

# **Australia East Timor Friendship Association South Australia Inc**

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Affiliated to the Timor Sea Justice Alliance (TSJA)

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## **AT LAST SOME JUSTICE FOR TIMOR-LESTE IN THE TIMOR SEA -- BUT MORE NEEDED**

The Australia East Timor Friendship Association of SA today released the statement below following the announcement that agreement had been reached between the governments of Australia and Timor-Leste that the maritime boundary between the two nations will be the midline between their coastlines:

The agreement signed by Agio Pereira for Timor-Leste and Julie Bishop for Australia is a truly historic occasion because, finally, the Australian Government has been forced to accept the principle of international law (the UN Convention of the Law of the Sea or UNCLOS) in relation to the maritime border between the two nations in the Timor Sea.

However, it is not a proud moment for Australia, whose leaders from the beginning of negotiations on 2002, sought to cheat Timor-Leste, the poorest nation in the region that was still recovering from 24 years of brutal occupation by the Indonesian military (TNI) out of its fair share of the oil and gas resources in its half of the Timor Sea.

Later, the Timor-Leste took Australia to an International Court over allegations of ASIS (Australian Security Intelligence Service) spying on its negotiating team in 2005 and accused it of bullying tactics during the early stages of its independence forcing the new East Timorese to accept an unfair deal.

Then in 2016, Dili took the maritime border dispute to the Permanent Court of Arbitration (PCA) at The Hague. The International Court ordered compulsory arbitration between the two parties which has finally led to the current agreement. The response of the then Attorney General, George Brandis was to order an ASIO (Australian Security Intelligence Organisation) raid on the office of Bernard Collaery, the Australian lawyer who was representing the government of Timor-Leste and to withdraw the passport of Witness K, a former Australian military intelligence officer, who became a whistle blower because of Australia's unfair treatment of Timor-Leste. Many international legal observers consider that these tactics were intended to pervert the course of justice.

These outrages followed the 24 years of aiding and abetting the TNI during its long and illegal occupation of East Timor. All of this has to be considered as a disgraceful and contemptible way to treat our valiant World War 2 ally whose people suffered greatly at the hands of the Japanese military for supporting Australia.

If Australia is acting in good faith, it should return the royalties for the resources that were removed from Timor-Leste's half of the Timor Sea to help it provide urgently needed humanitarian, rebuilding and development programs to build a healthy and

viable nation in the future. Its people still suffer high levels of Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder, malnutrition, youth unemployment, illiteracy, and infant mortality.

While AETFA SA is pleased that the East Timorese have gained some justice with the signing of the treaty, it notes that there is still disagreement over how to share revenue from the lucrative Greater Sunrise oil and gas field in the Timor Sea which analysts have valued at between \$40 and \$50 billion. Timor-Leste wants a 70:30% split in its favour -- with processing being done in Timor-Leste. Australia wants to share profits with an 80-20 percent split in Timor-Leste's favour, but with oil and gas processed in Darwin.

AETFA SA would ask why Timor-Leste should only receive 70% or 80% of the revenues given that 100% belongs to them? It would be much fairer for the Australian Government to offer 90% of the revenues to Timor-Leste and offer a high percentage of staff positions in the refinery industry go to East Timor engineers, geologists, technicians.

Don Rothwell, an expert in international maritime law at the Australian National University has said that the opportunity for a gas processing industry was "worth more to Timor than to Australia"- especially the dire struggle for independence against incredible odds. Surely Australian leaders could show some compassion and fairness to our struggling neighbour that faces so many challenges as it seeks to be an economically viable nation instead of continuing the mean minded treatment of a people who have been out loyal friends.

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**AETFA SA -- 43 YEARS OF SOLIDARITY WITH TIMOR-LESTE FOR INDEPENDENCE & JUSTICE**

*(AETFA SA was originally the Campaign for an Independent East Timor SA until Timor-Leste's independence in 2002)*