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## **Kuwait asked to block illegal export of toxic ships**

*Tuesday, 16 Mar, 2010*

The Basel Action Network warned the Government of Kuwait that 3 Kuwaiti flagged ships called the Al Awdah, Al Tahreer and Al Shuhadaa that are owned and operated by Kuwait Oil Tanker Co SAK, a subsidiary of Kuwait Petroleum Corporation and owned by the Government of Kuwait may very soon be exported from Kuwaiti waters destined for the ship breaking beaches of Pakistan, Bangladesh or India in contravention of the United Nations Basel Convention. Industry insiders, as well as the trade journal database Sea Web, lists these ships as going for scrap.

These ships are suspected of containing high levels of polychlorinated biphenyls, asbestos and other hazardous wastes within their construction. Exporting these vessels for scrapping on the beaches of South Asia would be a violation of the United Nations Basel Convention, which controls the transboundary movement of hazardous waste, such as PCBs and asbestos and their disposal. It is illegal for a party to the Basel Convention such as Kuwait, to transport a contaminated vessel to a Basel party state, such as Pakistan, Bangladesh or India, without prior notification and consent; it is also illegal for such vessels to be transported without a full inventory and accounting of the hazardous waste materials they contain and finally, it is illegal to export ships to facilities that do not maintain environmentally sound management.

It is well known that the beach breaking yards of Pakistan, India and Bangladesh are not capable of managing the disposal of hazardous wastes to fully protect human health and the environment. As a result, Bangladesh recently passed new legislation requiring vessels to be fully remediated of toxic materials prior to entering their waters for scrapping; India is also likely to follow suit.

Mr Colby Self of the BAN said that “BAN calls on the Government of Kuwait, who has clear jurisdiction in this matter, to retain these vessels and uphold the principles of the Basel Convention. A government owned oil corporation exporting hazardous waste to the developing world is unacceptable.”

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