

# Donbass Childhood Shot Dead

“...as they, the water and the fire, are purely inconsistent,  
Inconsistent are children and the war...”

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Information concerning minor children was published upon the consent of parents or other legal representatives.



# Introduction

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One of the most severe problems in the times of armed conflicts is the issue of providing protection for civilians, most especially, children. Though the necessity of civilians' protection is widely recognized by the International Law, currently this issue has become particularly topical.

Though the International Humanitarian Law clearly regulates the necessity of children's rights protection in the times of armed conflicts, this protection can be provided far from always.

The beginning of international and legal protection of rights and interests of children was launched as part of the League of Nations functioning and it further developed together with international and legal regulation of human rights under the auspices of the United Nations. These processes were closely integrated and interdependent. International and legal standards for children's rights and children's protection are an integral part of general standards for human rights.

It is necessary to notice that children enjoy double protection in compliance with the International Humanitarian Law: general protection as all non-combatants and those who stopped taking part in combat operations and special protection which they enjoy being children.

Thus, protecting children living in the environment full of violence and cruelty, it is necessary to break out of the vicious circle and lay down the foundation for long-lasting peace.

The undeclared war has been ongoing in Donbass for more than seven years. The war of the Ukrainian state against its own people, who, subject to the Minsk Agreements, de jure remain within its jurisdiction.

Ukrainian authorities have taken whatever measures are necessary to justify their crimes: supported by their Western curators, they created legislation

of a terrorist state, having incorporated spiritual and material arms of Nazism. In the period of 2014-2021, the Supreme Council of Ukraine adopted more than one hundred laws and delegated statutory regulations, violating rights and freedoms of Donbass citizens. The most dreadful one was Decree of the Supreme Council of Ukraine No. 462/VIII dated 21.05.2015 "On Adoption of the Declaration of the Supreme Council of Ukraine "On Departing of Ukraine from Certain Obligations Defined by the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights and the Convention for the Protection of Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms". The document has allowed the military and political regime of Ukraine not to respect rights and freedoms of the people residing (in the view of the Ukrainian government) in so called temporary occupied areas of Lugansk and Donetsk regions and most important to disclaim all responsibility for illegal actions of any kind. The decree lists all articles of the above international legal acts which establish basic human rights. All of them are basis for Section II of the Constitution of Ukraine, yet the Kyiv regime could not benefit from saying honestly that its own Constitution provisions are being violated, all the more so as one of the fundamental priorities of the European community, the standards of which have been being sought with no success by Ukrainian authorities for thirty years, is respect for citizens' rights exactly.

As a result of armed conflicts and civil wars 2 million children in the world died over the past decade, 6 more millions were badly wounded or disabled. Many others, who were made orphans or separated from their parents by war, went through terrible emotional distress in their struggle for survival.



As far back as in 2008 the Secretary-General of the United Nations represented the collective will in the following way: "Providing protection to children in armed conflicts is the most accurate way of quality checking for the United Nations and its member states. This is a moral appeal and it deserves being above political interests. The solution of this task requires an innovative and fearless approach and commitment of all the main participants of the process".

Beyond any dispute lives of all the children caught by the hardship of war differ from those fair and happy ideals, praised by various laws and covenants. Are the narrow lines of reports made by human rights organisations and supervisory missions able to describe inner experiences of a child who lost its relatives, a child who sustained injuries

or lost housing? Can one explain to a girl whose hair turned grey at the age 10 that her rights are protected by obligatory laws? Can parents of boys who died at their school football ground be comforted by knowing that attacking schools is a crime against humanity?

The Ukrainian state which ratified international legal rules concerning rights of children, protection of children in the times military conflicts and made a commitment to protect civilians, as from 2014 has been forcing children to dank cellars, frightening them with the thunder of explosions, bereaving them of their toys and destroying schools, killing friends. Children of Donbass, during those seven years they have seen more horrors than billions of adults over a lifetime.

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# **CHAPTER I**

# **INTERRUPTED FLIGHT**



Kyiv had a free hand in those crimes which had already been committed and those which followed. Moreover, the Ukrainian regime established an exclusion zone for us in the republics where any person who considers the takeover in Kyiv in February 2014 to be illegal is a criminal.

Among the criteria for defining people as separatists, potatriots, terrorists and pro-Russian bandits there was unwillingness to obey banderization, decommunization, Ukrainism propagation, distortion of the Great Patriotic War history in the long run. The policy of aggressive propagation of the Ukrainian Neo-Nazism ideology became normal for all politicians after Maidan. Prohibitions and legalized restrictions tactics have been affecting not only the lives of people in Donbass republics for a long time but also has become a part of daily routines of common Ukrainians. Limitation of the use of the Russian language for education, mass cultural events, TV and radio programmes, feebly disapproved by European human rights defenders, was legalized and is here to stay. A colossal cruel experiment for establishment of a militarized ultra-nationalist anti-Russian state in the territory of Ukraine is gaining traction.

A great part in this experiment is assigned to ideological activities aimed at children and teenagers. While the children living in the exclusion zone are exposed not only to shelling but also to total economic blockade, condemning the most helpless social groups, children and senior citizens, to struggle for survival in degrading conditions, their peers in Ukraine are exposed to brainwashing, which is only aimed at justifying, legitimizing all the evil deeds of Ukrainian authorities. According to the big grownups who rule Ukraine it is not enough for little Ukrainians just to love their country. They must be ready to take up arms and shoot at impersonal enemies imposed by the propaganda, without a second thought. Dehumanization of the Ukrainian youth is also a crime that is yet to be legally assessed by the world society.

Children gaze at us with an innocent and open look, with no hidden motive, with hope and belief in protection against all that is frightening and dark. War is darkness and fear: darkness of cellars or bomb proof shelters, where one needs to escape from bombardment, fear for mother and younger sister's lives and for that of the beloved dog... Its fatal consequences can't be explained to a child from the perspective of the International Humanitarian Law.

Time goes by, life goes on even in the times of armed conflicts, children grow, they laugh and rejoice over their own small victories, they get used to doing homework without being distracted by the crash of shelling, not to go round the school corner as there is a sniper sight area, not to touch any unknown objects and to hide into salvational bomb proof shelters at the proper time. Sometimes they accept the rules of living on the frontlines even faster than adults can do. There is only one thing they can't understand – why are they made to play this frightening game called war. Why cannot we, adults, perform such a simple and desirable miracle that is stopping all the wars in the world once and forever.

