

Protesters in Dili want Australia to settle oil dispute with East Timor

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A rally outside the Australian embassy in Dili to protest Australia's stance in the maritime dispute with East Timor. *Photo: Supplied*

Protesters have gathered outside Australia's embassy in Dili to demand an end to the bitter dispute with East Timor over undersea oil and gas fields.

"We want Australia to come to the table in good faith," said Juvinal Dias, an organiser for the rally.

No senior Australian politician [has visited East Timor since 2013](#) in a sign of frosty relations between the neighbours after East Timor took Australian to the international court, alleging Australian spies bugged the cabinet room in Dili to eavesdrop on deliberations over a maritime treaty.



Protesters outside the Australian embassy in Dili. *Photo: Supplied*

East Timor's Prime Minister Rui Araujo has appealed directly to Malcolm Turnbull for fresh negotiations on a sea boundary, with protesters demanding Australia accept a "median line" between the two nations.

Mr Dias believed the protesters to number more than 1000, made up of former veterans from East Timor's long independence struggle, activists and university students.

Australia's embassy in Dili was also [the target of a graffiti protest in 2014](#) in a sign of tension over the maritime dispute – a marked shift from the sentiment in 1999 when many Timorese scaled the Australian embassy walls in a bid to escape rampaging militia backed by Indonesia.