

STATEMENT OF THE INDIAN WOMEN THEOLOGIANS' FORUM  
ON THE ARREST OF FR. STAN SWAMY S.J.

9<sup>th</sup> October, 2020

We the Indian Women Theologians Forum strongly condemn the arrest of Stan Swamy SJ on Thursday night by the National Investigation Agency (NIA) on charges of terrorism related offences. We denounce the manner of his arrest which was done in a “rough and arrogant manner”, refusing to show any warrant or give the grounds for his arrest.

Stan Swamy is an 83 year old, Jesuit priest who has dedicated his life for the empowerment of Adivasis. We are shocked that he was charged with “terrorism related offences”, he has consistently raised a critical voice against police excesses in Jharkhand for a few decades now, highlighting the government’s failure to implement the fifth schedule of the Constitution in the State. He also questioned indiscriminate arrests of random Adivasi youth.

Implicating him in the Bhima-Koregaon case with fabricated accusations and subjecting him to constant harassment, he has endured raids on his premises and his personal computer. The pattern of raids and questioning in recent months, point clearly to the fact that he is seen as a threat to plans and schemes to exploit the mineral rich forested region of the tribal community in Jharkhand.

Now that the NIA has taken over the Bhima – Koregaon investigation, they found it convenient to implicate and finally arrest him in this case on trumped up charges.

It is evident that the empowerment of the Adivasi people is not in keeping with the plans of the ruling BJP government in the State. We call upon all right-thinking citizens to join us in condemning this vicious act of violence inflicted on an ailing 83 year old man who has had nothing but the well being of the Adivasi people as his goal. He did what the State government should have been doing in keeping with Article 15 (3) and (4) of the Constitution.

The manner of his arrest and the fact that the court remanded him into judicial custody even as NIA did not ask for it is a matter of grave concern. In view of his life-long dedication to the betterment of Adivasis, and his age related ailments, we call for the immediate release of Fr. Stan Swamy.