

They managed to escape from hell - MARIUPOL

Sophia, a professional lawyer who is now volunteer in Dnipro, shares stories of people who managed to escape Mariupol

« I was ready to kill a dog to feed my children... »

Mariupol. People got out of hell. Trying their best to stay strong and move on, they came to our center to get food package and disposable tableware. Their expressions were blank. When I offered to help, they would start to cry. One woman was so tired and stressed that she almost passed out and fell to the ground. We sat her down and gave her water to drink. I hugged her.

She told us, *“I had a business. I was just living my life, and then, in a couple of days, I was **surrounded by mutilated bodies... We were cooking food on the bonfire.** Suddenly, a shelling began. It destroyed our shelter. Those who managed to run out of there survived. Those who managed...*

***We buried the dead in the yard.** Russians didn't take bodies of their soldiers, so they were left on the streets, being eaten by stray animals.*



*I was praying all the time for my children to survive... **There was no water and no food.** We found our basement by chance, when we went to search for a shelter in between the bombings. It was damp. We could hear rats squeaking. I held my child close and didn't sleep the entire time” she said.*

She could only get some rest when she lost consciousness out of exhaustion. A shell hit the building they were hiding in, and the entrance to the basement got heaped up by rubble. They didn't cry out for help because if Russian

soldiers heard that, they would simply kill everyone. Solely for the purpose of amusing themselves. They enjoy having power and bringing misery to others.

***“We were so hungry, I started to think about killing our dog and eating it to last a few more days. I was about to do it when I heard “Is there anyone alive here?” in Ukrainian. I thought I was hallucinating, but no. Soldiers dug us out and helped to get out of Mariupol. 14 people got in one car, sitting on top of each other. Sophia, those events made us all believe in God,”** she added.*



They still don't understand they're safe. They hold on to the water bottles in their hands and weep. We couldn't hold back tears, we simply hugged them, pressed them tight to our chests and sobbed.

Those are the broken lives of my people. We would pass out at the sight of the dead in morgues during our internships. What will happen to small children that saw hundreds of mutilated bodies and torn off body parts? How are they supposed to live on? I hate everyone responsible for this.

«It began to rain, that was the first time in days that we drank water »

This morning I met people who managed to escape Mariupol in one of the centers that distribute humanitarian aid. One of them was a fragile woman of around 35 years old. She was disoriented, shivering, her voice trembling.

She decided to leave to save her kids. The car was stopped at every other mile it passed. She saw **piles of dead bodies**. Her eyes were full of fear and pain. She didn't have a home anymore, but at least, her family survived.

It was raining. **At the risk of being shot, she went out to collect water out of the storm drain for her kids.** And this happened in a free country, in the 21st century! Her elderly parents stayed with the children. Her husband went to a spring with other men. **They managed to take on some water, but then they got shot.** Her husband survived only by luck, having managed to run away.



Soon, we'll hear thousands of stories like this. We will never forget them. We will never forgive.

If you ever meet people who escaped zones of active hostilities, hug them. Believe me, it will mean a lot. What they went through is terrifying and painful. But your warmth and support are extremely important. Make them feel that they're not alone.

«We started to have hallucinations because of hunger»

Stuttering, a 40-years old woman began to tell her story

*"Because of the stress we felt constant nausea and dizziness. The problems we had been worried about "before" disappeared. For me, war is a different life. **It is a life full of unbearable smell of urine and feces, vomit, blood and decaying bodies.**"*

People cope with stress in different ways. I know that people die from pain and grief. The heart just cannot take it and there's no medicine to cure it. The same happens to people who have diabetes or cancer.

*Everyone says it is a humanitarian catastrophe, I want to explain **what it means to women, you are on your period and you wear the same pad for all 5 days.** There is no water, napkins, not even toilet paper. There are pieces of clothing, but I think you understand what I mean.*



*On the 4th day we ran out of food, **on the 7th day we started to have hallucinations and convulsions because of hunger.** We were in the basement, sitting on a rag, no longer crying. We thought about how to get out.*

We closed the mouths of children so that Russians could not hear that we were there. Everything that we had read about the history of the fascists, we felt many times worse. Because these monsters came with the mission to destroy; and **killing a child, or raping a woman is a PLEASURE for them.**

We have never seen so many corpses in our lives, there is a smell of decaying bodies on the street. Maybe yesterday we had a good, satisfying life, and today we have nothing material, but we have our Faith and God is with us".

Children are losing their parents, who are shot in front of their eyes. How long can this go on?

Those who have survived this concentration camp, arranged by Russian monsters, will remain crippled forever. And if physical wounds can somehow be cured, though still not all of them, mentally those people have been irreparably broken.