

Lebanon oil and gas political deal: LOGI demands clarifications and transparency

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When conversations are held behind closed doors, especially in Lebanon, suspicion heightens. In July and, reportedly, again in August 2016 Speaker of the Parliament Nabih Berri met with Foreign Minister Gebran Bassil to smooth tensions and disagreement over how Lebanon's oil and gas sector should move forward. By some accounts a "deal" was reached, yet others say it was just a PR move to show that everyone is on the same page. But we are not on the same page.

Information is being withheld and meetings like this are convened away from the public eye and outside the proper institutions. This political interference has left decision-making in oil and gas sector in a deadlock. Because of this interference none of the relevant institutions – the technical body advising the ministry, the ministry itself, the council of ministers or a ministerial committee tasked by the prime minister, or the energy committee in parliament – have communicated with the public the decisions that are (or are not) being made. Instead we're left with high level politicians, speaking behind closed doors, about details that must be left to the appropriate institutions.

Closed-door meetings raise suspicion, even if no deal was actually made, because they enable decisions to be made away from scrutiny and debate. This sector should develop according to international standards allowing the appropriate government institutions to design and implement sound policy for a sustainable sector.

What will LOGI do about it?

The Lebanese Oil and Gas Initiative (LOGI), an independent NGO building a global network of oil and gas experts, would like to raise serious concerns about the recent developments in Lebanon's oil and gas industry. Transparency is crucial for the development of the sector. LOGI would like to formally raise the following four points to the Lebanese Petroleum Administration (LPA), the Ministry of Energy & Water, the Council of Ministers, and all other stakeholders:

- 1) A political deal has been reached between two political parties regarding the oil and gas sector in Lebanon. LOGI is extremely concerned about the lack of transparency regarding (1) the original disagreement, (2) the agreement, and (3) the current stalemate.
- 2) There are rumours that the deal involves awarding Southern blocks to Russian companies. While these statements could be inaccurate or accurate they raise very serious concerns. It undermines the credibility and the work that the LPA has done so far. It is the right of every Lebanese citizen to be informed on all decisions related to Lebanon's riches and it is the government's duty to make such information widely and easily available to the public.
- 3) LOGI urges the LPA, the Ministry of Energy & Water, the Council of Ministers and all political parties and stakeholders to commit to full transparency in the management of the oil and gas dossier in Lebanon.
- 4) LOGI expects concrete steps to be taken from the LPA, the Ministry of Energy & Water, the Council of Ministers and all other stakeholders to clarify the issues at hand. LOGI urges them to make an official public statement addressing the above mentioned issues and concerns.

The Lebanese Oil and Gas Initiative (LOGI), is an independent NGO that promotes the transparent and sound management of Lebanon's oil and gas resources. LOGI is a member of the Publish What You Pay Network (PWYP). You can learn more at: www.logi-lebanon.org