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## **ALBANIA PRESIDENT BLOCKS TALKS ON SEA BORDER WITH GREECE**

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President Ilir Meta on Tuesday refused to provide the authorisation for further talks with Greece to resolve the sea border disagreement, demanding further information on what and how the government will negotiate.

"The request doesn't clearly define the object of negotiations for which the authorisation is requested," Meta said in a statement.

The negotiations for the delimitation of continental shelf, as they are known, were reopened last year between the left-wing government of Albania and the Greek authorities, along with talks on other unresolved issues between the two neighbouring countries.

Albania signed an agreement with Greece in 2009 after two years of negotiations, but the Albanian Constitutional Court annulled it in 2010 after finding it in breach of the constitution and international norms.

The decision was preceded by a widespread public outcry over allegations of a land grab by Greece.

A US diplomatic cable from 2008 published by WikiLeaks in 2011 suggested that the Albanian chief negotiator had lamented the pressure created by Athens through its position as an EU member state to make Tirana accept an unfair deal by threatening to block Albanias European integration.

The issue caused further tensions after 2013, when the Socialist Party leader Edi Rama was elected prime minister, as his party had challenged the deal in the Constitutional Court back in 2010.

But the Socialist Party government - hoping to improve relations with Greece and Albanias chances to open membership negotiations with the EU - has since started wide-ranging discussions with Greece aimed at resolving various disagreements.

It was almost instantly accused by the opposition of selling out the country.

Meta, who become president last year after leading the Socialist Movement of Integration party, which is now in opposition, denied allegations that he was playing politics by denying the authorisation to the government.

"The aim of the president has not been and is not to play politics with such a serious and delicate issue," Meta told a press conference on Tuesday.

<http://www.balkaninsight.com/en/article/albania-president-blocks-negotiations-over-sea-border-with-greece-02-20-2018>

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