

PRESS RELEASE

Text of the D.O. letter dated 1.8.2013 addressed by **Selvi J Jayalalithaa**, Hon'ble Chief Minister of Tamil Nadu to **Dr.Manmohan Singh**, Hon'ble Prime Minister of India is reproduced below: -

"I would like to draw your immediate attention to the plight of 34 fishermen belonging to Ramanathapuram district of Tamil Nadu who were ruthlessly apprehended by the Sri Lankan Navy in various incidents while fishing in the high seas in pursuit of their daily livelihood and are suffering prolonged incarceration in Sri Lankan jails.

I have repeatedly written to you about the incidents of Tamil Nadu fishermen who take to the high seas in search of their livelihood and fish in their traditional fishing waters around Katchatheevu being subjected to unprovoked brutal assaults, grievous hurt, abduction and detention at the hands of the Sri Lankan Navy. You may recall that in my letter dated 17.6.2013, I had brought to your notice that 8 fishermen belonging to Rameswaram, along with their 2 mechanized fishing boats, were apprehended by the Sri Lankan Navy on 15.6.2013, when they were fishing in the seas around Katchatheevu and produced in Mannar Court, Sri Lanka. They were remanded to judicial custody and lodged in Anuradhapura jail till 27.6.2013. Their remand was further extended up to 25.7.2013 and they were shifted to Vavunia prison. Now we have been informed that their remand has further been extended up to 6.8.2013.

Another batch of 21 fishermen of Rameswaram along with 5 mechanized fishing boats were apprehended by the Sri Lankan Navy on 6.7.2013 and produced in the Mannar Court, Sri Lanka. They were lodged in Anuradhapura jail till 19.7.2013. I had written to you regarding this incident on 8.7.2013. We are now informed that their remand has been further extended up to 2.8.2013. Their boats with implements are under the custody of the Sri Lankan Navy.

You are also aware that in my D.O. letters dated 4.7.2012 and 17.6.2013, I had brought to your notice the arrest and detention of 5 innocent fishermen from Rameswaram who are languishing in Sri Lankan jails for more than 20 months due to a fabricated case.

I am sorry to note that, despite my repeatedly writing to you with regard to these incidents of unprovoked assault on Tamil Nadu fishermen and their detention in Sri Lankan jails, there appears to be no concerted effort by the Government of India to secure the release of these fishermen. You will appreciate that these fishermen belong to one of the poorest sections of Society for whom prolonged periods of custody in an alien land

means loss of their daily livelihood. It has a crushing impact on their families who are in agony over their prolonged absence and detention. The entire fishermen community in Tamil Nadu is agitated over this issue. There appears to be no action by the Government of India to secure their release.

May I request you to direct the Ministry of External Affairs to immediately take up this matter through the highest diplomatic channels and take concerted steps to secure the immediate release of our fishermen? I seek your personal intervention in this matter."

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