

Last rebels quit south Damascus enclave - Syrian state media

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Syrian insurgents left an enclave in south Damascus on Thursday, state media said, the last in a string of rebel towns that have surrendered around the capital in recent weeks.

A pocket near Homs city remains the only besieged enclave in rebel hands across the country, though insurgent factions still hold tracts of the northwest and southwest along Syria's international borders.

Fierce offensives and evacuation deals have helped President Bashar al-Assad's military wrestle back control of much of Syria, with support from Russia and Iran.

State television said 15 buses shuttled fighters out of Beit Sahm, Babila, and Yalda south of the capital.

"The towns have become empty of terrorist presence," a state TV correspondent said from the outskirts of Beit Sahm.

Hundreds of people have left since last week. Under the deal, the buses take fighters and civilians who refuse the return of state rule to insurgent territory in the north near the Turkish border.

Government forces pounded jihadists in a small adjacent zone also south of Damascus, state news agency SANA said. Islamic State militants have been holed up there after weeks of intense bombardment on the Hajar al-Aswad district and Yarmouk Palestinian refugee camp.