The adults who decided to ram their ideology to the people of Donbass down their throats bear the unliftable responsibility for deaths and sufferings of children. **And all of the prematurely cut off lives of children, all their names echo in our hearts with dull heavy beats.**



Egor Artemovich Aleksandrov  
25.08.2013-24.06.2014



Ivan Vladimirovich Ermilov  
01.07.2009-02.07.2014



Daniil Nikolaevich Lukashuk  
24.07.2000-07.08.2014



Vladislav Vyacheslavovich  
Kapustnikov  
19.01.1997-10.07.2014



Denis Maksimovich Glushchenko  
28.07.1998-21.07.2014

## The first blow. Egor Aleksandrov

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The Aleksandrovs from Antratsyt faced a terrible sorrow on 24 June 2014. Their long-expected son, their cheer, their tomboy Egor perished. He was 10-month-old.

The boy was killed with a shell burst fragment in the yard while walking. This happened in the period of ceasefire declared by Ukrainian authorities.

## The second blow. Ivan Ermilov

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Vanya's father Vladimir, like many other citizens of Donbass could never guess that a plane, the flight of which he was watching together with his son, would bring them death. Just one day prior to the tragedy the Ermilovs celebrated the boy's 5<sup>th</sup> birthday. Vanya got some cherished presents and greetings from his nearest and dearest.

Galina Grigorova who held the position of the Council Chairperson of Stanitsa Luganskaya Settlement Council at those times remembers:

"The first thing we saw at Ostrovskogo was enormous shell craters and burning houses. As we ran closer we also saw bodies of people, ragged and blackened. I have never seen anything like that before... Shock, screams, cryings... Initially we thought there had been four people killed but when we started packing body parts into plastic bags it turned out there had been more of them. We tried to compile the remains correctly because arms, legs and heads were all spread across. Later we found one more head, the kids lifted it by its head and saw terror in the dead eyes.

## The third blow. Daniil Lukashuk

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The teenager was travelling in a car in Krasnyi Luch together with his uncle and brother. Their car came under fire. Daniil suffered a wound to his head and died at the scene.

## The fourth blow. Vladislav Kapustnikov

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The young man's life was ended off at the age of 17. He was spending time with his friends in a house at Voroshilova street. As a result of a mortar shelling of Chervonopartyzansk he received an explosion injury with a wound to his head caused by a fragment which crashed into the house.

Vladislav was a calm, good-tempered, tactful and compassionate child. He was a leader among his peers. After leaving school he entered Sverdlovsk College to become an underground electrical fitter.

He was a very energetic teenager with appreciable talents. Vlad had a wonderful memory. In school he had a feel for history and maths. He was a great fan of adventure stories. He was greatly interested in different equipment, repaired bicycles and motorbikes.

Vlad was also interested in basketball and football. He participated in school and municipal sports competitions. He was also extremely good at drawing.

## The fifth blow. Denis Glushchenko

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Only a week later he could have celebrated his 16<sup>th</sup> birthday. The teenager who was spending unbearably long days and nights in the cellar of the house together with his family hiding from the shelling got out to the street to inhale a bit of fresh air. In the time of another artillery shelling of the District of school No. 7, which the Ukrainian army was persistently keeping to wipe off the map, Denis received a severe fragment wound and died of blood loss in hospital under an operation.





Aleksandr Aleksandrovich  
Chudinov  
16.10.1997-30.07.2014



Vladislava Zakharovna Dukhnenko  
13.03.2007- 06.08.2014



Margarita Andreevna Vivchar  
22.01.2001-08.2014



Marina Andreevna Ledneva  
23.06.2008-07.08.2014

## The sixth blow. Aleksandr Chudinov

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In May 2015, the Farewell School Bell should have rung for Aleksandr. In a terrible twist of fate, the student of school No. 55 of Lugansk perished when going out with his friends. As residential quarters of Lugansk were suffering another artillery shelling by the Ukrainian military he suffered a wound to his head, while walking near the Church of Holy Great-Martyr Demetrius of Thessaloniki.

Sasha loved history and drawing. With his last breath he remained faithful to his iron friend, his motorbike. His classmates remember Sasha as a trusted companion, with whom they played football, slid down an ice chute in winter and planned for the future...

## The seventh blow. Margarita Vivchar

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She was in the countryside near Raevka settlement, Slovianoserbsk District. Died as a result of artillery shelling by the Ukrainian military, having received fatal wounds.

## The eighth blow. Vladislava Dukhnenko

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Vlada lived in the town of Sukhodolsk, Krasnodonsk District. On 1 September 2013, the girl went to Sukhodolsk school No. 5 for the first time, where she was cheerfully welcomed by her first school bell, new friends and the vast land of knowledge.

As remembered by her first teacher and classmates Vladislava was a bright eyed, open, curious girl, absorbed new knowledge and impressions happily and easily. On her very first day at school Vladislava made new friends.

In the period of active hostilities in the summer 2014 lots of Sukhodolsk citizens, seeking survival from Ukrainian shells, left the borders of the Lugansk People's Republic, leaving their pets, cats and dogs. On 6 August 2014, Vladislava and the whole family went to the street to feed abandoned animals. A shell explosion caught them at the entranceway. The girl received a fragment wound in her head which caused bleeding around the brain and cerebral tissues resulting in death.

On 1 September 2015, the first school bell of Sukhodolsk school No. 5 rang in memory of Vladislava Dukhnenko.

## The ninth blow. Marina Ledneva

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Lugansk had been left without electricity for a few days already. It was dark inside and Marina was walking with her mom, Svetlana, under shelter outside. It was about 7 o'clock in the evening. Then there was a whizz and an explosion. Svetlana came round, awoken by her mother-in-law's scream. Little Marina received a fragment wound in her head and died at the scene, her mom, who was 22 weeks pregnant, received an abdominal wound. There was no chance to call the ambulance anymore as mobile phone reception was down in the town. The injured were taken to hospital by people who were driving nearby. Marina could not be resuscitated but her mom was provided medical assistance in the perinatal centre of Lugansk, and soon a healthy child named Platon was born in the family.

Marina was cheerful, compassionate, kind. In the kindergarten she was a leader among youngsters. She loved performing, practiced dancing and drawing. She was a book lover. Those who knew her said she was bright beyond her years.

Marina had also always dreamed of becoming a fairy and being able to fly...



