

**Answer to Question**

**Eastern Mediterranean Gas Crisis**

(Translated)

**Question:**

Misr Al-Arabi site published on 28/8/2019 the following: "The surveying and exploration work is ongoing at a high frequency, no one can hinder our present and future work ... This is what Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan said two days ago about the gas exploration work in the eastern Mediterranean in a new challenge for Egypt, Cyprus and EU sanctions." Does this mean that there is a conflict over the Mediterranean gas between these four countries? Are the quantities of gas in the Eastern Mediterranean so great that could escalate into a conflict between countries for it? May Allah reward you with the good.

**Answer:**

Yes, the quantities are very large and significant because of the Middle East region in which these quantities are located, and the conflict for it is not only between these four countries (Turkey, Cyprus, the European Union and Egypt), but also there is America, Russia and the usurping Jewish entity of the blessed land of Palestine ... The major international influential countries exploit the gas also in their economic and political conflict ... To illustrate this we review the following:

**First: the discovery of the Eastern Mediterranean gas and its importance:**

**1. Discovery of gas fields in the Eastern Mediterranean Region:**

The discovery began in 2000, when British Gas, a branch company of British Petroleum company, discovered the Gaza Marine field, 36 kilometers off the shores of the Gaza Strip. The total reserves of the field are estimated to be approximately one trillion cubic feet of gas ... In January 2009, the Tamara field was discovered, which, according to geological surveys, has a total stockpile of approximately 10 trillion cubic feet. The same year witnessed the discovery of the Aphrodite field, 180 km from the south-western shore of Cyprus, at a depth of 1700 meters cubed. The field is located 90 km from the shores of northern occupied Palestine, and 1650 meters below the surface of the underwater meter. The total reserves of Aphrodite are estimated at 9 trillion cubic feet of natural gas. In 2012, the Leviathan field, with gas reserves of 17 trillion cubic feet, was discovered at a distance of 135 km from shores of northern occupied Palestine near the city of Haifa, with a depth of 1600 meters under the sea.

In 2015, the Zohr field was discovered near the Egyptian coast, discovered by the Italian company Eni, which is the largest gas field in the Mediterranean. The field is about 200 km from the beaches of Port Said, Egypt, and has proven reserves of 30 trillion cubic feet of gas. Eni estimates that it will extract 2.5 billion cubic feet per year in 2019, which will account for about 40% of Egypt's gas production. After the Zohr field, the Italian company Eni announced in the beginning of this year, the discovery of a new gas near the Egyptian coast, the Noor field, which is located in the Mediterranean, about 50 kilometers north of Sinai. Also, according to the US Geological Survey in 2010, there are likely to be about 122 trillion cubic meters of undiscovered gas sources in the Eastern Mediterranean basin off the coast of Syria, Lebanon, the Jewish entity, Egypt and Cyprus, in addition to approximately 107 billion barrels of recoverable oil.

**As you can see, the wealth is enormous.**

**2. The importance of gaseous wealth in the Eastern Mediterranean**

This importance comes not only from the importance of gas discovery, but also from the geopolitical importance of the wider region in which it is located, i.e. the Middle East, which

contains about 47% of the oil reserves and 41% of the gas reserves in the world. The importance was increased due to location of the Mediterranean Sea that opens to the intersections of Asia, Europe and Africa, and its connection to international trade routes through the Straits of Suez, Bosphorus and Gibraltar. As the discoveries continued, these estimates raised the hopes of the Eastern Mediterranean countries, opened the appetite of oil and gas companies, inflamed regional competition for resources, and drew international powers' attention to additional wealth and potential focus of conflict.

## **Second: The Conflicting Countries over Eastern Mediterranean Gas:**

### **1- Riparian countries of the Mediterranean**

a. **Turkish Cyprus - Greek Cyprus:** Turkish Cyprus considers that the island's wealth belongs to all its people and may not be exploited in isolation from the other party. But Greek Cyprus ignored this issue and completed the demarcation of its Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ), enabling it to exploit the gas wealth unilaterally in 2010, which prompted the Turkish Cypriot side to respond with a similar step, defining its maritime borders. (Turkey signed an agreement to demarcate the continental shelf with Northern Cyprus on 15/9/2011...) (Turkish Ahval news on 8/11/2018). As a result of these actions, there has been an overlap between the areas defined by the "Turkish and Greek Cypriot parties." (Therefore, the Republic of Northern Cyprus claims its right over several areas which the Greek Cyprus demarcated in 2010...) (Turk Press on 11/7/2019).

