IN THE HIGH COURT OF KARNATAKA AT BENGALURU

WRIT PETITION NO. .....OF .....(*SUO MOTO* PIL)

03.11.2026

RE: In the matter of murder of two Advocates by name Sriram V. and Manjunath and attempt to murder of Senior Advocate Venkataramanappa Sannakki and other connected matters.

BETWEEN:

SUO MOTO.

AND:

1. THE STATE OF KARNATAKA,
   REPRESENTED BY ITS CHIEF SECRETARY,
   VIDHANA SOUDHA, BENGALURU.

2. THE STATE OF KARNATAKA,
   REPRESENTED BY ITS PRINCIPAL SECRETARY,
   DEPARTMENT OF HOME AFFAIRS,
   VIDHANA SOUDHA, BENGALURU.

3. THE DIRECTOR GENERAL AND
   INSPECTOR GENERAL OF POLICE,
   KARNATAKA STATE, BENGALURU.

4. THE COMMISSIONER OF POLICE,
   BENGALURU CITY, BENGALURU.

5. THE JURISDICTIONAL DEPUTY
   COMMISSIONER OF POLICE,
   BENGALURU CITY.

6. BAR COUNCIL OF INDIA
   21, ROUSE AVENUE INTERNATIONAL AREA
   NEW DELHI-110 002.

7. KARNATAKA STATE BAR COUNCIL
   OLD K.G.I.D. BUILDING
   DR.B.R.AMBEDKAR VEEDHI
   BENGALURU-560 001.

8. THE ADVOCATES' ASSOCIATION,
BENGALURU. **... RESPONDENTS**

CORAM: HON'BLE MR. JUSTICE D K SINGH
AND
HON'BLE MR. JUSTICE H.SHANTHI BHUSHAN

ORAL ORDER

(PER: HON'BLE MR. JUSTICE D K SINGH)

The President and office bearers of the Advocates Association, Bengaluru, as well as the Chairman and members of the Karnataka State Bar Council, have brought to the notice of this Court the increasing incidents of violence, assaults, threats and murders of Advocates at different places in the State of Karnataka, including Bengaluru. They have requested this Court to take cognizance of the matter and initiate appropriate proceedings in public interest, particularly to ensure adequate protection and security to Advocates while discharging their professional duties.

2. In the representation submitted, they have referred to certain disturbing incidents, particularly the brutal and cold-blooded murders of Advocates by name Sriram V. reported on 09.10.2026 and Manjunath reported on 18.10.2026 and another incident involving the attempt to murder of Senior Advocate Venkataramanappa Sannakki of Gauribidanur on 28.10.2026.

These incidents have caused considerable shock and apprehension amongst the members of the legal fraternity. Their grievance is that incidents of murder and attempts to murder Advocates are being reported at different places in the State and that adequate preventive measures have not been taken by the concerned authorities. They have sought immediate intervention to ensure that Advocates are able to discharge their professional obligations without fear or intimidation. They have also sought appropriate directions to the police authorities for prompt registration of FIRs and effective investigation through a Special Investigation Team in cases involving offences against Advocates.

3. The representation further states that the Advocates Association, Bengaluru, in its General Body Meeting held on 29.10.2026, resolved to protest against the lack of security to Advocates in the discharge of their professional duties and to seek appropriate strengthening of the legislation concerning their protection. In pursuance of the said resolution, members of the legal fraternity throughout the State of Karnataka have abstained from judicial work today, i.e., 03.11.2026, seeking effective measures to strengthen the Advocates Protection Act and to ensure adequate safeguards for members of the Bar.

4. Apart from the incidents of physical violence against Advocates, the representatives of the Bar have also brought to the notice of this Court another serious grievance concerning the functioning of police stations. It is alleged that, in several instances, police stations have assumed the role of parallel courts by entertaining civil disputes between private parties and attempting to settle such disputes within the police station itself. It is their contention that the police authorities, in the absence of any statutory authority, cannot assume the role of adjudicating civil rights or settling disputes relating to property, possession, contractual obligations and other civil claims.

