**Re. Campaign for the Release of Fr Stan Swamy SJ**

Dear [Name of TD],

Human rights defender, Fr Stan Swamy SJ is an Indian Jesuit who has been detained by the National Investigation Agency (NIA) since October 10th 2020, because of a false accusation of being a Maoist. For more than 50 years, he has dedicated his life to defending the dignity of India’s marginalised and oppressed, especially its indigenous Adavisi people and the Dalits.

Fr Swamy utterly refutes the accusation that he has links to Maoist groups, and has never even been to the region, Bhima Koregoan, where these paramilitary forces operate. He is one of a group of 16 people who have been detained in this operation, which includes human rights lawyers Arun Ferreira and Sudha Bharadwaj, and writers Vernon Gonsalvez and Varavara Rao.

In a video statement made two days before his arrest, he said:

*“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 and put into jail.”*

Despite the absurdity of the allegations against him, Fr Swamy has been denied bail on numerous occasions. Now imprisoned for more than six months, and approaching his 84th birthday, his situation is desperate.

Voices of protest have already been raised in defence of Fr Swamy. The Catholic Bishops’ Conference of India has appealed for his release, as has George Pattery SJ, President of the Jesuit Conference of South Asia. 21 MEPs from across Europe wrote in his defence on December 18th , calling on the Indian Prime Minister to “release him immediately on humanitarian grounds”.

In Ireland, our ability to impact this situation may be small, but it is still significant. I urge you to investigate the plight of this defender of human rights and raise his case in the Dáil. I ask you to write to the Minister for Foreign Affairs, asking him to investigate this matter urgently; and to call on the Indian government to release Fr Swamy immediately and return him to his community.

Please advise me of any response you receive from the Department of Foreign Affairs.

Thank you for your assistance.

Is mise le meas,

[Your name]