

The background of the entire poster is a repeating pattern of stylized, jagged waves in shades of blue and teal. Each wave is depicted with a large, white, almond-shaped eye in the center, giving the impression of a sea of eyes watching the viewer. The eyes have black pupils and are surrounded by concentric circles of blue and white. The overall effect is a dense, textured, and somewhat unsettling visual.

# **PIPELINES FUEL CONFLICT**

**How fossil gas is fueling tensions in the  
Eastern Mediterranean;**

The case of the Eastmed-Poseidon Pipeline



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# Introduction

Around the world, the fossil fuel industry is grabbing onto fossil gas as its lifeline, making the false claim that it is a 'climate solution,' and trying to rapidly scale up the construction of new fossil gas infrastructure<sup>1</sup>. As the gas industry has been gaining momentum in the last decades, so have geopolitical conflicts around gas projects. This comes after a long history of oil conflicts<sup>2</sup> and extractivist neo-colonial practises triggered by the prospect of oil and gas exploration.

**Governments and intergovernmental institutions like the European Union falsely promote fossil gas as a clean energy source and as a solution for energy security<sup>3</sup>, with some governments even toting fossil gas as a solution for peace in the region.**

Not only does exploiting gas reserves both spark and fuel militarization, it threatens the health and livelihoods of communities living near the projects and accelerates climate breakdown; threatening food security and security of dwelling, increasing the risk of extreme weather events, and other risks. This impacts disproportionately harm communities of colour and people living in the Global South.

A pertinent, contemporary example is the Eastmed-Poseidon; **Europe's latest mega-pipeline project and a geopolitical minefield**. It is designed to carry fossil gas from under the disputed waters between Israel and Cyprus to Italy, via Cyprus and Greece. Its final destination is the EU gas network. Besides being a geopolitical minefield, it is fueling militarization, conflict and oppression in the Eastern Mediterranean region. Especially in the context of the COVID-19 public health crisis and the economic recession, this pipeline project would be a reckless waste of EU public money and political resources, at a time when those same resources are urgently needed elsewhere. This briefing will outline what's going on with this pipeline, what's wrong with it, and what we can do about it.



