

Thursday, 6 June 2013

Syria army takes control of village near Qusayr



Forces loyal to President Bashar al-Assad reclaimed control of the central village of Dabaa on Thursday, Syrian state television said, a day after the army and Lebanon's Hezbollah captured a rebel bastion.

"Our heroic armed forces have secured and stabilized the town of Dabaa, north of Qusayr," the broadcaster said.

According to the Syrian Observatory for Human Rights, "fierce clashes" are still ongoing in parts of Dabaa.

The village has seen frequent hit-and-run operations by both regime and rebel forces.

It lies north of Qusayr, which fell to army and Lebanon's Shiite Hezbollah forces Wednesday, nearly three weeks after the launch of a vast assault on the town.

Thousands of civilians and rebels –including wounded people –fled Qusayr as the town fell out of insurgent control, most of them to the village of Eastern Bweida.

Eastern Bweida lies some seven kilometers (four miles) northeast of Dabaa.

"I am very concerned about what will happen to the people who were evacuated to Eastern Bweida," said Observatory director Rami Abdel Rahman, who had earlier called on the International Committee of the Red Cross to evacuate the wounded.

Backed by its Lebanese ally Hezbollah, the Syrian army is pushing to wrest the last rebel bastions in central Syria from rebel hands.

Qusayr is strategic because it lies on the route linking Damascus to the coastline, which the regime is trying to secure ahead of any possible negotiations with the rebels.