



KUWAIT: An aerial view of a tire landfill in Salmi, around 160 kilometers away from the capital Kuwait City, on August 12, 2021.

Kuwait faces tall task of removing 'world's biggest tire graveyard'

Millions of dumped tires pose environmental, health risks

KUWAIT: Kuwait still faces major challenges in its efforts to remove its huge used tire landfill, described as 'the world's largest tire graveyard', amid environmental and health hazards that scientists warn are created by their prolonged presence. Located in the Arhiya area, five kilometers (over three miles) south of the city of Jahra, the graveyard contained 50 million tires, according to previous statements by Kuwaiti activist Abdullah Al-Bunyan. The dumped tires, still to be disposed of, have been accumulated there over the past two decades.

Last April, a huge fire at a tire landfill on Salmi Road was brought under control as firefighters worked hard to isolate the fire from the rest of the tires and confined it to an area of 200 square meters. The Arhiya tire crisis was first recorded in April 2012 when a large fire broke out in the tire landfills, attracting the world's attention to the tire graveyard. The April 2012 tire fire was followed by another fire in November 2019 that took a long time to put out. In October 2020, another tire fire caused huge material loss.

Government acts

The Kuwaiti government is taking various



measures to curb the hazardous impacts of these dumped tires. Last March, the General Administration of Customs approved a request for a company to export five million used tires at the

Arhiya site within nine months. It also initiated the establishment of five factories to cut, recycle and export these tires.

Abdul Karim Taqi, Director-General of the Kuwait Public Authority for Industry, had announced previously that 48 million out of 57 million tires were cut in Arhiya. The government is also shifting the remaining tires to the new site in Salmi, designated for collecting damaged and used tires.

"An area of two million square meters has been allocated for the establishment of tire recycling plants in Salmi," Hassan Kamal, a Kuwaiti Municipal Council member, told Anadolu Agency. "The designated site will include about 52 plants to recycle tires, paper, and plastic."

However, Hammoud Al-Anzi, head of the Jahra Committee in the Municipal Council, told Anadolu Agency that the efforts made so far do not match "the challenge of the huge number of tires." He called on the government to involve community volunteers to dispose of the tires, and invite major transport companies and heavy equipment companies to contribute within the framework of social responsibility to accelerate the pace of tires' disposal.

