



13.05.2026

PRESS RELEASE

People's Watch wishes to warmly congratulate the Honourable Chief Minister, Thiru. C. Joseph Vijay, on successfully carrying out his duties as the new Chief Minister by respecting democratic norms, adhering to social justice principles and the rule of law.

This Press Meet demands the complete fulfilment of demands that had not been met during the previous DMK regime on the 8th anniversary of the 16 lives lost in the Thoothukudi Sterlite firing and its immediate aftermath on May 22, 2018.

A People's Chief Minister:

Starting his life as a film artist and growing into a leader loved by the people, Thiru. C. Joseph Vijay has now been elected as the Chief Minister of Tamil Nadu. On behalf of People's Watch, we congratulate the Honourable Chief Minister Thiru. C. Joseph Vijay and wish him well on successfully carrying out his duties. He has taken responsibility as the Chief Minister of Tamil Nadu as well as the Home Department which oversees the police force of the state. Therefore, on behalf of the families affected due to custodial deaths, People's Watch demands that the Honourable Chief Minister ensure each of them speedy justice by initiating criminal cases, recovery, reparation and the prevention of future harm and relief to the missed out among the 28 families who lost their loved ones to custodial torture in the previous regime.

The unique meeting of Thiru. C. Joseph Vijay with the 20 families of Custodial Torture Victims:

On the morning of **July 14, 2025**, during the earlier DMK Government, the present Hon'ble Chief Minister Thiru. C. Joseph Vijay invited 20 families whose loved ones were tortured and killed during in police custody to the headquarters of Tamil Nadu Vetri Kazhagam (TVK) in Panaiyur. He privately met with the affected individuals and spoke with them for about 3 hours. This is a **historic milestone**, as no other political party leader in Tamil Nadu has undertaken such an initiative of meeting with so many victim families of different case at one go.

He individually inquired with each family about the loss they had undergone in losing their family member to custodial torture. In particular, upon hearing about the death of the minor boy Gokul Sri, who was tortured and killed at the Chengalpattu Government Observation Home, Thiru. C. Joseph Vijay held the hand of the grieving mother and was moved to tears. In a similar way, he embraced each family, expressed his support, and consoled them. The State Coordinator of People's Watch Thiru. I. Aseervatham who was also present, presented details of the cases to him. Listening with utmost attention, Thiru. C. Joseph Vijay expressed his frustration then, saying, "What am I going to do for the people of our society who have come to me with so much faith and hope, living in the most marginalized conditions?" However, within a few minutes, he composed himself and instilled confidence in the affected people by assuring them that he would rectify those losses in the future and consoled them.

He warmly embraced the children who had accompanied the affected families, gave them sweets, and made them happy. Additionally, he provided a financial support of ₹25,000 from his own funds to each family. The following day, on July 15, a statewide protest rally took place in Chennai's Sivanantha Salai. In the midst of thousands of people who were gathered, he ascended the stage with the affected families, raised various demands, spoke out strongly in support of those victimized by torture, and instilled confidence in the public that custodial torture would be stopped and human rights protected.

The 8th Anniversary of the 2018 May 22 Sterlite Protest Firing that Claimed 16 Lives

On May 22, 2018, during the AIADMK regime, police fired on people protesting against the Sterlite plant in Thoothukudi, killing 16 individuals in the violence that continued. Eight long years have now since passed. During the 2019 elections to Parliament, the 2021 elections to the Tamil Nadu Assembly and the 2024 elections again to Parliament, the DMK campaigned on the demand to deliver justice for those who lost their lives in the Sterlite protest assuring them criminal action against those found guilty. But sadly, after the DMK government came to power, on May 16, 2021, it received the interim report of Justice Aruna Jagadeesan Commission of Inquiry and made a few announcements that were only partly implemented.

Following this, the final report of the **Justice Aruna Jagadeesan Commission of Inquiry** was received and immediately tabled in the Assembly the following year and accepted. Thereafter, a government order followed.

After the final inquiry report was released, only a part of the recommended compensation was provided by the DMK Government to the families of those who lost their loved ones in

the firing and violence. No criminal action whatsoever has so far been initiated against all the 21 police and revenue department officials responsible for the firing and violence till date. Departmental proceedings were initiated, but none of the actions have been completed against any official. As a result, some senior police officials have even retired, receiving full government benefits after being clearly indicted in the Justice Aruna Jagadeesan Commission of Inquiry report with their individual actions being specifically mentioned. Consequently, the full implementation of recommendations from the Justice Aruna Jagadeesan report is yet to see the light of the day.

Demands on behalf of those Affected by the Sterlite Protest Firing

1. Ensure completion of the departmental action against the police and revenue department personnel involved in the crime within a time frame to be made public as per the Justice Aruna Jagadeesan Commission of Inquiry report. Additionally, initiate without any delay actions leading to commencement of criminal actions against the erring police and revenue officers relying on the Justice Aruna Jagadeesan Commission of Inquiry report by registering criminal cases, arresting the accused where required, appointing a Special Investigation Team, conducting a speedy investigation, filing a chargesheet, and proceeding with the trial – all in a time-bound manner.
2. Ensure the complete awarding of the compensation to all those killed and injured in the Thoothukudi firing, as per the Justice Aruna Jagadeesan Commission of Inquiry report by May 22nd 2026.
3. Withdraw immediately the criminal case filed by the CBI against the innocent protestors, pending before the Chief Judicial Magistrate, Madurai for the past over 4 years by initiating necessary action by May 22, 2026.

Demands on behalf of the families affected by deaths in police custody during the DMK Government:

1. Establish exclusive special courts (excepting those pending in SC/ST Courts) wherever required to ensure speedy trial to deliver justice and relief to the affected families in all cases of custodial deaths that occurred in police custody in Tamil Nadu under the DMK government.

2. Ensure provision of compensation to all affected families who lost their loved ones in such custodial deaths during the previous government, as was granted in the Ajith Kumar case following an order of the Madurai Bench of the Madras High Court.
3. Ensure registering of cases under the SC/ST (Prevention of Atrocities) Act in all cases where persons belonging to SC/ST communities died during custodial interrogation under the previous government to be followed by time-bound investigation, filing of charge sheet, commencement of trial and provision of all statutory compensation measures.
4. Ensure a torture-free society in the state by enacting a new special law against torture in the state of Tamil Nadu.

Thank you.

For further details, contact:

9994368576, 9994368571