

Turkish Cypriots work to clean oil spill

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Barrels stained with oil sit on the rocks after a spill off the coast of the Karpas peninsula in Turkish-occupied northern Cyprus on July 17, 2013. The spill occurred when around 100 tonnes of fuel leaked into the sea when a tanker was offloading at a power plant in the town of Gastrias.

Dozens of workers on Thursday struggled to contain the pollution caused by an oil spill along the coastline of northeast Cyprus, officials said.

The spill occurred when around 100 tonnes of fuel leaked into the sea when a tanker was offloading at a power plant on Tuesday in the town of

Gastrias (known in Turkish as Kalecik).

Mehmet Harmanci, tourism, environment and culture chief of the self-declared Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus, said a ship from Turkey equipped with pollution control equipment was helping the clean-up.

Witnesses reported seeing oil slicks along a stretch of up to five kilometres (three miles) of coast along the south of the Karpas peninsula, popularly known as the divided island's panhandle.

An official statement called the spill an "environmental disaster" in which 100 tonnes of fuel were released into the sea in just 15 minutes.

As clean-up operations progressed, it said the necessary precautions would be taken to prevent such accidents in the future.

The eastern Mediterranean island has been divided since 1974, when Turkish forces invaded following a coup by Greek Cypriots seeking union with Greece.

Only Ankara gives official recognition to the TRNC.

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