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Houthis will allow salvage teams to attend to blazing Greek tanker

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Iran's mission to the United Nations said yesterday that the Houthis in Yemen will allow salvage teams to head to the badly damaged *Sounion* suezmax tanker in the Red Sea and let it be towed.

The ship was attacked multiple times by the Houthis in international waters between Yemen and Eritrea eight days ago. The tanker, owned by Greece's Delta Tankers, has been on fire since August 23 with the Houthis releasing a dramatic video of the moment they set it ablaze.

The EU naval force in the region gave an update on the state of the Delta Tankers vessel yesterday, warning it remains a navigational risk and a "serious and imminent threat of regional pollution" something that could lead to a "catastrophic environmental crisis".

"Successful mitigation will require close coordination and active participation of regional states," the EU naval taskforce stated.

“The risk of an oil spill, posing an extremely serious environmental hazard, remains high and there is widespread concern about the damage such a spill would cause within the region,” Arsenio Dominguez, the secretary-general of the International Maritime Organization said yesterday.

If there is a spill from the ship, states won't be eligible to receive a payout from the International Oil Pollution Compensation Funds. Such payments are exempt when there's damage that results from acts of war, hostilities, civil war or insurrection.

The *Sounion* is carrying 150,000 tons of crude oil from Iraq. The badly damaged ship risks spilling four times as much oil as the *Exxon Valdez*, arguably tanker shipping's most famous casualty, potentially becoming the fifth worst oil spill of all time, according to statistics carried by the International Tanker Owners Pollution Federation (ITOPF).