

Feature

## East Timorese rise against Australia exploiting their maritime sovereignty

[TamilNet, Saturday, 26 March 2016, 11:23 GMT]

**More than ten thousand East Timorese gathered in front of the Australian Embassy in Dili on March 22 demanding a re-negotiation of the maritime borders of the strategic as well as oil- and gas rich Timorese sea. Grass-root level activists, students and former liberation fighters organized the protest, seeking an end to Australian violation of East Timorese national sovereignty. The protests follow several large demonstrations organized by the East Timorese people protesting Australian state-corporate imperialism in their homeland. The latest mobilisation of East Timorese is a lesson to the smaller nations, peoples and their former liberation fighters on how to confront the outer challenges through a struggle-centric approach, commented Tamil activists for alternative politics in the occupied country of Eezham Tamils.**



[Photo: Wayne Lovell / Timor Photography]

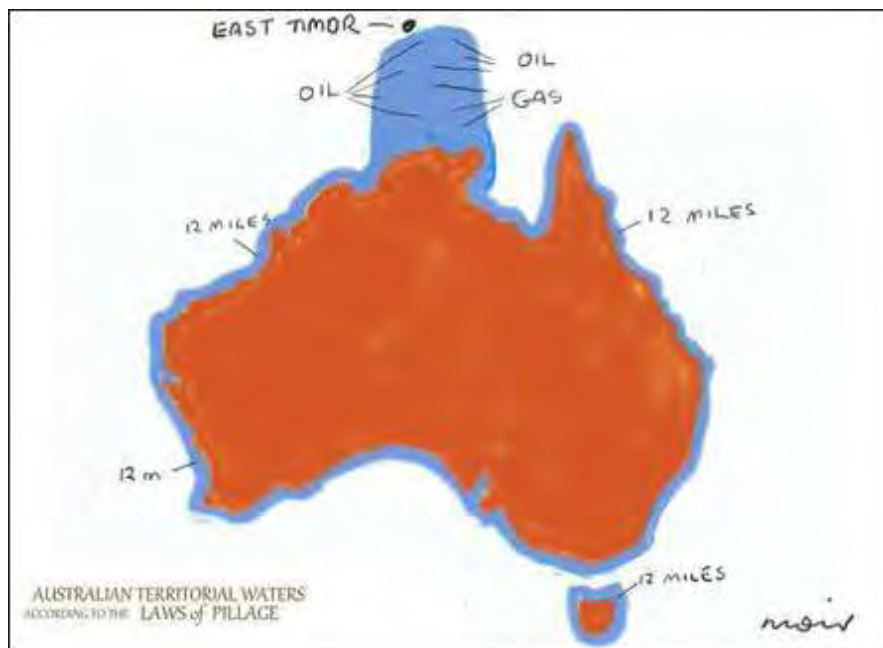
Following East-Timor's independence from the genocidal occupation of Jakarta, the Australian government hurriedly attempted to secure its corporate-imperialist interests in the region and imposed a maritime border treaty upon Dili and East-Timor.

In 2006, the treaty was signed on Australian conditions wherein Australian corporate and state interests acquired a large share in Timorese natural resources as well a strategic portion of the Timor Sea, which borders Australia, Indonesia, and East Timor.



Maritime boundary conflict between Australia and East Timor [Illustration Courtesy: Timor Sea Justice Campaign]

There are large tracts of gas reserves in the Timor Sea, notable are the large Greater Sunrise gas fields which remain largely unexplored.



Cartoonist Alan Moir's infographic on Twitter

As a consequence of the treaty as well as previous dealings with Jakarta, the Australian treasury has been embezzling the revenues from several smaller gas fields in the Timor Sea.

John Pilger, the maker of the documentary film 'Death of a Nation', clandestinely filmed in 1994 in the then occupied East-Timor, has revealed in a recent article that appeared in the Green Left Weekly on 25th February that the Australian treasury has made 5 billion dollars from Timorese Gas and oil revenues since the independence of East-Timor on 20th May 2002.

