

PRESS RELEASE

Text of the D.O.Letter dated 3.7.2016 of **Selvi J Jayalithaa**, Hon'ble Chief Minister of Tamil Nadu addressed to **Shri Narendra Modi**, Hon'ble Prime Minister of India :-

"This is to bring to your notice yet another incident in which five fishermen of Tamil Nadu have been apprehended by the Sri Lankan Navy. It is reported that 5 fishermen in a mechanised fishing boat who set sail for fishing from Rameswaram fishing base of Ramanathapuram District were apprehended by the Sri Lankan Navy in the early hours of 3.7.2016 and taken to Kankesanthurai, Sri Lanka.

The repeated instances of abduction and apprehension of innocent Indian fishermen belonging to the coastal districts of Tamil Nadu adjoining the Palk Bay, by the Sri Lankan Navy, while engaged in earning their meagre livelihood by fishing in their traditional fishing waters, is a matter of grave concern. I have repeatedly emphasized the importance of the Government of India undertaking a strong diplomatic offensive to uphold the rights and interests of Indian fishermen from Tamil Nadu. The unconstitutional ceding of the Indian territory of Katchatheevu Island by the agreements of 1974 and 1976 have been challenged by me on valid legal grounds in the Supreme Court of India. Despite my repeated appeals to the Government of India to ensure that the traditional fishing rights of the Tamil Nadu fishermen are upheld through a permanent solution to this sensitive livelihood issue, the situation at sea remains precarious with the unabated offensive actions of the Sri Lankan navy.

The Sri Lankan strategy of not releasing the fishing boats, the sole and only source of livelihood of the poor fishermen, is further aggravating the situation. At present 95 impounded fishing boats remain insecurely berthed in Sri Lanka and are sustaining severe damages.

I request that a calibrated set of actions is immediately initiated to ensure that our fishermen are allowed to pursue their livelihood with freedom in their traditional waters. I once again call for your immediate intervention to secure the immediate release of the 34 fishermen and 95 fishing boats currently in Sri Lankan custody, including the 5 fishermen and their mechanised fishing boat apprehended on 3.7.2016 without any delay".

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