

SUPREME COURT OF INDIA

Citizens for Justice and Peace

Vs.

State of Gujarat

Writ Petition (C) No. 219 of 2006

(Markandey Katju and V.S. Sirpurkar JJ.)

13.01.2009

JUDGMENT

V.S.Sirpurkar, J.

1. This Writ Petition under Article 32 of the Constitution of India has been filed basically challenging the appointment and continuation of respondent No. 3 Shri P.C. Pandey to the post of Director General of Police, State of Gujarat. The other prayer in the Writ Petition is to direct respondent No. 1 - State of Gujarat to take disciplinary action including prosecuting respondent No. 3 for having failed in his duties during the Gujarat carnage of 2002.

2. Notice was issued by this Court on 11.5.2006 to the respondents, whereupon, the State of Gujarat has come up with a Counter Affidavit, denying most of the contentions raised in the Writ Petition. This Writ Petition was filed on 1.5.2006 and notice thereof was issued on 11.5.2006 and ever since then, number of interim orders in nature of directions came to be passed.

3. Shortly stated, the petitioner claiming itself to be an organization, which was started as a response to the alleged carnage which took place in Gujarat from 27.2.2002 onwards with the main objective to bridge the gap between the various religious communities, as also to ensure that justice is done to those who are the victims of communalism. It is claimed that it had set up a Citizens Tribunal to go into the causes and extent of communal violence in Gujarat headed by two retired Hon'ble Judges of this Court. The petitioner has filed the Report of the said Tribunal, which published in two volumes. The other contentions which are raised are that the respondent No. 3 Shri P.C. Pandey was the Commissioner of Police, Ahmedabad during the period when the communal disturbances rocked the State of Gujarat. It is claimed that more than 700 persons died and number of irregularities were committed by Shri Pandey such as not supplying the reinforcements and serious derelictions of his duties. Number of other allegations have been made that Shri Pandey was sent on deputation to CBI, which appointment was challenged before this Court by the petitioner by filing Writ Petition (C) No. 147 of 2004, wherein, the first respondent-State of Gujarat had given an undertaking that he would not handle any cases relating to Gujarat riots of 2002. He was accordingly not

allowed to handle those cases. It has also come in the allegations that on account of the directions issued by this Court, about 2000 cases which were hastily closed by the then Gujarat Government, were directed to be re-opened and a fresh scrutiny into those cases was also ordered. It was expressed that if Shri Pandey continued in the highest post of Director General of Police, those cases would be adversely affected and the guilty would be shielded and that would be patent denial of justice.

4. In its Counter Affidavit, the State of Gujarat opposed most of the claims and pointed out that the claim that the appointment of respondent No. 3 as a Director General of Police would be detrimental to the cause of justice, is not correct. It is pointed out that the Review Committee constituted under the directions of this Court earlier vide order dated 17.8.2004 was required to look into all 2020 riot cases, wherein, the investigating agency had filed "A" Summary. It is further pointed out that Shri Pandey was not in any manner connected with the Review Committee nor was he in a position to influence the same. It is further pointed out that up to the quarter ending 30th April, 2006, as many as 1989 cases out of the aforesaid 2020 cases had already been reviewed in respect of which periodic reports were filed by the Committee before this Court. It is claimed that in all, hardly 30 "A" summary cases had remained and it was, therefore, argued before us by the Learned Counsel appearing on behalf of the State of Gujarat that there was no point in now taking exception to the appointment and continuation of the third respondent as the Director General of Police. Learned Counsel also informed us during the debate that even those 30 "A" summary cases have already been decided upon and, therefore, there is no scope for those cases being affected by Shri Pandey in his continuation as the Director General of Police. It is further submitted at the Bar that Shri Pandey is going to retire on 31st March, 2009 and under the circumstances, this Writ Petition itself has become redundant.

5. Considering the overall situation, firstly, the fact that almost all the cases in the "A" summary, which were recommended by the investigating agency, have already been dealt with by the Scrutiny Committee and secondly that Shri Pandey is going to retire on 31st March, 2009, we do not propose to continue with this Writ Petition. In fact, this Writ Petition has itself become redundant as the continuation of Shri Pandey as the DGP is of no consequence insofar as the apprehension expressed by the petitioner in the Writ Petition is concerned.

6. Shri P.P. Rao urged that if Shri Pandey continues to that post, he may be in a position to pressurize the Courts, where, in pursuance of the recommendations of the Scrutiny Committee, the prosecutions are in progress. We do not think that such a thing can be said either regarding Shri Pandey or even the Trial Courts in Gujarat. We do not have any reasons to believe that Shri Pandey, in his remaining tenure of about three months, would take any such steps. We do not think that the Trial Courts in Gujarat are capable of being pressurized in the manner expressed in the Writ Petition.

7. An appointment of a government servant is the prerogative of the particular government, particularly, when it is a sensitive appointment of Director General of Police. We, under the doctrine of 'judicial review', would not extend our hands to upset such an appointment, more

particularly, in the factual panorama which is available today. We hold that the present Writ Petition has become redundant and we dispose it of as such. As for any disciplinary action against Shri Pandey, it is for the concerned government. We will not enter the fact finding exercise.

8. Shri Rao further expressed that the Government of Gujarat might extend the appointment by giving extension to Shri Pandey. We do not think any such contention can be entertained at this stage, without there being any basis for the same.

9. In the result, the Writ Petition is disposed of in the light of observations made hereinabove.