
Rebels, families start evacuating Syria's Daraya

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Daraya - Syrian rebels and their families began evacuating the town of Daraya outside the capital Damascus on Friday, under a deal agreed with the government after a four-year army siege.

The fighters and their families left the devastated town on buses accompanied by ambulances and Red Crescent vehicles, an AFP reporter at the scene said.

The first bus to emerge from the town carried mostly children, elderly people and women.

Additional buses carried rebels, some carrying individual weapons, as allowed under the terms of the deal to evacuate the town.

As the buses carrying rebels came out, government troops waved their weapons in the air in celebration and taunted the evacuating fighters by chanting pro-government slogans.

A military source told AFP that around 300 rebels and their families would also be evacuated from Daraya on Friday.

The evacuation, which is part of a deal between the government and opposition fighters in Daraya announced on Thursday, is expected to run until Saturday.

Rebels are being allowed to leave with their personal weapons and have been promised safe transit to opposition-held Idlib city.

Civilians are expected to be transferred to government-run reception centres for processing and resettlement.

An estimated 8 000 people have remained in Daraya despite a siege that began in late 2012 and constant

government bombardment.
