

Berri-Aoun End their Oil Dispute, Troika agreement to Approve Decrees by the Cabinet.

By Lebanon Gas and Oil
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Speaker Nabih Berri and Free Patriotic Movement MP Michel Aoun have resolved their dispute over the oil file, reported the pan-Arab daily Asharq al-Awsat.

It said that the two sides agreed to issue contracts over the oil fields adjacent to the Israeli blocks after the speaker had warned that the neighboring state could exploit Lebanon's offshore wealth, also it was notable the impact of the regional revolution in Gas exploration such as Egypt, Cyprus and Israel.

The disagreements were over the designation of blocks open for bidding and the terms of a draft exploration agreement.

Berri was seeking to open all the blocks for bidding, while former Energy Minister Gebran Bassil sought to open them in installments.

Change and Reform bloc MP Hikmat Dib said to the same daily that Berri and Aoun had agreed to auction off maritime blocks closest to Israel in a move to block the Jewish state from siphoning off gas and oil from Lebanon's territory and to boost the exploration file.

Free Patriotic Movement leader MP Michel Aoun urged in the past a cabinet meeting to discuss deeply the issue petroleum extraction, adding that it will be the last resort to protect the Lebanese people.

Berri is spearheading a campaign to endorse two oil decrees in January 2015 and demarcate the southern territorial waters before Israel starts drilling gas from the Lebanese reserves.

Petroleum expert Rabih Yaghi told the daily that it's time to commence practical steps in oil drilling and exploration, it would be able to make

gains from this wealth in at least seven to eight years. Israel has already started its exploration as has Cyprus and even Syria, in spite of its conflict, noted the daily.

Meanwhile, Energy Minister Arthur Nazarian hoped that the cabinet's signing of the oil decrees would serve as "gift" to the Lebanese people in 2015.

The cabinet is likely to reach a settlement over the opening tenders of marine oil blocks to foreign companies, as Energy Minister Arthur Nazarian linked the adoption of petroleum decrees to resolving this dispute.

In this issue, we should add the significant progress of the Future movement by their remarkable action and announcements through the MP Mohammed Qabbani, the president of the Parliament's Public Works, Transport, Energy and Water Works committee who was declared previously about the sector acceleration on 2015: "there is a road map to activate the oil & gas industry in Lebanon and the first step is to approve the draft decrees of the blocks delineation in the Lebanese Offshore, and the Exploration & Production Sharing agreement, in addition to the preparation of the Petroleum Tax Law."

As recap, for the first time since April 2013 a huge campaign by authorities and from different political parties especially from the troika Berri-Aoun-Hariri is launched to reactivate the Lebanese Oil and Gas sector starting by signing the two decrees on Q1 2015.

Local and international authorities and embassies work hardly to remove all political and technical hurdles to the endorsement of the decrees and to speed up the drafting of related tax laws.

Once signed, Lebanon can go ahead and begin exploring and drilling for oil and gas in its offshore fields.

Recent political agreements and declarations and the latest reports left a clear and positive impression about the future of the Lebanese oil and gas sector in 2015.