



Jesuit Conference  
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in Canada and the United States

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January 28, 2021

President Joseph R. Biden  
The White House  
1600 Pennsylvania Avenue NW  
Washington, DC 20500

**Re: Unjust detention in India of Fr. Stan Swamy, SJ**

Dear Mr. President,

Congratulations on your election victory—our prayers are with you and we look forward to working with your Administration over the coming years. We were honored that you chose one of our fellow Jesuits to deliver the invocation prayer at your inauguration.

On behalf of the Jesuits in the United States, and in solidarity with our Jesuit brothers in India, I write to express deep concern over the ongoing unjust detention of Fr. Stan Swamy, SJ. Fr Stan, an Indian Jesuit priest, is 83 years old and in poor health. For 50 years, he has worked tirelessly for poor and marginalized communities in India, especially its Indigenous people (Adivasis).

On October 8, 2020 Fr Stan was arrested and taken into custody by the National Investigation Agency (NIA) of India. His arrest is related to alleged Maoist links, in particular a 2017 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 being present in Bhima Koregaon and strongly rejects any suggestion that he is linked to Maoist groups. Despite these denials, 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 abuses of power against Indigenous youth and others falsely imprisoned for defending their rights.

Fr Stan's arrest has become international news and is being condemned globally. Several important international allies have spoken out on Fr Stan's behalf. On October 20, 2020, Michele Bachelet, United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, made a statement calling on the government of India to guarantee the rights of human rights defenders in the country, referring specifically to the situation of Fr. Stan. On December 18, 2020, 21 Members of the European Parliament wrote to Prime Minister Modi asking for his release.

The United States plays an essential role as a leader in the promotion and advancement of human rights on the international stage. Our country stands for freedom of speech, freedom of assembly, freedom of religion, and against abuses of power, especially those that target people working to protect the rights of those who are marginalized. The beginning of a new Administration is an important time to send a clear message about these values that our country holds dear. We cannot espouse these principles and values and stand by, doing nothing in this case.

**We ask that the United States strongly condemn the incarceration of Fr Stan Swamy, ask the Indian Government to release him immediately, and ask it to refrain from arbitrary arrests of innocent citizens.**

We ask you to act as quickly as possible for the sake of Fr Stan, whose health and very life are at risk. Many incarcerated people have contracted the COVID-19 virus in prisons during the current pandemic, making this matter all the more urgent.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Timothy P. Kesicki, SJ". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large initial 'T' and a long horizontal stroke at the end.

Fr. Timothy P. Kesicki, SJ  
President

Cc: Secretary Antony Blinken