



INTERNATIONAL
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OF JURISTS

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AUSTRALIAN SECTION

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Australian Section International Commission of Jurists

NEWS RELEASE

Timor Gap Dispute

22 April 2004, Sydney

“International law or international arbitration should determine the future of the disputed Timor Gap oil fields”, said Steve Mark, Chairman of the Council of the Australian Section of the International Commission of Jurists.

“Australia’s action in March 2002, in withdrawing its consent to the determination of the maritime boundary jurisdiction of the International Court of Justice and the International Tribunal for the Law of the Sea was unconscionable in the few weeks leading up to the establishment of the world’s newest and the regions poorest nation,” said Mr Mark.

“Australia is not only depriving its poverty-stricken neighbour of the opportunity to have law determine the issue, Australia is also exploiting its present economic advantage by depleting the resources which are the subject of the dispute,” said Mr Mark. “We kicked out the umpire before East Timor existed.”

“The basis for Australia’s argument, in any event, relies on infrastructure put in place as a result of negotiations with the occupying power Indonesia, during a period that international law and most of the rest of the world treated as an illegal occupation, and thus Indonesia was precluded from unjust enrichment by international law,” said Mr Mark.

“Surely it is in Australia’s interest to have a viable near neighbour in East Timor, rather than take from it, by hard commercial bargaining, the only cash earner it has. We ask the Australian government to return to the negotiating table in good faith or let the law or independent arbitration determine the result,” said Mr Mark.

For further comment and information, please contact Mr Steve Mark, Chairman, Council of the International Commission of Jurists on (02) 9377.1801 or chair@icj-aust.org.au.