

ACAT (Harrow group) – prayer case of the month (*March 2021*)

Please pray as you feel led for Jesuit priest **Father Stan Swamy** (83). He was arrested by India's National Intelligence Agency (NIA) and has been detained in Taloja Central prison in Mumbai since 8th October 2020 under antiterrorism laws which many observers believe are now being mainly used to crack down on dissent.



Father Stan Swamy is known for his 5 decades of service to the poor and homeless. He has been in the forefront of trying to protect and advocate for India's indigenous Adivasi people whose lands are under attack in the eastern Indian state of Jharkhand, where mining interests loom large. He has resorted to all legal and peaceful means to try and put an end to the violence they suffer. Jharkhand is home to 40% of India's precious minerals, including uranium, mica, bauxite, gold, silver, graphite, coal and copper. But development has been uneven and has come at the cost of its tribespeople, who comprise more than a quarter of the state's 30 million residents.

Following his arrest, he and 15 other human rights workers have been charged with sedition and having links with outlawed Maoist rebels. In particular, he is accused of alleged links with Maoist insurgents involved in a violent attack in Maharashtra state in 2018. He has always denied any involvement. The other prisoners are also all known for their peaceful commitment and work with the poor.

The priest, who suffers from ill-health including Parkinson's disease and other age-related conditions, was initially expected to be held until 23rd October. However, he was denied bail on that date and on subsequent occasions. He has remained imprisoned ever since.

The Director of Jesuit Missions has recently said: "We are at critical stage of the campaign for **Fr Stan**. He is in poor health, and his condition is deteriorating. The risk of contracting COVID in prison is a grave existential threat to **Fr Stan**. We must keep up the pressure on the Indian government to release **Fr Stan** and the other human rights activists who are being held." Other individuals who know him as a man of peace as well as prominent church leaders and organisations such as Christian Solidarity Worldwide (CSW) are also pressing for his release.

Update: some positive news from Saudi Arabia: Loujain Al-Hathloul (our prayer case for July 2020) has been released and Ali al Nimr (our prayer case for January 2018) is no longer facing the Death penalty and it is hoped that he will be released towards the end of this year. Nazanin Zaghari-Ratliffe (prayer case October 2016) is technically due to be released on Sunday 7th March. Please pray that she will be free to return to her family in the UK..