

## **Aleppo ceasefire back on track, evacuations to begin on Thursday**

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**Damascus:** A new ceasefire deal has been reached and civilians and the wounded in east Aleppo were expected to begin evacuation from the city on Thursday morning, rebel officials said late on Wednesday.

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Under the terms of the deal, confirmed by two rebel officials, a ceasefire was expected to go into effect half an hour before midnight Aleppo time, the Guardian reported.

A spokesperson for Nouredine al-Zinki, one of the armed opposition groups in Aleppo, said the deal would also allow the evacuation of wounded in Fua and Kefraya, two Shia villages in Idlib province that are besieged by rebels.

The inclusion of Fua and Kefraya was a concession to Iran, which had opposed the previous ceasefire deal negotiated by Turkish intelligence and the Russian military.

An official from Ahrar al Sham, another key rebel group, denied however that Fua and Kefraya were part of the deal, which was reached after Turkish mediation.

Sources in East Aleppo said that shelling in the city stopped at midnight local time.

The new ceasefire agreement came a day after a previous evacuation deal appeared to unravel in the face of Iranian opposition.

Tens of thousands of civilians remained trapped without food, water or medicine under a hail of artillery and airstrikes on Wednesday after Iranian-backed militia who had spearheaded the ground assault on eastern Aleppo defied a ceasefire agreement brokered by Russia and Turkey to allow residents and opposition fighters under siege to leave the city.

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