Anna Timofeevna Bugaeva  
12.07.2014-08.08.2014



Aleksey Vladimirovich  
Butynets  
25.10.1997-15.08.2014



Dariia Vitalievna Knysh  
31.10.2011-14.07.2014

## The tenth blow.

### Anna Bugaeva

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On 8 August 2014, an artillery shelling of Krasnaya Polyana village settlement was lasting for two hours. As residents of Krasnaya Polyana said when at about 6 in the evening there was finally a calm period people heard screams about the Lagutins' death.

Nina Lagutina, as soon as she had heard the thunder of explosions, rushed home to take everyone to the cellar, but the family members who were going to wash their little baby in the bathroom had no chance to hide on time, and a shell hit the house. Daughter, granddaughter and great-granddaughter, who was only 27 days old, died right in front of Nina Logvinovna.

Anya Bugaeva's great-grandmother Nina Lagutina recollects:

"I thought little Anya was alive, I took her in my arms and saw that a fragment had hit her in the head... Next day I had to do something with the bodies. Thanks to my neighbours, they helped me. Dressed them and laid in the kitchen. Zhenya, my neighbour, was bold enough to fetch a priest. The priest would perform a funeral service, and suddenly explosions start to rumble, we rush to the cellar, there is calm period and he continues the service".

The 68-year-old Nina Logvinovna worked up the courage to try and take the bodies to the cemetery but the Ukrainian military roadblock didn't let her go. Then she addressed the superior officer who was in Krasnaya Polyana and, though it took her a lot of effort, she managed to bury her relatives at the cemetery. She could get no coffins, so the bodies were just covered in blankets. They had to put the bodies into graves with their own hands, there was no one to help with digging in, they did it themselves.

## The eleventh blow.

### Dariia Knysh

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The long-expected blessing for Elena and Vitalii Knysh did not last for long. Little Dasha was only

two years old when their house in Lugansk was hit with an enemy shell. Vitalii was busy near the car as he was loading it with belongings to save his family from the war. Elena and their daughter were inside the house. They were never destined to survive. The three of them died.

Their neighbours remember the girl to be very cheerful, she would happily run outside. And her parents' joy had no limits, as they had been expecting to have a child for five years.

## The twelfth blow.

### Aleksey Butynets

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The 16-year-old young fellow died in the yard of their house together with his uncle. Aleksey received fatal fragment wounds in his head and died at the scene.

After graduating from school No. 33 of Lugansk Aleksey had to choose his future career. Having earned his grandfather's support he decided to enter the Car Service College. The teenager had a look at the whole list of specialities and his choice fell on becoming a welder.

As the place was first close to his school and to the College, Aleksey decided to live with his grandparents. He was a studious pupil and always helped the elderly. Of course his granny tried to treat her dear grandson with tasty food. But surprisingly Lesha loved simple lean food. His favourite indulgence was eating eclairs. He said he could consume kilos of them. So his granny was happy to buy her grandson's favourite fancy cakes.

"He was my dear little helper," says Aleksey's granny. "I could always rely on him. It hurts to recollect the memories. Years have passed, and yet it still feels like a huge rock on my chest, it presses me down, spoils the whole life".





Valeriia Mikhailovna Suglobova  
20.11.2001-18.08.2014



Evgenii Borisovich Orekhov  
15.09.2006-20.08.2014

## The thirteenth blow. Valeriia Suglobova

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On 18 August 2014, Valeriia together with her mom, granny, grandpa and other fellow villagers decided to relocate from Khryashchevatoe settlement, Krasnodon District, occupied by the Ukrainian Military and the nationalistic Aidar Battalion. Relocation was organized by the occupying army and none of the civilians could even guess what was fated for them. People were taken into the carbody of ZIL-131. As those who managed to survive recollect, the car moved a bit, then stopped, people heard the cabin doors slam and the car exploded.

Mikhail, Valeriia's father, is the only member of the Suglobovs family who managed to survive. As the tragedy stroke, he was in captivity, imprisoned by the Aidar Battalion. When he was released, he had to face another terrible episode which was identification of the completely blackened dead bodies of his relatives.

Mikhail Suglobov recollects:

"My daughter Lera was the light, my own North Star. The very moment I took the baby in my arms she became everything for me. To say I love her madly is to say nothing at all. What is the purpose to continue living when your very heart is ripped out? But I live. Just to preserve the memory of my child, my treasure who wasn't destined to live any longer..."

Lera was only 12 years old at the time she died, but she will be always remembered by her friends and teachers. Russian and Literature teacher of Khryashchevatoe school Liubov Mayboroda recollects:

"The girl was like a bright little star: cute, kind, very humble. Her classmates loved and respected her. Her radiant eyes were gleaming with incredible charm. At school Lera was fond of drawing, she liked literature and music. She was so tender, as if made of sun rays".

## The fourteenth blow. Evgenii Orekhov

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In 2014, Zhenya was to become a second form student of school No. 17 in Lugansk. On 20 August 2014, he was in Lugansk, returning home in a car together with his parents after a visit to his grandparents. It was when another artillery shelling of the city started. Dealing death, Ukrainian shells were hitting the ground near outpatient clinic No. 11. Having realized they were an easy target for shells the Orekhovs tried to get out of the car and hide near the houses. One of the shells has almost hit the car cutting the air with deadly fragments. Zhenya's mom Yuliia died at the scene. The boy, who was reeling from the shock, managed to run up to the trees planted along the road ignoring a terrible wound in his hip. There he was found by an ambulance crew.

In the severe conditions of the city suffering siege, in the light of flashlights and disposing only the minimal amount of water, without proper anaesthesia and blood supply, the crew of surgeons was trying to save their little patient. No miracle happened. The boy died on the operating table as a result of blood loss.

As the surgeons who operated him recollect, Zhenya would occasionally recover consciousness and ask if his mom had survived. None of the medical staff dared to tell him the dreadful truth.

Now, there is a memorial plate in his memory placed in school No. 17 of the city of Lugansk. On it his classmates, who has already become a bit older, see a smiling boy dressed in an embroidered shirt, who died two weeks shy of his eighth birthday and ten days of his second form classes. The life of Zhenya Orekhov was taken by a shell launched by Ukrainian soldiers to a peaceful city.



