium where police insisted on cremating Vignesh's body. After much protest, they agreed to let us carry out the burial as per our custom," he says.

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