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My native Mariupol is under russian occupation

My name is Andriy Kozhushyna. I am from Mariupol. I will tell you my story of being under russian occupation in my native city.

In 2021, I entered the Pryazovskyi State Technical University in the specialty “Thermal power engineering”, joined the University’s Trade Union Organization, and became a member of the student body. I am a fourth-year student at the Educational and Scientific Institute of Modern Technologies, in the specialty “Thermal power engineering”. I am also a second-year student of the Social and Humanities Faculty, in the specialty “Social work”.

I will share with you some information and photos of my native beautiful Mariupol before and during the russian-Ukrainian war 2014 – 2024.

Mariupol (Greek: Μαρτίπολι – City of Mary) is a city in Ukraine in the south of Donetsk Oblast on the shores of the Sea of Azov at the mouth of the Kalmius River.



Mariupol regional drama theatre. May 2, 2021. Author: Oleksandr Malyon.

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Donetsk_Academic_Regional_Drama_Theater#/media/File:Донецький_академічний_Обласний_драматичний_театр.jpg (Revised: 10.07.2024)



Pryazovskiy State Technical University in 2021. May 2, 2021. Author: Oleksandr Malyon.
https://en.m.wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Вул._Італійська_%28Анамова%29._115.jpg (Revised: 10.07.2024)

Mariupol was one of the most important centers of Ukrainian metallurgy (two large metallurgical plants operated in the city – Ilyich Mariupol Metallurgical Plant and “Azovstal”), and a major seaport, one of the ten largest cities in Ukraine, and was the most important industrial and large economic center of the country.

It was an area of compact residence of Greeks from the Azov region, a climatic and mud resort. The population of Mariupol as of January 1, 2022, was 425,681 people.

In 2012, Mariupol was recognized by the government of Ukraine as one of the most comfortable cities in Ukraine to live in.

During the Russian invasion of Ukraine, the city was almost destroyed by the Russian troops. It has been under occupation since May 20, 2022, after the Ukrainian defenders were forced to surrender after the fighting at “Azovstal”.

As of June 7, 2022, the city had approximately 100,000 residents. According to Ukrainian legislation, this is a temporarily occupied territory.

On March 6, 2022, Mariupol was awarded the honorary title “Hero City of Ukraine” by the Decree of the President of Ukraine to commemorate the feat, mass heroism, and resilience of citizens, shown in the defense of their cities during the repulsion of the armed aggression of the Russian Federation against Ukraine.

The battle for Mariupol began on February 24, 2022 as a result of a full-scale russian invasion of Ukraine and lasted until May 20, 2023 (86 days).

Because of the russian invasion, the armed forces of the russian federation committed mass murders in Mariupol and carried out several airstrikes and bombings, including an airstrike on a hospital, an airstrike on the Mariupol regional drama theater, a bombing of an art school, etc.

For three months, russian troops razed Mariupol to the ground.

Defense of “Azovstal”, the siege of “Azovstal” (battle for “Azovstal”, the storming of “Azovstal”) – combat operations from March 18 to May 20, 2022, on the territory of the Mariupol metallurgical plant “Azovstal” and its surroundings, took place as part of the battle for Mariupol during russian invasion of Ukraine.



Airstrikes continue on Mariupol, the enemy carries out assaults in the area of the seaport and the “Azovstal” plant. April 20, 2022. Mariupol Azovstal Plant / Open source photo.

https://en.defence-ua.com/news/day_56th_of_war_between_ukraine_and_russian_federation_live_updates-2609.html

(Revised: 10.07.2024)

The Armed Forces of Ukraine fought the battle on one side, and the occupying armed forces of the russian federation on the other side.

The peculiarity of “Azovstal” is that the huge metallurgical plant has a complex system of deep underground shelters and communications. This structure allowed the Ukrainian military to turn the enterprise into a fort.

The Ukrainian metallurgical plant “Azovstal” became the center of resistance of the Ukrainian army in response to Russian aggression against Ukraine.