Aleksandr Sergeevich Sorokin  
19.12.2008-22.08.2014



Vladimir Evgenievich Gorbanev  
13.05.2014-26.08.2014



Ivan Sergeevich Kulichenko  
08.07.2003-26.08.2014



Marina Vadimovna Evsiukova  
25.07.2007-25.08.2014



Daniil Aleksandrovich Poguliay  
08.03.1997-27.08.2014



## The fifteenth blow. Aleksandr Sorokin

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An explosion of Ukrainian ballistic missile Tochka-U over the town of Rovenki caught Sasha in the park where he was walking with his grandpa. Grandfather was carrying little Sasha in his arms hoping he would survive but a tiny fragment pierced the boy's heart, giving him no chances to live.

The day Sasha Sorokin perished was shocked by the bewildering cynicism demonstrated by the headquarters of the so-called anti-terrorist operation and Ukrainian mass media. The five-year-old child's death was given as annihilation of a big base of rebels.

## The sixteenth blow. Marina Evsiukova

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In those disastrous August days when Lugansk was blockaded, volunteers managed to provide some humanitarian supplies to those who stayed in the city with children. One could get some in an administrative building in the very heart of the city. One day the Evsiukovs came to get their portion. While father was standing in line, mom and their daughter went to the yard of a multi-family residential house in order to hide there in case of shelling. The decision was fatal as a shell exploded near Nataliia and her 7-year-old daughter Marina. Her mom received fragment wounds in her legs, the girl's leg was shot off and some fragments hit her in the head. Doctors didn't manage to save the child.

## The seventeenth blow. Vladimir Gorbanev

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Marina Gorbaneva from Krasnaya Polyana village settlement, Antratsyt District, had already had three children when in May 2014 she gave birth to twin boys. One of them had no health problems but the second one came into being as a weak child. His mom was in hospital in Lugansk with him. When the city was already being mercilessly shelled, the mom seeking salvation together with her son moved back to the village settlement. This happened right before the beginning of occupation of the settlement by the Ukrainian military.

In the evening of 25 August, the baby got temperature up and it could not be subdued without medical aid. Ukrainian soldiers would not let anyone in the village settlement at the time, so the ambulance couldn't cross the roadblock and save the child. Next day in the morning Vova Gorbanev died and was buried in the yard of their house.

In 2021, his brother celebrated his seventh birthday. He will soon start school. He likes playing with cats and running in puddles with dogs. He is also mom's helper: as soon as she starts working in the garden the boy pushes all other matters aside and rushes to help her. He also does mischiefs together with his brother who is a year and a half older.

His twin brother could have become the same.

## The eighteenth blow. Ivan Kulichenko

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The 11-year-old boy died under an artillery shelling of Roskoshnoe village settlement, Lutuhyne District. He had gone outside just five minutes before the shelling started. When an explosion smashed the windows in the flat out Vanya's mom rushed to him but it was too late.

His relatives and friends remember him as a friendly, compassionate boy who loved his younger sister a lot and took a great part in her upbringing.

## The nineteenth blow. Daniil Poguliay

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Daniil lived with his dad, mom, sister and granny in Novosvetlovka urban-type settlement, Krasnodon District. In 2014, Daniil became a 10<sup>th</sup> form student of Novosvetlovka gymnasium.

In the morning of 28 August 2014, as a result of ferocious shelling of Novosvetlovka by Ukrainian armed units one of the shells exploded in the yard of the Poguliays' house. Daniil received fatal fragment wounds to his head and spine. He had no chance to survive. His mom Svetlana Poguliay died together with Daniil.



Kirill Vladimirovich Sidoriuk  
21.06.2001-29.08.2014



Aleksandra Kaplina  
21.12.1998-16.09.2014



Valentin Eduardovich Ostapenko  
28.05.1998-26.10.2014



Daniil Iurievich Sanduliak  
02.03.2000-06.09.2014



Ivan Anatolievich Poliakov  
07.10.2010-31.10.2014

## The twentieth blow. Kirill Sidoriuk

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Kirill lived in Butkevich settlement not far from the town of Petrovskoe, Krasnyi Luch. The boy was an 8<sup>th</sup> form student. Kirill, as remembered by his teachers, was a cheerful and compassionate child, who was always ready to help his friends. Yet he lavished the most special attentions on his younger sister Tanya.

In the morning of 29 August 2014, Kirill, his mother and sister went to buy some bread. On their way they were caught by shelling. Little Tanya fell on the ground and Kirill, in order to save his beloved nine-year-old sister, covered her with his own body. The boy received multiple fragment wounds in his corpus, which resulted in great blood loss and death. Tanya survived thanks to her brother's bravery.

Upon the initiative of the Children's Rights Ombudsman of the Lugansk People's Republic memorial plate in remembrance of the valour of the 13-year-old student appeared on the wall of school No. 36 of Petrovskoe in 2016.

In 2015, Kirill Sidoriuk was awarded a 1<sup>st</sup> Class Medall "For Valour" by a decree of the Head of the Lugansk People's Republic. Posthumous.

## The twenty-first blow. Daniil Sanduliak

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Daniil and his mom Yuliia received fatal wounds in the yard of their house in Roskoshnoe village settlement, Lutuhyne District, as a result of an artillery shelling.

The 14-year old student of the 200<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of Lugansk Gymnasium No. 60 played handball professionally. He travelled all over Europe together with his team, dreamed of taking part in international competitions.

## The twenty-second blow. Aleksandra Kaplina

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Aleksandra Kaplina had an old head on young shoulders and she took the illegal takeover in Kyiv and the war started by Ukraine against the constituent republics of Donbass hard. She took part in the Russian Spring protests, supported people of

the beleaguered Lugansk, was eager to join the ranks of the people's volunteer corps of Donbass, but she wasn't old enough for that.

On 16 September 2014, the car in which Sasha was travelling towards Bakhmut was caught by sniper shooting from Ukrainian military positions. Aleksandra Kaplina died of a bullet wound in her head at the scene.

## The twenty-third blow. Valentin Ostapenko

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Died in the town of Rovenki through inadvertence when he was trying to diassemble an ammo he had found.

## The twenty-fourth blow. Ivan Poliakov

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Vanya was born and lived in Donetsk settlement near Kirovsk. Vanya's favourite toys were cars and his ball. The child enjoyed riding his bike. The boy loved his elder sister a lot, waited impatiently for her to come home from school to play with her. Masha taught him letters and numbers in return.

The tragedy made to the Poliakovs by the war happened on 31 October 2014.

As recollected by Nataliia Poliakova:

"The shells were flying to the centre, they damaged electricity. A shell fell in our yard. It was a warm day, all of us were outside. My husband and son went to the well in the garden, a minute or two later another shell fell and killed them".

