

PRESS RELEASE

Text of the D.O. letter dated 8.7.2013 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 wish to bring to your notice yet another instance of high-handed, blatant and illegal abduction and detention of 21 Indian fishermen, by the Sri Lankan Navy. These 21 fishermen of Ramanathapuram District set sail for fishing in 5 boats bearing registration numbers IND/TN/10/MM/474, IND/TN/10/MM/302, IND/TN/11/MM/117, IND/TN/11/MM/259 and IND/TN/10/MM/008 on the night of 6.7.2013 and they have been abducted on the high seas. It is learnt that they have been remanded up to 19.7.2013.

I have been repeatedly writing to you regarding the continuing instances of unprovoked assaults upon, and the abduction and illegal detention of, innocent fishermen belonging to Tamil Nadu on the high seas by the Sri Lankan Navy. As you are aware, 49 fishermen in 10 Boats were apprehended by the Sri Lankan Navy on 5.6.2013. Of these, 24 fishermen have been released on 2.7.2013 and another 25 fishermen on 3.7.2013 after nearly a month of illegal detention. Another 8 fishermen were apprehended in two boats on 15.6.2013, and those fishermen are still languishing in Sri Lankan jails. Besides these, 5 fishermen of Rameshwaram have been in Sri Lankan judicial custody since 29.11.2011 on foisted charges. These rapacious onslaughts of the Sri Lankan Navy upon innocent and unarmed Indian fishermen are perpetrated with a view to intimidating and browbeating them to prevent them from venturing out to the fishing waters in the vicinity of Katchatheevu, which my Government has always claimed to be a part of the traditional fishing areas of Indian fishermen. Such unprovoked and violent acts of the Sri Lankan Navy unfortunately remain uncountered by the Government of India. This will only exacerbate the situation and create more unrest amongst the fishermen community of Tamil Nadu.

As I have already pointed out in my letter dated 17.6.2013, the Ministry of External Affairs continues to maintain a stoic and apathetic silence. There appears to be no effort to engage the Sri Lankan Government in any dialogue to permanently resolve this vexatious issue. The numerous incidents of arrest of Tamil Nadu fishermen by the Sri Lankan Navy, especially in the recent past, need a strong and co-ordinated diplomatic response by the Government of India at the highest level. I, therefore, request you to summon the High Commissioner of Sri Lanka in New Delhi and strongly advise the Sri Lankan Government through him, to stop these continuing unprovoked assaults upon innocent Indian fishermen on the high seas by the Sri Lankan Navy.

I also request you to insist upon the Government of Sri Lanka to release the Tamil Nadu fishermen forthwith without retaining them in custody."

Issued by : Director of Information and Public Relations, Chennai-9.

Dated : 9.7.2013