

Timor Sea protest group calls for GG's help in maritime dispute

By **PMC Editor** - March 3, 2016



A cartoon daubed on a wall in Dili characterising "exploitation" of the oil reserves claimed by Timor-Leste with a fair Timor Sea maritime boundary. Image: MKOTT

The Australian Governor-General, Peter Cosgrove, has turned down a request by a Timor Sea civil society group to meet during his short tour of Timor-Leste seeking a “frank and open” discussion about the maritime boundary dispute.

The Movement Against the Occupation of the Timor Sea (Movimentu Kontra Okupasaun Tasi Timor/MKOTT) has sent an open letter to Cosgrove, saying that “occupation and exploitation” had continued in the country after independence from Indonesia.

“This occupation has, to our dismay and disappointment, been continued by the government of Australia, the country of which you are Governor-General, a wealthy and prosperous country,” the letter said.

Spokespeople for MKOTT said the Australian Embassy had rejected the meeting, quoting Deputy Ambassador Angela Robinson as saying Cosgrove had a “very full program during his short time” in the country.

The open letter from MKOTT, dated March 2, said:

His Excellency, Mr Peter Cosgrove, Governor-General of Australia

Welcome to Timor-Leste.

The Movement Against the Occupation of the Timor Sea (Movimentu Kontra Okupasaun Tasi Timor/MKOTT) is a social movement composed of activists, students, individuals, former resistance and civil society organisations. Since its creation in 2004, this movement has advocated for legal, judicial and diplomatic processes between the Australian and Timor-Leste governments to find a maritime boundaries solution which is fair to both countries.

As a movement of people from Timor-Leste, we deeply appreciate your actions as a commander of the international force which came to Timor-Leste seventeen years ago, saving the lives of many Timorese from the brutal violence of the Indonesian military after we won our independence.

Even though we were informed by the Australian embassy in Dili that you were unable to meet with us during your visit to Timor-Leste because your schedule was full, and also because your role in the Australian government does not relate to the question of the maritime boundary between Timor-Leste and Australia, we still see you as an important person in the relationship between our two countries.

Today, as a good friend of the people of Timor-Leste, you visit our land once again, where seventeen years ago you offered you solidarity and assistance. We believe that you understand very well how the people of this nation have suffered as a result of war and conflict, and have been kept poor for centuries of colonial occupation and domination.

Unfortunately, however, this occupation and exploitation has continued after Timor-Leste achieved independence. This occupation has, to our dismay and disappointment, been continued by the government of Australia, the country of which you are Governor-General, a wealthy and prosperous country. Therefore, by means of this letter, MKOTT would like to use the occasion of your visit to Timor-Leste to beseech you, as a historical friend of the people of Timor-Leste, to use your influence and ask the Australian Government to:

- 1. Respect the sovereignty and dignity of the people and nation of Timor-Leste as they do and have done with other nations.*
- 2. Revert to the maritime boundary dispute resolution mechanisms under the jurisdiction of the International Court of Justice and the International Tribunal on the Law of the Sea.*
- 3. Focus negotiation “Frank and Open” on maritime boundary and do not*

turn the subject in to broader bilateral relationship.

4. Discontinue their use of now discredited “Continental Shelf” argument.

5. Stop using their considerable political and economic power to continue to rob Timor-Leste’s people of their current and future wealth.

We would like to once again express our deep gratitude for your solidarity with the Timorese people, and thank you very much for your attention.

Sincerely,

*Juvinal Dias and Faustino Soares
(Spokesperson of the Movement)*

PMC Editor

<http://www.pmc.aut.ac.nz>

Duty editor of the Asia Pacific Report/Evening Report collaboration or the Pacific Media Centre at the Auckland University of Technology. Feedback: [Email the editor](#)