As recollected by the Poliakovs' neighbour Mariia Glukhovtseva:

"In the moment when the shell was flying to the Poliakovs' yard Tolik rushed to the place where his son was and grabbed him. They both were pulled limb from limb. With my own eyes I saw body parts of little Vanya and his father Tolik, their arms torn off... Vanya and his father were buried in the same coffin".



Svetlana Pavlovna Agababiants  
11.06.2004-05.11.2014



Arina Vasilievna Gusak  
04.09.2010-21.01.2015



Liana Radzhovna Vidak  
27.08.2007-11.11.2014



Aleksandr Gennadievich Soroka  
30.09.1999-29.11.2014



Anna Viktorovna Khomutova  
05.10.1997-24.01.2015



Vladislav Evgenievich Postavnoy  
29.03.2003-22.04.2015



Svetlana Sergeevna Borodavka  
02.06.1997-20.02.2015



## The twenty-fifth blow. Svetlana Agababiants

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As a result of a country part of the town of Kirovsk shelling Svetlana received multiple fragment wounds to her head, corpus and limbs, she died at the scene.

## The twenty-sixth blow. Liana Vidak

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Died near Shchetovo settlement, Anratsyt District, as a result of a gun shot injury in her head complicated with plexuses bones and skull base fractures.

## The twenty-seventh blow. Aleksandr Soroka

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Died in the town of Rovenki through inadvertence when he was trying to disassemble an ammo he had found.

## The twenty-eighth blow. Arina Gusak

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In January and February 2015, the town of Stakhanov was being shaken by massive strikes launched by the Ukrainian military. On 21 January, a message about the death of a 4-year-old girl and her mom was received. They were caught by rockets of Uragan and Smerch multiple rocket launchers on their way to the kindergarten.

As recollected by her granny Elena Miagkikh:

“On 21 January 2015, my daughter and granddaughter died, half a year later my sister, who, at the time of shelling, had left the house with them and headed to the hospital, died of a heart attack. They were about 50 metres out from the house when I heard an explosion. I rushed to the street and hurried after them. My daughter and the 4-year-old granddaughter died at the scene.

My daughter Natasha had her both legs and one arm almost completely torn away. My granddaughter received a wound in her little temple, her leg was also almost completely torn off and she also received a total internal injury”.

## The twenty-ninth blow. Anna Khomutova

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At the time of artillery shelling of Sanzharovka village settlement (the Donetsk People's Republic), she received multiple wounds and was taken to the central multi-field hospital of Stakhanov where she died of the injuries sustained.

## The thirtieth blow. Svetlana Borodavka

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The girl was moving to her relatives in Orekhovo settlement (the Lugansk People's Republic territory occupied by the Ukrainian Military) and touched off a wire by Ukrainian soldiers.

## The thirty-first blow. Vladislav Postavnoy

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The young citizen of Chernukhino settlement, Perevalsk district, became a victim of the war after combat activities had been finished. As a tragic accident he was blown up by a grenade.

As recollected by his granny Tatiana Postavnaya:

“Vadik loved flowers; he would always bring me a small bunch of wild flowers. Right before his death he had come up to me and said: “Granny, close your eyes. Surprise”. When I opened my eyes he presented me a beaded rose. Once on his way to school he was walking through the market and bought some flower seeds to plant them. And now I take flowers to his grave”.



Iurii Romanovich Ponomarev  
08.11.2000-23.04.2015



Iurii Iurievich Ponomarenko  
14.11.2001-23.04.2015



Anastasiia Iurievna Kovtun  
07.06.2001-13.10.2018

## The thirty-second blow. Iurii Ponomarev

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## The thirty-third blow. Iurii Ponomarenko

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Friends until death... We are used to hearing this expression about elderly people who have been friends for decades. Yet, the civil war started by Ukrainian authorities against the people of Donbass introduces some great changes.

Namesakes with similar sounding surnames Iura Ponomarev and Iura Ponomarenko lived nearby, their birthdays were celebrated on nearby days, the friends also died on the same day.

The disaster stroke when Lugansk was getting used to the life free of explosions. On 23 April 2015, the boys brought a grenade to the house through negligence and lack of knowledge and it exploded. Both teenagers died of numerous fragment wounds at the scene.

But even years later they still live in the hearts of their friends and classmates. Every year on the days of their birthdays, greetings are posted in their social network accounts. Children deeply regret such an early death of their friends, who were too young to die.

## The thirty-fourth blow. Anastasiia Kovtun

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In the evening of 13 October 2018, on the eve of a great Orthodox holiday, Protection of the Blessed Virgin, punitive troops fired shells on the town of Zolotoe-5, Pervomaysk Town Council, in the area of Marievka railway station. From the direction of the town of Zolotoe the Ukrainian military fired eight 120mm shells over the residential area.

One of the shells hit the yard of house No. 26 at Pochtovaya ulitsa, where the Kovtuns lived. At that moment the 17-year-old Anastasiia entered her parents' house. The girl and her mother Larisa received terrible fatal wounds...

"Nastya and I were at my place, then she decided to visit her mom. During the walk we heard not a single shot. I stepped out of the yard to have a smoke, I was 15 metres away. And suddenly there was an explosion, the yard was full of smoke. I rushed to the yard. Her mom was killed but Nastya was still breathing. Ruckling with blood. Her legs were all fractured. I put my kaffiyeh off and bandaged the wound on her leg, tried to stop the bleeding. I put my hands under her head and discovered a wound on its back. Nastya lived 20 more minutes. There were two other people in the yard at the moment. They survived without a scratch. But Nastya and her mom died," the girl's groom, who was near the yard, just a few metres away from the house, when the tragedy happened, said.

The death of Anastasiia and Larisa Kovtun was a great shock for everyone.

Anastasiia Kovtun celebrated her seventeenth birthday on 7 June 2018. The girl was a second year student of a Medical College and, as one may guess, dreamed of saving people. Her death was a shock for the teachers and students of the Stakhanov Medical College. In the hall of the educational institution there is a memory stand with photographs of Anastasiia and Larisa Kovtun showing them smiling at the girl's school graduation party.

"They are not humans," the Vice-principal of the College Aleksandr Stefanov grieves about the honours student's death, "I cannot even call them beasts as this way I will offend animals. They are fascists!"

Iuliia Sukanova is also unable to accept the death of her groupmate.

"No one can believe that. Almost a moment ago we saw her with a smile on her face, and now Nastya is not with us," said the girl.

