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*Dear colleague, this is the special investigative correspondent, Sophie Mangal. I submit here my new article in English and kindly request that you look into the possibility of publishing it on your website.*

## **What is Actually Happening in Eastern Ghouta?**



Currently, the situation around Eastern Ghouta can only be described as drastic. Jaysh Al-Islam along with Faylaq al Rahman militants are blocking civilian evacuations via humanitarian corridors, preventing the delivery of humanitarian aid, and evacuating the wounded.

The humanitarian pause came into effect at 9 a.m. on Thursday upon the initiative of the Syrian Government and Russia. In the area of Vafidin, the government forces have already

created block posts, and the medical staff is ready to provide the necessary medical care for the sick and injured. Moreover, special buses will evacuate civilians to safe areas. Despite the United Nations Security Council Resolution 2401, demanding an immediate end to the fighting and the establishment of a humanitarian truce lasting at least 30 days, the militants of Eastern Ghouta violated ceasefire and have shelled civilians who tried to flee the area from mortars. And in that way, radicals undermine the efforts of the Syrian authorities and hinder the evacuation of the population. At the same time, the Syrian army units fully respect the truce and do not respond to provocations. A number of Western media have already blamed the Syrian government for ceasefire violations, as well as for potential use of chemical weapons against innocent civilians. According to the Syrian political observer Abdullah al-Ahmed, such kinds of reports are exclusively aimed at the discretization of the legitimate government and the Syrian government forces.

Abdel Bari Atwan, a Middle East expert, holds the similar position. He believes that some Western media in the near future will try to deflect everyone's attention from the initiatives of Bashar Assad in the form of humanitarian corridors and civilian evacuation from the besieged Eastern Ghouta. In addition, the media could once again say that the Syrian Army used chemical weapons in order to justify attacks. Through these actions, the West tries to create a false perception of what's happening in Eastern Ghouta, as it did during the liberation of Aleppo in 2016. The Syrian army doesn't fight against Syrians. Only with the support of Russia, all the necessary conditions for the improvement of the humanitarian situation, and rescuing civilians, who are forcibly retained by extremists.