

PRESS RELEASE

Text of the D.O. letter dated 6.8.2013 addressed by **Selvi J Jayalithaa**, Hon'ble Chief Minister of Tamil Nadu to **Dr.Manmohan Singh**, Hon'ble Prime Minister of India is reproduced below: -

"I would like to invite your attention to my earlier letters dated 17.6.2013, 8.7.2013, 1.8.2013 and 2.8.2013 highlighting the plight of 70 innocent fishermen from Tamil Nadu who continue to languish in Sri Lankan jails. I had also sought your personal intervention at the highest diplomatic levels in order to secure their immediate release. In the absence of any action by the Government of India to secure their release by raising the issue with the Sri Lankan Government, these poor fishermen from Tamil Nadu still remain in Sri Lankan custody.

Even while they continue to remain in Sri Lankan jails, in yet another outrageous incident that took place on 3rd August 2013, another 20 fishermen from Rameshwaram have again been abducted by the Sri Lankan Navy. This is the third time within a period of one month that fishermen from Tamil Nadu have been subjected to such highhanded acts of abduction and kidnapping at the hands of the Sri Lankan Navy. 5 Mechanised fishing boats bearing registration numbers IND/TN/10/MM/268, IND/TN/10/MM/865, IND/TN/10/MM/381, IND/TN/10/MM/708, IND/TN/11/ MM/325, which ventured out for fishing on 3.8.2013 from Rameshwaram base with 20 fishermen on board, have been apprehended near Katchatheevu by the Sri Lankan Navy and taken to Thalaimannar, Sri Lanka. They have been remanded to custody on 4.8.2013.

I have been repeatedly writing to you about the travails of innocent Tamil Nadu fishermen who face harassment, abduction, assault and apprehension at the hands of the Sri Lankan Navy, which continues its menacing and predatory acts in the face of the immobility and apathy of the Government of India to the plight of these innocent fishermen from Tamil Nadu. The ineffective response of the Government of India has emboldened the Sri Lankan Navy to continue such predatory attacks on Indian fishermen with impunity.

I must also emphasise that these frequent abductions, arrests and detention for long periods of time of Tamil Nadu fishermen by the Sri Lankan Government, have created tension and agitation amongst the fishermen community in Tamil Nadu. The fishermen community in Tamil Nadu, which faces continuous harassment not only by the Sri Lankan Navy but also attacks by Sri Lankan miscreants in the guise of fishermen, now nurses a strong grievance against the Government of India that it has forsaken them in a time of crisis and is apathetic to their interests.

These continuous attacks and abductions are acts of an unfriendly nation and should be countered effectively by coercive diplomacy. A strong message should be delivered through diplomatic channels that India will not tolerate these attacks. Our diplomats in Colombo should take up the matter with the Government of Sri Lanka and take concrete steps to secure the immediate release of all the 90 fishermen who are now in Sri Lankan jails.

May I also request you to take immediate steps to initiate a diplomatic dialogue with the Government of Sri Lanka to immediately stop the recurrence of such incidents of arrest and harassment of Tamil Nadu fishermen in the Palk bay, which is their traditional fishing area from time immemorial? I solicit your personal and immediate intervention in this matter."

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