

《Evacuation of Syrian rebels from Damascus delayed》

DAMASCUS -- A plan to evacuate Syrian rebels from southern Damascus ' districts, which was scheduled to take place Saturday, has been frozen due to disagreements among the insurgents about their coming destination, pan-Arab al-Mayadeen TV reported.

The rebels divided on whether to go to areas under their control in the northern province of Aleppo or to the de facto capital of the Islamic State (IS) militants in Raqqa in northern Syria, the TV said.

A source told Xinhua on Thursday that as many as 5,000 armed militants and their families are planned to be evacuated from the al-Hajar al-Aswad and al-Qadam districts south of capital Damascus this Saturday.

Hardline radicals from the IS and the al-Qaida-linked Nusra Front, who rejected to reconcile with the government, were supposed to be evacuated to rebel-held areas in northern Syria, namely to the IS de facto capital of al-Raqqa and the town of Mare' in the countryside of the northern province of Aleppo, according to the source who requested anonymity.

The rebels, who will stay in the districts, will have to hand over their weapons and turn themselves in to Syrian authorities to have their criminal records cleared under the deal.

As a goodwill sign, the rebels started removing sand barriers and opened roads between al-Hajar al-Aswad and al-Qadam, while the government busses were allowed to reach those areas as part of preparations to evacuate the hardline jihadists, the source said.

The new deal is under the UN mediation, said the source, adding that after the implementation of the evacuation, a truce with undeclared conditions will be implemented next Monday in the rebel-held town of Zabadani, northwest of the capital Damascus and the two besieged Shiite towns of Kafraya and Foa in the countryside of the northwestern province of Idlib.

Earlier this month, nearly 300 rebels evacuated the district of al-Waer, the last rebel-held district west of the central city of Homs under a similar deal mediated by the UN.

Muhammad al-Omari, an official at the Syrian Ministry of Reconciliation, said Thursday that 2016 will witness an acceleration in the national reconciliation in Syria.

Almost a quarter of a million people, including nearly 12,000 children, have been killed in Syria's conflict since it broke out in March 2011.