5. The Advocates Association, Bengaluru, in its General Body meeting held on 29.10.2026 at Vakilara Bhavan, passed a Resolution, which is reproduced as follows:

> ***"RESOLUTION OF THE GENERAL BODY OF THE ADVOCATES' ASSOCIATION BENGALURU***
>
> *In the general body meeting held on 29-10-26 at the Advocates Association Bangalore at Vakilara Bhavan at 1:30 pm noon on the issue of recent violence and murder of advocates and the issue of the lawyers being insulted in police stations it was unanimously decided as follows -*
>
> ***1. To apprehend the accused in the killings of advocates and to bring them to justice by arresting them and sending them to custody and ensuring their conviction.***
>
> ***2. To immediately bring provisions to strengthen the ADVOCATES PROTECTION ACT by adding stringent non bailable provisions and to make offences under the act punishable by at least 10 years imprisonment.***

3. To draft SOP by the home ministry of Karnataka on the treatment to be meted out to citizens and advocates who go to police stations to give complaints and defend clients and to ensure that it is implemented and followed.

4. To issue directions to all police stations and officers that no civil dispute shall be settled in police stations and any attempt to use police powers to settle civil disputes would involve serious disciplinary action against police officers.

5. SINCE the miscreants are yet to be apprehended in Advocate Manjunath's case to institute a court monitored investigation into the case.

We hope that the above measures to strengthen the Advocates protection act and to implement police reforms in conformity with the constitutional objectives would be implemented immediatly and action would be taken in this regard falling which we would launch a bigger Agitation on the same."

6. In pursuance to the abovementioned Resolution dated 19.10.2026, a representation dated 03.11.2026 was issued to the Chief Secretary, Government of Karnataka, regarding the recent killings of lawyers in Karnataka and need to strengthen the Advocates protection Act. The said representation is extracted as hereunder:

"*Dated:3-11-2026*

To.

CHIEF SECRETARY
Room No. 320, 3rd Floor,
Vidhanasoudha,
Bengaluru-560001,

Dear sir,

Sub - Recent killings of lawyers in Karnataka and need to strengthen the Advocates Protection Act.

The recent cold blooded murder of Advocates SRI Manjunath, Whitefield and SRI Sriram, Annapurnesheari Nagar and the attempt to murder incident of Advocate SRI Venkatramana Sannaki from Gouribidnur has shocked the Advocate Community of Karnataka. Advocates have to work fearlessly to bring justice to their clients. Unfortunately there is an atmosphere of fear and violence.

In recent times there has been no protection for Advocates practising in the profession.

These incidents of violence on Advocates are on the rise and it is necessary to take emergent measures to curb the same. Protection needs to be given to Advocates who are fighting for justice. In case they are not given safety the whole system to administration of justice will collapse.

The Advocates Association, Bangalore in its general body meeting held on 29-10-2026 had decided to protest against lack of Security for Advocates in their profession and to Demand that the Advocates Protection Act legislation be strengthened to give protection to advocates.

In view of the same it has been decided to abstain from work in the entire state on 3-11-26 Tuesday and All Advocates Associations in Karnataka are participating in this protest and have decided to fight for the urgent legislation to strengthen the Advocates Protection Act.

Further we are also witnessing a wrong trend in the police force which was not there earlier. Advocates who visit police stations on behalf of their clients are not being given respect. Even a minimum chair is not being offered to sit and discuss. In many cases the officers and staff behave very arrogantly against advocates. This needs to be set right by drafting a proper SOP TO THIS EFFECT to extend proper treatment to citizens and advocates in police stations.

Apart from the above there is a recent trend of police stations becoming parallel courts and substituting themselves as the undeclared courts of the land. Civil disputes between parties are being settled in police stations itself. Though the commissioner and DGP OF POLICE have drafted an SOP not to involve in civil disputes yet the officers at the implementation level namely the inspectors and sub inspectors and ACPs don't care about the same and are violating Supreme Court judgments in this regard and the SOP S in this regard. Though we have brought this to the notice of the authorities yet virtually nothing has been done till date. We request and demand that immediate action be taken to stop such Kangaroo courts or parallel

courts in police stations and take disciplinary action against such erring officers.

Again sir if no action is taken to curb such parallel unofficial courts and if disrespect to the profession continues then we would on be forced to launch an agitation and even file a PIL to curb the same.

Hence we demand that the following issues be addressed forthwith.

1. To apprehend the accused in the killings of advocates and to bring them to justice by arresting them and sending them to custody and ensuring their conviction.

2. To immediate bring provisions to strengthen the ADVOCATES PROTECTION ACT by adding stringent non bailable provisions and to make offences under the act punishable by at least 10 years imprisonment.

3. To draft SOP by the home ministry on the treatment to be meted out to citizens and advocates who go to police stations to give complaints and defend clients and to ensure that it is implemented and followed.

4. To issue directions to all police stations and officers that no civil dispute shall be settled in police stations and any attempt to use police powers to settle civil disputes would involve serious disciplinary action against police officers.

