

IN THE HIGH COURT OF JHARKHAND AT RANCHI

W.P. (PIL) No. 5044 of 2022

Court on its own Motion

Versus

1. State of Jharkhand.
2. The Chief Secretary, Government of Jharkhand, Project Bhawan,
P.O. : Dhurwa, P.S. : Jagannathpur, District – Ranchi (Jharkhand)
3. The Home Secretary, Government of Jharkhand, Project Bhawan,
P.O. : Dhurwa, P.S. : Jagannathpur, District – Ranchi (Jharkhand)
4. The Director General of Police, Government of Jharkhand, Project
Bhawan, P.O. : Dhurwa, P.S. : Jagannathpur, District – Ranchi
(Jharkhand)

... Respondents

CORAM: HON'BLE THE CHIEF JUSTICE
HON'BLE MR. JUSTICE RAJESH SHANKAR

For the State: Mr Vibhor Mayank, A.C. to A.G.

Reserved on: 13.08.2026

Pronounced on: 17/08/2026

Per M. S. Sonak, C.J.

1. The present public interest litigation was initiated by this Court on its own motion on 11.10.2022, the day following a serious incident that occurred on 10.10.2022 at the Civil Court premises, Latehar.
2. The incident which prompted this Court to take suo motu cognisance occurred on 10.10.2022 at the Civil Court premises, Latehar. A large gathering of members of the Tana Bhagat community forcibly trespassed into the court complex, engaged in vicious sloganeering, vandalised the premises, assaulted police personnel, and disrupted law and order, resulting in the complete stoppage of judicial proceedings. The situation escalated to such an extent that the then learned Principal & District Sessions Judge, Latehar, had to be locked and confined within the four walls of a room to safeguard his life and liberty.

3. While taking suo motu cognisance, this Court recorded its *prima facie* concern regarding the inadequacy of security arrangements at Civil Court premises across the State and directed the Chief Secretary and the Director General of Police to place on record the intelligence inputs, action taken reports, and an assessment of the security arrangements provided at court premises and to judicial officers.
4. We have considered the material placed on record through successive affidavits filed by the respondents and have heard learned counsel appearing for the State.
5. At the outset, it is necessary to observe that the incident in question warranted immediate and urgent intervention by this Court. An incident of this nature strikes at the very independence of the judiciary, which is a basic feature of our Indian constitutional scheme. The right to protest is undoubtedly a fundamental right; however, such right cannot extend to obstructing judicial proceedings, assaulting those entrusted with the administration of justice, or vandalising court premises.
6. From its inception, therefore, the present matter was never adversarial in character. The concern before this Court was, and continues to be, to ensure that the justice delivery system remains secure and is not subjected to such disruption in the future.
7. During these proceedings, this Court has passed several orders to ensure that no similar situation arises at the district level due to inadequate deployment of security forces and that those responsible for such acts are duly identified and dealt with in accordance with law.
8. By order dated 11.10.2022, this Court directed the Chief Secretary and the Director General of Police to file their respective affidavits. In

compliance, detailed counter-affidavits were filed by both officers in November 2022, placing on record the intelligence inputs available at the relevant time, the action taken immediately after the incident, the registration of Latehar P.S. Case No. 251 of 2022, the deployment of security personnel at the Latehar Court premises and the residences of judicial officers, and district-wise reports regarding the security arrangements at Civil Court complexes across the State. The affidavits also referred to a high-level meeting convened at the Police Headquarters on 13.10.2022 and the directions issued thereafter to all districts.

9. By subsequent orders, this Court continued to monitor the matter and called for periodic updates. A supplementary affidavit filed in March 2025 furnished a translated copy of an earlier communication, as directed. Thereafter, by order dated 12.06.2025, this Court called for the status of the investigation into the criminal case arising from the incident dated 10.10.2022, as also a fresh report regarding the security arrangements at the Latehar Court premises and for the judicial officers posted there. Further time was granted by order dated 27.11.2025, with a caution that continued default might require the personal appearance of the concerned respondents.

