



SEMAPHORE

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Association of Australia and New Zealand



Historic Maritime Border Agreement

Lebanon and Israel have signed what has been described as an “historic” agreement to demarcate a long-disputed maritime border between the countries.

Brokered by United States mediator Amos Hochstein, the deal between the nations – who have effectively been at war since Israel’s creation in 1948 – was agreed in principle in the earlier part of October and officially signed by the parties at month’s end.

According to media reports, the agreement has set Boundary Line 23 as the basis for demarcation, which will effectively see Lebanon gain 860 square kilometres of previously-disputed maritime territory.

However, it is understood that further negotiations are required to absolutely define the maritime border as it reportedly also relies on the two countries agreeing a particular land boundary.

Israeli Comment

In a statement at a special Israeli Cabinet meeting on October 27 Israel Prime Minister Yair Lapid described the agreement as “historic” and a “tremendous achievement” for the State of Israel.

“This agreement strengthens Israel’s security and our freedom of action against Hezbollah and the threats to our north,” said the Prime Minister.

“There is rare consensus in the [Israel] security establishment regarding the necessity of this agreement ... everyone has signed off on this agreement and its contribution to Israel’s security and our operational needs.

“This is a diplomatic achievement. It is not every day that an enemy country recognises the State of Israel, in a written agreement, in view of the international community. It is not every day the United States and France stand behind us and provide security and economic guarantees for an agreement.”

The Prime Minister said the agreement was also an economic achievement for his country.

“Yesterday [October 26], gas production began from the Karish Platform. Israel will receive 17% of the profits from the Qana-Sidon Field, the Lebanese field. This money will go into Israel’s economy and will be used for health and welfare, education and security.”

The Prime Minister noted that his Government’s process in approving the agreement had been brought before Israel’s Supreme Court “with various claims”.

“The Supreme Court unanimously determined that the Government conducted a fair, worthy and lawful process. The responsibility is ours, and so is the authority – in the hands of the Government.”



Israel Prime Minister Yair Lapid

In a statement on October 12, Prime Minister Lapid emphasised that the agreement had been reached once “final demands” from Lebanon – understood to involve extending the border further into Israel territory at Line 29 – had been “refused”.

Lebanese Position

A statement issued by the press office of the Presidency of the Republic on October 13 described the final version of the agreement as “satisfactory” to Lebanon.

“Especially as it meets the Lebanese demands that have been the focus of a long debate during the past months and required effort and long hours of difficult and complex negotiations,” it stated.

“In this context, the Presidency believes that the final formula preserved Lebanon’s rights to its natural wealth, at an important time for the Lebanese.”

Deputy Speaker of the Parliament of Lebanon Bou Saab emphasised the inherent difficulties navigated in negotiations, “because they do not establish diplomatic relations” [between the countries].

“In fact, Lebanon does not recognise the Israeli enemy,” he said.

“Therefore, reaching an understanding of this kind on borders that have an economic interest is not an easy thing. Rather, it is a very great effort by the American administration that was in place and was done in a just and equitable manner. Otherwise, we would not have reached what we have reached today.”

The Deputy Speaker said “Lebanon got everything it wanted, contrary to rumours” through the process.

“Lebanon will obtain its full rights from the Qana field, and the Israelis’ revenues from the field may be taken from [French energy company] Total.

“Lebanon does not recognise the line of buoys [previously strung by Israel to mark the maritime border].”

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