

## Hundreds protest outside Australian embassy in Dili: Organiser

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East Timorese activists attend a rally outside the Australian embassy in Dili on February 23, 2016.  
AFP/VALENTINO DARIEL SOUSA

Dili, East Timor: Protesters rallied Tuesday outside the Australian embassy in the East Timor capital Dili, demanding Canberra come to the table "in good faith" to end a long-running dispute over major oil and gasfields in the Timor Sea.

Hundreds of protesters, including students, activists and former resistance fighters, gathered peacefully outside the diplomatic mission to urge Australia to "respect East Timor sovereignty", rally organiser Juvinal Dias told AFP.

"We are asking Australia to negotiate the maritime boundary based on good faith," Dias said.

Ties between the neighbours have soured since East Timor took Australia to the International Court of Justice to settle a dispute over the maritime boundaries governing lucrative undersea oil and gas reserves.

The tiny, half-island nation, which has a sluggish economy heavily dependent on oil and gas, wants a treaty which was signed in 2006 and set the maritime borders to be torn up. It claims Australia spied on ministers to gain commercial advantage.

The protesters want permanent maritime boundaries drawn up along the "median line" between Australia and East Timor, Dias said. He urged Australia to abandon its "invalid" claim in the Timor Sea and promised further rallies if it refused to negotiate.

The 2006 treaty was signed between Canberra and Dili, four years