

24 Mar 2016 - 9:56pm

East Timor determined to get Australia's attention over 'unfair' sea boundaries

http://www.sbs.com.au/news/article/2016/03/24/east-timor-determined-get-australias-attention-over-unfair-sea-boundaries



East Timor is determined to draw Australia towards the negotiation table over sea boundaries in the resource-rich Timor Sea.

By

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24 Mar 2016 - 7:26 PM UPDATED 24 Mar 2016 - 9:56 PM

One of Australia's closest neighbours, East Timor, is trying to draw Australia into negotiations to redraw the sea boundary between the two countries in the resource-rich Timor Sea.

East Timor's government claims it has lost around \$6.6 billion (US\$5 billion) in royalties and tax revenue in the Timor Sea since independence in 1999, and it has asserted that more than \$52 billion would lie in its territory if the sea borders reflected the norms of the UN Convention of the Law of the Sea.

"We believe that Timor's independence struggle will not be completed until it establishes internationally-recognised boundaries and has control over the resources within those borders."

Online campaigns and protests have been organised by several organisations this week calling for Australia to consider negotiations.

A rally in Melbourne on Thursday, outside the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade office drew hundreds of demonstrators. It is just one in a series of protests held in the last week: outside the Australian embassies in Dili, Jakarta, Manila, and Kuala Lumpur.



Protests in front of Australia's Department of Defence building in Melbourne today (from Ingrid Svendsen's Twitter page)

The largest protests were seen in East Timor's capital, Dili, on Tuesday and Wednesday, where around 20,000 took part.



Timor Sea Justice

@TimorSeaJustice

Day two of Dili's [#HandsOffTimorsOil](#) protests at Aus Embassy in East [#Timor](#)

10:51 AM - 23 Mar 2016

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Travis

@teakingw

Great to hear speakers at today's [#HandsOffTimorsOil](#) rally outside [@dfat](#) office in Melbourne [#auspol](#) [#solidarity](#)

11:52 AM - 24 Mar 2016

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A rally in Jakarta was also held on Thursday.

Why the East Timorese are protesting

Eka Lopes was one of the thousands who attended Wednesday's protest in front of Australia's embassy in Dili.

Protesters shouted slogans including "negotiations now" and "hands off Timor oil" as East Timorese security forces guarded the embassy.

Ms Lopes told SBS the protestors are demanding the boundaries be drawn so that East Timor has control over the resources in the waters off its coast.

"It is critical for East Timor to have boundaries, because oil is an important resource," she said.

"Australia gets 10 per cent of the revenue from the area (where resources are extracted), this is unfair because East Timorese people believe that if it belongs to us, it should be given to us, not taken by a country that already has a lot of wealth.

Ms Lopes said seeking what her country believes as justice, was the main goal.

"It's an important thing, when something happens to Timor we come out and show our solidarity and show support for each other," she said.

"It's a big deal, not only for people in Dili, but for our entire history."





Ina Exposto Martins added 12 new photos — 😊 feeling pumped with **Eva Correia** and **6 others**.

1 hr • 🌐

Aileu ohn loron nian..Asaun Solidariedade hasoru Governo Australia...forsa nafatin.....



Humans of Dili

@dili_humans

Follow

There's even a protest being held in [#Timor](#)'s small regional town of Aileu [#medianlinenow](#) [#HandsOffTimorsOil](#)

1:18 PM - 23 Mar 2016

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The Australian-based group, Timor Sea Justice Campaign, want a boundary to be drawn along the median line halfway between the two countries' coastlines.

Frosty relations between the countries developed after Australia withdrew from the maritime boundary jurisdiction of the UN Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS) in 2002, leaving East Timor with no legal avenues to negotiate its claim.

The group says one of the areas in question, called the Greater Sunrise gas field, is located 100km from East Timor and is expected to generate \$40 billion in government revenues.

According to the group, the area would lie entirely within Timor's Exclusive Economic Zone.