10. In compliance with the order dated 12.06.2025, a counter-affidavit was filed on 05.08.2025 on behalf of the Superintendent of Police, Latehar. The affidavit reported that charge-sheets had been submitted against forty accused persons who were in custody, while investigation against the remaining accused was continuing. On the aspect of security, the affidavit detailed the personnel deployed for the protection of the Principal District and Sessions Judge and other

judicial officers; the strength of the court security contingent, including armed personnel stationed within the premises; the presence of a Quick Response Team in close proximity; the boundary wall secured with barbed-wire fencing; CCTV cameras installed at strategic locations; facilities for production of high-risk under-trials through video-conferencing; and regular supervision by a designated Deputy Superintendent of Police (Court Security).

11. Thereafter, an updated counter-affidavit dated 09.12.2025 was filed, recording further progress in the investigation. Additional arrests had been made, charge-sheets had been filed against the accused already in custody, notices under S. 41-A of the Code of Criminal Procedure had been issued to certain accused, and efforts to identify the remaining unknown accused were ongoing. However, the security arrangements at the Latehar Court premises and for the judicial officers remained substantially the same as those reported in August 2025.

12. Upon consideration of the material now before us, we are, for the present, satisfied with the security arrangements at the Civil Court premises in Latehar. The deployment of armed personnel for court security, the complex's physical infrastructure, the presence of a Quick Response Team in proximity, CCTV coverage, and other related measures appear adequate to meet the present security requirements of the court premises.

13. Regarding the personal security of the judicial officers posted at Latehar, the latest affidavits indicate that adequate numbers of Bodyguards, House Guards and Home Guards have been deployed, with each judicial officer being provided, at a minimum, with one

Bodyguard and one Home Guard. We are, for the present, satisfied with the individual security cover provided to the judicial officers in the Latehar Judgeship.

14. Having regard to the foregoing, we are of the considered view that a comparable level of personal security cover ought to be ensured for judicial officers serving across all the districts of the State of Jharkhand. There is no reason to wait for a Latehar-type incident and only then initiate steps for protection and security measures. The safety and security of judicial officers, particularly those serving at the district level, cannot be viewed in isolation from the independence of the judiciary. An independent judiciary necessarily presupposes an environment in which judicial officers can discharge their constitutional and judicial functions without fear, intimidation, or threats to their personal safety.
15. The Hon'ble Supreme Court has, on more than one occasion, underscored that the safety and dignity of judicial officers form an essential facet of judicial independence. In **Delhi Judicial Service Association, Tis Hazari Court, Delhi v. State of Gujarat, (1991) 4 SCC 406**, the Hon'ble Supreme Court took serious note of an assault on a judicial officer and emphasised the imperative of protecting the dignity and independence of the subordinate judiciary. The security arrangements in place must, therefore, be viewed not merely as administrative measures but as integral to the constitutional commitment to an independent judiciary. Accordingly, it is the duty and obligation of the State to create a secure environment and afford adequate protection to judicial officers and members of the legal

fraternity, so as to enable them to discharge their duties fearlessly and without interference.

16.In view of the foregoing, and since the immediate concerns that prompted the initiation of this public interest litigation have been substantially addressed, we find nothing further to determine at this stage.

17.Before parting, we expect that the investigation and the pending proceedings arising out of the incident will be brought to their logical conclusion in accordance with the law, and that the security arrangements presently in place at the District Courts will be maintained on an ongoing basis.

18.The writ petition is accordingly disposed of. The interlocutory orders made from time to time in this petition are made absolute to the extent required by the context. Pending interlocutory applications, if any, stand disposed of. The Registry is directed to communicate a copy of this order to all concerned forthwith.

(M. S. Sonak, C.J.)

(Rajesh Shankar, J.)

August 13, 2026

N.A.F.R.

Manoj/Cp.2

Uploaded on 17.08.2026