# What is the Eastmed-Poseidon?

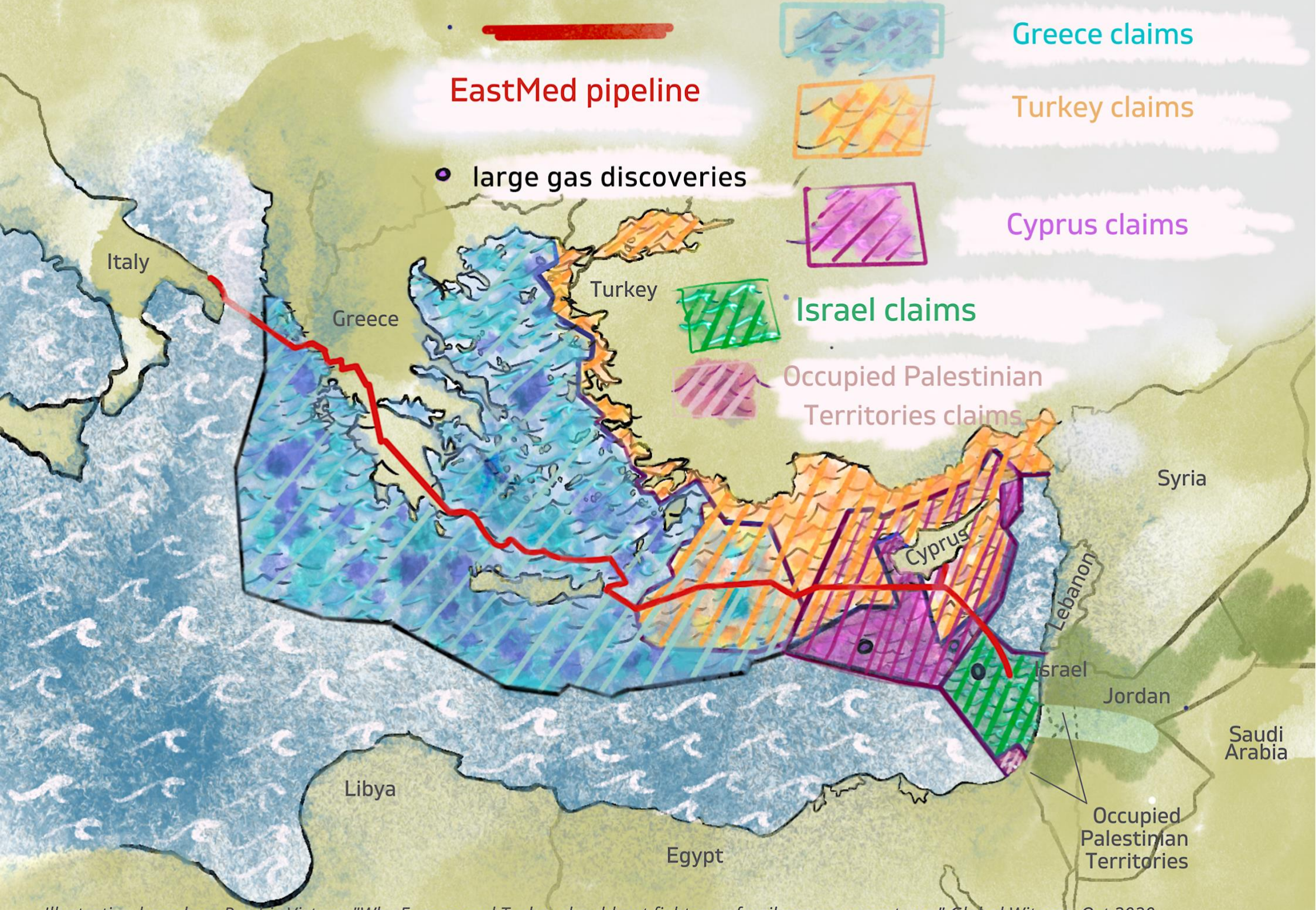
Simply put, it is a mega pipeline with two parts. Part 1) is called the [Eastmed](#)<sup>4</sup>, and would carry gas from the disputed waters of the Levantine Basin (East of Cyprus) to Greece via Cyprus. Part 2) is the [Poseidon](#)<sup>5</sup> pipeline<sup>6</sup>, which would carry gas across mainland Greece to Italy. Together, they would cover a distance of approximately 2100km in total (see the annex for more details of the pipelines sections). **This would make it one of Europe's longest pipelines, and, reportedly, the world's deepest**<sup>7</sup>, with sections buried **up to 3 km below the sea's surface**<sup>8</sup>, providing serious logistical challenges and risks.

More information is available about the Eastmed than the Poseidon segment of the project, and therefore this briefing will offer more information on the prior. However, the Poseidon pipeline is not to be overlooked; the EU is supporting this project and the gas is intended for European consumption, so it is extremely unlikely that the Eastmed would be built without the Poseidon pipeline.

Both the Eastmed and Poseidon pipeline projects are at the early stages of development; making it a perfect time to stop the project before

finances are secured and pipes are laid. **A company called IGI-Poseidon<sup>9</sup> promotes both projects; it is a joint venture of the Greek DEPA and Edison, an Italian company owned by the French EDF Group.** Israeli companies Delek and Ratio, Chevron (a US company, which recently purchased Noble energy and its Israeli licenses), Exxon (US), ENI (Italian), TOTAL (French), Royal Dutch Shell (Netherlands), Qatar Petroleum, and Cyprus' Kogas and BG all have drilling interests in the region. See the annex for more details on the various international companies involved. **The Eastmed would cost an estimated €6 billion<sup>10</sup> and would have an annual capacity of up to 20 billion m3 (BCM) of gas.**







# Geopolitics

**The governments of Israel, Greece and Cyprus are enthusiastically supporting the pipeline.** Italy has the most ambiguous position about the project of the countries along the route. In Spring of 2019 the Italian prime minister **outspokenly rejected the pipeline**<sup>11</sup>, but after a change of government **Italy signed onto the project**<sup>12</sup> in January 2020.

