



We MUST Stand with Fr Stan Swamy because...

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BY CEDRIC PRAKASH

We MUST Stand with Fr Stan Swamy because he epitomises all that is good in the Gospel of Jesus and the Constitution of India. He has always radiated compassion, truth, justice, liberty, equality, non-violence and fraternity.

He spoke about these values, he taught them, he embraced them and lived them. This is exactly what Jesus did and does -and expects each of his disciples to do the same today! We have to promote and protect the sanctity of the Constitution for the generations which will follow us!

We MUST Stand with Fr Stan Swamy because today he is by default the face of several others languishing in jail. Those, who like him, are illegally incarcerated in the Elgar Parishad/ Bhima- Koregaon case like Sudha Bharadwaj, (human rights



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lawyer and activist from Chhattisgarh), Varavara Rao (78-year-old Activist, writer and poet from Andhra Pradesh; he is currently very sick), Anand Teltumbde (70-year-old Dalit scholar and activist), Arun Ferreira (advocate and human rights' activist from Mumbai), Vernon Gonsalves (civil rights activist and former professor at Mumbai University), Sudhir Dhawale (writer and Mumbai-based Dalit rights activist), Shoma Sen (professor at Nagpur University), Surendra Gadling (a UAPA expert and lawyer from Nagpur), Mahesh Raut (a young activist on displacement issues from Gadchiroli), Rona Wilson (Delhi-based prisoners' rights activist), Gautam Navlakha (Delhi-based journalist and civil rights activist), Hanybabu Tarayil (DU Professor) and three members of the Kabir Kala Manch, Sagar Gorkhe, Ramesh Gaichor



and Jyoti Jagtap; besides there are others like Umar Khalid and Sai Baba; some anti-CAA protestors who are also in jail just because they have taken a stand for justice and truth

We MUST Stand with Fr Stan Swamy because his arrest has brought into focus the draconian UAPA (Unlawful Activities Prevention Act). At a recent Media Conference, Opposition Leaders from across the political spectrum have called for an immediate repeal of the UAPA.



CPI(M) leader Sitaram Yechury at a virtual conference organised by the People Union of Civil Liberties (PUCL) *“This the Unlawful Activities Prevention Act must go from statute books. It has to be removed. We do not need these sorts of laws that can be misused. The present regime removed checks and balances on UAPA and misused this draconian law. It must go.”*

We MUST Stand with Fr Stan Swamy because he has shown us what it means to truly accompany and empower the Adivasis. He has struggled alongside with them on issues related to the violation of laws in acquiring land for mega projects for mining and infrastructural development which flout the rights of the downtrodden and tribals.

He has been consistently his raising voice in democratic, legitimate ways against the state-sponsored violations of laws and assault on democratic rights of people aimed at paving way for unrestricted exploitation of land and natural resources.

He has questioned the non-implementation of the 5th Schedule of the Constitution why the Panchayats (Extension to Scheduled Areas) Act [PESA], has been ignored. He has expressed disappointment at the silence of the govt on Samatha Judgment, 1997 of the Supreme Court; he has raised his voice at the half-hearted action of the Government on Forest Rights Act, 2006. He has expressed his apprehension at the recently enacted Amendment to ‘Land Acquisition Act 2013’ by the Jharkhand government which sounds a death-knell for Adivasi Community.



He has strongly disagreed with the setting up of ‘Land Bank’ which he sees as the most recent plot to annihilate the Adivasis. He has challenged the indiscriminate arrest of three thousand young Adivasis under the label of ‘naxals’ just because they question and resist unjust land-alienation and displacement.

We MUST Stand with Fr Stan Swamy because he understood and lived the call of ‘Laudato Si’ – even when many of us have been in our comfort zones, cosmeticizing this powerful Encyclical, Stan has had the courage to take on the mining mafia who were destroying the forests, the natural habitat of the Adivasis and looting precious natural resources for their profiteering.





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He has been living the mandate of Pope Francis, “The human environment and the natural environment deteriorate together; we cannot adequately combat environmental degradation unless we attend to causes related to human and social degradation. In fact, the deterioration of the environment and of society affects the most vulnerable people on the planet: “Both everyday experience and scientific research show that the gravest effects of all attacks on the environment are suffered by the poorest” (#48) ... Today, however, we have to realize that a true ecological approach always becomes a social approach; it must integrate questions of justice in debates on the environment, so as to hear **both the cry of the earth and the cry of the poor.**” (#49)

We MUST Stand with Fr Stan Swamy because he truly believed in the power and the Joy of the Gospels. Pope Francis reminds us in ‘Evangelii Gaudium’, “An evangelizing community gets involved

by word and deed in people’s daily lives; it bridges distances, it is willing to abase itself if necessary, and it embraces human life, touching the suffering flesh of Christ in others. Evangelizers thus take on the “smell of the sheep” and the sheep are willing to hear their voice. An evangelizing community is also supportive, standing by people at every step of the way, no matter how difficult or lengthy this may prove to be. (#24). I prefer a Church which is bruised, hurting and dirty because it has been out on the streets, rather than a Church which is unhealthy from being confined and from clinging to its own security. (#49) Peace in society cannot be understood as pacification or the mere absence of violence resulting from the domination of one part of society over others. Nor does true peace act as a pretext for justifying a social structure which silences or appeases the poor, so that the more affluent can placidly support their lifestyle while others have to make do as they can. Demands involving the distribution of wealth, concern for the poor and human rights cannot be suppressed under the guise of creating a consensus on paper or a



transient peace for a contented minority. The dignity of the human person and the common good rank higher than the comfort of those who refuse to renounce their privileges. When these values are threatened, a prophetic voice must be raised". (#218)

We MUST Stand with Fr Stan Swamy because in spite of perhaps not having read Pope Francis' Encyclical 'Fratelli Tutti' (which was released on 4 October and Stan was arrested on 8 October), he has been living the letter and spirit of this great document.

