

News

The P&H High Court requests a response from Haryana over a PIL that claims the cow protection law encourages vigilantism.



According to the petition, the legislation permits private citizens and vigilante organizations to use the coercive powers of search and seizure.

In the case of National Federation of Indian Women NFIW v. State of Haryana and Others, the Punjab and Haryana High Court today issued a notice on a petition contesting provisions of Haryana's cow protection law on the grounds that the law allegedly permits private individuals and vigilante groups to exercise coercive functions of search and seizure.

Today, Chief Justice Sheel Nagu and Justice Sanjiv Berry's Division Bench heard the Public Interest Litigation (PIL) filed by the National Federation of Indian Women (NFIW).

Following a brief hearing, the Court sent a notice to Haryana Gau Seva Aayog, the Director General of Police, and the Haryana government.

"We will issue notice," the Court declared.

Sections 16 and 17 of the Haryana Gauvansh Sanrakshan and Gausamvardhan Act, 2015 were contested in the PIL submitted by attorney Arjun Sheoran. Additionally, the appeal calls for swift action against the State's cow vigilante organizations.

Only a police officer or a government official can be given such responsibilities, according to the attorney representing NFIW today.

The Supreme Court has ruled that these powers belong to the State and cannot be delegated to anyone, he continued.

"Private individuals are stopping motorists, claiming to have the authority to do so, and even seizing the vehicles. Law and order problems are resulting from this, according to Sheoran.

The Special Cow Protection Task Force (SCPF) for each district was notified by the Haryana government in July 2021, according to the PIL, with the goal of "collecting information regarding cattle smuggling and slaughtering from public and further to take prompt action on such illegal activities after specific inputs received from the public."

The Chairman, Haryana Gau Seva Aayog, nominated three members of the SCPF, while the Deputy Commissioner nominated two members from **Gauraksak** Committees/renowned **Gausevaks**.

According to the petitioner, Sections 16 and 17 of the Act allow any private person to be granted sovereign police powers of search, entry, inspection, and seizure without establishing even the most basic requirements, standards, or protections.

The plea argues that the Act's delegation of crucial police authorities, including access,

inspection, search, and seizure, is excessive, arbitrary, and unconstitutional.

The appeal has claimed that the laws have facilitated a systematic increase in cow vigilantism in Haryana and other places, where a number of self-described ***gau-rakshaks***, or cow vigilantes, have developed and, armed with legal power, abuse anyone they believe to be "guilty" of cow smuggling or slaughter.

NFIW was represented in the PIL by attorneys Arjun Sheoran, Tejasvi Sheokand, Rohan Gupta, Pranhita Singh, Shivangi Chauhan, and Manish Boora of Vaakya Legal.