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Subject: Fw: UPDATE 1-Libyan army sets ultimatum to clear Benghazi

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Subject: UPDATE 1-Libyan army sets ultimatum to clear Benghazi

TRIPOLI (Reuters) - The Libyan army issued an ultimatum on Wednesday to residents of the opposition capital Benghazi, warning them to leave rebel-held locations and weapons storage areas by 2200 GMT, Libyan television reported.

A text on the screen of Al-Libya television addressed inhabitants of the eastern city, saying the army was coming "to support you and to cleanse your city from armed gangs.

"It urges you to keep out by midnight of areas where the armed men and weapon storage areas are located."

Libyan television broadcast reports on Tuesday that supporters of Muammar Gaddafi had rallied in the city, which foreign journalists there could not confirm. It was not clear whether this warning would be followed by any action.

Gaddafi said on Lebanon's LBC TV he did not expect a battle in Benghazi, seat of the insurgents' provisional national council, and that Libyan people have been helping get rid of "al Qaeda" elements there.

In New York, anti-Gaddafi Libyan diplomat, Ibrahim Dabbashi, told reporters that the international community had 10 hours to act against Gaddafi's troops.

"We think that ... in the coming hours, we will see a real genocide in Ajdabiyah if the international community does not move quickly and prevent him from attacking it with a large force," he said.

Libyan rebels fought back against Gaddafi's troops around the eastern town of Ajdabiyah on Wednesday, hampering their push towards Benghazi. Government forces captured Ajdabiyah, 90 miles (150 km) south of Benghazi on the Gulf of Sirte, on Tuesday.

(Reporting by Ali Abdelati and Souhail Karam; Editing by Louise Ireland)

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