

# *Syrian army captures key town in Eastern Ghouta*

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Damascus, March 19 (RHC) -- The Syrian army on Sunday captured the town of Saqba in the capital Damascus' Eastern Ghouta countryside and civilians started returning immediately to their homes.

The Syrian soldiers were fanning out in the area and the civilians who remained in the area welcomed the soldiers.

Meanwhile, civilians who had evacuated Saqba hours ahead of its liberation, immediately started returning to their homes in that area before they could even reach shelters outside Eastern Ghouta.

According to a field commander with the Syrian army, many of the rebels in Saqba had surrendered, while others fled ahead of the Syrian fighters' arrival, Xinhua news agency reported.

Saqba has sustained damage during the battles, with many buildings either largely or partially destroyed.

Earlier in the day, Syrian President Bashar al-Assad visited a frontline area in Eastern Ghouta area, meeting with soldiers and civilians as well, the Syrian presidency media office said.

The media office of the Syrian army published two photos, in which Assad appeared surrounded by soldiers with a caption reading "on the frontline in Eastern Ghouta, President Assad is with the heroes of

the Syrian army."

Eastern Ghouta, a 105-square-km agricultural region consisting of several towns and farmlands, poses the last threat to the capital due to its proximity to government-controlled neighborhoods east of Damascus and ongoing mortar attacks that target residential areas in the capital.

Four major rebel groups are currently positioned inside Eastern Ghouta, namely the Islam Army, Failaq al-Rahman, Ahrar al-Sham, and the Levant Liberation Committee, known as the al-Qaida-linked Nusra Front.

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