



An Update on Fr. Stan Swamy SJ, India

29th October 2020

Fr. Stan Swamy SJ (JAM) 83 years old Jesuit, was arrested from his residence in Ranchi, Jharkhand-India on 8th October 2020 and was flown to Mumbai on 9th and was sent to judicial custody immediately. He is accused of alleged links with Maoists in an incident that took place on January 1, 2018 at Bhima Koregaon in Maharashtra (Western India) where Stan has never been. Fr. Stan has denied the accusation of his involvement in the violence or any other links with the extremist Maoist group. Sadly, he is the 16th human rights' defender arrested in the same case with similar accusation. All 16 of them are in Talaja prison in Mumbai.

On 21st October a bail petition was filed on medical grounds, not on substantive matter in the Sessions court.

On Friday 23rd October, the court rejected the bail petition. This was expected. Nevertheless, this is the legal process before appealing in the High Court where the case will be argued on the substantive matter based on the charge sheet that runs to 10,000 pages.

A team of lawyers are studying the charge sheet carefully. This will take time to segregate what pertains to Stan and cull out important allegations by NIA regarding Stan. Once we get more clarity on the charges, we will keep you updated.

On 25th October, Fr. Stan for the first time contacted Fr. David Solomon SJ (DUM), his Jesuit companion in Bagaicha for the last 2 years. Stan spoke to Solomon for 4 minutes. According to Solomon, he sounded confident, although his health remains a big concern. Stan needed some modified prescription, and this is being attended to. Solomon informed him that we are all with him and praying for him and the legal team is doing all that they could.

Stan can make a phone call once a week to the person he wishes to call. Till now, no one has been able to meet him in the prison.

Ever since Stan was arrested on 8th October, the Jesuit in India have formed various committees both at the national and regional levels, namely strategy, campaign, communication, legal etc., to continue this advocacy action. In spite of pandemic, people have continued to come out in large numbers in all the States of India, to say that they #standwithstan calling for immediate release of Stan and also 15 others who have been languishing in the prison for the last 2 years.

What is interesting to see is that, although the campaign began as #standwithstan seeking immediate release of Fr. Stan, it became stronger day by day seeking the release of all 16 human rights defenders who are unjustly accused and imprisoned without trial for the last 2 years. Presently, the campaign is calling not only for the release of the 16 accused persons but also to repeal the draconian Unlawful Activities Prevention Act (UAPA).



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The campaign is gaining momentum everyday with large support from people of all religions, cultures, languages, communities, students, NGOs, intellectuals, human rights groups, political leaders, political parties and media. Regular updates with articles and reports of protests, campaigns, webinars etc., are available on the website: www.standwithstan.jcsaweb.org

This is becoming a campaign not merely for the release of Fr. Stan but a campaign to save democracy which is systematically getting eroded all over the world. This is an opportunity for all of us to mobilize to save democracy and to stand for truth and justice.

If you wish to receive more details or updates, kindly contact:

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In Solidarity,

Xavier Jeyaraj, SJ