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Russia Says Nearly 80,000 Civilians Have Been Evacuated From Eastern Ghouta Through Humanitarian Corridors

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Reuters

Almost 80,000 civilians have left the besieged Syrian district of Eastern Ghouta over the past two weeks as Russian-backed pro-government forces close in toward retaking the rebel-held enclave near the Syrian capital of Damascus, the Russian military has said.

The Russian military announced the evacuation of civilians from Eastern Ghouta through humanitarian corridors on Feb. 28, amid accusations of indiscriminate shelling leading to the deaths of hundreds of civilians in the assault on Ghouta. The UN estimates that up to 400,000 people remain trapped in the area, which has been one of the last strongholds for anti-government rebels in Syria's nearly eight-year war that has claimed hundreds of thousands of lives.

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The total number of civilians, mostly children, who have been evacuated from Eastern Ghouta since the start of the humanitarian operation has risen to 79,702, Russian defence ministry said on Tuesday.

It said in a statement posted on its website that on Monday, 6,046 civilians left the district via humanitarian corridors.

Pro-Damascus forces including the Syrian army have seized control of an estimated 70 percent of eastern Ghouta, the Syrian military was cited as saying in a statement by Interfax on Friday.

Russia announced the start of daily ceasefires late last month to allow for civilians to evacuate from the area following a UN Security Council resolution demanding a month-long truce in Syria to allow humanitarian access to besieged areas and areas under deadly bombardment.

On Monday, Russia blocked a meeting of the United Nations Security Council to discuss the human rights situation in Syria.

Reuters contributed reporting to this article.

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