The Eastmed is already increasing tensions in the Eastern Mediterranean region. **The offshore gas fields include numerous overlapping and conflicting national claims to the offshore gas reserves and are located in geopolitically sensitive zones**<sup>13</sup> of the Mediterranean which add stress to the already fragile peace keeping efforts.

Absurdly, politicians are selling the pipelines and exploitation of gas in the Eastern Mediterranean as a solution for peace, stability and security in the region. For example, **the Prime Minister of Israel, Netanyahu, promises it will bring “stability in the region.”**<sup>14</sup> **Greek Energy Minister Hatzidakis called it “a project of peace and cooperation.”**<sup>15</sup>

The EU also plays its role in this narrative, claiming that bringing gas from the Eastmed to Europe is important for European “energy security”. Gas is already escalating conflict and it will only bring suffering to civilians; those impacted

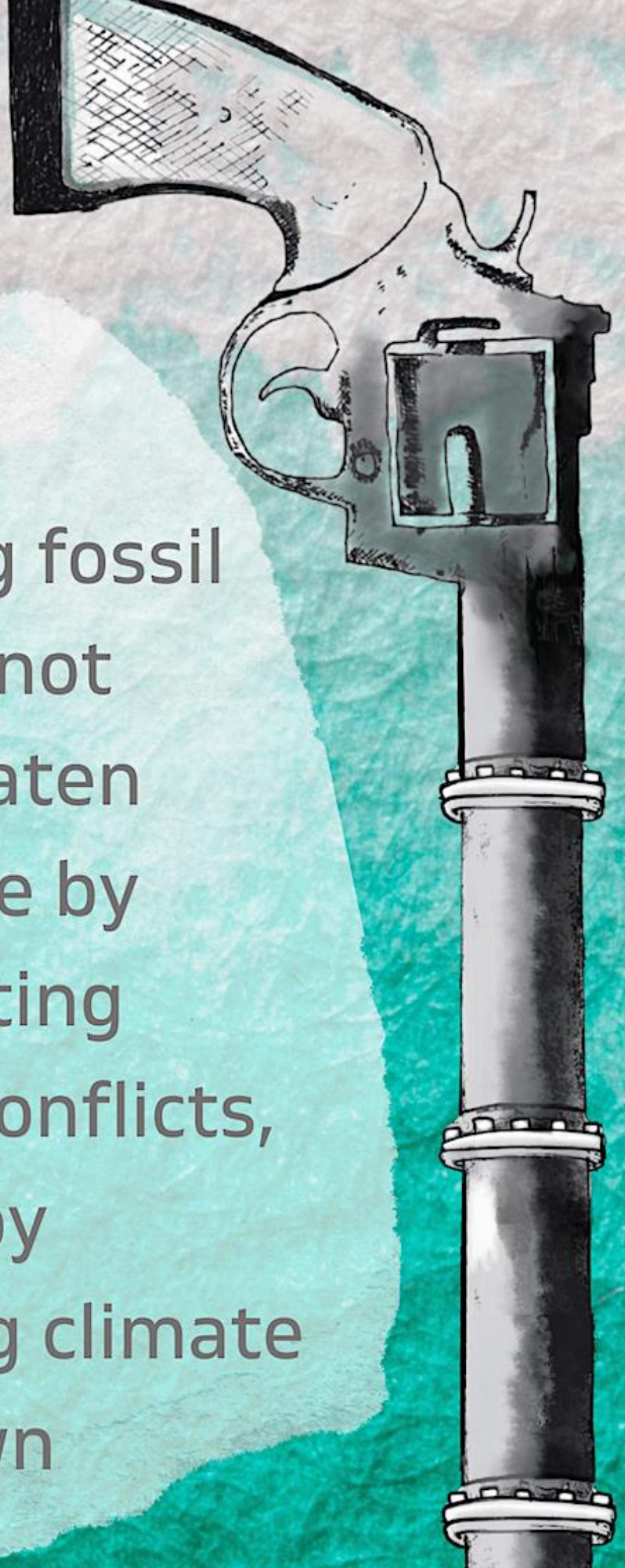
by military activities by living close to fossil fuel infrastructure, and those whose livelihoods are destroyed by climate breakdown. “Whose security is prioritised?” and “at what costs?” are important questions to pose, to break out of neocolonial dynamics.

