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With Refugee Camp, ISIS Just Three Miles From Assad's Palace

By Jason Ditz

April 8, 2015



A week of offensives have left ISIS in control of the Yarmouk Refugee Camp, a massive Palestinian refugee camp in metro Damascus. This is adding to the humanitarian woes for the camp's residents since the civil war began, at least for the estimated 15,000 of the original 200,000 residents who remain.

It's perhaps an even bigger problem for the Syrian government, however, as having fended off the PLO and Hamas, ISIS now has control over a camp just three miles from the presidential palace in central Damascus.

The military had all but given up on the camp before, leaving it switching among various pro- and anti-rebel Palestinian factions. The ISIS takeover is obliging them to rethink their position, however, and to try to muster some air power against the camp.

Unfortunately so far that means barrel bombs, the makeshift weapons that Syria has increasingly relied on as the war drags on and which are known for being wildly inaccurate and endangering civilians.

The bombings are sure to fuel international criticism of the Syrian government's tactics, but with ISIS so close to their seat of power, they're almost certain to continue.