

RELEASE IN PART  
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**From:** H <hrod17@clintonemail.com>  
**Sent:** Thursday, July 12, 2012 11:50 AM  
**To:** 'monica.hanley'  
**Subject:** Fw: AP -- Group of Christians evacuated from besieged Syrian city after deal between army, rebels

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Pls print for me.

**From:** Sullivan, Jacob J [mailto:SullivanJJ@state.gov]  
**Sent:** Wednesday, July 11, 2012 10:29 PM  
**To:** H  
**Subject:** Fw: AP -- Group of Christians evacuated from besieged Syrian city after deal between army, rebels

Interesting.

**From:** Nuland, Victoria J  
**Sent:** Wednesday, July 11, 2012 09:21 PM  
**To:** Sullivan, Jacob J; Abedin, Huma  
**Subject:** Fw: AP -- Group of Christians evacuated from besieged Syrian city after deal between army, rebels

**From:** PA Clips [mailto:paclips@state.gov]  
**Sent:** Wednesday, July 11, 2012 01:09 PM  
**To:** PA-Monitoring-Group-DL  
**Subject:** AP -- Group of Christians evacuated from besieged Syrian city after deal between army, rebels

Group of Christians evacuated from besieged Syrian city after deal between army, rebels

By Associated Press, Published: July 10 | Updated: Wednesday, July 11, 12:23 PM

DAMASCUS, Syria — A group of Christians trapped in the besieged, bombed-out Syrian city of Homs has been evacuated after a deal between the army and rebels, a priest involved in the evacuation efforts said Wednesday.

Maximos al-Jamal, a Greek Orthodox priest who has been following the plight of Syrian Christians in Homs, said 63 people were taken out to safety over the past 24 hours.

Christians, who make up about 10 percent of Syria's population, say they are particularly vulnerable to the violence sweeping the country of 22 million people. They are fearful that Syria will become another Iraq, with Christians caught in the crossfire between rival Muslim groups.

Homs, Syria's third largest city, has a substantial Christian population and has been one of the hardest-hit regions since the uprising against President Bashar Assad's regime began in March 2011. Rebels control several neighborhoods, which has sparked several rounds of intense attacks by government troops over the past months.

The rebels have controlled the Christian neighborhoods of Hamidiyeh and Bustan Diwan since early February. Sporadic clashes with government troops have already forced tens of thousands of Christians to flee the neighborhoods to a relatively safe area known as the Valley of the Christians, just outside Homs. Those that stayed faced increasing danger.

Al-Jamal says about 100 of the civilians who remained trapped in the two besieged Homs neighborhoods are Christians, down from thousands who lived in the area before the uprising began.

He has said he feared the rebels wanted to keep the Christians in the city as a bargaining chip while the army's bombardment and ground attacks intensified.

"Gunmen have told the besieged people that if you go out of these areas, we will die," al-Jamal told The Associated Press Wednesday.

But finally, he said a deal was struck between the army and armed gunmen in those areas and 24 civilians were evacuated on Tuesday and 39 on Wednesday, most of them Christians. Mediation was ongoing to get the remaining civilians out, he added.

Syrian Christians have largely stuck by Assad, fearing the strength of Islamist hard-liners in the uprising against his rule.

"I stayed inside Hamidiyeh to protect the churches from looting. I saved 14 icons from the St. George church which has been destroyed," said Jihad Akhras, who was among those who were evacuated Wednesday.

He said the situation inside Hamidiyeh and Bistan al-Diwan was "tragic" with barely enough food for those who remain trapped there.

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