b. **The European Union:** Its priority is to enhance energy security to diversify sources of imports as well as diversify supply routes, especially with the deterioration of European-Russian relations and under the pressure of US sanctions in recent years. In this context, the Eastern Mediterranean gas contributes to this equation and reduces the almost total dependence on Russian gas, especially for the countries of Eastern and Southern Europe ... Thus, the EU appears present in the equation through some of its member countries such as Greek Cyprus and Greece, and through oil and gas exploration companies.

c. **Turkey:** Turkey is not a member of the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS), which allows for the delimitation of marine areas, partly because of its dispute with Greece in the Aegean Sea. Turkey considers that the exclusive economic zone defined by Greek Cyprus overlaps with the Turkish continental shelf and its exclusive economic zone even though it has not been officially declared ... Based on these demands, Turkey does not recognize the agreements established by Cyprus (Greek) to demarcate its exclusive economic zone with Egypt and the Jewish entity and Lebanon, and considers that the bidding for foreign companies to search and explore for gas in this region is illegal, because it violates the rights of Ankara ... Erdogan said in a speech to supporters of the ruling Justice and Development Party in Turkey that he leads, in an event on the occasion of the 18th anniversary of its founding in the capital Ankara ("We are located in the Eastern Mediterranean via Turkish ships and the naval forces protects those ships" Erdogan stressed that Turkey continues its exploration activities in the region "licensed by the Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus") ... (Sawt Al-Imarat 24/8/2019).

d. **The Jewish state usurper of Palestine:** the increasing discoveries of gas helps the Jewish entity to escape from the dependence on Egypt, and it fills a big gap in its energy sector. Not only that, gas in the occupation calculations turned into a political and security lever, and an effective political weapon for normalization with a number of Arab countries in the regional neighborhood, especially Egypt, Lebanon, the Palestinian Authority and Jordan. Also ("Israel" reached an agreement with Greece, Cyprus and Italy to build a pipeline at a cost of six billion euros "6.8" billion dollars to transport gas from "Israel" to the three countries...) (Ash-Shurooq News on 25/11/2018), all because Europe is seeking to diversify its energy sources.

e. **Egypt:** Gas not only carries an economic value for the Egyptian regime, but more importantly, it is considered a tool to consolidate the regime and obtain the required regional and international legitimacy in the absence of internal legitimacy that allows the Egyptian people to make the best use of the wealth of the country. Earlier this year, Egypt, the Jewish state, Cyprus, Greece, Italy, Jordan, and Palestine announced the Eastern Mediterranean Gas Forum. (In

January, Egypt, "Israel", Cyprus, Greece, Italy, Jordan and Palestine announced in Cairo the establishment of the so-called Eastern Mediterranean Gas Forum. The Forum excluded these countries: Turkey, Lebanon, Syria and Turkish Northern Cyprus from its membership when it was established, although they are countries overlooking the eastern Mediterranean basin ...) (Gulf Online on 15/1/2019).

f. And - there are countries bordering (Riparian zone) the Mediterranean Sea, but they have no impact or influence (Syria in the current situation ... Lebanon, although it has signed agreements with French, Italian and Russian companies, but has not yet begun and may be delayed due to the intervention of the Jewish state ... and then the (Palestinian) authority!)

## **2. Non-riparian countries of the Mediterranean**

a. **America:** it views the region through a broader framework of its priorities in the Middle East, often linked to ensuring energy flow and protecting the Jewish entity. The United States is present in the Eastern Mediterranean region through its companies and through its agents in the region. Its liquefied gas exports to Europe are also on the rise, and this may affect its outlook for the region's gas in the future.

b. **Russia:** Although the gas in the Eastern Mediterranean is not a substitute for Russian gas and does not compete with it, yet Moscow wants to ensure its monopoly on the European market by also being present in any complementary or alternative gas projects, so as not to be adversely affected by them, this is exactly what it does... Moscow is present in the struggle for gas in the Eastern Mediterranean through gas exploration companies (the case of Lebanon), and financial financing (the case of Greek Cyprus and Greece), and through military presence and bilateral agreements (the case of Syria).

