

Alert: Israel Stealing Lebanon's Offshore Oil & Gas Reserves!

By Lebanon Gas and Oil

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Lebanon should not have allowed Israel to take even a drop of its oil, Speaker Nabih Berri was quoted as saying Monday, lamenting that his country had effectively surrendered two reserves to its enemy.

He said that Israel was allowed to steal oil from two Lebanese reserves near the border because those reserves, from which 870 square miles, were neglected by the government.

"This means that we have given up these two reserves, which is something we should not have let happen," MP Mohammad Qabbani, who heads the parliamentary committee of public works, energy and water, quoted Berri as saying in a news conference after a meeting.

However, the speaker assured that an internal dispute that had erupted over how many reserves to drill into has been resolved.

Berri called for issuing a decree related to oil as soon as possible, saying Lebanon is wasting time while Israel is signing deals to steal its resources.

The meeting was also attended by Energy Minister Arthur Nazarian and a representative from the Petroleum Administration Committee.

"The instructions and advice that the Speaker gave us are very important, especially that there is an enemy who will probably, and rather certainly, benefit from the gas and oil in the Lebanese waters," Nazarian said in the joint press conference with Qabbani.

The minister underlined that Lebanon should speed up procedures to start drilling.

"We should all see how we can achieve that away from political disputes," he added. "Politics should not be allowed into economics, and what is important is that we all benefit. "

Qabbani explained that a major obstacle has been the oil companies' lack of interest in drilling oil and gas.

He explained that this problem was due to many reasons, including the international fall in oil prices and Israel's construction of gas pipelines to export to Cyprus and Greece.

"What we have come to know is that the world is not waiting for us, and that we have to move to protect our rights especially concerning the borders of Lebanon's economic area," Qabbani said.

To note also that Speaker Nabih Berri vowed Wednesday to take matters into his own hands to stop Israel from stealing Lebanon's oil and gas.

In his weekly meeting with MPs from various blocs, Berri was quoted as saying that Lebanon has been passive while Israel siphons off its oil and gas.

Berri told his visitors of a deal between Greece, Cyprus and Israel involving Lebanon's untapped deposits.

"We should take serious steps to defend our oil resources and invest in them, or else I will not remain silent and idle," he told the lawmakers.

Berri had told Al-Akhbar earlier this week that he had received credible information from an unnamed "international scientist" that Israel had started siphoning off gas from one of Lebanon's reserves in an area close to the southern border with Israel.

Another important declaration came from Hezbollah MP Nawwaf Musawi: Israel began stealing Lebanon's oil 7 years ago

Israel has been dipping into Lebanon's offshore oil and gas reserves for years, Hezbollah MP Nawwaf Musawi warned Sunday, days after Parliament Speaker Nabih Berri made a similar statement.

"The Israeli enemy had started drilling for oil more than seven years

ago,” the MP said in a statement released Sunday.

Musawi said that Israel has been violating 860 square kilometers of “Lebanon’s exclusive economic zone,” noting that the violation has yet to receive a governmental response that would allow Lebanon to reclaim the area.

Israel believes it has a claim over the area, while the U.N. considers the same region to be a disputed zone between the two countries, Musawi added.

The U.N. position means that all parties should refrain from drilling, exploration or any other form of activity, he added.

But Lebanon should immediately begin exploring the reserves and extracting what it can, especially if the oil were to be deemed a shared resource, since Israel's seven-year head start puts it at an advantage to sell.

He also warned of the possibility that Israel is using horizontal drilling to access reserves that belong exclusively to Lebanon.

“It is the duty of the government to make it a top priority to preserve Lebanon’s oil resources.”

Sources: *Daily Star - Beirut Al Akhbar Newspaper*