From the very beginning of the fighting for Mariupol, a large number of people found shelter at the plant. As of April 20, 2022, the number of military personnel was approximately three thousand people, and civilians were at least two hundred.

Since February 24, 2022, Mariupol residents have been living in fear. The crimes committed by the so-called DPR and the Russian Federation have no justification whatsoever.

Until March 2, 2022, the city authorities of Mariupol tried to maintain peaceful life in Mariupol, but during martial law and constant shelling, it was very difficult.



Inside the metallurgical plant “Azovstal” after the end of the defense of “Azovstal”. May, 2022.

By May, after months of battle, the Azovstal Iron and Steel Works was a charred skeleton. *Credit...Pavel Klimov/Reuters*
<https://www.nytimes.com/2022/07/24/world/europe/ukraine-war-mariupol-azovstal.html> (Revised: 10.07.2024)

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Due to the blockade, since March 2, 2022, there was no electricity, water, gas, heating, and mobile communication in Mariupol. Due to constant shelling, it was impossible to deliver water, food, medicines, and children's goods to the city.



Mariupol after shelling of russian troops. March 31, 2022. Mariupol has been the scene of some of the war's most intense fighting [Alexander Ermochenko/Reuters]

<https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2022/3/31/timeline-russias-siege-of-ukraines-port-city-of-mariupol> (Revised: 10.07.2024)



Ruined Mariupol. Destroyed by russian troops. May 2022. Osnat Lubrani, the top United Nations representative in Ukraine, described the shock of arriving in Mariupol. "The word 'Dresden' came to my mind," she said. Credit...Pavel Klimov/Reuters

<https://www.nytimes.com/2022/07/24/world/europe/ukraine-war-mariupol-azovstal.html> (Revised: 10.07.2024)



Mariupol's main train station photographed in 2013. Mykola Swarnyk (Creative Commons).
<https://www.rferl.org/a/mariupol-then-now-photos-ukraine-war/31832359.html> (Revised: 10.07.2024)



Mariupol railway station. Destroyed by russian troops. April 2022. Mariupol's railway station in April 2022. The station is situated just one kilometer from the Azovstal factory, where Ukrainian fighters are making their last stand against pro-Russian forces in the city. [Alexander Ermochenko/Reuters].
<https://www.rferl.org/a/mariupol-then-now-photos-ukraine-war/31832359.html> (Revised: 10.07.2024)



Pro-Ukrainian meeting in Mariupol on Feb. 22, 2022. Source: facebook/Evgeny Sosnovsky
https://mipl.org.ua/wp-content/uploads/2023/03/photo_2022-12-23_14-46-03-1024x682-1.jpg (Revised: 10.07.2024)

As of March 21, 2022, more than 100,000 civilians remained in the city from 425,681 people before the beginning of the Russian-Ukrainian war 2014 – 2024. Blockaders were forced to collect rainwater for drinking, food was cooked on street fires, and the dead were buried right in the yards in mass graves.

On March 2, 2022, Russian artillery shelled the densely populated district of Mariupol for 15 hours. One district on the left bank of Mariupol was almost destroyed.

Satellite photos of Mariupol taken on the morning of March 9, 2022, showed significant damage to high-rise buildings, residential buildings, grocery stores, and other civilian infrastructure. According to estimates, up to 90% of Mariupol's infrastructure was significantly damaged because of the shelling. Almost 30% cannot be repaired.

Since March 2, 2022, people have survived in damp and cold basements.

Children, in the 21st century in the center of Europe, were forced to hide in basements. It is just a nightmare!

More than 600 people died in the Mariupol regional drama theater after an airstrike on the assembly hall by Russian terrorists on March 16, 2022.



Mariupol regional drama theater was largely destroyed by Russian military airstrikes on March 16, 2022, killing about 600 people. Donetsk regional military administration:

<https://www.facebook.com/photo/?fbid=506832367665989&set=a.464541731895053> (Revised: 10.07.2024)



Mariupol regional drama theater. Destroyed. March 16, 2022.

https://ui.org.ua/wp-content/uploads/2022/06/04870000-0aff-0242-5e4f-08da33f7f844_cx7_cy12_cw90_w1597_n_r1_st_s.jpg
(Revised: 10.07.2024)

The russian occupiers destroyed a house with a clock in the center of the city.