The geopolitical implications of the Eastmed pipeline are varied and layered and only just beginning to emerge. A few are discussed below, and further conversation, collaboration and input are warmly invited.





Exploiting fossil  
fuels will not  
only threaten  
civilian life by  
exacerbating  
political conflicts,  
but also by  
escalating climate  
breakdown





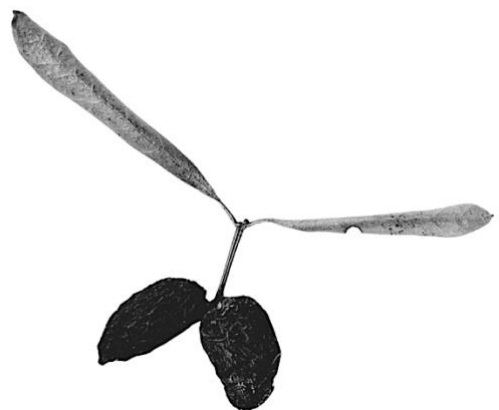
## EU Involvement

The EU is providing significant political and financial support to the Eastmed pipeline. At the time of writing (November 2020), €36,427,924 of public money has been awarded to the pipeline project from the Connecting Europe Facility<sup>16</sup>. It also has received priority status by being included in the latest Projects of Common Interest (PCI) list, which means that the pipeline can skip regulatory hurdles, receive preferential treatment, and is considered a top EU priority.

The EastMed pipeline is part of the EU's huge and rapid push for new fossil gas import terminals and pipelines. The EU argues that there is a strong need for the European gas network to diversify its gas supply, to avoid dependence on Russian imports in order to ensure "energy security"<sup>17</sup>. Under this premise, the EU is supporting and prioritizing a massive gas infrastructure buildout including the construction of the Southern Gas Corridor for Azerbaijani gas, new LNG ('Liquid Natural Gas') terminals for US and global imports, and now the Eastmed pipeline.

This argument of "energy security" is flawed for several reasons; Firstly, European gas infrastructure is under-utilized, and there is already

enough infrastructure to meet projected gas needs<sup>18</sup> "even in the event of severe supply disruption" from Russia. Secondly, EU gas demand is decreasing<sup>19</sup>, despite the EU consistently over-estimating demand<sup>20</sup> (as ruled by the European Court of Auditors). The EU Commission's long term strategy for 2050<sup>21</sup> even sees a decline of gaseous fuels of up to 90%. Moreover, several of the many proposed gas projects in Eastern Europe which claim to be intended to 'diversify away from Russia' could ultimately end up carrying cheap Russian gas anyway<sup>22</sup>. Finally, energy security is incompatible with increasing fossil fuel dependencies on volatile regimes<sup>23</sup> (like Azerbaijan and Israel); they are, by definition, not reliable sources. Decentralised, local sustainable energy is the key for truly secure energy systems.





## Cyprus, Greece & Turkey

In the summer of 2020, tensions rose between Greece and Turkey, with **warships clashing**<sup>24</sup> above disputed gas reserves offshore of Cyprus; catalysed, in part, by the EU indicating its desire to import gas from the region, by investing in the Eastmed pipeline. **The Eastmed secures a European market for the gas located in disputed waters, and so incentivises parties to fight for ownership of the water and to start drilling.**

