

**PRESS RELEASE**

Text of the D.O. letter dated 28.8.2013 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 bring to your notice yet another incident which occurred on 26<sup>th</sup> August, 2013, in which Indian fishermen belonging to the Pamban area in Ramanathapuram District have been apprehended by the Sri Lankan Navy. 35 poor, innocent fishermen set out for fishing from the Pamban (South) fishing base on 25.8.2013 in 4 mechanised fishing boats bearing registration numbers IND/TN/10/MM/892, IND/TN/10/MM/174, IND/TN/10/MM/975 and IND/TN/09/ MM/230. It is reported that they have been apprehended by the Sri Lankan Navy and taken to Kalpitiya Police Station for further action.

I had already brought to your notice that 36 fishermen in 5 mechanized fishing boats belonging to Nagapattinam District have been abducted and illegally detained by the Sri Lankan Navy in two incidents on 30<sup>th</sup> and 31<sup>st</sup> July, 2013, respectively and have been remanded up to 28.8.2013 through multiple extensions of remand. I had also written to you that two groups of 21 fishermen and 20 fishermen in 5 boats each belonging to Ramanathapuram District were also apprehended by the Sri Lankan Navy on 6.7.2013 and 3.8.2013 respectively and they have been remanded through multiple extensions up to 29.8.2013. All of them have been languishing in Sri Lankan jails for the past several weeks.

I write with a deep sense of anguish and agony because, despite my repeated letters dated 8.7.2013, 1.8.2013, 2.8.2013 and 6.8.2013, seeking to impress on you the imperative need to ensure the early release of the poor, innocent Indian fishermen belonging to Tamil Nadu, the Government of India remains a mute spectator. What we in Tamil Nadu read are just press statements that all efforts would be taken by the Government of India to ensure the early release of our fishermen but we fail to see any concerted action. It leads us to doubt whether the issue is even taken as seriously by the Government of India as it ought to be. This very muted response of the Government of India has emboldened the Sri Lankan Navy to repeatedly arrest our fishermen and their aggressive actions are worsening day by day.

You will appreciate that these fishermen belong to the poorest section of Society and prolonged periods of incarceration in an alien land means severe mental agony and loss of livelihood not only for the detainees but also for their beleaguered families. The entire fisherman community in Tamil

Nadu is greatly exercised over this issue and in particular by the apathy shown by the Government of India towards their cause.

You are also aware that already 5 Rameswaram fishermen charged in a fabricated case are languishing in a Sri Lankan prison since 29.11.2011. The Government of India has to take positive and concrete steps to secure the early release of the 82 fishermen who are already in Sri Lankan jails for months together and the 35 fishermen who were arrested on 26.8.2013, or else the deep sense of frustration and anger amongst the fishermen community of Tamil Nadu against the Government of India will only mount further. I yet again exhort you to take immediate action through diplomatic channels to secure the release of all the Indian fishermen from Tamil Nadu who are in Sri Lankan custody along with their boats and arrange for their immediate repatriation.

May I request your immediate and effective personal intervention in this matter which has been a severe source of aggravation in the coastal districts of Tamil Nadu for many months now?"

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