

Environmentalists say oil spill damaging protected areas in Red Sea

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Cairo - An environmental organisation said Tuesday that an oil spill off the coast of Egypt's Red Sea city of Hurghada was damaging protected areas, though the government said it had been contained. The spill was detected last week but as yet no company has taken responsibility for it.

State-owned media quoted a source in the Egyptian Environmental Affairs Agency as saying that 95 per cent of the oil spill had been cleaned up.

"This is true only in the areas near tourist beach resorts. The problem remains as it is near the northern, environmentally protected areas in the Red Sea," said Amr Ali, Managing Director of the Hurghada Environmental Protection and Conservation Agency.

"We are waiting for fingerprint results, after the Egyptian Environmental Affairs Agency collected samples from the platforms in the area and the spills to determine the source," Ali told the German Press Agency dpa.

"It has been eight days since the spill was first detected and the source is not determined yet," Ali said. "And no company has had the decency to declare its responsibility."

He added that he was waiting for a proper assessment of how damaged the protected areas were, before the organisation takes legal action against those responsible. There were no specific details about how big the oil spill was, he added.

The government announced that the spill was "limited" and that the leakage had stopped, without revealing how it had affected the coast.

Independent daily al-Masry al-Youm said Saturday that the spill had spread 20 kilometres along the coast of Hurghada, one of Egypt's top tourist destinations.

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