

FIFTEEN YEARS AFTER INDEPENDENCE EAST TIMOR IS STILL WAITING FOR AUSTRALIA TO SET PERMANENT MARITIME BOUNDARIES

Posted by Tom Clarke  on May 20, 2017

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Timor Sea Justice Campaign spokesperson, Tom Clarke, said successive Australian Governments had refused to establish permanent boundaries because Australia was currently taking oil and gas revenue that would instead flow to East Timor if the boundaries were set according to international law.

"The Timorese secured their independence 15 years ago, yet one vital step in their long journey to full sovereignty remains – they do not have permanent maritime boundaries. Unfortunately the Australian Government's pursuit of Timor's oil has seen Australia snub international law and refuse to set permanent boundaries," said Mr Clarke.

The two countries are currently in negotiations after East Timor initiated a UN backed "compulsory conciliation" process that exists for occasions when one country – in this case Australia – refused to recognise the independent umpire that normally settles such disputes.

However, Mr Clarke warns that the Australian Government has a habit of scuttling such negotiations and jostling East Timor into complicated temporary resource sharing deals which short-change the Timorese out of billions of dollars.

"Every day that the Australian Government delays setting permanent boundaries with East Timor is another day that Australia takes oil revenue that should be going to East Timor," said Mr Clarke.

TLAU Thx @AlboMP (<https://twitter.com/AlboMP>) In AUS interest to complete last 1.8% of our maritime border, respect international law & be a good neighbour. #medianline (<https://twitter.com/hashtag/medianline?src=hash>) pic.twitter.com/zEda7pIYCn (<https://t.co/zEda7pIYCn>)

— TIMFO (@TimfoOrg) May 8, 2017 (<https://twitter.com/TimfoOrg/status/861396574697422848>)

Having steadfastly supported the brutal Indonesian occupation of East Timor during the Suharto Dictatorship, Australia finally adopted a more principled stance in 1999 following the UN sponsored ballot for independence. Australia then played a pivotal role in leading the subsequent peacekeeping force and providing humanitarian assistance to help the nation emerge from decades of hardship and transition to democracy.

Mr Clarke sad Australia's greed for Timor's oil has tarnished the legacy of the INTERFET peacekeeping mission and undermines Australia's aid program.

"What's the point in giving millions of dollars in aid, if we're taking billions away in oil and gas revenue? Australians played a pivotal role in helping the Timorese secure their independence, we now need to finish the job and set permanent and fair maritime boundaries," said Mr Clarke.

In June the Timor Sea Justice Campaign groups from various states are sending a community delegation to parliament (<http://www.timorjustice.com/canberragathering>) to raise this issue with MPs and present a petition (<http://www.timorjustice.com>) to the Foreign Minister's office.

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