**Activists, Monitor Say Syrian Rebels Lock People In Cages As Human Shields**

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http://www.reuters.com/article/2015/11/01/us-mideast-crisis-syria-ghouta-idUSKCN0SQ2C620151101

A monitoring group and activists said on Sunday that Syrian rebels had locked people in cages and driven them to areas near Damascus to use as human shields against heavy government air raids.

A video posted online by the Shaam News Network, an opposition media outlet, showed men and women in iron cages being driven on the back of pickup trucks through what it said was the area of Eastern Ghouta, northeast of the capital.

The Britain-based Syrian Observatory for Human Rights said it had information from Eastern Ghouta residents that the people being used as human shields were military officers and their families who had been captured by rebels in the area.

Reuters was unable to verify the video footage.

Syrian government missiles hit a crowded marketplace in the town of Douma in Eastern Ghouta on Friday, killing at least 70 people, according to the medical aid group Medecins Sans Frontieres (MSF).

Government warplanes have been pounding the area and a strike hit a hospital this week, MSF said.

The air raids continue as fighting intensifies in the four-year civil war between Syrian forces loyal to the government backed by Russian air cover on one side, and an array of insurgents including Islamist groups on the other.