



## **NATIONAL PLATFORM FOR SMALL SCALE FISHWORKERS**

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January 8, 2022

### **PRESS STATEMENT**

On

#### **The Conflict of Small and Traditional Fishing Communities with Ring Seine Fishing Boats having Smaller Mesh Nets and Sonar Fish Finders at Visakhapatnam, Andhra Pradesh**

**National Platform for Small Scale Fish Workers (NPSSF)**, the largest organisation of small and traditional fishers, fish farmers and allied fish workers of the country that includes coastal fishers along with the **Democratic Traditional Fishers Workers Forum (DTFWF)** of Andhra Pradesh have been utterly shocked and anguished at the bloody clash between traditional small fishing communities and some fishers fishing with ring seines made of smaller mesh size nets and equipped with sonar fish finders.

**NPSSF and DTFWF** have observed with great concern and pain the clashes that occurred in the sea off Visakhapatnam coasts on the 5th of January 2022 that have left 5 boats fully burnt and another 6 to 7 boats partially damaged. About 30 fishers were wounded. Some of them had to be rescued from the sea by the Coast Guard. The police have arrested 60 to 70 people and there is a lookout notice for nearly 400 fishing community people.

**NPSSF and DTFWF** firmly believe that the root of the conflict lies in the present situation of marine fisheries and the Government's failure in taking competent administrative initiative to address the problems and resolve the conflict.

In a situation when the near shore waters of our country are over fished by mechanised fishing boats like trawlers and purse seiners, when the share of small scale traditional fishing communities has dwindled from more than 85% of the total marine catch in 1960 to less than 18% of the same in 2019-20 and continues to slide down, some self seeking fishers have resorted to smaller versions of purse seine fishing called ring seines with smaller mesh size nets and equipped with sonar fish finders. The result everywhere is further unsustainable extraction of residual fish stock leaving almost no catch for the small scale traditional fishers in the near shore areas. Ring seine boats locate fish shoals by sonar fish finders and encircled it with the net at maximum speed to minimize fish escape. With smaller mesh size nets all the fish in the shoal including the juveniles are caught.



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In Kerala introduction of ring seines resulted in sharp decline of the main catch Oil Sardines after 2012. In Goa the ring seiners are in continuous conflict with the traditional fishing communities. The bloody clash at Visakhapatnam on 5th January 2022 is a logical outcome of the same process. **It is an undeniable pointer to the incompetence of the Fisheries Department of Andhra Pradesh that in spite of such earlier examples they allowed the ring seiners to carry on with destructive fishing in the near shore areas jeopardising the livelihood of small and traditional fishing communities doing sustainable fishing. The connivance of the Andhra Pradesh Government in allowing continuation of ring seine fishing is squarely responsible for the bloody conflict.**

In stark contrast to the conflict in Visakhapatnam the small scale fishing communities of Prakasham District, under continuous guidance and support from the DTFWF, have decided together to abstain from using destructive fishing gears like Ring Seines or small mesh size Shore Seines.

**In view of the above NPSSF and DTFWF demand –**

- **Immediate stoppage of destructive ring seining in the Andhra Pradesh waters;**
- **Immediate release of all arrested fishers and withdrawal of all lookout notices against fisher people;**
- **Full compensation for the destroyed and damaged boats;**
- **Provide cost of treatment to the wounded fishers;**
- **Immediate constitution of a Commission with the participation of small and traditional fishing communities to assess the situation including available fish stock, sustainable fishing and the livelihood priorities of the small and traditional coastal fishing communities.**

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