## **Third: the exploitation of gas in the conflict between economically and politically influencing countries**

1. As for the European Union: On December 20, 2018, Greece, Cyprus and the Jewish entity announced that they were ready to proceed with a US-backed pipeline project to transport natural gas from the eastern Mediterranean to Europe. The EastMed pipeline will transport gas from the sea between occupied Palestine and Cyprus to the EU markets via Greece. About 10 billion cubic meters of natural gas are expected to be transported to the EU via Greece and Italy. The aim of the EU is to diversify its imports of natural gas away from Russian gas. The EastMed project will meet approximately 10-15% of the EU's expected natural gas needs, so the EU will be able to diversify the energy sources, and Russia will lose its influence on gas prices on the EU. The European Union is likely to try to lower market prices for gas, which has risen steadily over the past few years...

2. This is regarding the European side, as for the American side, the United States pressured Russia by imposing sanctions on it and on its allies, especially Germany, to stop the Nord Stream-2 pipeline, claiming that this project would push Russian gas deep into Western Europe and enables Russia to exert greater influence on European foreign policy, which allows it to use energy as a tool to pressure any country. Therefore the United States is working hard to push EU countries to buy liquefied natural gas (LNG) from the US instead of Russia as a means to diversify and secure energy supplies and create a competitive climate. This, no doubt affects Nord Stream 2 project: (which includes the construction of two gas pipelines across the Baltic Sea to Germany with a total capacity of 55 billion cubic meters of gas per year, while a number of countries are opposed to this project such as Ukraine, the United States of America ...) (Sputnik News on 1/4/2019).

3. Competition and conflict between the United States and Russia over natural gas supply have increased, and because the EU, as a superpower of 28 countries with a total population of about 512 million people, it is an important market for the world's largest energy exporters, especially when it comes to natural gas. This is why Russia has been interested in it for a long time and was the dominant source and supplier of natural gas to the European market, and now

America has entered the line and is now looking to challenge Russia by increasing its exports of American (LNG) as an easier and safer in storage and transportation,

On the other hand, it is expensive because of the effort required to liquefy and transport it compared to gas transported in pipelines and other energy sources. But if it is priced on a competitive basis, it can play an increasing role in the EU's gas supply, which is a potential threat to Russia ... America has begun to do so. The volume of liquefied natural gas supplied from the United States to the European Union amounted to about 24% of the total US LNG production in October 2018, compared to about 10% from US exports that went to the European Union in 2017; the year America began to emerge as a gas exporter for the first time. In the first months of 2019, EU imports of US gas amounted to about 13%, making it the EU's third largest supplier. This is due to increased production from oil shale fields in America.

4. In short, with Russia dominating the EU's gas supply and relying heavily on it, the need to diversify energy sources is growing, and the EU is keen to support the EastMed project and diversify its imports of natural gas away from heavily American sanctioned Russian gas, especially after North Sea gas production has declined. At the same time, the US wants to dominate the European market by pushing EU countries to buy liquefied natural gas from the United States instead of Russia, thus directly blocking the Nord Stream 2 project, which connects Russia to Europe via the Baltic Sea.

5. Thus, the Middle East, which is essentially an Islamic region, has been blessed by Allah (swt) with abundant wealth of oil, gas, minerals, etc., but it is plundered and used by the colonial and Kuffar together with the Jewish state the usurper of the blessed land of Palestine ... All these enrich their economy, and move their factories and markets with this wealth ... some of it reaches the rulers, their agents and they make it their private money, although this wealth is the public property of the people, its owners and not its thieves! It is the duty of the Ummah to move to change these oppressive rulers who enable the colonial Kuffar to plunder our wealth ... and the Ummah remains in misery of living, it does not benefit from its wealth that surrounds it: like the camel dying of thirst in the desert but it is carrying water on its back.

The silence over the oppressor and not working to change him with sincerity for Allah (swt) and sincerity with the Messenger of Allah (saw); will not save the silent one from the consequences of oppression, rather it will strike the oppressor and the one silent over the injustice.

﴿وَاتَّقُوا فِتْنَةً لَا تُصِيبَنَّ الَّذِينَ ظَلَمُوا مِنْكُمْ خَاصَّةً وَاعْلَمُوا أَنَّ اللَّهَ شَدِيدُ الْعِقَابِ﴾

**“And fear a trial which will not strike those who have wronged among you exclusively, and know that Allah is severe in penalty” [Al-Anfal: 25].**

It afflicts the oppressor with his injustice and affects others for their silence over the oppressor and not working to change him...

﴿إِنَّ فِي هَذَا لَبَلَاغًا لِقَوْمٍ عَابِدِينَ﴾

**“Indeed, in this [Qur'an] is notification for a worshipping people” [Al-Anbiya: 106].**

2 Muharram 1441 AH

1/9/2019 CE