

Saudi Arabia opens land border with Qatar, air and sea to come

Kuwait's foreign minister has made the announcement that Saudi Arabia has reopened its land border with Qatar and is set to reopen its airspace and sea border.

This announcement, made on Monday January 4, could herald the resolution of a political dispute that led to a boycott on Qatar by Saudi Arabia and its allies. This diplomatic, trade and travel boycott began in June 2017, amid accusations that Qatar had ties to Iran deemed "too close" and that the country was supporting terrorism. Qatar has denied these allegations.

While the Abu Samra land border between Saudi Arabia and Qatar was effectively open, as of Tuesday morning it remained quiet, in great part because Qatar is still not allowing non-resident visitors due to COVID-19 restrictions, and also because the border-crossing rules are still not clear.

Leaders in the region and around the world lauded this step. Nayef Mubarak Al-Hajraf, Gulf Cooperation Council Secretary General, stated: "The step, which comes ahead of the 41st GCC summit in Saudi Arabia on Tuesday, reflects the great interest and sincere efforts being made to ensure the success of the summit, which is held in light of extraordinary circumstances."

Saudi Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman said the GCC summit will be "inclusive," leading the states towards "reunification and solidarity in facing the challenges of our region."