



AS IT IS

UN Aims to Remove Oil from Tanker in Red Sea

July 31, 2023

An international team is working to remove oil from a ship **anchored** in the Red Sea off the coast of Yemen.

The oil tanker, called the SOF Safer, has not been used for at least eight years. It contains over 1 million barrels of oil.

Experts say the ship is at risk of breaking up or exploding.

The Associated Press reported in 2020 that seawater entered the ship's engine room and caused damage. The water also put the ship in danger of sinking.

For years, the United Nations and governments of nearby countries warned that an explosion or oil leak could **disrupt** shipping in the Middle East. The ship is close to the Yemeni ports of Hodeida and Ras Issa. Many ships travel from the Persian Gulf, past Yemen and through Egypt's Suez Canal to get to the Mediterranean Sea.

The United Nations purchased another oil tanker so crews could move the oil from the Safer.

Antonio Guterres is the UN Secretary General. In a statement, he said the work is a “**critical** next step in avoiding an environmental and humanitarian **catastrophe**.”

The U.N. said the job will be done in less than three weeks.

The Safer was built in the 1970s and sold to the Yemeni government in the 1980s so it could move oil pumped from the fields in Marib.

The U.N. said a leak could have been worse than the 1989 Exxon Valdez oil spill, one of the largest **ecological** disasters.

When the oil is removed, the work will not be over, however. The Safer will be anchored to an underwater oil pipeline before it is taken away to a **scrapyard**.

David Gressly is the U.N. humanitarian official for Yemen. He said moving the oil will prevent a “worst-case **scenario**.” Guterres said, cleaning up an oil spill in Yemen could have cost “tens of billions of dollars.”

I’m Dan Friedell.

Dan Friedell adapted this story for Learning English based on a report by the Associated Press.

Words in This Story

anchor -v. to connect a boat to something very heavy that rests on the ocean floor so it does not move

disrupt -v. to change from the usual order of business in a big way

critical -adj. extremely important

catastrophe -n. a very bad accident

ecological -adj. having to do with the environment and nature

scrapyard -n. a place where vehicles and machines are taken apart and the parts are broken down into basic materials

scenario -n. a situation that might happen but that has not become reality

We want to hear from you. Do you think the U.N. can do the rest of the job safely?

Here is how our comment system works:

- 1. Write your comment in the box.*
- 2. Under the box, you can see four images for social media accounts. They are for Disqus, Facebook, Twitter and Google.*
- 3. Click on one image and a box appears. Enter the login for your social media account. Or you may create one on the Disqus system. It is the blue circle with "D" on it. It is free.*

Each time you return to comment on the Learning English site, you can use your account and see your comments and replies to them. Our comment policy is [here](#).