The offshore disputes over gas fields must be understood through a historic lens. Cyprus has long been used as a geopolitical pawn in the chess game of international relations. **After centuries under colonial rule, first as part of the Turkish empire and later as a British colony, Cyprus won independence in 1960 with powerful social uprisings.** Internal conflicts escalated and in 1974 Turkish military forces invaded the island, internally displacing people from both the Turkish Cypriot and Greek Cypriot communities. **The country was split into two zones with military borders, blocked checkpoints and a United Nations buffer zone; the Northern part of the island is administered by the Turkish Cypriot community and the Southern part of the island is administered by the Republic of Cyprus (Greek Cypriot community).** For more than 20 years

the checkpoints were closed, cutting off the two communities from one another. Peace building talks at the political level started in 1975 and are still ongoing, still with no viable solution for the people of Cyprus. In 2003, the checkpoints between the two areas opened and communities had the opportunity to exchange, with inspiring bottom up peace building initiatives. **Cyprus remains heavily militarized;** There are major military forces in the country, including Greek Cypriot, Turkish Cypriot, a UN peacekeeping force, and British military bases.

**The onshore political disputes have implications for the ownership of offshore gas reserves.** Turkey is the only country in the world that currently recognizes Northern Cyprus as a sovereign state. In 2011, **Turkey signed a deal with leaders in Northern Cyprus that redrew the borders of the country's waters**<sup>25</sup> - at least as far as those two parties were concerned - and gave Turkey permission to drill in the region. This permission is however not recognised by the Republic of Cyprus nor by the rest of the actors in the region. **In the summer of 2020, these historical tensions escalated, resulting in Greek and Turkish warships colliding**<sup>26</sup>. Fighting over conflicting maritime gas claims contributes to the resurfacing of long-standing conflict, and increases the possibility of open conflict.

The Cypriot government emphasises that fossil gas will restore the country's safety from Turkey's threats by



building alliances with other countries and their military forces (for instance with Israel) and by having the militarised support from transnational oil and gas companies that want their economic and foreign interests secured. The argument is also being used the other way round; justifying militarization in order to protect the disputed gas fields off the coast of Cyprus.<sup>27</sup>

In September 2020, over 60 organizations from Turkey, Greece and Cyprus came together to demand an end to extraction in the region, for climate justice and for peace<sup>28</sup>. In their own, inspiring words:

**“We need to ensure energy justice, with distribution according to social need, not profit. We need to end private profiteering in energy by taking energy production and distribution back into democratically controlled public ownership.**

**We say no to new fossil fuel exploration and development of reserves! We say no to conflict between our countries! We say yes to climate justice and to peace.**





# Palestine, Israel & Lebanon

**The Israeli government is one of the most enthusiastic proponents of the EastMed pipeline, as it would secure a European export market for Israeli gas reserves.** In the last decade they have been exploiting undersea gas reserves in the Mediterranean, investing in a boom of gas infrastructure (following the global pattern) while continuing a brutal occupation and oppression of the Palestinian territories both on land and sea.

It must be noted that any regional activity comes in the context of **decades of human rights abuses in the occupied Palestinian territory**<sup>29</sup>, which has further escalated in 2020 with Israel's **illegal annexation plan**. **One of the ways Israel suppresses the right of Palestinians to their land and to self determination is by controlling resources in Palestinian territories**<sup>30</sup>, and the **Gaza Marine gas field is a case in point**<sup>31</sup>. Despite being under Palestinian ownership, the Israeli regime **does not allow Palestine to exploit their gas reserves**<sup>32</sup>, in order to reduce their economic and political power. Following pressure from the Israeli government, companies, such as Shell, who have licenses awarded by the Palestinian Authority in the waters off Gaza **have abandoned operations**<sup>33</sup>.

