

Oil and Gas Lead to New Lebanon-Israel Economic War

By Lebanon Gas and Oil

20 Dec, 2014



U.N. Asks Israel to Pay Lebanon \$850 M for Oil Spill

The U.N. General Assembly overwhelmingly approved a resolution on 19/12/2014 asking Israel to pay Lebanon over \$850 million in damages for an oil spill caused by an Israeli air force attack on oil storage tanks during its war with Lebanon in July 2006.

The assembly voted 170-6 in favor of the resolution, with three abstentions. Israel, the United States, Canada, Australia, Micronesia and Marshall Islands voted "no."

General Assembly resolutions are not legally binding but they do reflect world opinion.

The resolution says "the environmental disaster" caused by the destruction of the tanks resulted in an oil slick that covered the entire Lebanese coastline and extended to the Syrian coastline, causing extensive pollution.

Israel's U.N. Mission said in a statement on 19/12/2014 that the resolution is biased against Israel.

"Israel Immediately responded to the oil slick incident by cooperating closely with the United Nations Environment Program, as well as other U.N. agencies and NGOs, addressing the environmental situation along the coast of Lebanon," the statement reads. "This resolution has long

outlived the effects of the oil slick, and serves no purpose other than to contribute to institutionalizing an anti-Israel agenda at the U.N.."

The assembly acknowledged the conclusions in an August report by Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon that studies show the value of damage to Lebanon amounted to \$856.4 million in 2014. It asked Israel to provide "prompt and adequate compensation."

The assembly also asked Ban to urge U.N. bodies and other organizations involved in the initial assessment to conduct a further study, building on the work conducted by the World Bank, to measure and quantify the environmental damage sustained by neighboring countries.

The resolution notes that "the secretary-general expressed grave concern at the lack of any acknowledgment on the part of the government of Israel of its responsibilities vis-a-vis reparations and compensation" to Lebanon and Syria for the oil spill.

It notes that Ban concluded that the spill is not covered by any international oil spill compensation funds and therefore recognizes "that further consideration needs to be given to the option of security the relevant compensation from the government of Israel."

Lebanon's U.N. Ambassador Nawaf Salam said his country considers the resolution to be "major progress" because it puts forward a figure for compensation, acknowledges the conclusions of the secretary-general's report, and reaffirms the General Assembly's commitment to justice.

"We affirm that Lebanon will continue to mobilize all resources and resort to all legal means to see that this resolution is fully implemented, and that the specified compensation is paid promptly."

Berri Inquires U.S. about Role in Lebanon-Israel Maritime Border Dispute

Speaker Nabih Berri has asked Lebanon's Ambassador to Washington to inquire the U.S. administration about the reasons behind the procrastination of a top energy diplomat in resolving the territorial dispute between Lebanon and Israel.

Berri told his visitors that he asked Ambassador Antoine Chedid to ask the State Department on why Amos Hochstein has stopped his mission.

The speaker's remarks were published in al-Joumhouria newspaper. Berri is spearheading a campaign to revive the oil exploration file in Lebanon after accusing Israel of "stealing" Lebanon's offshore gas. He has also been calling for the demarcation of the southern territorial waters.

Berri told his visitors that he would meet with UNIFIL Commander Major General Luciano Portolano on 19/12/2014 to discuss with him a possible U.N. role in protecting Lebanon's rights in its Exclusive Economic Zone.

But U.N. Deputy Secretary-General Jan Eliasson, who was in Beirut this week, has said that any U.N. mediation in that regard requires a request by the Lebanese and Israeli authorities.

"We haven't so far received any such Israeli demand," he said.

Lebanon and Israel are at loggerheads over the 850 kilometers of territorial water that each claims as part of its EEZ.

Sources: AP Naharnet