

**11 August 2017**

## **India: Human rights defender Medha Patkar detained**

On 9 August 2017, human rights defender Medha Patkar was arrested by police in Dhar district for participating in a peaceful protest against the inadequate redress and resettlement of families displaced by the Sardar Sarovar dam project on the Narmada river, in Gujarat state. Medha Patkar is currently detained at Dhar jail.

Medha Patkar is a prominent human rights defender and founding member of Narmada Bachao Andolan- NBA (Movement to Save the Narmada). NBA is an organisation which mainly works for the rights of persons displaced due to development projects alongside the Narmada River. This project is affecting people in the states of Gujarat, Madhya Pradesh and Maharashtra. For decades, Medha Patkar has been working on defending the political and economical rights of tribal communities in Western India. She has also helped establish a network of activists across the country – the National Alliance of People's Movements. In 1992, she was awarded the Goldman Environmental Prize.

On 7 August 2017, Medha Patkar and fellow activists staged a peaceful protest and went on hunger strike in Chikalda, Madhya Pradesh, against the inadequate redress and resettlement of families displaced by the Sardar Sarovar dam project on the Narmada river, in Gujarat state. Police officers entered the protest site, dispersed the protesters using batons and detained Medha Patkar along with nine other activists. Medha Patkar was taken to Bombay hospital in Indore, due to health concerns related to her hunger strike and discharged on 9 August 2017. After being discharged from the hospital, she attempted to return to Chikalda but was arrested by Dhar Police, brought before the magistrate and sent to Dhar jail. Medha Patkar has been on a hunger strike since 27 July 2017 along with other activists.

Front Line Defenders expresses concern at the arrest of Medha Patkar, which it believes is solely motivated by her peaceful and legitimate work in human rights, and in particular her efforts to seek justice for the tribal communities affected by the Narmada dams.

### **Front Line Defenders urges the authorities in India to:**

1. Immediately and unconditionally release Medha Patkar, as Front Line Defenders believes that she is being held solely as a result of her legitimate and peaceful work in the defence of human rights;
2. Guarantee in all circumstances that all human rights defenders in India are able to carry out their legitimate human rights activities without fear of reprisals and free of all restrictions.