Anastasiia Kovtun was the 34<sup>th</sup> child who died as a result of armed aggression of Ukrainian government against the people of Donbass.





Mikhail Ivanovich Kodentsev  
07.12.2003-06.04.2021

## The thirty-fifth blow. Mikhail Kodentsev

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On the eve of a great Orthodox holiday, Annunciation to the Blessed Virgin Mary, a 17-year-old teen, a native of Perevalshchina, Misha Kodentsev died tragically. A graduate of school No. 24 of Bugaevka was then a student of Sloviánoserb'sk Agricultural College, from which his mom had once graduated. It was the location of the educational institution that became fateful for the boy as he and his friend Edik decided to explore the unfamiliar territory...

It was a cleaning day in the dormitory of the educational institution, everyone had a task set to tidy up their rooms, and thus the boys' absence could not be noticed at once. They had told the concierge that they would be back soon, but they didn't appear for a long time. The college sounded the alarm immediately as life and work on the frontlines forced people to get used to being on the alert all the time, moreover, an advisory concerning mine threats had been given not so long ago.

Yet sometimes boys, the daring, bold folk, rebel.

"My friend suggested walking along a river," Mikhail's friend Eduard, who had received some fragment wounds, said. "He was a non-resident, from Alchevsk, just like me. I agreed to go with him. First we found a dried-up river. Then my friend came across the Seversky Donets River. We were walking along the path. He noticed a body lying on the path in the distance. He ran by, had a look, it was a dead boar. I guess it had also touched off a mine".

Eduard stepped 5 metres aside and then an explosion thundered.

"After the first explosion I was hit by a few fragments and started running back. While running, I heard 8 or 10 explosions. Then I screamed from afar: "Misha, Misha!" – but he was motionless," the young man, who deeply regrets going to the river and not having reasoned his friend out of doing that, recalls.

Misha is remembered grievously in the College, where one can see a photo of him near a burning candle, and in the school of his native Bugaevka settlement.

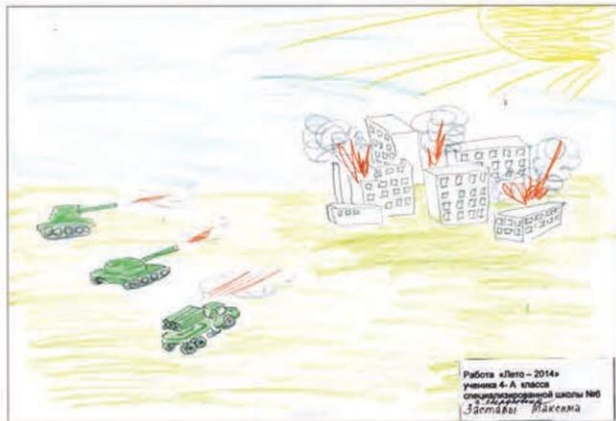
"After finishing the first semester, just before the New Year, children were writing about their plans and dreams for the future," the Vice-principal for Educational Activities of Sloviánoserb'sk Agricultural College Valentina Dimion brings up. "And their tutor peeped at the plans and dreams of the guys for the future. Misha wrote that he wanted to get worthy education and help his parents to reclaim their farm".

It was a sad shock for the administration, teachers and students of the settlement school to learn about the graduate's death.

"He was real..." such a description was given to Mikhail Kodentsev at school. "Teachers and friends knew Misha to be an open, kind and cheerful person. He would win in academic competitions in maths and physics. Misha was distinguished for his hard-working nature, he readily responded to all the appeals for aid. He set good examples for kids, felt responsible for them. We cherish the memory of him in our hearts, and his name will always be a part of our school history".





















Again the war echoes all over the planet,  
Destroying everything that lives.  
My soul, which writhes in pain, is screaming,  
It's wailing, lamenting and howling.

When caught by war we all are equal, yet children fear more,  
One can't explain those terrors.  
Bombs are exploding closer, their thunder is voluming up.  
So what's awaiting me today?

Oh, how much I wish to see a sunrise!  
And a kitten playing in the grass under my window,  
Will a bullet pass by or not?  
I've held my breath a bit!

There's only constant peal around  
And it seems like it will never end.  
"I'm longing for silence!" my heart screams. May it  
all come true, I know this.

Today, even birds went silent in our garden,  
And no breeze is rustling in the grass.  
Everything around seems to be afraid to bring disaster –  
Not to be blamed for the tears of children.

Adults! You are stronger than kids!  
You can do what you want.  
I beg you to stop the war as soon as you can,  
And save the Earth for all of us.

*Yana Vovchenko, 7<sup>th</sup> form*



# **CHAPTER II**

## **STUDYING ABC**

### **NEAR THE FRONT LINE**



In any war, the peaceful population is the most important, the most suffering and unprotected party. And it is their lives and future that the state protects, the state that is represented by the military, rescuers, and doctors. Every day of Ukraine's war against the republics of Donbass is a struggle for survival for the past, present and future.

All the versatile manifestations of war are terrible. It takes lives and destroys destinies, but it also makes you learn to appreciate every second you live. And residents of an apartment building who have to hide in the crowded basement bunch together and become a close group. It brings fear for loved ones and creates situations where people perform heroic deeds for those they care about. In war, things appear in stark contrast to each other. It is the war that shows the true essence of the ideology, which is trying to crush any sprouts of opposition through force and cruelty. But the total dehumanization of those who are ready to kill for a false idea gives rise to the unparalleled humanity of the defenders of our fragile world, those who protect our future – our children – from the horrors of war.

Thousands of little residents of the Republic are daily exposed to a deadly menace: chaotic shelling, indiscriminate weapons, mine threat, information aggression, and economic blockade. But every little person living on the front line has great defenders who, day after day, try to help children be happy and laugh again, encourage them to enjoy learning and relax with their family. And they also try to give the children something which we never notice in peaceful time: confidence about the future and a sense of security. Along with the defenders of the Republic's borders, there are other fighters: family members, carers and teachers, social workers and cultural workers,

doctors and psychologists. Each of them also wages a war every day, a war to save the most sacred and defenseless thing in this cruel world: children's souls.

Just seven years ago, no one could imagine that instead of nice family pastimes and children's noisy games in the yard there would be one terrible word, WAR, and that it would take away many lives. Back then, girls in the region still played house all day long, and restless boys rode imaginary horses and chased frogs on the creeks. The war waged by the Ukrainian neo-Nazis crashed everything. Its goal is to destroy everything that we call with very simple words: HOMELAND, FAMILY, FAITH, and MEMORY.

