

People's Watch urges govt. to protect activist Jagaber Ali's family

The Chief Minister should direct authorities to conduct a re-post-mortem on Jagaber Ali's body, it says, adding the State should give assistance to the victim's three children to pursue education

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The High Court should *suo motu* take up the death of activist Jagaber Ali, 56, of Vengalur, who was mowed down by a tipper lorry in Tirumayam taluk in Pudukottai district on January 17 allegedly for raising his voice against illegal quarry operations, and order a thorough probe by a Special Investigation Team (SIT), headed by an officer in the rank of Inspector General of Police, said People's Watch executive director Henri Tiphagne.

Addressing a press conference here on Saturday, he said like in the case of Sattankulam incident, where the court pitched in directly and monitored the death of Bennicks and his father Jayaraj, it should order a probe into the death of Jagaber Ali.

Stating that a fact-finding team, which visited Pudukottai on January 24, submitted a detailed report, he said despite repeated pleas to government officials, including the Collector (former and



People's Watch executive director Henri Tiphagne addressing media persons in Madurai on Saturday.

present), Superintendent of Police (former and present), the Assistant Director (Geology and Mines), Tahsildar and others, to take action against illegal stone quarries and crusher units, no action was taken.

That many political party functionaries too maintained stoic silence was baffling, Mr. Tiphagne said, adding that there was a clear case of connivance between various stakeholders, which encouraged di-

rectly and indirectly, and the illegal quarry owners to operate boldly.

When Jagaber Ali continued his fight, he was silenced by being hit by a lorry, he added.

The fact-finding team members said the licence given in November 2018 to the private quarry in Tirumayam taluk was suspended in November 2023. However, the quarry functioned. Hence, Jagaber Ali approached the Ma-

dras High Court Bench in Madurai.

The family members of Jagaber Ali, who spoke to the fact-finding team, said the activist, after realising that he was under a threat, moved cautiously.

Though the activist obtained orders from the judiciary, it had no effect as the officials did not act on them, Mr. Tiphagne said.

Chief Minister M.K. Stalin should direct the authorities to conduct a re-post-mortem on Jagaber Ali's body.

The State government should give ₹1 crore as compensation to his family members. Under the Witness Protection Scheme 2018, the family members of the activist should be given protection. The CCTV footages of Tirumayam police station should be preserved as after the death of Jagaber Ali, many suspects had visited the station.

The family should be accorded police protection and the State should provide assistance to the victim's three children to pursue their school education, he stressed.