

PRESS RELEASE

Text of the D.O. letter dated 22.11.2013 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 am extremely distressed to be writing to you yet again bringing to your notice yet another instance of illegal apprehension of innocent Indian fishermen belonging to Tamil Nadu by the Sri Lankan Navy on 21st November, 2013, which also happens to be 'World Fisheries Day'. The Government of India's insensitive handling of the entire issue has led to the repeated, increasingly frequent and brutal attacks on fishermen from Tamil Nadu peacefully pursuing their livelihood in their traditional fishing waters. The meek and pusillanimous response of the Government of India to these repeated instances of apprehension have emboldened the Sri Lankan Navy to illegally arrest and detain more and more of our fishermen.

I would like to bring to your notice the latest incident on 21st November, 2013, in which the Sri Lankan Navy brutally abducted 20 poor innocent fishermen along with their 5 fishing boats while they were fishing in their traditional waters of Palk Bay. 20 fishermen set out for fishing from Jagadhapattinam and Kottaipattinam fishing bases of Pudukottai District on 20.11.2013 in 5 mechanised fishing boats bearing registration numbers IND-TN-08-MM-106, IND-TN-08-MM-125, IND-TN-08-MM-245, IND-TN-08-MM-297 and IND-TN-04-MM-173. While they were engaged in fishing in their traditional fishing waters, they were apprehended by the Sri Lankan Navy on 21st November, 2013. When the global fishermen community was in a festive mood, celebrating World Fisheries Day, this dastardly act of the Sri Lankan Navy has again cast a pall of gloom over our innocent fishermen and their families.

Incidents of abduction and detention of fishermen from Tamil Nadu for long periods in Sri Lankan prisons have multiplied, even as the Government of India takes little or no action to convey India's strong protest or to use coercive diplomacy to put an end to these marauding attacks. The very serious livelihood problem of hundreds of thousands of our fishermen is, in fact, being relegated to the backburner as something to be sorted out by the fishermen associations of both countries. The continued insensitive and ham-handed treatment of the Tamil Nadu fishermen issue in the Palk Bay, is fast alienating the fishermen community in Tamil Nadu, who justifiably feel that they have been let down by their own national Government.

I wish to remind you that before the latest incident of 21st November, 2013, 60 fishermen who had earlier been apprehended and remanded to custody, continue to languish in Sri Lankan Jails and are yet to be released by the Sri Lankan Government. 42 fishing boats of our fishermen are yet to be returned from Sri Lankan custody causing considerable economic loss to the poor fishermen. May I once again exhort you to personally intervene in the matter and use the highest diplomatic channels of the Government of India to secure the immediate release of 80 fishermen who are currently in Sri Lankan custody including the 20 fishermen who were apprehended on 21st November, 2013, and the 47 Indian fishing boats detained by the Sri Lankan authorities at the earliest?

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