Anyone learns to recognize these values as early as in their pre-school or primary school years. But the education of little residents of Donbass, as well as their lives, have become another target for the Ukrainian military and political leadership. The armed aggression of Ukraine against the population of the Lugansk People's Republic damaged or nearly destroyed 113 schools and 78 kindergartens. Some of them have not been restored to this day, and some still remain within the areas of daily shelling by the Ukrainian army. The educational facilities all have hospitable bomb shelters, always ready to open their doors to the children, and there are signs on each floor showing where to go in emergency.

Here, teachers and educators accomplish a professional feat every day. The school bus, which is associated with traffic safety, reliability, and well-being all over the world, here has become another target for Ukrainian soldiers. But the thirst for knowledge and the zest for life have always been stronger than the fear of the deadly threat.



# I am not afraid!

Most of the front line in the Lugansk People's Republic passes through Slovianoserbsk District. There is probably not a single village that has not suffered from the onslaught of the Ukrainian army. One of such villages is Frunze, and the local school and even kindergarten keep working.

During the war, the glazing and roof of the kindergarten were damaged. But despite all odds, preschool children go on learning.

"We work, our little pupils come and socialize," said Anna Fedorchuk.

Things go on as usual in the kindergarten: children learn, walk outside, and play their favorite games.

"I swim in the river, go fishing with my dad, and play football," 5-year-old Sasha reported about his summer pastimes.

The boy said that his village is sometimes shelled often, and sometimes not.

"But I'm not afraid!" the little resident of Frunze village, busy drawing bright balloons, assured us.

And the kid from the same group, who introduced himself as Nikita Sergeevich, shared his plans for the future: he wants to be a driver, and his favorite car is dad's.

Well, the educators are absolutely doing their best to distract the pupils from the war.

"When they shoot, we tell the children that some clouds are quarreling, or that there is a man hitting down with his hammer, and we don't say that it's explosions," said Irina Matrokhina, a kindergarten teacher. "They have a happy childhood, and they live their lives to the fullest!"

Frunze School, keeping up with other schools of the Republic, is getting ready for the new academic year. The newly-decorated classrooms are already waiting for the students. One wall unit in the corridor catches the eye.

"This canvas was painted by our students in honor of the holiday of the ninth of May," the school's supply and maintenance manager, Nadezhda

Petrushova, said. "It is about peace. The children drew and painted on pieces of cloth. They tried to show how they imagine peace and how they want to have no explosions around as soon as possible. Then we sewed all the pictures together, into one canvas of peace."

The mother of two lost her mother in November 2014.

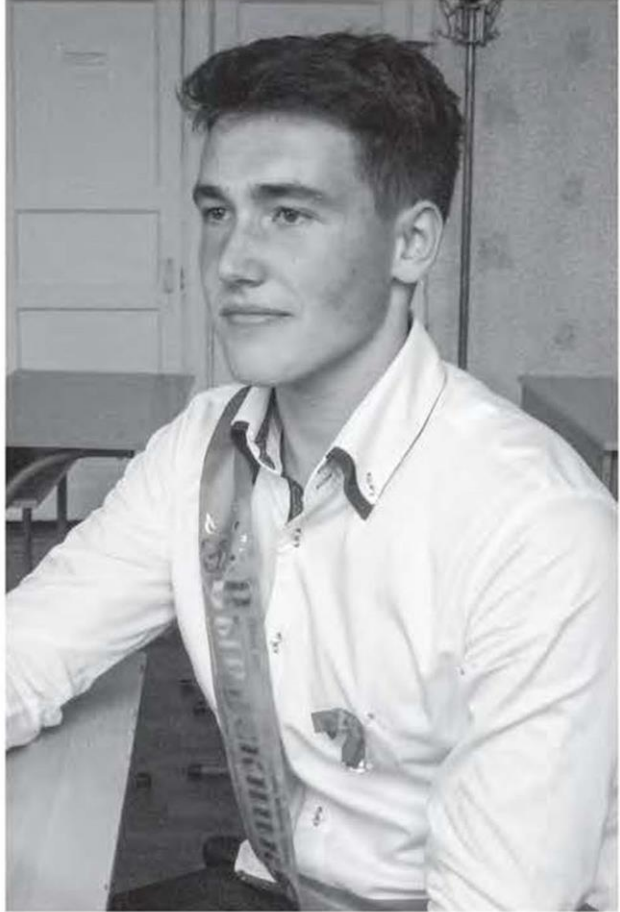
"She was hiding from the shelling in the basement of her house. Shells from multiple-launch rocket systems were falling on the village. One of them exploded right in her yard. The summer kitchen, the basement, and the roof were completely destroyed. Mom suffered severe shrapnel wounds. She was given first aid and taken to the Stakhanov hospital. The doctors tried to save her but her injuries were severe and she lost a lot of blood. On 17 November, my mother died."

"My house was destroyed," Nadezhda continued. "My husband and I built our house in the same street where my mother lived. In 2014, we had moved in a couple of months before that. Everything was new, we had been given household appliances for our wedding in 2008. We had just put everything in place, unpacked, and organized things... On that day at the end of November, there was heavy shelling. A shell hit through the roof, and the building was in flames. Everything burned down completely, we only managed to save our documents."

Nadezhda and her husband worked in Rodakovo on the railway, where one man heard what had happened to them and gave them temporary shelter. The family soon returned to their native Frunze and now lives with the husband's relatives. It is in the same street where the house in which Nadezhda's mother died is, and where the house of the newly-weds burned down. But despite all the grief, Frunze village is alive, and people bring up children and go on with their life.

"One teacher told me that children who live in war times are always very talented," Anzhelika Pirogova, Head of Frunze Village Life Support Department, says. "It is true! And no matter what, we will go on living!"







# Waltzing in the line of fire

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In May 2019, eight school graduates in Kalinovo, a frontline village, said goodbye to their beloved school in a very special way. They had been preparing for that moment for more than two months. In the evenings, they gathered in the village club and did their best to learn the dance moves. And when the long-awaited day came, they went to the middle of the hall and started waltzing. For those two girls and six boys, it was probably the first waltz in their lives. They danced clumsily, sometimes off the beat, but with the sincerity that brought tears to the teachers' and parents' eyes. In their new adult life, they will have other waltzes to dance. But that waltz will always remain special for them, and they will never forget it. Waltzing in the line of fire.

