

TIMOR SEA JUSTICE CAMPAIGN

A FAIR GO FOR EAST TIMOR

East Timor is only asking for its
entitlement according to international law
– no more, no less.



Timor Sea Justice Campaign News

[Timor to drop ASIO raid case but will recommence original spy proceedings to nullify oil treaty](#)

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East Timor has signalled it will drop its secondary legal case against Australia regarding ASIO's raids on the offices of Timor's Australian lawyers, but will recommence the original legal proceedings which prompted the controversial raids.

The raids occurred days before legal proceedings were to be heard in The Hague, in which East Timor was seeking to have a lucrative oil and gas treaty nullified due to revelations that Australia had bugged the Timorese cabinet room during the negotiations.

The Timor Sea Justice Campaign's spokesperson in Melbourne, Tom Clarke, said dropping the side case regarding the seized documents will allow East Timor to get back to focussing on the original case and the need for permanent maritime boundaries.

"The allegations that our Government spied on one of our neighbours for mere economic gain shocked many fair-minded Australians, but disappointingly it fits a pattern of bullying behaviour from successive Australian Governments that have been intent on short-changing East Timor out of billions of dollars in gas and oil revenues," said Mr Clarke.

A common misconception is that East Timor is asking for its maritime boundaries to be redrawn, but in fact, East Timor has never had maritime boundaries and is simply seeking to have them established for the first time - as is the right of every sovereign nation.

Australia has refused to negotiate permanent maritime boundaries and has instead jostled East Timor into a series of temporary resource sharing arrangements. The latest - the Certain Maritime Arrangements in the Timor Sea (CMATS) Treaty - which covers the \$40 billion Greater Sunrise gas field, is the treaty that East Timor has sought to have scrapped following the relations about spying.

Mr Clarke said it made sense for East Timor to focus its energies on the bigger issue of establishing fair and permanent maritime boundaries that will complete Timor's journey to full sovereignty and also deliver billions of dollars in oil and gas revenue.

"As interesting - and deeply embarrassing for Australia - as the case about the ASIO raids was, ultimately it's a bit of a sideshow because every day spent not pursuing permanent maritime boundaries is another day that Australia benefits from the unfair and incomplete arrangements that it bullied East Timor into more than a decade ago," said Mr Clarke.

The International Court of Justice had already issued a provisional ruling in the case. It ordered the Australian Government not to access the documents it had seized and delivered an unprecedented rebuke, telling Australia to immediately stop interfering with East Timor's communications and not to use national security as an alibi for commercial espionage.

Mr Clarke said the announcement did not mean that East Timor was laying the spying scandal to rest, as the bugging of rooms in East Timor's Government Palace in Dili is central to its case that Australia had not signed the CMATS treaty in good faith.

"I don't think Tony Abbott would be too happy if New Zealand - or North Korea for that matter - had bugged his cabinet room to help rip-off Australia in trade treaties. So it's completely understandable and appropriate that East Timor to pursue this matter further," said Mr Clarke.

Australia withdrew its recognition of the maritime boundary jurisdiction of the International Court of Justice in 2002, just two months before East Timor's independence.

"We're looking at very uneven negotiating positions. On one hand you have Australia, a large wealthy nation with vast territorial waters and resources, and on the other you have East Timor, one of the poorest nations in Asia in real need to secure ongoing revenue," said Mr Clarke.

The Timor Sea Justice Campaign is reinvigorating a grass roots campaign to encourage the Australian Government to give East Timor a fair go in the Timor Sea by establishing fair and permanent maritime boundaries in keeping with current international law.

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