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Press Release

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Vijayawada

The Human Rights Forum (HRF) demands action according to section 176 (1A) of Cr.P.C. in the case of custodial death of a yet to be identified person- not a Telugu speaker- in the Ajitsingh Nagar Police Station in Vijayawada. The investigating officer, B. Srinivas, Circle Inspector of Ajitsingh Nagar range, should be discharged from the investigating duties as the said incident happened in the police station under his charge. He should also be discharged from his regular duties till the time proper investigation as per the law is completed.

On 16th of April, 2019, in the morning, residents of Basava Taraka Nagar caught an unidentified person on the charge that he was trespassing the houses in the locality. He was then handed over to the ‘Blue Colts’ police force. He was then brought to the Ajitsingh Nagar Police Station. However, in the evening the police very silently shifted the accused to the New Government Hospital. When he was declared brought dead, the police stated that he committed suicide by hanging himself to death.

To ascertain the facts in the case, a two member HRF team visited Ajitsingh Nagar police station, New Government Hospital and interacted with the police personnel, a doctor who was a member of the team of doctors that conducted post-mortem and people residing around the Ajitsinghnagar Police Station.

An unidentified person whose whereabouts are yet to be identified- not a Telugu speaker-- was caught by the residents of Basava Taraka Nagar when he was allegedly trying to break into a house in the locality. He was then handed over to ‘Blue Colts’ police force, who in turn handed him to the Ajitsingh Nagar Police Station. When he was brought to the police station, there was another accused in the station, unrelated to this person. They were put up in a room adjacent to the lock-up room. They were provided with lunch in the afternoon at around 1 P.M. In the evening the police very silently took the deceased to the New Government Hospital for treatment. However, he was declared brought dead. The police then released a statement saying that he committed suicide by hanging himself to death. Subsequently, based on the departmental enquiry report, N.D.Nageswara Rao, Assistant Sub-Inspector, V.Sambasiva Rao, Head Constable, M.Naga Malleswari, Woman Constable were suspended for their negligence. In-charge

RDO of Vijayawada, Chakarpani, submitted another report to Krishna District Collector, Md. Imtiaz, on the whole episode.

However, we wish to point out certain loopholes in the narrative being proffered by the police pertaining to this incident.

The Ajitsingh Nagar police station where the incident took place is a small building where every room in the building is visible from every other room. At any given time there will be ten police personnel in the station. As mentioned above, along with the deceased, there was another accused in the police station when this incident took place. It is still incomprehensible how the person could hang himself to death in the presence of so many people in such a small building with not even a single witness to his suicide. It is not known if any one attempted to dislodge him from his suicide attempt. It is said that CCTV cameras that are installed in the premises of the police station were dysfunctional on that day. Once again, it is not clear if they were dysfunctional only on that particular day or have been dysfunctional for some time. In either case, it points to gross negligence of the station in-charge which is nothing but dereliction of his duty. We were told that that there were injuries on one leg and one thigh of the deceased. The reasons for these injuries, to our knowledge, are unknown.

There is no clarity on any of these points raised above. It is pertinent here to mention that this is the 11th case of custodial death in the last 18 months in Andhra Pradesh. The custodial deaths are continuing unabated. Had there been prompt and legal action in the previous cases of custodial deaths, this wouldn't have happened, perhaps.

HRF is of the view that a mere departmental enquiry is insufficient. We demand an investigation by Judicial (or) Metropolitan Magistrate as required according to Section 176 (1A) of Cr.P.C. In the meanwhile, B. Srinivas should be divested from his investigative as well as regular duties till the time investigation is completed.

G.Sivanageswara Rao

(HRF State vice-president)

G.Rohith

(HRF Krishna district convener)