

## Jeyaraj-Bennix custodial deaths: Activists barred from visiting Sathankulam police station

*Executive Director of People's Watch, Henri Tiphagne, and human rights defender from Chhattisgarh, Himanshu Kumar, were attempting to inspect the Sathankulam police station for CCTV installations when they were denied entry.*



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On the fifth anniversary of the [custodial deaths](#) of Jeyaraj and Bennix in Sathankulam, Tamil Nadu, prominent human rights activists were denied entry to the police station where the father and son were allegedly tortured. Henri Tiphagne, Executive Director of People's Watch, and Himanshu Kumar, a well-known human rights defender from Chhattisgarh, were stopped by police while attempting to inspect the station for CCTV installations – five years after the incident sparked nationwide outrage.

Speaking to TNM, Henri said he had travelled to Thoothukudi to attend a memorial event held on Sunday, June 22, marking five years since their tragic deaths. Following the event, he and his team visited the Sathankulam police station to check whether CCTV cameras had been installed in line with Supreme Court directives. However, they were stopped outside the premises.

“About 50 police personnel were stationed to block our entry, and the gates were barricaded. The officers gave various excuses, including a so-called 'police forecast report,' to justify their actions. The sad truth is that nothing has changed in Sathankulam, even after five years,” Henri told TNM.

At the memorial event, Henri also criticised the delay in departmental action against the nine police officers accused in the case. “Why is the police department waiting for a final court verdict? Disciplinary action should be taken independently and without delay,” he said.

He further expressed disappointment over the absence of ruling Dravida Munnetra Kazhagam (DMK) leaders at the event, particularly Thoothukudi MP Kanimozhi. “The Tamil Nadu government must explain why there is still no special court hearing the Jeyaraj and Bennix case on a day-to-day basis. Justice delayed is justice denied,” he remarked.

Jeyaraj and Bennix, who owned a mobile phone shop in Sathankulam, were arrested on June 19, 2020, for allegedly breaching COVID-19 lockdown norms. They died within days of their arrest, allegedly due to custodial torture. The incident triggered widespread protests and renewed calls for police accountability across Tamil Nadu and India.

Although the Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI) [filed](#) a chargesheet against ten police personnel, with charges including murder, activists have raised concerns over the slow pace of judicial proceedings, noting that the case continues to drag on without urgency.

<https://www.thenewsminute.com/tamil-nadu/jeyaraj-bennix-custodial-deaths-activists-barred-from-visiting-sathankulam-police-station>