

300 caste killings in TN, 13 convictions in five years: RTI data

In the 30 years until December 2020, the State Vigilance Monitoring Committee, that is to meet twice a year, has met only three times, he added.

MADURAI: An RTI-based data collection carried out since January by the executive director of the NGO 'Evidence', A Kathir, revealed that 300 people from SC/ST communities were killed in caste murders across 33 districts of TN from 2016 to 2020.

Pointing out that according to the data, on an average, 5-6 caste-based killings occur in the State every month, he said among the 33 districts that shared the data, Thoothukudi tops the list with 29 murders, followed by Madurai with 28, and Kallakurichi with 24.

“While 13 cases have been registered during the five year period in Villupuram, 24 cases of murders on caste lines were registered in 15 months alone, from January 2020 to March 2021 in Kallakurichi district that was bifurcated from Villupuram district nearly two years ago. It is an alarming trend in the Villupuram-Kallakurichi belt,” he explained.

Recording a conviction rate of 4.3 per cent, the accused in only 13 of the 300 registered cases have been convicted, while 28 cases are pending investigation and a whopping 229 cases are pending trial at court.

Even 32 years after the SC and ST (Prevention of Atrocities) Act, 1989 was enacted, not all districts have separate court buildings to hear cases on atrocities against SCs/STs. This leads to prolonged pendency of cases, Kathir said.

In the 30 years until December 2020, the State Vigilance Monitoring Committee, that is to meet twice a year, has met only three times, he added. Stating the committee was recently formed by the DMK government with 63 members, he urged it to take steps to expedite investigations and grant relief to victims' families.

Kallakurichi Collector PN Sridhar said the issue would be discussed at the new district's first vigilance monitoring committee meeting that is to be held this week. Commenting on the low conviction rate in SC/ST murders, *activist Henri Tiphagne said, "Effective and speedy prosecution holds the key. Seeking more time during the trial and the delay only leads to witness tampering and out-of-court settlements. Provisions for the protection of witness and victim are built within the Act itself, but are not practised. Only if all provisions are put into use can the conviction rate be improved."*

Re-postmortem of Dalit priest

The Madurai Bench of the Madras HC has ordered a re-postmortem of the body of a Dalit priest from Pudukkottai. He was found hanging from a tree last month, after allegedly being killed by Caste Hindus

<https://www.newindianexpress.com/states/tamil-nadu/2021/sep/15/300-caste-killings-in-tn-13-convictions-in-five-years-rti-data-2358885.html>