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The 'liberated' Syrian city of Raqqa avoids chaos, gains visitors



After declaring that the northern city of Raqqa was “liberated” and taken from the Syrian regime’s control, opposition fighters said they have been successful in keeping chaos at bay, by deploying heavily in the city, while looking to bring in new visitors.

“The opposition has succeeded in avoiding any chaos and protected all government institutions and private properties, but it still needs to succeed in establishing a civilian authority,” reported Al Arabiya’s correspondent, currently in the city.

The fighters have control over all the roads leading into Raqqa, which is located 160 kilometers from the city of Aleppo that still sees raging battles between rebels and the Syrian regime forces.

Shifting power from military fighters to civilians is an ongoing process, according to Mohamad Nabil Fawaz, the head of the local council in Raqqa.

“This is subject to consultations with all the military groups that played a role in liberating the city, and we are working on normalizing the security situation as well as the services,” Fawaz said.

Visitors looking to enter Raqqa city are strip searched, an attempt the opposition forces say is to foil any efforts by the embattled Syrian President Bashar Al-Assad’s to infiltrate and regain control of the city.

In March, Syrian opposition forces brought down the statue of the late President, Hafez al-Assad.

“There is a far more sense of freedom in the city after the downing of Assad statute,” Al Arabiya’s, Joumaa Accache, said.

While some areas are still deserted, in certain residential areas and markets, citizens started to rebuild

The opposition estimates that more than half of Raqqa residents and those who migrated to it before it was seized have fled, amounting to more than a million.

Clashes between opposition fighters and the regime forces, however, continue to reoccur as Assad regime forces are still present in three military locations in Raqqa governorate.

Raqqa plays an important economic role in Syria.

The city together with other northern governorates, al-Hasaka and Deir El-Zour, are the main agricultural areas in Syria, in addition to 70 percent of Syria's oil.