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People's Watch condemns torture and murderous assault on lawyers

Suspend all concerned police officials including DSP Mayilvakanan

Poongkumar, Marx, Ignatius, Alwin Rasool, Gomathi Manikandan, Santhagunam and Veluchamy – all lawyers of Thoothukudi - were taking bath in the Kuttraalam waterfalls in the evening of the 25th of July, 2007 when 7 police personnel (including the women Sub Inspector) under the leadership of the Inspector of Police of the Kuttralam Police Station came there and shouted at the lawyers in abusive language.

The bathers told the police that they were lawyers and also asked them why they were using abusive and wrong language. The lawyers who questioned the police officials were immediately assaulted. The police officials also informed the Police Control Room immediately. Under the leadership of Mayilvakanan, the Deputy Superintendent of Police of Thenkasi, 2 vans full of policemen arrived there and subjected all the 7 lawyers to brutal torture and assault at the falls. Marx, Poongkumar, Ignatius and Veluchamy were taken to the Police Station subsequently.

Till 9.00 a.m. on the 26th of July, 2007 their arms were tied with rope and they were tortured and beaten up with batons by the DSP Mr. Mayilvakanan. The lawyers were taken to Thenkasi Govt. Hospital at around 9.00 a.m. to get a certificate showing that they were in an inebriated state.

Only Advocate Veluchamy who had sustained grievous injuries was administered a TT injection and provided medical treatment. After getting the medical certificate the four lawyers were brought back to Thenkasi Police Station and beaten up and tortured again. Signatures of all four lawyers were got on blank papers.

Later at about 12.00 in the noon the lawyers were produced in Chengottai Court. The lawyers submitted before the magistrate that they had been subjected to assault and torture. The Magistrate ordered that they be imprisoned and also that they be provided medical treatment.

On the 26th of July, 2007 at about 3.30 p.m. all the four lawyers were sent to Palayamkottai Central Prison.

The lawyers were taken out on bail by Joseph Senguttuvan, the President of the Thoothukudi Lawyers Association and Muthuramalingam the President of the Tirunelveli Lawyers Association and they were immediately admitted for treatment at Tirunelveli Govt. Hospital.

The police officials involved in this incident have violated the guidelines given by the Supreme Court in the DK Basu Judgment. The lawyers have been subjected to the very same violations that were faced by the Chief Minister of Tamil Nadu at the time of his midnight arrest.

We are well aware of the assault made on policemen in the same Kutralam by Ravi, an IPS official who was the Commissioner of Tirunelveli Corporation a few months ago. People and the policemen had gathered together and tied him up with ropes but the Police Department did not register any case against him.

The police, who should have provided security to the public, shed their honor and embarked on this brutal and murderous assault on the lawyers. People's Watch not only condemns this incident but also demands that case of Attempt to Murder should be filed against all the concerned police officials including DSP Mayilvakanan. They should be suspended without any inquiry whatsoever. The false cases filed against the affected lawyers should be retracted.

People's Watch also requests the Hon Chief Minister of Tamil Nadu to order a judicial inquiry into the incident by a retired Judge and a retired Police Officer.