

Mr. Amit Shah, Union Home Minister of India
Ministry of Home Affairs
North Block
New Delhi - 110001

Groningen, 2023

Dear Minister Amit Shah,

Between 2018 and 2021, the Pune Police and National Investigation Agency arrested 16 human rights defenders for their involvement in the 2018 Bhima Koregaon riots. They were charged under various provisions of the draconian Unlawful Activities (Prevention) Act and the Indian Penal Code. The arrests appear to be politically motivated and relate to a massive crackdown on human rights defenders.

Fr. Stan Swamy, one of the 16 activists, died in detention on 5 July 2021. Since his arrest, his mental and physical health drastically deteriorated, and he was denied timely and effective medical treatment by the authorities. Sudha Bhardwaj, Varavara Rao and Anand Teltumbde were granted bail. Gautam Navlakha was shifted to house arrest. The other 11 activists continue to languish in jail without a trial.

I call for all charges against the 16 activists to be dropped, and for the immediate release of the 11 that remain in detention. Pending their release, the activists should be granted prompt, regular and unrestricted access to medical care and other basic necessities.

Yours sincerely,