

A New Era

For

JUSTICE



Bulletin 1 December 2021

Justice is the voice of a coalition of organisations and networks in the UK who stand up against injustice.

Global leaders continue to remain silent as more and more human rights violations by autocratic governments are being highlighted across the world: in China, in the Middle East, in Latin America.

Our coalition focuses on India: the one country whose [rapid descent](#) under the current regime on all indices, from [press freedom](#) to [hunger](#) to [environmental destruction and internal displacement](#) of people to the [purposeful use of sedition laws](#) to silence its own human rights defenders, is ringing alarm bells that need to be urgently heard.

In July 2021, Stan Swamy, an 84-year Jesuit priest with Parkinson's disease, [passed away in custody](#). Stan had [spent his whole life working with](#) India's indigenous Adivasi people defending their rights against the usurping of their lands and forests by mining companies, aided and abetted by an increasingly autocratic state. Stan was harassed by police, incarcerated on fabricated charges in [an over-crowded prison](#) at the height of the Covid pandemic. His health quickly deteriorated, he contracted coronavirus and by the time he was allowed to go to an adequately functioning health facility it was too late.

In a series of bulletins, Justice will outline ● why India's descent into darkness is a global threat ● why it should concern the UK public and ● why the coalition seeks your support and appeals to raise your voice of concern.

Criminalising journalism

Siddique Kappan: a journalist, arrested on false charges, was chained to his hospital bed when he contracted Covid-19 in prison

[Siddique was arrested](#) on 5 October 2020 on his way to Hathras village in the state of Uttar Pradesh (UP) to report on case of caste atrocity. A dalit woman had been gang-raped and severely injured by "upper-caste" neighbours. She died a few days later on 29 September 2020 and even as the case [received international attention](#) and a national media reporter captured [the scene on video](#), the local police ignored the right of the family to carry out her cremation and forcibly burned her body in the middle of the night in a field. How the family continues to face caste violence [has also been reported internationally](#).

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Raihana, Siddique's wife, [has talked about](#) how her husband and two colleagues were stopped and

[arrested on charges of sedition](#). Siddique contracted Covid-19 in prison but was chained to the bed in the local poorly equipped hospital. Raihana had to file a plea in the Supreme Court of India for her husband to be moved to an adequate medical facility in Delhi. The UP government strongly opposed his move displaying a total disregard for human rights. Journalist unions in India have appealed for his release but to no avail.

[Watch the State \(WTS\) at The Polis Project's](#) 'Mapping patterns of violence against journalists in India (2019-2021)' has documented that from May 2019 to August 2021, 256 instances of violence against journalists were reported in India. On 15 November 2021, two young female journalists, [Samridhi K Sakunia and Swarna Jha](#), who were reporting on purposely created religious tensions in the state of Tripura, were intimidated and detained by the police as part of the [government's efforts to suppress news](#) that attempts to document the increasing instances of Hindu mob violence.

They killed him.

Stan Swamy, an 84-year old Jesuit,

in custody on trumped-up charges, passed away on 5th July 2021. Family members of prisoners on similar charges describe Stan's death as 'institutional murder'. The truth is, Indian PM Modi does not tolerate any criticism of his policies. He makes false statements, such as India's

Criminalising environmentalists

Hidme Markam: a human rights and anti-mining activist, arrested on false charges, at gun point and dragged to waiting police van on International Women's Day 2021



[Hidme was picked up](#) by the Chhattishgarh Police on charges of alleged involvement in Maoist activities. She was dragged to a police van while attending a memorial event for the



late [Pande Kawasi, who was physically and sexually abused in custody](#) in

February 2021. Hidme had been speaking out against the arrests of innocent villagers and was actively involved to save Nandaraj Hill, where Adani and other mining companies operate. Eyewitness Soni Sori, who herself had been [arrested and sexually traumatised in custody](#) in 2011, said Hidme "isn't a Maoist as police claimed and has been fighting for the Jal-Jangal-Jameen [water-forest-land] of tribals in Bastar. She had been going to the offices of SP, Collector frequently and met with many prominent personalities including Bhupesh Baghel, and Governor to raise tribals' issues." ... Have you ever heard that a Maoist goes to the SP or Collector's office, meets with the Chief Minister, Governor and reveals their identity openly?," asked [Soni Sori in an interview with NewsClick](#).

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India - the largest democracy?

World leaders, instead of expressing their concern, have turned a blind eye to India's increasingly worsening human rights record.

British and other governments, [for their trade interests](#), are [now bolstering](#) India's skewed economic policies the country's own citizens [are protesting against](#). The current government is stoking [communal hate and discrimination](#) and harassing journalists who report on it while telling the world "Today India is among those countries which have succeeded in saving maximum number of citizens. .., And today, it is also India that has started world's largest Corona vaccination programme .." ([Prime Minister Narendra Modi, Global Economic Forum, January 2021](#)).

World leaders congratulated Mr Modi as they did at the G7 Summit in Cornwall in England in June of the same year too while [scientists](#) and the [Parliamentary Standing Committee warned the Indian government](#) to take measures for possible surge of Covid-19. They ignored the advice and [Indians died in thousands](#) every day in April-May 2021.

India, a signatory of the statement at the G7 Summit: "We are at a critical juncture, facing threats to freedom and democracy from various quarters such as rising authoritarianism, human rights violations and abuses and politically motivated internet shutdowns" is known for [world's largest internet shutdown in Kashmir](#), whose autonomous status has been unconstitutionally revoked, with ongoing and still increasing imposition of extensive military presence to suppress people's basic rights.

Still in October 2021, [while on her trip to India](#) to boost trade, the British Foreign Secretary called India as the "the largest democracy in the world."

It is worryingly ironic that while the Foreign and Commonwealth Office is praising India for its futuristic green vision, British citizens are protesting against the funding of the [Science Museum, London, by the Adani coal mining group](#). The same Adani group is notorious for its [widespread environmental violations](#) in India and other countries, and is widely observed to be unusually favoured by the current Indian government, which has condoned and supported its multiple violations of environmental and legal norms.



Do not let injustice prevail in India.

Remembering Gauri Lankesh



On 5 September 2017, [journalist Gauri Lankesh, a fearless critique of government policies was shot dead](#) by men on motorcycles when she returned home from work. Gauri was the fourth public intellectual to be killed in this way. Gobind Pansare, lawyer, historian, and socialist involved in organising against caste and communal violence was also shot while out a walk on 20 February 2015. M.M. Kalburgi, renowned professor of literature and former Vice Chancellor of Kannada University, Hampi and a critic of Brahmanical dominance, hypocrisy and superstition was killed at point blank range in his home on 30 August 2015.



Photo: Gauri Lankesh at a condolence meet following Dr Kalburgi's death.

As [Siddharth Deb notes in Columbia Journalism Review](#) in this series of killings “the broad finger of suspicion points, inexorably, to members of the Hindu right, people determined to eliminate those it considers its ideological enemies, stubbornly standing in the way of India as a Hindu nation.” And it is this ideology that lies at the heart of the current regime led by Prime Minister Narendra Modi that has [reduced India's democratic status to an 'electoral autocracy'](#) by the V-Dem Institute.

This issue of Justice remembers Gauri [[Freedom is non negotiable: Requiem for Gauri Lankesh](#) - Arati Rao] with a message that we will not let the sacrifice of those who have been harassed, tortured, imprisoned or murdered by the current government go in vain.

Protests on streets

