



[Israel and Lebanon Reach an Agreement on a Maritime Border Deal but Challenges Remain](#)

Israel and Lebanon have reached an agreement regarding their longstanding maritime border dispute over drilling rights and gas production in the Mediterranean Sea. The deal covers an approximately 330-square mile area of contested territory in the region which includes the Karish and Qana gas fields. The agreement came after months of recent United States-mediated talks and has been deemed a significant and positive breakthrough even as some challenges remain moving forward. Analysts and issue experts have pointed out that it is also a noteworthy development as the European Union seeks alternatives to Russian energy in the face of the ongoing war in Ukraine. Additionally, Lebanon has been rife with major economic and financial challenges, and thus desires that profits from gas deposits could provide much-needed relief and alleviate governmental failures to among other things, produce adequate electricity for its citizenry. In the past, international companies had also refused to begin the gas exploration process due to security concerns in the absence of a deal, so the brokered agreement should help quell these apprehensions as well. All told, it is hoped that the maritime deal will pave the way for the non-confrontational development of gas fields in the Mediterranean Sea.

Though the agreement would bring a sense of stability regarding the exploration of contentious energy fields, challenges still remain, as there is much at stake with respect to implementation such as the rights of the undersea natural gas reserves. The reserves in the areas between the Eastern Mediterranean that are claimed by the two countries are at risk of being exploited by a single party. Lebanon and Israel both claim some 860 square kilometers of the Mediterranean Sea. Based on the understood terms of the agreement, the waters would be divided along a line of the strategic Qana natural gas field. Israel has agreed to allow Lebanon to produce gas from their side of the field if Lebanon agrees to pay royalties to Israel for any gas extracted from the Israeli side. The deal itself still requires final stamps of approval in Israel and Lebanon, in addition to a formal signing of the agreement. The United States, a key mediating entity, has expressed that it hopes to see the deal officially signed soon – as both nations have seemingly acknowledged that the deal will suffice their respective needs.

Not everyone is excited about this deal, as former Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu has vowed to cancel it if he is reinstated as prime minister, with the impending Israeli elections taking place in a couple of weeks on November 1st. Netanyahu has regrettably accused the current government of submitting to Hezbollah threats despite the fact that the group has stated it approves of the deal so long as Lebanese officials do as well. Lebanese President Michel Aoun expressed that the final draft of the agreement is acceptable to Lebanon and hopes that the deal would be formalized as soon as possible. U.S. President Joe Biden also spoke with officials from both countries and congratulated them on the deal, hailing it as a “historic agreement.”

Israel’s cabinet has endorsed the deal, and opened the door for parliamentary review of it. Lawmakers now have approximately 14 days to review details of the deal before it returns to the cabinet for a final vote. In Lebanon, the deal has been green-lighted by the prime minister, president, and parliamentary speaker, with all voicing satisfaction with the terms. It is expected that the potential formalization of the agreement would mean that the resolution of any further maritime differences would go through the United States.