

<http://www.abc.net.au/news/2015-11-17/east-timor-appeals-to-australian-public-in-border-dispute/6949604>

## East Timor appeals to Aust public in dispute

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East Timor is seeking Australian public support to try to persuade Canberra to settle a longstanding maritime border dispute over the oil and gas rich waters that lie between the two countries, a senior minister says.

Development Minister Xanana Gusmão - a former rebel leader and president of the impoverished, tiny state - says East Timor would appeal to Australians' sense of fair play to push their government into meaningful talks.

"If we go to the media and if we raise awareness, it is not because we want people to be against Australia, but just to say 'oh yes, it is unfair'," Gusmão told Reuters in an interview on Tuesday.

The Timorese struggle for independence from Indonesia was a celebrated cause for Australian activists and Gusmão hopes to win their sympathy, along with support from Australian soldiers who had served as peacekeepers there.

East Timor has sought for years to renegotiate a treaty governing oil and gas revenue sharing arrangements that was signed with Australia soon after it gained statehood in 2002.

"From the beginning we asked Canberra to talk. They wouldn't want to blow up all of these issues. We are neighbours, we have problems, we sit down, we talk - but nothing," Gusmão said.

East Timor argues the sea border, undefined since it was a Portuguese colony, should fall halfway between it and Australia, which it says would put several oil and gas fields in its territory.

Under the treaty, East Timor shares revenues from these fields, from a mooted half share of the as-yet undeveloped Greater Sunrise fields to 90 per cent of the currently producing Bayu-Undan and Kitan fields.

Allegations that Australian spied on Timorese negotiators fuelled controversy over the treaty. The issue was taken to the International Court of Justice before the two sides settled.

But East Timor is still pursuing international arbitration over both the maritime border dispute and a tax case involving a pipeline from the existing fields to Australia.

Australia warns that defining the border the way East Timor wants may prompt Indonesia to also seek to shift its sea border, and thus gain ownership of disputed oil fields.

An Australian government map shows most of the Greater Sunrise fields in its waters, but with a warning they could be claimed by Indonesia if the border moves. East Timor's map shows the fields within its claimed share of the Timor Sea.

Greater Sunrise is 33 per cent owned by Woodside, the operator. Its co-owners are ConocoPhillips, Royal Dutch Shell and Japan's Osaka Gas Co Ltd.