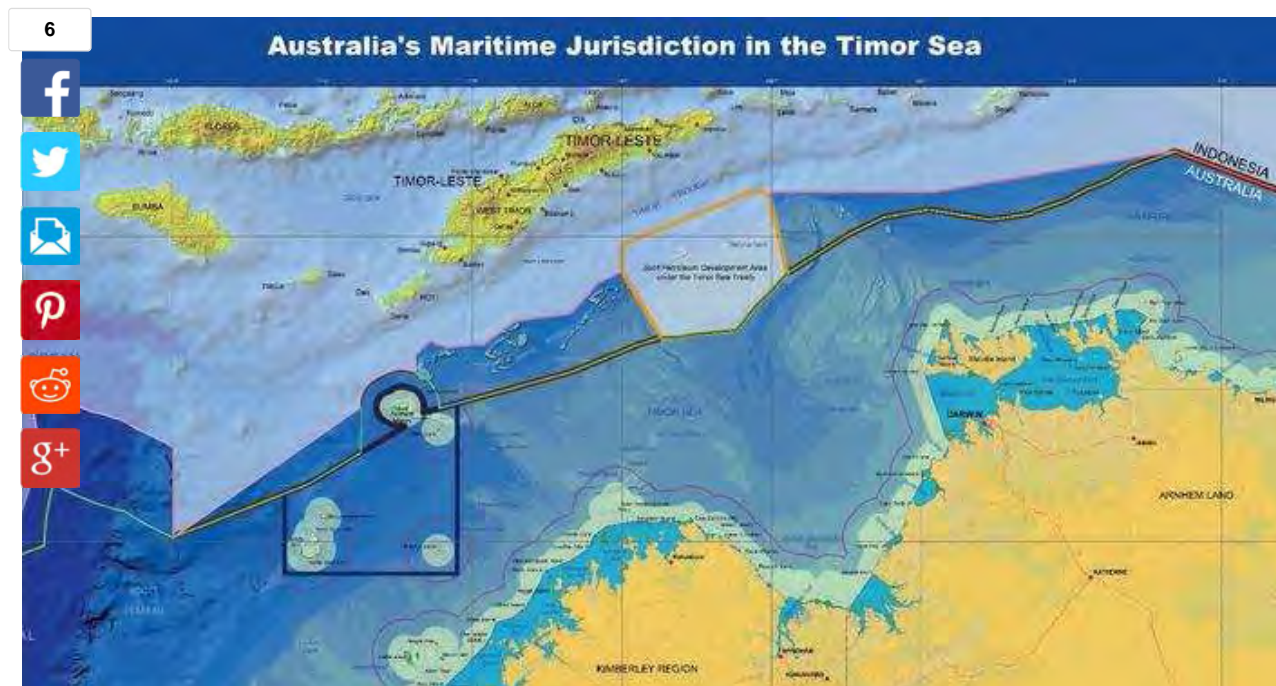


East Timor's government also believes that if the maritime boundary was decided under the UN convention, the bulk of the oil and gas reserves in the Timor Sea would lie within their territory.

Timor Justice Sea spokesman Sam King told SBS he believes the Australian government's position is not legal.

"The Australian government has withdrawn from the relevant international law conventions, precisely because it doesn't have any confidence that what it's doing is legal," he said.

"What they have essentially done is try to bully the Timorese government and grab what they can."



Below is a picture on Twitter from cartoonist Alan Moir.



Alan Moir

@moir_alan



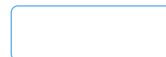
Australia & East Timor Oil [#eastTimor](#) [#Timor](#) signed prints \$55

Online campaign to get Australia's attention

New York-based campaign group, East Timor and Indonesia Action Network (ETAN), joined this week's protests by calling on people to post a photo of themselves holding paper signs with the words 'Australia: hands off Timor's oil' and 'Australia: Median Line Now.'



Endie van Binsbergen
@endievb



AUSTRALIA: Hands off Timor-Leste's oil!![#medianlinenow](#)
[#HandsOffTimorsOil@TurnbullMalcolm](#) en [@etan009](#)

ETAN spokesman John Miller told SBS: "We are doing so to send a strong message to the Australian government that their recalcitrance is affecting its global reputation and credibility."

"ETAN advocated for Timor's self-determination and sovereignty for many years," Mr Miller said.

"We believe that Timor's independence struggle will not be completed until it establishes internationally-recognised boundaries and has control over the resources within those borders.

"This would end Australia's legalized theft of income that the East Timorese are entitled to."

Australia stands by existing treaties

A spokesman from DFAT told SBS previous negotiations between the two countries did not reach agreement

on permanent boundaries.

"As an alternative, we agreed to place permanent delimitation of our maritime boundaries on hold and focus on joint development of the resources," the spokesman said.

"Australia stands by the existing Timor Sea treaties, which have provided investor certainty and allowed Timor-Leste to earn US\$11.91 billion in revenue and Australia to earn US\$1.33 billion.

"Timor-Leste receives 90 per cent of the revenue from the Joint Petroleum Development Area, an area claimed by both parties during negotiations. Timor-Leste will receive 50 per cent of the revenue from the Greater Sunrise, even though it would only receive 20.1 per cent of revenue if a maritime boundary was drawn based on application of median line principles."

Related reading

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Australian taxpayers paid \$1 million to fight litigation at the International Court of Justice brought by East Timor over a December 2013 ASIO raid.

The spokesman said Australia has consistently been open to consultations with the East Timorese Government, and Prime Minister Malcolm Turnbull "recently reiterated a willingness for dialogue on a range of bilateral matters directly in correspondence with the Timor-Leste Prime Minister Rui De Araujo."

The spokesman said stability and development of East Timor is very important to Australia.

"We are Timor-Leste's largest development cooperation partner (A\$95.3 million ODA in 2015-16) and work closely with the government to enhance livelihoods, advance human development and strengthen governance and institutions."