



JÉSUITES  
du Canada

JESUITS  
of Canada

13 October 2020

The Honourable François-Philippe Champagne  
Minister of Foreign Affairs  
House of Commons  
Ottawa, Ontario K1A 0A6  
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Dear Minister Champagne,

I write to express our deep concern for the arrest of Fr Stan Swamy SJ, an Indian Jesuit priest, who has been taken into custody by the National Investigation Agency (NIA) of India for alleged Maoist links. Fr Stan is 83 years old and in poor health. For 50 years, he has worked tirelessly for poor and marginalized communities of India, especially its Indigenous people/Adivasis.

His arrest on October 8, 2020 is allegedly related to a 2017 celebratory anniversary event in Bhima Koregaon-Elgar Parishad in Pune that drew 35,000 people. Tragically, the event ended in violence with one person dead and several injured.

Fr Stan has always denied having ever been to Bhima Koregaon and strongly rejects any suggestion he is linked to Maoist forces. Yet, Fr Stan is one of 16 people who have been detained in connection with this incident. Others include well-known human rights lawyers Arun Ferreira and Sudha Bharadwaj, and writers Vernon Gonsalvez and Varavara Rao.

Fr Stan has been harassed because of his opposition to government policies that affect the rights of the Adivasis. His work has included documenting the abuse of power against Indigenous youth and others, falsely imprisoned for defending their rights. Fr Stan filed a public interest litigation (PIL) in court against the state of Jharkhand on behalf of 3,000 imprisoned Indigenous people.

Fr Stan's arrest has become international news and is being condemned by people globally. Canada aspires to be a leader in the promotion and advancement of human rights in the international stage. Our country has publicly declared its commitment to championing the values of inclusivity and accountable governance; peaceful pluralism and respect for diversity; and human rights including the rights of those most marginalized in society. All these values have either been ignored or violated in the case of Fr Stan.

We cannot espouse these principles and values as a nation and do nothing in this case. We ask that the Government of Canada strongly condemn the incarceration of Fr Stan Swamy, ask the Indian Government to ensure his immediate release and ask it to refrain from arbitrary arrests of innocent citizens.

We ask the Government of Canada to act as quickly as possible for the sake of Fr Stan Swamy whose health and very life is at risk. We know that a number of people who have been incarcerated during the global COVID-19 pandemic have contracted the virus in prison, making this matter all the more urgent.

Yours sincerely,

Fr Erik Oland SJ  
Provincial Superior/Supérieur provincial  
Jesuits of Canada/Jésuites du Canada



Cc: *The Right Honourable Justin Trudeau*, Prime Minister of Canada [justin.trudeau.p9@parl.gc.ca](mailto:justin.trudeau.p9@parl.gc.ca)