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CM, HC must intervene in activist's murder case: People's Watch

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Madurai: Chief minister M K Stalin and Madras high court must intervene and help expose the network behind the mining mafia that was responsible for the murder of environmental activist Jagabar Ali in Pudukkottai, said Henri Tiphagne, executive director of People's Watch.

Talking to reporters in Madurai on Saturday, Tiphagne alleged that the state govt's claims about transferring the case to the CB-CID are misleading. "Though the govt has announced the transfer of the case to the CB-CID, there is no official record of this transfer yet."

Tiphagne inspected the murder site and nearby quarries in Pudukkottai on Friday. He claimed that his investigation revealed evidence pointing to a premeditated murder rather than an accident. "There were no accident injuries on Ali's body, only multiple cut wounds, which indicate a planned murder. The quarry and crusher, which Ali reported for illegal operations, are still functioning even after his death. This shows a nexus between officials and quarry owners," he said.

Tiphagne also highlighted irregularities in the handling of the case. "It took 20 hours to register an FIR after Ali's death. During this time, his body was kept at the Thirumayam GH mortuary, where there was no CCTV camera. Moreover, the postmortem report has not been handed over to Ali's family," he said.

The activist alleged that district officials are complicit in the murder and demanded accountability from all ministers concerned. "The chief minister must not only provide solatium to Ali's family but also take stringent measures to dismantle the mining mafia. There should be a thorough investigation into the role of officials and politicians in facilitating illegal mining operations."

Tiphagne said there have been at least five incidents of violence against anti-mining activists in Tamil Nadu over the past three years. "Even in Madurai's Vadipatti, an activist was attacked," he said.

"Ali's death is a challenge to the conscience and dignity of the judiciary and the state govt. This is a test of the state govt's commitment to protecting human rights and holding those in power accountable."