



BEFORE THE MADURAI BENCH OF MADRAS HIGH COURT

DATED : 27.02.2026

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THE HONOURABLE MRS.JUSTICE L.VICTORIA GOWRI

Crl.O.P.(MD).No.4575 of 2026
and Crl.M.P(MD).No.4860 of 2026

- 1.Annakkodi
- 2.S.Senthilkumar
- 3.R.Vairavan
- 4.M.Karuppaiah
- 5.R.Kamaraj
- 6.N.Sekar
- 7.C.Vaitheeswaran
- 8.R.Arumugam
- 9.K.Rajesh
- 10.S.Ambal
- 11.G.Gowthaman
- 12.N.Rajasekar
- 13.C.Sethupathi
- 14.R.Senthilkumar
- 15.V.Venthasamy @ Suppu
- 16.P.Kodiyapachayan
- 17.V.Karuppaiah
- 18.K.Nagarajan
- 19.M.Shanmugam
- 20.C.Anjakannu
- 21.N.Thiyagarajan
- 22.S.Ganesan
- 23.K.Seerumpuli
- 24.M.Karuppaiah
- 25.M.Vairavan

... Petitioners

Vs.

1.The State of Tamil Nadu
rep., by the Inspector of Police,



Nerkuppai Police Station,
Sivagangai District.
Crime No.16 of 2026

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2.Manivel

... Respondents

Prayer: Criminal Original Petition is filed under Section 528 of BNSS, 2023, to call for the records relating to the impugned FIR in Crime No.16 of 2026 dated 17.01.2026 registered on the file of the first respondent herein against the petitioners for the offences under Sections 189(2), 132, 292, 126(2) of BNS and quash the same as illegal.

For Petitioners : Mr.K.G.Arunkumar

For R1 : Mr.B.Thanga Aravindh

Government Advocate (crl.side)

ORDER

Seeking quashment of FIR in Crime No.16 of 2026 on the file of the first respondent Police registered for the offences punishable under Sections 189(2), 132, 292 and 126(2) of BNS (Corresponding to 143, 353, 290 and 341 of IPC), this criminal original petition is filed.

2. Considering that no adverse order is going to be passed against the second respondent, notice to him is dispensed with.



3. The case of the prosecution is that regarding the dispute between two groups in respect of worship in Patchai Moongil Ayyanar temple, on 16.01.2026 the petitioners without getting prior permission staged a road-roko and thereby, committed the offence. Based on the complaint given by the second respondent, the first respondent police registered a case in Crime No.16 of 2026 for the offences punishable under Sections 189(2), 132, 292 and 126(2) of BNS.

4. The learned counsel for the petitioners contend that the impugned FIR suffers from fundamental illegality and does not disclose the commission of any cognizable offence. The petitioners submit that the alleged protest was conducted peacefully and that peaceful expression of opinion is a constitutionally guaranteed right under Article 19(1)(a) of the Constitution of India. It is their case that expressing one's views in a democratic nation cannot be criminalised unless the act satisfies the ingredients of a penal provision.

5. The learned counsel for the petitioners submitted that the FIR does not contain any specific overt act attributable to any of the petitioners. The complaint does not whisper any material to show that the petitioners indulged in violence, caused disturbance, annoyance or obstruction to any public authority or to the general public.



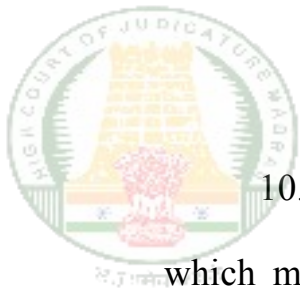
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6. It is further argued that the allegations in the FIR are vague, sweeping and intended only to portray a peaceful assembly as illegal. Criminal law cannot be invoked to curtail peaceful expression, which is the bedrock of democratic governance.

7. Per contra, the learned Government Advocate (Crl.side), on the other hand, submitted that the petitioners and others had assembled without permission, blocked a public road, and caused inconvenience, and therefore, the prosecution is justified.

8. Heard the learned counsels on either side and carefully perused the materials available on record.

9. Section 189(2) of BNS (143 IPC) requires a prima facie indication that the person was a member of an unlawful assembly as defined, i.e., an assembly with a common object falling within Section 141 IPC. In a protest-related FIR, merely stating that a group assembled, without particulars of common object vis-à-vis each accused, and without any material indicating participation beyond presence, is insufficient to fasten criminality on an individual.



10. Section 126(2) of BNS (341 IPC) contemplates wrongful restraint, which must be shown by allegations indicating that the accused voluntarily obstructed a person so as to prevent that person from proceeding in any direction in which that person had a right to proceed. The FIR in the present case does not identify the person restrained by the petitioners, the place of restraint, or the act of restraint attributable to them.

11. Section 292 of BNS (290 IPC) relates to punishment for public nuisance where the nuisance is established. Even to proceed, there must be foundational allegations describing the nuisance and the petitioners- role in causing it. Such foundational particulars are absent as against the petitioners.

12. Section 132 of BNS (353 of IPC) deals with assault or criminal force to deter public servant from discharge of his duty. Criminal force is defined in Section 350 of IPC and the same is extracted as follows:~

350. Criminal force. Whoever intentionally uses force to any person, without that person's consent, in order to the committing of any offence, or intending by the use of such force to cause, or knowing it to be likely that by the use of such force he will cause injury, fear or annoyance to the person to whom the force is used, is said to use criminal force to that other

13. The mandates of the aforesaid Section would make it clear that only when a person intentionally uses force to any person, without that person's



consent, the offence of criminal force would be made out. For the offence under Section 353 to be made out, there should be an assault or criminal force to deter public servant from discharge of his duty. In the instant case, a fair reading of the charge sheet itself would suffice to understand that no criminal force had been exerted by the petitioners as against the public servants at any point of time and hence, the offence under Section 132 of BNS is not made out.

14. Article 19(1)(a) and 19(1)(b) of the Constitution guarantee freedom of speech and expression, and the right to peaceful assembly without arms. These rights can be restricted only by reasonable restrictions provided by law. The Hon-ble Supreme Court has consistently held that peaceful protest is a recognized democratic right, and criminal prosecution cannot be launched unless the alleged act squarely falls within the ingredients of a penal offence.

15. The ingredients of Sections 189(2), 132, 292 and 126(2) of BNS are not made out in the FIR. Criminal law cannot be invoked on vague and omnibus allegations, particularly when the allegations seek to criminalise peaceful expression. The present FIR appears to have been registered mechanically and without application of mind.



16. In view of the authoritative pronouncements cited by the petitioners and considering the facts of the present case, this Court finds that the continuation of the investigation against the petitioners would amount to abuse of process of law.

17. Accordingly, this Court is inclined to exercise its inherent powers under Section 482 Cr.P.C., 1973 (corresponding provision of Section 528 of BNSS) to secure the ends of justice.

18. In the result, the Criminal Original Petition is allowed. The FIR in Crime No.16 of 2026 on the file of the first respondent Police is quashed insofar as the petitioners are concerned. Consequently, the connected Miscellaneous Petition is closed.

27.02.2026

NCC : Yes / No
Index : Yes / No
Rmk

To
1.The Inspector of Police,
Nerkuppai Police Station,
Sivagangai District.

2.The Additional Public Prosecutor,
Madurai Bench of Madras High Court, Madurai.



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L.VICTORIA GOWRI, J.

Rmk

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