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16 June 2016

### **Waterkeepers Iraq tracks massive waste oil spill in Sulaimani Dump**

For decades now the city of Sulaimani in Iraqi Kurdistan has been dumping its waste at a site in an industrial area southeast of the city very close to the Tanjero River known as the Tanjero Dump. Most of this waste is municipal garbage from the city residents but industries and businesses also use the site. As with most waste facilities in the country, this is simply an open, air dump, not a sanitary landfill and it has been polluting the local environment for years.

Waste oils and most likely other toxic materials have been dumped here as well, which has reportedly contaminated groundwater in the area. In the winter of 2016, the waste oil, now mixed with rainwater and garbage, reached a critical level and begun to flow out of the dump towards the Tanjero River. An effort to intercept this oily mess by digging a deep trench on the south side of the dump did not succeed and by late February of this year, the trench was starting to fill and the waste oil had broken past it and entered the farm fields between the dump and the river.

Since February, this moving oily mass has traveled over 140 meters and based on measurements taken by Waterkeepers Iraq in early June 2016 has traveled an average 1.3 meters per day. This rate is likely increasing with the warmer temperatures of summer. Waterkeepers Iraq predicts that this moving toxic spill will reach the Tanjero River in 3 to 4 months if efforts aren't made to stop it. It's already polluting the river but if the mass reaches the river, it will be even harder to clean up and could partially back up the river and increase the impact of this toxic spill. There are communities and farmlands downstream that depend upon the waters of the river and Darbandikhan Lake and Dam could likely both be impacted by this spill as well.

It is unclear whether dumping of waste oil is continuing to take place at the site and there appears to be no significant action to address this moving toxic mess since attempting to stop it by digging the trench this past winter. Nor do there appear to be any efforts at finding alternative, recycling methods that would stop waste oils and other toxics from being dumped in the first place.

Immediate action is needed and we urge the Sulaimani Governorate, the Kurdistan Environment Board, the Iraqi Ministry of Health and the Environment, and the Kurdistan



Regional Government to clean up this spill as soon as possible and find a better solution for dealing with municipal waste and industrial toxins such as waste oil. We also urge the UN and international environmental organizations to start raising this issue with the Kurdistan Regional Government, local authorities in Sulaimani, and the Baghdad Government. This is an issue that we ignore at our peril.

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Attached are some images of what is happening taken in February and April of 2016, along with a map showing the progress of the spill as of early June 2016. The rough location of the spill is at GPS Coordinates: 35.483047, 45.424534. Waterkeepers Iraq has also made a short film on this issue available on our YouTube Channel:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=RYryXo4xYAA>

To find out more about this issue or Waterkeepers Iraq contact the Iraq Upper Tigris Waterkeepers, Nabil Musa at [info@waterkeepersiraq.org](mailto:info@waterkeepersiraq.org) or +964 07703594408, or visit our website at: [www.waterkeepersiraq.org](http://www.waterkeepersiraq.org).

Or check us out on:

Facebook: <https://www.facebook.com/groups/IraqUpperTigrisWaterkeeper/>

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Attachments:

Tanjero Dump - 24 Feb & 24 Apr 2016 (Photo comparisons 1,2, & 3)  
Sulaimani Dump Oil Spill Map – as of June 2016