We hope that the above measures to strengthen the Advocates protection act and to implement police reforms in conformity with the constitutional objectives would be implemented immediately and action would be taken in this regard failing which we would launch a bigger Agitation on the same."

7. Newspaper clippings reporting the incidents were also placed on record before this Court, with the following headlines:

1. Deccan Herald Daily Newspaper on 20.10.2026 – ***"Advocate shot dead outside Whitefield home; two detained"***

2. Deccan Herald English Daily on 28.10.2026 – ***"Advocate fatally attacked in Gauribidanur"***

8. It appears that the Commissioner of Police and the Director General and Inspector General of Police have already formulated Standard Operating Procedures and issued instructions restraining police personnel from interfering in civil disputes. However, according to the representatives of the Bar, such instructions are not being followed by the officers at the field level, particularly the Inspectors, Sub-Inspectors and Assistant Commissioners of Police. Despite repeated complaints and representations being made to the higher authorities, no effective steps have been taken to put an end to such illegal and unauthorised practices. The grievance is that police stations continue, in certain instances, to function as forums for settlement of civil disputes, virtually substituting the jurisdiction of competent Courts for illegal considerations.

9. Having regard to the grievances as stated, we are of the view that the issues flagged are not matters concerning the Advocates Association or the Bar Council alone. 'Legal Profession' is a noble profession. Advocates are not merely representatives of litigants; they are officers of the Court and partners in the administration and dispensation of justice. They assist the Courts

in the discharge of their constitutional and legal functions and play an important role in protecting the rights of citizens. Their safety, dignity and professional independence are, therefore, matters of considerable importance. An Advocate must be able to represent the cause of his client fearlessly, without apprehension of physical harm, threat or intimidation. An attack upon an Advocate, particularly one resulting in the loss of life, cannot be viewed as an isolated incident, since it also affects the independence of the Bar and the administration of justice.

10. Another aspect which requires attention is the manner in which Advocates are received and treated when they approach police stations or other police authorities in connection with their professional duties. A uniform Standard Operating Procedure is required to be put in place prescribing the manner in which Advocates are to be received and dealt with by police personnel. At the least, due respect, dignity and minimum professional courtesy must be extended to an Advocate who approaches a police station in the discharge of his professional obligations. This is not to confer any special privilege upon an Advocate, but to ensure that public servants maintain proper conduct and extend the courtesy expected of them towards members of the legal profession. The procedure should also provide for appropriate

action wherever instances of misconduct, discourtesy or intimidation are brought to the notice of the authorities.

11. The Police personnel involving themselves in civil disputes between private parties is a serious issue and requires attention and direction to put an end to such illegal activities in the Police Station forthwith. A Police Station cannot be converted into a forum for adjudication of civil rights or settlement of disputes relating to property, possession, contractual obligations or other civil claims. The police authorities are required to act within the limits of their statutory jurisdiction. It appears that the instructions and SOPs issued by the higher police authorities are not followed. Repeated instructions cannot remain confined to paper. There must be proper supervision to ensure that such instructions are implemented and that appropriate action is taken against officers who violate them. The State Government and the Police Department must ensure that all police stations are specifically instructed not to entertain or settle civil disputes between parties, except where any criminal offence requiring action in accordance with law is disclosed.

12. The State Government is also required to examine the necessity of strengthening the existing statutory framework relating to the protection and welfare of Advocates, including the

provisions of the Advocates Protection Act. The increasing incidents of threats, assaults, intimidation and violence against Advocates call for an examination of whether the existing statutory provisions provide adequate protection. The concerns expressed by the Bar cannot be addressed merely by issuing assurances. Appropriate legislative and administrative measures, supported by an effective mechanism for implementation, are required.

13. Further, a separate Standard Operating Procedure is required to be formulated for receiving and examining complaints made by Advocates against police officers and for taking appropriate action thereon. Such complaints should not remain unattended or be dealt with mechanically by the very establishment against which the grievance is made. There should be a proper mechanism, under the supervision of senior police officers, to ensure that such complaints are acknowledged, examined within a reasonable time and dealt with in accordance with law.

14. In these circumstances, the following aspects require examination by this Court:

(i) The safety, security and protection of Advocates while discharging their professional duties and the measures required to

prevent attacks, threats, assaults and intimidation against members of the Bar.

(ii) Formulation and implementation of a uniform Standard Operating Procedure prescribing the manner in which Advocates approaching police stations and other police authorities in respect of their clients are to be received and treated, ensuring due respect, dignity and minimum professional courtesy.

