

# What Australia doesn't want you to know, and why

Two months before East Timor achieved independence in May 2002, Australia formally **withdrew from international legal mechanisms** for resolving maritime boundary issues that cannot be settled by negotiation. East Timor's soon-to-be Prime Minister called this withdrawal an "unfriendly" act. The withdrawal has prevented the new nation from employing third-party arbitration to encourage Australia to approach this issue in a timely and cooperative manner.

In October 2002, East Timor claimed a 200 nautical mile Exclusive Economic Zone, based on the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea. At the same time, East Timor asked Australia to begin negotiations. The first round of talks was held a year later, the second round in April 2004. Neither meeting made significant progress, although East Timor asked for monthly talks both times, and **Australia has refused to meet more than twice per year.**

**East Timor is among the world's poorest countries.** Its government's annual budget, around \$85 million, has mostly been paid by donors so far. The nation is trying to avoid borrowing from international financial institutions, as it faces a \$30 million budget deficit over the next two years. But since 1999, **the Australian government has taken in more than \$1 billion** from petroleum fields which would be East Timor's under a fair boundary settlement.

In March 2004, Representative Barney Frank and 52 others wrote to Mr. Howard, concluding that, "We trust your country's commitment to the freedom and security of East Timor will include recognition of East Timor's territorial integrity and its right to a swift, permanent resolution of the maritime boundary dispute." In early April, more than one thousand East Timorese demonstrated in front of the Australian Embassy in Dili, calling for Australia to end its occupation of the Timor Sea and stop stealing East Timor's oil. East Timor's leaders, including President Xanana Gusmão and Prime Minister Mari Alkatiri, made similar requests, pointing out that **this is a life and death issue** for the people of East Timor.

## East Timor Action Network

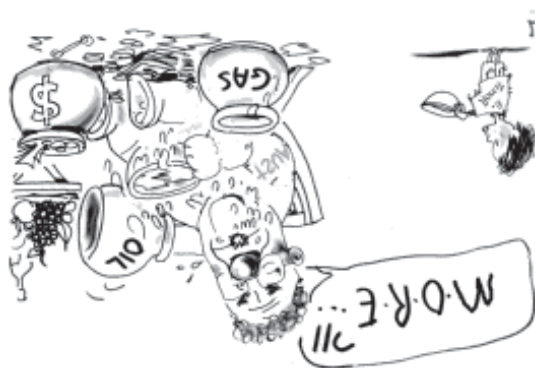
PO Box 15774, Washington, DC 20003-0774

202-544-6911

etan@etan.org

www.etan.org

**Tell the Australian government it should be ashamed to steal East Timor's only significant natural resource, continuing profiting from Indonesia's now-ended illegal occupation. Greed should not take priority over law and justice.**



East Timor, the world's newest nation, became independent two years ago after a quarter-century of brutal Indonesian military occupation, supported by both the United States and Australia. Indonesia killed more than 200,000 East Timorese during the occupation, but the violent killing has ended. Today, East Timor's greatest problem is finding the money to rebuild its infrastructure and provide education and health care for its people, the poorest in Southeast Asia.

Australia, East Timor's southern neighbor, is occupying seabed territory which should legally belong to East Timor, as it is much closer to East Timor's coastline than to Australia. The large, rich neighbor is taking in more than \$1 million dollars every day that could be saving lives in East Timor. Australia is also dragging out negotiations on a permanent maritime boundary, hoping to delay an agreement until all the billions of dollars of oil and gas have been extracted and sold.

Australia's claimed jurisdiction is based on an illegitimate treaty with Indonesia, illegally signed while Indonesia brutally occupied East Timor. The East Timorese and their friends thought that the violent withdrawal of Indonesian troops in 1999 was the end of foreign occupation of their territory.

# Australia: Stop Stealing East Timor's Oil!