Pope Francis unequivocally states, "For these reasons, the Church, while respecting the autonomy of political life, does not restrict her mission to the private sphere. On the contrary, "she cannot and must not remain on the sidelines" in the building of a better world, or fail to "reawaken the spiritual energy" that can contribute to the betterment of society. It is true that religious ministers must not engage in the party politics that are the proper domain of the laity, but neither can they renounce the political dimension of life itself, which involves a constant attention to the common good and a concern for integral human development. The Church "has a public role over and above



her charitable and educational activities". She works for "the advancement of humanity and of universal fraternity". She does not claim to compete with earthly powers, but to offer herself as "a family among families, this is the Church, open to bearing witness in today's world, open to faith hope and love for the Lord and for those whom he loves with a preferential love. A home with open doors. The Church is a home with open doors, because she is a mother". And in imitation of Mary, the Mother of Jesus, "we want to be a Church that serves, that leaves home and goes forth from its places of worship, goes forth from its sacristies, in order to accompany life, to sustain hope, to be the sign of unity... to build bridges, to break down walls, to sow seeds of reconciliation". (#276)

Stan Swamy: Tamil Nadu Catholics observe day of solidarity



Catholic churches across Tamil Nadu on October 18 expressed solidarity with Jesuit Father Stan Swamy, a native of the Tamil Nadu now who is in a Mumbai jail for alleged Maoists links.

During the Sunday Mass, Catholics prayed for the good health and immediate release of Father Stan. They also organized parish level-programs in front of the churches condemning the priest's arrest and demanded his immediate release.

The call to observe the solidarity day for the jailed priest was given by the Tamil Nadu Bishops' Council (TNBC). Council president Archbishop Antony Poppusamy of Madurai expressed shock at "the unlawful" arrest of the 83-year-old priest, who for decades served the oppressed in the eastern Indian state of Jharkhand.

We MUST Stand with Fr Stan Swamy because just before his arrest he wrote, "Over the last two decades, I have identified myself with the Adivasi people and their struggle for a life of dignity and self-respect... In this process, I have clearly expressed my dissent over several policies and laws enacted by the government in the light of the Indian Constitution. I have questioned the validity, legality and justness of several steps taken by the government and the ruling class. If this makes me a 'deshdrohi', then so be it. We are part of the process. In a way I am happy to be part of this process. **I am not a silent spectator, but part of the game and ready to pay the price whatever be it...** I / we must be ready to face the consequences. I would just add that what is happening to me is not unique. Many activists, lawyers, writers, journalists, student leaders, poets, intellectuals and others who stand for the rights of Adivasis, Dalits and the marginalised and express their dissent to the ruling powers of

the country are being targeted. Grateful to all who have stood in solidarity with me all these years". Can there be a more motivating reason?!

We MUST Stand with Fr Stan Swamy because like a true son of St Ignatius he walked the talk. In keeping with the Universal Apostolic Preferences of the Society of Jesus he was convinced that he had to work with the excluded. He did so in a most unassuming manner, standing up for their rights, ensuring that they live a more dignified life in an environment of justice! Like him, our stand today for him, necessarily has to be visible and vocal!

We MUST Stand with Fr Stan Swamy because the harassment, intimidation, the hours of interrogation he has been subject to and his incarceration in Talaja jail is not only unwarranted and illegal but downright inhuman.

That an innocent eighty-three-year-old with physical ailments, can be a victim to such horrendous



treatment from the ruling regime speaks volumes of the abysmal depths to which the country has fallen into; that too when the country has been gripped by a pandemic which has taken a toll everywhere! All civil behaviour and democratic norms have been thrown to the wind.

We MUST Stand with Fr Stan Swamy because ...simply and selfishly – today it is HIM; tomorrow it will be YOU and ME! And there will be no one left to stand with us! ©

Ranchi Archbishop leads human chain to demand Jesuit's release



Archbishop Felix Toppo of Ranchi October 16 joined priests, nuns and lay people to form a 5-kilometer human chain to denounce the arrest of Fr Stan Swamy for alleged Maoist links. Many of the more than 1,000 protestors, who lined up in Ranchi lit candles, terming it a symbol of hope against the attempts to silence intellectuals and rights activists such as Father Stan Swamy.

The human chain was part of ongoing protests by various

groups around the country. Archbishop Toppo and Auxiliary Bishop Theodore Mascarenhas of Ranchi stood outside the Archbishop's Residence on Purulia Road, holding banners and wearing masks in accordance with Covid-19 protocol.

Archbishop Toppo's banner read: "We demand justice." Among the other slogans printed on posters were "Stop terrorizing activists," "Stan is a worker for Dalit and Adivasi rights and not a terrorist," "Everyone has human rights, stop branding them as terrorists"

and "Release Stan Swamy—the voice of the oppressed." Bishop Mascarenhas, one of the organizers, said the way the elderly Jesuit was arrested by NIA at night last week on false charges is beyond condemnation.

"We demand his release," he added. Tribal rights activist Dayamani Barla said, "Stan's body of work for the cause of tribals is well documented. The recent action against him is a strategic attempt to silence all such voices who stand for the cause of the marginalized."

Earlier on October 15, Bishop Mascarenhas told a press conference that they had formally appealed to the Jharkhand government to intervene and seek the release of Swamy.

"We believe he is innocent and his decades-old work for the rights of tribals and the marginalized stands unparalleled. The way such an elderly person is being harassed should evoke strong reactions from everywhere," the bishop said.

(Source: telegraphindia.com)