

The Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR)

January 26, 2021

In news : Recently, OHCHR has asked the government of India to release the activists who are in prison for the 2018 Bhima Koregaon case, “at the very least on bail”.

A brief note on the Bhima Koregaon case

- The Bhima Koregaon case dates back to January 1, 2018, which marked the 200th anniversary of the battle of Bhima Koregaon.
- The event was organised to celebrate the victory of the British, which included a large number of Mahars, against Peshwa Baji Rao II’s army. A person was killed and several others were injured during the 2018 event.
- Several human rights activists, including Sudha Bharadwaj, Varavara Rao and Gautam Navlakha, were arrested during the course of the investigation.
- The case is currently with the National Investigation Agency (NIA).

About the OHCHR

The Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (UN Human Rights) is the leading UN entity on human rights. We represent the world’s commitment to the promotion and protection of the full range of human rights and freedoms set out in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights.

Mission of OHCHR

In carrying out its mission UN Human Rights:

- Gives priority to addressing the most pressing human

rights violations, both acute and chronic, particularly those that put life in imminent peril

- Focuses attention on those who are at risk and vulnerable on multiple fronts
- Pays equal attention to the realization of civil, cultural, economic, political, and social rights, including the right to development
- Measures the impact of its work through the substantive benefit that is accrued, through it, to individuals around the world

History of the mandate

The **UN General Assembly established the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights in December 1993 through its resolution 48/141** which also details its mandate. This was just a few months after the World Conference on Human Rights adopted the Vienna Declaration and Plan of Action.

Adopted by 171 States, the Vienna Declaration renewed the world's commitment to human rights. It also called for strengthening and harmonizing the monitoring capacity of the United Nations system with regards to human rights.

UN Human Rights is mandated:

- Promote and protect all human rights for all
- Recommend that bodies of the UN system improve the promotion and protection of all human rights
- Promote and protect the right to development
- Provide technical assistance to States for human rights activities
- Coordinate UN human rights education and public information programmes
- Work actively to remove obstacles to the realization of human rights and to prevent the continuation of human rights violations
- Engage in dialogue with Governments in order to secure

- respect for all human rights
- Enhance international cooperation for the promotion and protection of all human rights
- Coordinate human rights promotion and protection activities throughout the United Nations system
- Rationalize, adapt, strengthen and streamline the UN human rights machinery

Role of OHCHR

Both the High Commissioner and the Office have a unique role to:

- **Promote and protect all human rights:** We speak out objectively in the face of human rights violations and help elaborate the standards that are used to evaluate human rights progress worldwide.
- **Help empower people:** Our research, education, and advocacy activities, contributes to the increased awareness and engagement by the international community and the public on human rights issues. This means thousands of people in all regions of the world are empowered to claim their rights.
- **Assist Governments:** Through our field presences, we help prevent abuses and contribute to defusing situations that could lead to conflict. Our monitoring and analysis feeds sensitive decision-making and development programming. We also provide capacity-building and legal advice to thousands, supporting the development and judicious enactment of laws and policies the world around.
- **Inject a human rights perspective into all UN programmes:** We mainstream human rights into all UN programmes to ensure that peace and security, development, and human rights – the three pillars of the UN – are interlinked and mutually reinforced.