The EU support for the Eastmed and Poseidon pipelines demonstrates

complicity in Israel's ongoing human rights abuses of the Palestinian people. Israel's policies and actions in

Palestinian territories have frequently violated human rights law, as documented by **Human Rights Watch**<sup>34</sup> and the **United Nations**<sup>35</sup>. **Tying EU energy dependency to Israel, legitimises the country's policies and its actions, such as the current annexation of Palestine, while further financing the Israeli government.**

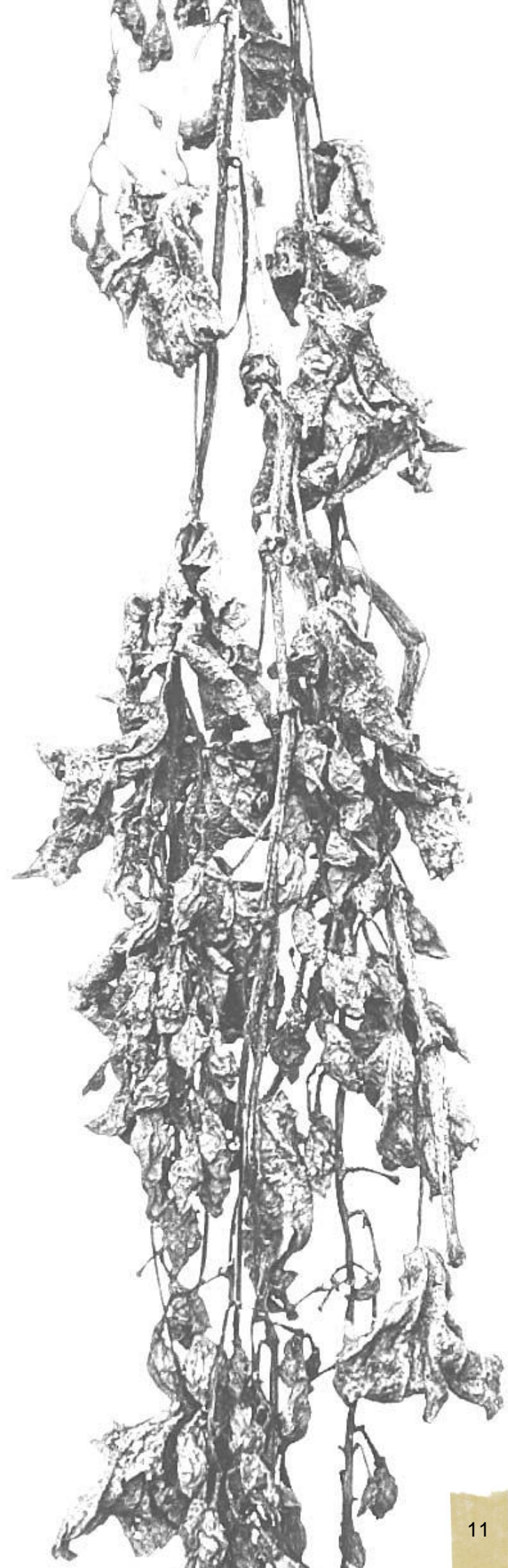
**The Palestinian environmental group Penson has spoken out against the EastMed pipeline**<sup>36</sup>, calling on the EU and the governments of Greece and Cyprus to:

- **Cancel the feasibility study and remove the EastMed Gas Pipeline from the PCI list.**
- **Warn European companies and investors of the legal, economic and security risks of involvement in Israel's gas projects**
- **Reconsider EU investment in the natural gas projects included in the third PCI given their negative impact on climate change and human rights**



The waters of the Eastern Mediterranean are further complicated with gas fields that are located between Lebanon and Israel<sup>37</sup>; countries which are officially at war and as such have disputed land and marine borders.

In October 2020, discussions to define the marine borders were started between the two parties, under US supervision, with the clear desire to clarify gas extraction opportunities. These talks are historic as the two parties do not have diplomatic relations, and have stirred uncomfortable feelings in Lebanon. Indeed, the discussions focus on gas prospects and business interests while overlooking decades of armed conflict<sup>38</sup>. The talks are adding to the tension of the complex political situation in Lebanon, following a year of revolution and a criminal explosion in the capital of Beirut.



