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Supreme Court Directs FIR Registration in Maharashtra Custodial Death Case

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The Supreme Court of India has directed the registration of a First Information Report (FIR) in connection with the custodial death of Somnath Suryawanshi in Maharashtra. The directive comes amid allegations that Suryawanshi was subjected to torture during his time in police custody. The court noted that the names of individual officers could be added to the investigation at a later stage, depending on the evidence uncovered, underscoring the judiciary's focus on ensuring accountability in law enforcement.

According to case documents, Suryawanshi's death occurred under suspicious circumstances while in police detention. Initial reports have raised concerns regarding possible misconduct by law enforcement officials, with claims that he was subjected to physical abuse. This has led to demands for a fair and transparent investigation from civil rights groups and legal observers.

The Supreme Court's ruling mandates that an FIR be registered without further delay, marking the formal initiation of criminal proceedings under Indian law. The court clarified that while no specific names need to be included in the FIR at this stage, the investigation must remain open to the possibility of identifying and charging individual officers if supported by credible evidence. This approach aims to uphold due process while allowing a fact-based probe.

The order is seen as part of the judiciary's broader effort to enforce constitutional protections, particularly Article 21, which guarantees the right to life and personal liberty. Custodial deaths have been a recurring issue in India, drawing criticism from human rights organizations and legal experts who stress the need for stronger oversight of police conduct and better safeguards against abuse.

Legal analysts say the court's action is consistent with previous rulings that have stressed the need for impartial investigations into allegations of custodial torture. The court's insistence on a formal criminal complaint highlights the seriousness with which such cases should be handled, rather than being addressed through internal departmental procedures alone.

The case will now move into the investigative phase under the supervision of appropriate authorities. The outcome is expected to serve as a benchmark for how similar cases are handled in the future, reinforcing the principle that custodial violence must be met with legal scrutiny and institutional accountability