They bombed the railway station. The “Metalurg” DC, the “Iskra” DC, and the “Neptun” swimming pool came under fire. The “Victory” cinema burned to the ground.

During the blockade, the russian terrorists destroyed the largest shopping center “PortSity”, as well as the General Post Office and many other buildings that are so dear to the residents of Mariupol.

The building of the Arkhip Kuindzhi Art Museum was destroyed because of a direct hit by a russian aerial bomb on March 21, 2022, during the Siege of Mariupol. There were no original works by Arkhip Kuindzhi in the museum at the time, but works by other artists were. The fate of paintings by Ivan Aivazovskyi, Mykola Hlushchenko, Tetyana Yablonska, Mykhailo Deregus, Andriy Kotska, Mykola Bendryk, and Leonid Gadiy is still unknown.

Since there was no electricity and gas, people cooked food on fire. For this, they had to search for firewood under fire. The same can be said about water. The wells in some areas were far away, and many people went to them for water under fire. If a person could not reach the well, he/she collected and drank rainwater. That is why you could see horrors on the streets: dead people were lying on the roads with bottles of water and firewood.

The winter of 2022 was frosty for Mariupol residents, as sub-zero temperatures lasted until the end of April. We believe that about 100,000 people died. Most of them were buried in the “Brother Grave” at the Old Crimean cemetery.

Many more people were under the rubble, which the occupiers were in no hurry to dismantle. If they dismantled the ruins, the bodies of dead civilians were taken to the second micro-district of Azovmash, where their remains, together with garbage, were processed into concrete, which was then used to lay or renew damaged sections of roads. Many children suffered morally. It was difficult for them to see what was happening to the city and people.

Mariupol is now a city of anarchy and chaos, where they do not pay for work, where they disperse the disaffected, where they build housing for “their own russians”, and where no one thinks about Mariupol residents.

About 50% of educational institutions from preschool to higher education are working. The people who work there are collaborators. They teach Ukrainian children according to the russian curriculum. Class teachers and group curators conduct class hours on patriotic topics of russia.

Garbage in Mariupol is not taken out anywhere. The occupiers destroyed almost all-public transport.

Almost all the historical and cultural buildings, which were the value of Mariupol, were destroyed by the russian invaders.

After the beginning of the full-scale invasion of russian aggressors, the Pryazovskyi State Technical University left for the Dnipro, where it resumed its work. I stayed in Mariupol and even during the occupation continued my studies for a whole year, actively demonstrating my pro-Ukrainian position.

The building of my Pryazovskyi State Technical University, where peaceful residents of Mariupol were hiding, was also shelled.



Russian shelling destroyed the fifth building of the Pryazovsky State Technical University. March 10, 2022.

Inna Lapina: https://gdb.rferl.org/02330000-0aff-0242-adbc-08da02a58941_w1597_n_st.jpeg (Revised: 10.07.2024)

The first historical building of the university, the second, the third, the new fifth building, the sixth, and the eleventh were mutilated. Unfortunately, our sports complex also came under fire. Almost all the colleges that were structural units of the Pryazovskyi State Technical University survived. But the Mariupol Polytechnic College was destroyed along with a dormitory, a sports complex, laboratories, and an assembly hall.

Thus, the full-scale invasion of the Russian army, which Mariupol felt first and held on to the last, brought severe suffering and death of tens of thousands of peaceful residents of Mariupol, the destruction of the city's infrastructure by 90%, other extremely vital problems that are very noticeable now in the occupation.

Now I am in Dnipro. I study at the Pryazovskyi State Technical University and miss my native Mariupol.

Mariupol is Ukraine! Everything will be Ukraine!
Glory to Ukraine and the Armed Forces of Ukraine!