# US Interference

The US is seriously interfering in the geopolitical dynamics of the region, in fossil fuel development and in militarization; as it does all over the world. **The US congress recently passed a bill that supports fossil gas projects and further militarization in the Eastmed region in the same text, as part of a significant spending package**<sup>39</sup> (see the Eastern Mediterranean Energy and Security Partnership for the relevant section). On one hand, the Eastmed pipeline, liquid fossil gas (LNG) terminals, and other gas projects are supported; with a promise of US assistance for fossil gas extraction offshore Cyprus and Israel, and a US run Energy Center in the region. On the other, it promises drones and joint military exercises, and lifts a 1978 embargo on selling arms to Cyprus, which was put in place to de-escalate conflict with Turkey. **Exxon Mobil (who holds the exploration blocks offshore Cyprus) heavily lobbied for the bill to pass**<sup>40</sup> and was successful when the text was approved in early 2020. US diplomats have been present at many regional meetings, **supporting and celebrating the process**<sup>41</sup>. Exxon, Chevron and Noble are all US companies with drilling licenses in the region.

**History has repeatedly shown the dangerous relationship and complicity of the fossil fuel industry and national military industrial complexes, from soft pressure to outright invasions of sovereign nations.**





## Economic Feasibility

Large scale fossil gas projects, like the Eastmed pipeline, are incredibly expensive infrastructure; the Eastmed alone would cost an estimated €6 billion euros. **The risk of this pipeline, if built, becoming a stranded asset is dangerously high.** Firstly, gas demand is dwindling<sup>42</sup>, and studies show Europe already has more than enough gas infrastructure to meet its needs<sup>43</sup>. Exploiting regional gas for the EU market has already been criticized as being too expensive to be economically viable<sup>44</sup>,

even before the 2020 drop in gas prices. Add to the mix that new fossil gas infrastructure has an **economic lifespan that, if fulfilled, would involve emissions that violate global climate agreements**<sup>45</sup>. This means such projects will most likely have to be decommissioned before even paying off investments, let alone reaping profits, in order to meet global climate agreements.

**At a time of unprecedented economic volatility in the oil and gas market, and the COVID-19 economic recession, it is a reckless waste of money to invest in the Eastmed pipeline or any other fossil gas infrastructure.**

# Impacts

Aside from escalating political tensions and risking conflict that will destroy livelihoods, there are many other reasons that the gas in the Eastern Mediterranean (and any fossil gas) cannot be extracted and exploited.

***Impacts on Peace & Security:*** The pipeline is fueling conflicts throughout the region, as countries battle to take ownership of gas reserves and as such reignite historical tensions around maritime borders. This is stirring up unresolved conflicts in Cyprus, Greece, Turkey, Israel and Lebanon, and threatening fragile peace keeping efforts. Harsh impacts on the Palestinians can be expected as the EastMed pipeline reinforces the Israeli regime economically and politically. ***Exploiting fossil fuels will not only threaten civilian life by exacerbating political conflicts, but also by escalating climate breakdown, thereby threatening food security, security of dwelling, among others.***

***Impact on Communities:*** The communities that live along the route of mega-pipelines, as with any extractivist project, are deeply impacted by their construction. As we have seen time and time again around the world, from ***Mozambique***<sup>46</sup> to ***Italy***<sup>47</sup>, ***communities are sacrificed for the construction of mass infrastructure projects that they will reap no benefit from.*** The people

living along the pipeline route will suffer disproportionate impacts on their livelihoods, health impacts from chemical leaks, decrease of real estate values, etc. For those living on the coasts near offshore drilling or the offshore pipeline segments, their tourism dependent livelihoods will be threatened.

***Impact on Local Environment:*** The project endangers the diverse and fragile ecosystems of the Mediterranean, ***identified as a biodiversity hotspot***<sup>48</sup>. It is one of the deepest pipelines ever planned, which comes with costly technical difficulties, and making it complicated to detect and fix leaks. The Eastmed pipeline in particular would pass through geologically unstable places, with earthquake risks.

