

Stop, thief!



Australia - stop stealing East Timor's oil!

“If you want to make money,
you should conclude an agreement quickly...
We are very tough. We will not care
if you give information to the media.
Let me give you a tutorial in politics –
not a chance.”

*-- Australian Foreign Minister Alexander Downer to
East Timorese Prime Minister Mari Alkatiri, during a
November 2002 meeting on oil and natural gas deposits
in the Timor Sea, which lies between the two countries*

**Why did Australia withdraw from the
international mechanisms providing
impartial legal resolution of maritime
boundary disputes?**

**Why won't Australia negotiate its
maritime boundaries with East Timor?**

What is the issue?

The Timor Sea, the body of water between Australia and the new nation of East Timor, contains oil and natural gas deposits worth tens of billions of dollars. During the illegal Indonesian military occupation of East Timor (1975 to 1999, with over 200,000 people killed), the Australian government signed an agreement with Indonesia which gave Australia much of East Timor's oil.

After East Timor voted for independence in 1999, Australia was forced to negotiate with the rightful owner of these resources. But Australia coerced its tiny neighbor into signing an "interim" agreement allowing Australia to keep 60% of East Timor's oil -- which translates into billions of dollars.

Australia now refuses to negotiate maritime boundaries with East Timor, since this would void prior agreements. The United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea clearly indicates much of the Timor Sea resources now claimed by Australia rightfully belongs to East Timor. To avoid arbitration of the issue, Australia withdrew from the International Court of Justice and the International Tribunal on the Law of the Sea, the legal mechanisms for resolving such disputes.

Why support East Timor's claims?

East Timor is the world's newest country and one of the poorest. More than 40% of its people live on less than 55 cents a day. East Timor is still struggling to rebuild after the Indonesian military and its militias destroyed most of the country's infrastructure in 1999. Funds are desperately needed for schools, clinics, roads and other essentials.

What should Australia do?

Australia must honor East Timor's independence by promptly negotiating a permanent maritime boundary between the two countries; this will allow East Timor to enjoy all the natural resources it is entitled to. Australia should rejoin the community of law-abiding states by accepting the international legal mechanisms for resolving boundary disputes. Australia must also stop selling new exploration contracts in disputed areas, and put the more than \$1 billion it has taken from these areas into escrow, to be divided fairly after boundaries are determined. All parties must support the equitable and environmentally sound development of Timor Sea resources.

Let the Australian government know!

Email them at petroleum.exploration@industry.gov.au

East Timor Action Network

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