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The War affected everyone

My name is Polina Derkach. I will share with you my story. I study history. I am a first-year master's student at the Faculty of Social and Humanities at Grinchenko University. I am from Novomoskovsk, in the Dnipropetrovsk region, Ukraine. I am 22 years old.

I was only 12 years old in 2014 when the russian occupants invaded the East of Ukraine. When the full-scale russian invasion – the full-scale war of Ukraine began, I was 19 years old. Thus, for 10 years of my life, almost half of my life, I have been living in war. I know very well that the war has affected everyone, and I feel that I am changing too.

For example: I have not felt safe for a long time, even when I go abroad, I hear the sounds of sirens and at night I wake up from the sounds of sirens, thinking that it is rockets flying. Almost all my friends and relatives feel or go through the same thing, so we talk about it, we talk openly, and we know that we hear each other because we are going through it together. Even those who live abroad suffer from the war because their native home is in danger. Many of my friends started going to psychologists.

I am studying in Kyiv, but since the end of the first year when COVID-19 started and until now, we have been studying mainly online. Every time we meet with our teachers, we ask if everyone is fine and how the night with air alarms was. Probably, this is not a relevant question abroad, but it is widespread in Ukraine.

Some of my classmates and friends from Grinchenko University are now serving in the Armed Forces of Ukraine, protecting our Motherland Ukraine, us, and me. They are our dearest defenders. I always wait for news from them, just to know that they are alive.

It is quite scary to understand that these are the realities of today when you are not sure of your future or even of tomorrow.

I like to read, it is my hobby. Agree, at least once, when you read the book, you envied the heroes and wanted to live in their universe. Every time I read about wars, I could not believe what people were willing to do instead of living in peace and development. And now I live in war. It was not a book script I would want to live by. But, unfortunately, this is not the first such story with Ukrainians.

Now, when I read books where there is a war or watch movies with such a plot, I perceive it all in a completely different way, because, to my great regret, I do not have to imagine it all, but only to forget it, like a terrible dream.

I live in Dnipropetrovsk region. In this region we have the town of Nikopol, which is on the Ukrainian side, but the other bank of the Dnieper River is already occupied by the russian invaders. It sounds like something extremely scary, and it is.

You can see how beautiful was Nikopol before this war cruel began.



Savior and Transfiguration Church. Nikopol. August 22, 2015. <https://discover.ua/en/locations/spaso-preobrazenskij-sobor>
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Nikopol Independence Square. August 22, 2015. <https://ukrainetrek.com/nikopol-city> (Revised: 10.07.2024)

My aunt and uncle live in Nikopol, and this city is under russian fire every day. Every day, non-stop. Every night is like horror, and every new morning brings hope. My aunt is a nurse so she needs to be there.

I was in Nikopol before the start of the full-scale invasion, it is a small but cozy town. I remember I loved walking in the park and near my aunt's house and walking with my cousin to the center. But now, according to the stories of my relatives, about 800 apartment buildings and more than 5000 private residential buildings were damaged in Nikopol by russian shelling.

The russian occupiers are destroying and wiping out this town, like everything else. They kill people, destroy cities, rewrite history to destroy the truth.

You can see a real photo of the houses where people lived before the rocket attack. These are not military bases, as the russians say, they are ordinary residential buildings with civilians.

And probably the scariest thing is when you hear something flying and you can not do anything but listen.

I live in Novomoskovsk, a small town near the metropolis – Dnipro. However, as in all cities, towns, and villages of Ukraine, we are not safe anywhere. So, here's a photo, a russian rocket did it. I heard that explosion, it was very scary. It was night, the air alarm began, my parents and I began to gather in the basement, and then there was an explosion, a roar, and a fire. One second.



A house in Dnipro after a rocket attack by russian terrorists on January 21, 2023.

<https://www.nytimes.com/2023/01/21/world/europe/dnipro-ukraine-russia-strike-apartment.html> (Revised: 10.07.2024)

Every day we live in danger. No one knows what the new day will bring. None of the Ukrainians knows whether the night will be peaceful. Living in this state every day is exhausting, it is tiring, but we fight because we know that we live on our native land and have the right to life.

Throughout our history, we fought for our existence and always proved that we were worth it. But now we want the world not to forget about us. We want to be understood and supported.

Ukrainians want to have their free independent state and a peaceful sky above their heads, where civilian planes not missiles, will fly.

I have two cousins, one is seven years old, and the other is one year old, and neither of them has yet lived a peaceful life without war. It breaks my heart every time the air alarm goes off, my cousins get scared and I cannot help them except go to the shelter and wait. Wait until we survive.

This is Dnipro. You can see how wonderful this city is, located on the banks of the Dnipro River. One million people live here. More precisely, they lived here before the war.



Dnipro, 2011. <https://top20.ua/dp/blog/yakiy-zaklad-obrati-dlya-vidpochinku-na-berezi-dnipra-70.html> (Revised: 10.07.2024)

You can see what the russian terrorists did to a house full of civilians. This is a tragedy created by non-humans in the 21st century.

In Dnipro today, as a result of russian shelling, almost 700 buildings have been destroyed, and more than 15,000 buildings have been damaged.

Currently, there is no exact information on how many people left Ukraine and how many returned. How many families were forced to leave their homes and relatives? How many fates were broken?

I mentioned my love for books. Yes, I read books where the main characters lived during the war and you know wars always end, good conquers evil and I believe our story will have a good ending.



A hospital in Dnipro after russian shelling on May 26, 2023. <https://edition.cnn.com/2023/05/26/europe/dnipro-medical-facility-attack-russia-ukraine-intl/index.html> (Revised: 10.07.2024)

I talked a little about life in my country during the war. Scary, very scary. I would never want you to go through what we are going through. Think about it. When you wake up in the morning after the shelling call your relatives and friends to make sure that everyone is alive.

Thank you for your attention and time to read. I am very grateful that we are remembered! Sometimes it feels like the world is tired of war. I can understand it.

In Ukraine, we are also tired of bad news. Unfortunately, this is our reality. We cannot close ourselves and listen or read something else. We must only fight and continue to live.

Please do not forget that russia is a terrorist state!