***Climate Impact:*** The EastMed pipeline is designed to carry up to 20 billion m<sup>3</sup> (BCM) of fossil gas annually. ***Fossil gas is a dangerous fossil fuel, and more gas infrastructure is incompatible with the Paris Climate goal***<sup>49</sup> ***of keeping global warming under 1.5 degrees.*** Fossil gas is mostly made up of methane, a supercharged greenhouse gas, which has an ***estimated global warming impact over 86 times higher than that of CO2 in the next 20 years***<sup>50</sup>. Practically, this means that fossil gas has a very intense and immediate impact on climate change. When combining the results of methane leaks and CO2 generation through combustion; fossil gas infrastructure is accelerating us towards irreversible climate tipping points.



## So what now?

We need to transform the centralised, extractivist fossil energy model that is currently the norm, to break free from this cycle of extraction, violence and sacrifice. We must resist the flawed logic that fossil fuels can be part of a solution for peace and security. **Now (and until we win!) is a crucial time to stop new fossil gas infrastructure like the Eastmed pipeline, and make way for a just transition to renewable, democratic energy systems.**

We are surrounded by inspiring projects that **develop community-owned and community-managed clean energy**<sup>51</sup>. We admire the work of allies to address the stark reality of energy poverty and the difficult transition that workers of the fossil industry are bravely facing, and the need for workers and the most impacted to be at the centre of building solutions. We respect the people opening difficult conversations about colonial legacy and the responsibility Europeans have for destroying communities and environments for centuries; these difficult conversations are essential to understand the power dynamics of the current energy system and how we want to move away from it.





**Get active!**



A coordinated network of local people, grassroots activists and campaigners are coming together to organize around the EastMed pipeline, to stop its construction, and to resist gas being used as an excuse to militarize and escalate conflict.

Contact the [Gastivists collective](#) to join this network, and to find out more about fossil gas and tactics to fight the construction of new gas infrastructure. All around the world gas projects are collapsing, with people power quickly building momentum. Join us.

\*\*\* Get in touch \*\*\*

Email: [hello@Gastivists.org](mailto:hello@Gastivists.org)

**Facebook & Twitter:** @gastivists





# Annex

## The pipeline route in detail

The EastMed project current design envisages a 1,300 km offshore pipeline and a 600 km onshore pipeline. It comprises of the following sections:

200 km offshore pipeline stretching from Eastern Mediterranean sources to Cyprus;  
700 km offshore pipeline connecting Cyprus to Crete Island;  
400 km offshore pipeline from Crete to mainland Greece (Peloponnese);  
600 km onshore pipeline crossing Peloponnese and West Greece<sup>52</sup>.

The Poseidon Pipeline will extend for approximately 760 km on Greek territory (the onshore section) from the Turkish-Greek border in Kipi to the landfall in Florovouni and for approximately 216 km crossing the Ionian Sea up to receiving terminal in Otranto, Italy<sup>53</sup>.

## Actors; Companies & Institutions involved

### Eastmed Pipeline operator/construction:

<b>IGI Poseidon</b>	Greece
Joint venture of...	
DEPA	Greece
EDISON	Italian company, owned by EDF (France)

### Multiple companies hold licenses off of Israel's coast, and gas produced by these companies could be transported by EastMed, including:

Chevron	US
Energear	Greece
Ratio	Israel
Delek	Israel

### It is likely that companies holding licenses offshore Cyprus would also seek to transport gas through EastMed. These include:

Exxon	US
Chevron	US
Noble	US
Eni	Italy
Total	France
<b>Shell</b>	Netherlands /UK
Qatar Petroleum	Qatar
Kogas	Cyprus
BG	Cyprus
Delek	Israel

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- <sup>6</sup> The Poseidon pipeline’s full route, as the company building it (IGI Poseidon) is planning, would travel across Northern Greece to The Greek-Turkish border. It would connect with another pipeline, the Greece-Bulgaria interconnector (IGB pipeline). The part of the Poseidon that the EU is supporting is the section that will carry gas from Greece to Italy. Therefore, this is the segment referred to in this paper and the length included in the calculations.
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- <sup>16</sup> “Pipe Down; How gas companies influence EU policy and have pocketed €4 billion of taxpayers’ money.” *Global Witness*. June 2020.
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