[Your address]

His Excellency Mr Vikram K Doraiswami,

The Indian High Commissioner

India House

Aldwych

London WC2B 4NA

 July 2023

**Detention of fifteen human rights activists in Maharashtra state**

Your Excellency

We are concerned at the continuing detention, without formal charges, of 15 human rights activists in Taloja and Byculla jails in Mumbai and under house arrest in Maharashtra state. Surendra Gadling, Rona Wilson, Sudhir Dhawale, Shoma Sen, Mahesh Raut, Vernon Gonsalves, Arun Ferreira, Hany Babu, Jyoti Jagtap, Ramesh Gaikor and Sagar Ghorke and are being held under the Unlawful Activities Prevention Act. In addition, Sudha Bharadwaj, Varavara Rao, Anand Teltumde and Gautam Navlakha remain under house arrest, released from prison under strict bail conditions due to their frail health.

As lawyers and academics, they have worked to defend the rights of India’s most marginalised people and have not been found guilty of any crime. These activists are mainly older and several suffer from underlying health conditions. Very sadly, a sixteenth person who was also detained, Father Stan Swamy, a Jesuit priest in his 80s, died in prison of Covid in 2021 having been repeatedly denied the care he needed. This does not reflect well on India’s international reputation.

I request that you ensure the authorities in Maharashtra:

* Immediately ensure these 15 human rights defenders are released
* Ensure they have a fair trial based on proper charges or all charges are dropped
* Cease using the Unlawful Activities Prevention Act to harass human rights defenders and prevent legitimate freedom of speech.

Thank you for your consideration

Yours sincerely