

**IN THE HIGH COURT OF JHARKHAND AT RANCHI
W. P. (PIL) No. 919 of 2021**

Court on its own motion

Versus

The State of Jharkhand & ors **Respondents**

**CORAM: HON'BLE THE CHIEF JUSTICE
HON'BLE MR. JUSTICE SUJIT NARAYAN PRASAD**

For the State : Mr. Rajiv Ranjan, Advocate General

Oral Order

02 / Dated : 04.03.2021

1. This Court is very disturbed by the news which has been published in the e-newspaper "The Times of India" published on March 3, 2021 that Village Council has sentenced 'witches' to death and five persons of a family have been killed including five year old minor in Buruhatu-Amtoli Pahar, Gumla. This is not only shameful but also raises a serious question upon the entire system as to how in the present modern civilized society such type of incidence has taken place. On the basis of the aforesaid fact stated in the newspapers, this Court takes cognizance of the matter.

2. We remember that some programmes have been floated by the JHALSA also to make the people aware regarding the evils of witchcraft practice and other things through various schemes etc. However, it appears that we are still lagging behind. It is a right time when the State Authorities must rise from deep sleep and think over it and take some serious action. It should not only take remedial measures but also take serious steps for generating awareness in the people regarding evils of such type of practice.

3. Accordingly, we would direct the Member Secretary, JHALSA to make an enquiry in this matter through the District Legal Services Authority and submit a report.

4. We would also direct the State Authorities especially the Principal Secretary, Department of Home, Government of Jharkhand and the Principal Secretary, Social Welfare Department, Government of Jharkhand as well as the Director General of Police, Jharkhand, Ranchi to come up with their respective affidavit regarding the occurrence and the action they have already taken or they propose to take so that such type of incident could be avoided.

5. Let this matter be posted on 18.03.2021.

6. The team of Legal Services Authority should be provided with adequate security during they would be making an enquiry into the matter as the matter is very sensitive. We would direct the Deputy Commissioner, Gumla as well as the Superintendent of Police, Gumla to take steps in that regard especially the protection which is to be provided to the team of the Legal Services Authority in course of enquiry. The entire expenditure to be incurred in the enquiry would be met by the State Authority.

7. Let a copy of this order be immediately communicated to the Member Secretary, JHALSA and the learned Advocate General.

(Dr. Ravi Ranjan, C.J.)

(Sujit Narayan Prasad, J.)