John Pilger's documentary film was central in documenting the genocide conducted by Indonesia in East-Timor as well as Australian corporate-imperialist ventures.

In his [latest article](#), Pilger explains how Australia and U.S. were complicit in Indonesia's genocidal invasion of East Timor as:

"...conspiracy to steal East Timor's oil and gas. In leaked diplomatic cables in August 1975, the Australian ambassador to Jakarta, Richard Woolcott, wrote to Canberra: "It would seem to me that the Department [of Minerals and Energy] might well have an interest in closing the present gap in the agreed sea border and this could be much more readily negotiated with Indonesia ... than with Portugal or independent Portuguese Timor." Woolcott revealed that he had been briefed on Indonesia's secret plans for an invasion. He cabled Canberra that the government should "assist public understanding in Australia" to counter "criticism of Indonesia". In 1993, I interviewed C Philip Liechty, a former senior CIA operations officer in the Jakarta embassy during the invasion of East Timor. He told me: "Suharto was given the green light [by the US] to do what he did. We supplied them with everything they needed [from] M16 rifles [to] US military logistical support ... maybe 200,000 people, almost all of them non-combatants died."

The deal has meant the massive tapping of Timorese natural resources by Australia, and consequently the wealth and capital which required to rebuild impoverished East-Timor and its people after decades of a brutal genocide under the occupation of the Indonesian military.

Important to recall is that the Indonesian State centred in Jakarta and the Suharto regime were a long standing strategic ally of the U.S.A. and Australia, in fighting communism as well as the sovereign peoples' movement in the region.

General Suharto was regarded as integral in Washington's 'domino theory' driven policies, the military invasion of Vietnam, and in the pursuit of larger interests the South-East Asian region.

During the period from 1965- 66, the Suharto regime with open U.S. support committed one of the gravest genocides of the previous century - the massacres of over a million communists and the Communist party's predominant Chinese supporters in Indonesia.

The present government of East Timor has accused the Australian Secret Intelligence Service (ASIS), of using espionage against their ministers during the period of negotiation of existing maritime borders to gain strategic and commercial advantages, and demands that the treaty be annulled.

Following these accusations, in both 2013 and 2014, the grass-roots of East-Timor began mobilizing a national movement towards securing Timorese sovereignty.

The movement to secure the maritime borders of East Timor through re-negotiation has brought together all political parties in a show of Timorese national unity.

The legendary leader of the Timorese national liberation struggle Xanana Gusmao, has called the Australian espionage and the subsequent treaty a criminal act.

On the 23rd of February, another large demonstration was held outside the Australian embassy in Dilli, demanding the negotiation of a permanent international maritime border. Both the mentioned demonstrations were organized by the Movement Against the Occupation of the Timor Sea (MKOTT), which constitutes of organized students, youth, civil society as well as veterans of the Timorese national liberation struggle against Indonesia.



[Photo: AFP]

A popular slogan of the movement which has been organizing over the past few years, has been "Timor Leste, viva! Australia, abaixo!" ("Long Live East Timor! Down with Australia!").

The case of East-Timor is a significant lesson for Eezham Tamils, regarding the dynamics and considerations of Australian and U.S. geo-political and geo-economic interests in the Indian Ocean region.

Both Washington and Canberra went from supporting Jakarta's genocide against the East-Timorese to scheming to hijack East-Timorese independence once it became an inevitable reality, to secure their imperialist-corporate interests.

Nevertheless, the national spirit of resistance is once again mobilized by the East-Timorese masses towards securing their sovereignty and future from external dictations.

The East Timorese are gallantly displaying that the national aspirations and grievances of their masses can be accommodated only if they secure their national sovereignty and self-determination, and that they did not fight for liberation in order to be subjugated by corporate-state imperialism, regional hegemons, or external powers.

**Find this article at:**

<http://www.tamilnet.com/art.html?catid=79&artid=38202>

Reproduction of this news item is allowed when used without any alterations to the contents and the source, TamilNet, is mentioned