

INDIA: Muslim man branded with Om symbol, denied food by Tihar jail officials

20/04/2019 13:34 by admin

When the Muslim man complained that a stove in the jail was not working properly, the jail superintendent summoned him into his office where he was thrashed by the cop and other police officials before branding him with Om.

You Muslims have destroyed our country: Jail officials to Muslim man who | Photo courtesy: Aneesha Mathur

HIGHLIGHTS

1. Muslim man Shabbir had raised a complaint
2. Jail superintendent then beat Shabbir up and branded him with Om for raising complaint
3. According to Shabbir's advocate, he was also abused for being Muslim

New Delhi: A Muslim undertrial claimed that he was beaten and branded with an Om symbol by Tihar jail officials inside the jail premises.

The case came to light after the man's family approached Karkardooma court with a complaint that their son's life was "in danger in the jail".

When Shabbir alias Nabbir was brought before magistrate Richa Parihar, she found that the Om symbol had been engraved on his back.

Shabbir is 34 years old and has been in Tihar since November, 2017.

On April 12, Shabbir raised a complaint with the superintendent of jail no 4 - Rajesh Chauhan. Shabbir told Rajesh Chauhan that the induction stove in their barracks was not working properly.

Incensed by the complaint, the jail official then started beating Shabbir.

Rajesh Chauhan then summoned Shabbir into his office, berating him for "trying to be a neta" and raising complaints. Behind closed doors, Rajesh Chauhan and some other jail officials beat Shabbir again.

They did not stop there.

Not satisfied with the beating, Rajesh Chauhan took a metal Om symbol, heated it, and branded the Om on Shabbir's back.

"Converted to Hinduism as he had 'fasted' during Navratri".

Shabbir was then denied food for two days, and on April 14, Rajesh Chauhan told Shabbir that he had "converted to Hinduism as he had 'fasted' during Navratri".

"You Muslims have destroyed our country".

The jail officials also berated him for his religion saying that "you Muslims have destroyed our country".

Shabbir narrated his ordeal to his family, who contacted their advocate. On April 16, when advocate Jagmohan met his client (Shabbir) in jail, the branded symbol had only healed a little.

The case was heard by the court on April 17 when Shabbir was already scheduled to be brought to court for a hearing in the ongoing trial against him.

In the courtroom, the judge asked him to narrate his story, and then she saw the branded symbol herself.

Photo of Shabbir with Om branded on his back / Photo courtesy: Aneesha Mathur

The judge passed orders that Shabbir was to be medically examined, and immediately removed from "the direct or indirect supervision of jail superintendent Rajesh Chauhan".

The court also ordered an enquiry and ordered the DGP Prison to submit the CCTV footage and take statements of the other prisoners within 24 hours.

The brazenness of the authorities came out on April 18 as no official from the Tihar authority appeared before the court.

The medical examination and enquiry reports also did not come to the court.

The judge has now issued repeated orders, asking for a report from the DGP Prisons, and will hear the matter on Monday (April 22).

Meanwhile, the Tihar authorities, in a statement to India Today TV, tried to downplay the incident.

Sources in Tihar denied that any such incident had taken place.

"There is little possibility that any such incident has happened. We are conducting an enquiry," a source said.

A press statement has been issued by DG Tihar Ajay Kashyap.

"Enquiry is being conducted by DIG. The undertrial [Shabbir] has been shifted to a different jail as advised by the court. Detailed report to the court will be submitted once the enquiry is over," the statement said.

The family is scared but have placed their hope in the judiciary.

"The jail authorities will have to explain why they targeted him. They [jail authorities] will have to file a reply and the

court will take action," advocate Jagmohan, who is representing the family, told India Today TV.

Undertrial Shabbir faces charges under the Arms Act, as countrymade weapons had been found in his possession.

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