

TIMOR SEA JUSTICE CAMPAIGN

A FAIR GO FOR EAST TIMOR

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Timor Sea Justice Campaign News

Latest News

12th anniversary of Australia's withdrawal from the International Court of Justice on maritime boundary matters

Thursday, March 20, 2014

Tomorrow marks the 12th anniversary of when Australia quietly withdrew Australia's recognition of the maritime boundary jurisdiction of the International Court of Justice and the International Tribunal on the Law of the Sea.

It did this just two months before East Timor became independent and the Timor Sea Justice Campaign's Tom Clarke said it was no coincidence.

"To put it bluntly, Australia gave the independent umpire the finger. It was a very clear signal that Australia had no intention of playing by the rules when it came to negotiating with East Timor over lucrative oil and gas fields in the Timor Sea," said Mr Clarke.

By turning its back on the independent umpire, Australia left East Timor with no legal avenue in which to challenge Australia's refusal to establish permanent maritime boundaries or Australia's unilateral depletion of the contested

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oil fields of Laminaria Corallina.

Mr Clarke said it was not surprising that East Timor was jostled into a series of temporary resource sharing arrangements that each considerably short-changed East Timor out of billions of dollars in government revenues.

“Negotiations between a country like Australia and what was the newest and poorest nation in Asia, were always going to be uneven. But Australia’s refusal to accept any rulings from the independent umpire really tipped the scales and East Timor was between a rock and a hard spot – in urgent need of funds but facing a hard-nosed and belligerent Australia,” said Mr Clarke.

Australia is currently entangled in legal proceedings at the International Court of Justice over alleged spying that took place during the negotiations over the Greater Sunrise field anticipated to generate \$40 billion in government revenues.

“Australia is willing to send an elite legal team to the ICJ to defend ASIO’s ability to raid the offices of the Australian lawyers representing East Timor. Yet it thumbs its nose to the very same court when it comes to the more important and underlying issue of where maritime boundaries should be placed,” said Mr Clarke.

The Timor Sea Justice Campaign is calling on the Australian Government to enter fresh negotiations to establish permanent and equitable maritime boundaries with East Timor in accordance with current international law.

Mr Clarke said to achieve that Australia needs to demonstrate its good faith by resubmitting to the maritime jurisdiction of the International Court of Justice.

“How is the Australian public meant to have any faith in the Australian Government’s legal position when the Government does not recognise the independent umpire? When it comes to gas and oil and maritime boundaries, our Government’s behavior towards East Timor is a complete betrayal of the notion of fair go,” said Mr Clarke.

For further information or comments, contact TSJC Spokesperson, Tom Clarke, on 0422 545 763

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Tom Clarke
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