

PRESS RELEASE

Text of the D.O. letter dated 17.6.2013 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 have been repeatedly writing to you regarding the continuing instances of unprovoked assault upon and the abduction and illegal detention of innocent fishermen belonging to Tamil Nadu on the high seas by the Sri Lankan Navy. The last such instance took place on 5th June, 2013, when 49 Tamil fishermen were abducted by the Sri Lankan Navy and were arrested and remanded by the Sri Lankan authorities.

Despite my strong letter of protest dated 6.6.2013 and request to the Government of India to take effective measures at the diplomatic level to secure the release of the fishermen, it is a matter of regret that there was no strong reaction from the Government of India. The Ministry of External Affairs has continued to maintain a stoic and apathetic silence and there appears to be no effort to engage the Sri Lankan Government in any dialogue to resolve the issue.

In fact, the apathy of the Government of India has emboldened the Sri Lankan Navy to continue their predatory onslaughts on Tamil Nadu's fisherfolk with impunity. Even as the 49 Tamil Nadu fishermen abducted on 5th June, 2013, are in Sri Lankan custody, another outrageous incident of apprehension of 8 innocent and poor fishermen from Rameswaram by the Sri Lankan Navy has taken place on 15.6.2013. These fishermen who ventured out into the sea in two mechanised fishing boats bearing registration nos. IND/TN/10/MM/56 & IND/TN/10/MM/423 on 15.6.2013 were apprehended by the Sri Lankan Navy and remanded to custody by the Magistrate at Mannar, Sri Lanka for 12 days up to 27.6.2013. Needless to say, the incident has caused great agitation and unrest among the fishermen community in Tamil Nadu, who now feel alienated by the Government of India's apparent inaction and callous apathy in failing to protect its own fishing community from peacefully pursuing their livelihood on the high seas. The numerous incidents of arrest and attacks upon Tamil Nadu fishermen by the Sri Lankan Navy need a strong and co-ordinated diplomatic response by the Government of India at the highest level.

May I, again, exhort you to take up the matter with the Sri Lankan Government and arrange for the immediate release of all the 57 fishermen of Rameswaram now in Sri Lanka's custody, along with their boats and also secure the release of the 5 innocent fishermen who have been languishing in Sri Lankan jails since 29.11.2011?."

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