

## Libya abruptly closes its borders with four countries

Monday 17 December 2012

December 16, 2012 (KHARTOUM) - The Libyan parliament on Sunday voted to seal the country's borders with four countries citing concerns over security, according to a report by the state news agency (LANA).

The closure is "temporary" and will impact Sudan, Niger, Chad and Algeria says the report. The decision also declared the provinces of Ghadames, Ghat, Obari, Al-Shati, Sebha, Murzuq and Kufra as closed military regions subject to "extraordinary measures".

The parliament also ordered the defense minister to appoint a military governor to the southern region with executive powers that enables him to control the borders, arrest wanted individuals and prevent infiltrators.

A military official, who wished to remain anonymous because he was not authorized to speak to reporters, told Associated Press that the government's main concern is not the influx of people, but the illegal flow of weapons.

The decision comes a few days after Libya Prime Minister Ali Zeidan toured the region in a trip that took him to Niger, Mali, Chad and Sudan for talks that focused on border security. He called for further discussions on the issue in the framework of a regional summit.

Following the fall of Gaddafi's regime, the Libyan government hosted last March a border security conference that brought together ministers and military officials from Algeria, Chad, Egypt, Mali, Mauritania, Morocco, Niger, Sudan and Tunisia.

The scattering of arms and fighters across the region after the Libyan conflict has created security problems, especially in Mali, where a Tuareg rebellion led to a military coup and an ensuing power vacuum that has enabled Islamist groups to seize control of the north of the country.

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