(iii) Strict implementation of the existing instructions and SOPs prohibiting police personnel from interfering in civil disputes or undertaking settlement of civil litigation at police stations, together with appropriate accountability for violations.

(iv) Examination of the necessity of strengthening the existing Advocates Protection Act and the statutory measures relating to the safety, security and welfare of Advocates.

15. The above issues require consideration in the larger interest of protecting the legal fraternity and preserving the independence of the Bar, which is an indispensable component of the justice delivery system. Protection of Advocates is not a matter of extending any special status or privilege to a particular professional class. It is necessary to ensure that those who assist the Courts in the administration of justice are themselves able to discharge their duties without fear, threat or insecurity.

16. In similar circumstances involving incidents of violence and murder of members of the legal profession, the High Court of Bombay, sitting at Goa, has initiated *suo moto* public interest proceedings to examine the issue of safety and protection of Advocates. Likewise, the High Court for the State of Telangana has also registered *suo moto* proceedings in the wake of the cold-blooded murder of Advocates, recognising the seriousness of the issue and the need for appropriate intervention. These instances also indicate the seriousness with which the issue of safety of Advocates requires to be viewed. The concerns raised by the legal fraternity in the State of Karnataka, therefore, warrant consideration by this Court.

17. In view of the incidents brought to the notice of this Court and the larger issues concerning the safety and professional independence of Advocates, we deem it appropriate to initiate *suo moto* proceedings in public interest.

18. **Accordingly, the Registry is directed to register a *Suo Moto* Public Interest Litigation (PIL)** taking into consideration the representation submitted by the Advocates Association, Bengaluru, and the Karnataka State Bar Council, together with the issues noticed hereinabove.

19. The State of Karnataka, represented by its Principal Secretary, Department of Home Affairs; the Director General and Inspector General of Police, Karnataka; the Commissioner of Police, Bengaluru City; the Jurisdictional Deputy Commissioner of Police; Bar Council of India; Karnataka State Bar Council and the Advocates' Association, Bengaluru, shall be arrayed as respondents. The Advocates Association, Bengaluru, and the Karnataka State Bar Council shall also be impleaded as parties to the proceedings, represented by their respective Presidents/Chairmen.

20. The State Government, through the Department of Home Affairs, and the Director General and Inspector General of Police, Karnataka, shall place before this Court the existing SOPs and instructions governing the aforesaid aspects. They shall also indicate the steps taken to ensure their implementation, the measures proposed for strengthening the statutory protection available to Advocates and the mechanism contemplated for dealing with complaints made by Advocates against police personnel.

21. The State Government shall also examine the necessity of strengthening the existing Advocates Protection Act

and place its response before this Court with regard to the legislative and administrative measures proposed in that regard.

22. The respondent-Police Authorities shall furnish case-wise details of investigation in respect of every case involving the murder of an Advocate reported in the State of Karnataka. In respect of each case, the particulars shall indicate the name of the deceased Advocate, date and place of occurrence, police station and crime number, sections of law invoked, date of registration of the FIR, names of the accused persons, details of arrests made, the material collected during investigation and the present stage of investigation. It shall also be indicated whether the charge sheet has been filed and, if so, the date of filing and the present status of the proceedings before the jurisdictional Court. In cases where the investigation is still pending, the reasons for the delay, the steps taken so far and the further course of investigation proposed shall also be specifically stated. The particulars shall be furnished in a consolidated statement, duly verified by the Director General and Inspector General of Police, Karnataka, on the next date of hearing.

23. The Registry shall place the matter before the Court at the earliest, having regard to the urgency and public importance of the issues involved.

Issue notice to the respondents, returnable on ***08.12.2026***.

Sri K. Shashi Kiran Shetty, learned Advocate General for the State of Karnataka, is requested to accept notice on behalf of the State Government and the concerned Police Authorities.

The learned Advocate General is further requested to place on record a status report with regard to the investigation conducted in the aforesaid incidents. The report shall contain case-wise particulars of the FIRs registered, the investigation conducted, arrests made, material collected, the present stage of investigation, filing of charge sheets, wherever applicable, and the further steps proposed to be taken by the investigating agencies.

The other respondents should place their stand on record by way of affidavit(s).

Place the matter before the appropriate Bench after obtaining necessary orders from Hon'ble the Chief Justice.

List this matter on 08.12.2026.

Sd/-
(D K SINGH)
JUDGE

Sd/-
(H.SHANTHI BHUSHAN)
JUDGE