At first glance, this village seems typical for rural Donbass. People go about their household chores, looking after vegetable gardens and livestock, haymaking, harvesting, and thousands of other things. And even those who have white-collar jobs also have to work hard.

Nevertheless, for many years this outback has been the front line of defense of the Lugansk People's Republic. And as on any front line, there are always enemy shells and mines.

Teachers and students were finishing their final preparations for the celebration, and the father of one of the mischievous-looking second form pupils could not help remembering May 2018:

"It has become calmer here now. There is no shelling in the center of the village now. They mainly hit the vegetable gardens at the outskirts. And I remember how it was in May last year. Two or three days remained before the Farewell School Bell, and the Ukrainian side started throwing their "gifts."

122-mm mortar firing. The target was the elderly and children only... One boy from the Kalinovo school was so "impressed" by it, he even decided to draw those "gifts"... He drew a bullet flying into his house.

However, become calmer is a relative term. Early in the morning on 26 May 2019, soldiers of the 54th Separate Mechanized Brigade of the Armed Forces of Ukraine "congratulated" local children on the end of the school year with two volleys targeted at the outskirts of the village.

People who live here haven't read any reports for a long time. Everyone can hear and see perfectly well from which direction shells are targeted. Only the people of Kalinovo themselves know how much they had to overcome over these years. However, to spite the Ukrainian artillery, the village that had so many shellings is not wiped off the map.

The local school was built in the mid-1960s. It doesn't look old though. One can notice that a lot of time and money have been invested in the village over the years. However, teachers also did their best to nurture the students' souls.

Svetlana Boyko, the head teacher, tells us about the best students, the prizes they won at various competitions, and about the computer class that the school had equipped in the times of the Lugansk People's Republic formation (the Ukrainian authorities had not bothered to provide the equipment), about the active involvement of the school staff in the public life of neighboring Pervomaisk. She is especially proud of the fact that three new young teachers are joining the ranks of the school staff soon.

But the newcomers in their early career will have to take the war into account. After all, the school is only about one and a half kilometers from the constantly blasting demarcation line. For the artillery, this is a trifling distance. It is not surprising that every child in Kalinovo does not need the memos in every classroom from the Ministry of Emergency Situations of the Lugansk People's Republic to recognize an unexploded shell. They all know the meaning of the alarms: "A long signal (ringing) is for shelling. A short intermittent signal is given in case of fire."

"Unfortunately, our children have to hear the first signal once every two months, and these are actual shellings and not emergency response training,"



Svetlana Boyko, the head teacher of Kalinovo school, sighs, "The little ones go down to the basement when it happens, the older ones go to the corridors with no windows."

In the winter 2015, when the shelling of the school district was particularly intense, all the windows in the building were broken.

"One shell hit under the foundation, and there were also a lot of craters around," the head teacher continues, "A shell fell on the football field over there. We do not go there for sports anymore. We found another place for Physical Culture lessons."

Fortunately, this area of the village is now considered more or less safe. But when shelling was particularly intense in Kalinovo and the surrounding area, school has to cancel classes. Children are telephoned and given tasks.

It is no coincidence that Svetlana Boyko's main wish for the graduates that she announced at the celebration was for peace to come as soon as possible.

There are only four desks in the classroom where Form 11 was studying. Just enough for the two girls and six guys. In the summer 2014, they were 12 years old. Over the next five years, when they had their formative period, developing their inner self and their life attitudes, there was an ongoing roar of the cannonade. And this makes these students strikingly different from their peers who have never been exposed to any wars. Talking to them, it is noticeable that they seem to have extensive life experience. In their eyes, one can distinguish a whole range of feelings. Except fear.

Lisa Mikhailyuk wants to become a primary school teacher. But she also has her cherished dream.

"Most of all, I want war to end, to live in peace, and everything to be as it used to be... People will no longer afraid of thunder and explosions... Not afraid that someone might be killed!" the graduate admitted.

Bogdan Oleinikov, the head of the class, is planning to become a programmer. However, unlike his peers who live a peaceful life, his plans are not too ambitious.

"Yes, we live for today and don't look too far into the future," the guy agrees, "You never know what can happen tomorrow or the day after tomorrow. After all, we live war times. And war is unpredictable. The important thing for me now is to pass exams and enter a university. I promise that I will study even harder there than I did here."

"Our students are actually very mature for their age", Larisa Oleinikova, the homeroom teacher of the graduates, agrees, "Over the years, they have learned the real value of peace, true friendship, and charity. And I am also struck by their calm self-confidence, which is not typical for people of their age."

At the end of the festive event, the entire graduating class ran outside, where, according to tradition, they released balloons into the sky. It was pouring with rain. But they are not the people who would run for shelter from the rain.

As we were leaving, we asked the head teacher what gave the teachers the strength to live and work during the war.

"If not us, who?" Svetlana Vladimirovna answered, "After all, this is our village, our children, and our land. I, for one, was born in Kalinovo, and I first studied here, then taught at this school, and now I am the head teacher. Children should be taught, educated, and entertained, so that when they become adults, they could remember their childhood, and not the war."

And as early as on 1 September 2019, fourteen more first form pupils are going to sit at the desks of the village school. That means Kalinovo will go on. A total of 10,000 children started school in the Lugansk People's Republic that year.

The war in Donbass has long been talked about as a living creature. For many years this inhuman force has been destroying houses, breaking destinies and taking lives. But no matter how hard it tries, it cannot kill people's thirst for life, faith, hope, and love. And while people celebrate weddings near the firing line, and while children are born and go to school here, while school bells are ringing, and smartly dressed graduates perform their waltz, the Republic cannot be defeated.





# When silence terrifies

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Marina Tkachenko, the head teacher of Zolotoye School No. 4, does not hide her pride for her students: one of the graduates of 2019 was awarded a gold medal and, after passing his interview, was enrolled in Lugansk State University.

In academic year 2019-2020, 12 children sat at school desks for the first time. They are kids who do not remember what life was like without war.

The first direct hit to the school was on 23 November 2014. But for the town of Zolotoye-5, the new truce has never come. There are bullet holes in dozens of windows. This is horror that is part of everyday life for Zolotoye children. Of course, this affects all residents of the settlement: at the beginning of the last academic year, 103 children came to school, and at the end of it, there were only 87. Parents try to do their best to protect their children from war.

"A lot of children dropped out in the first three months due to the escalation of the military situation, in which some of local people were killed," Marina Tkachenko said, "But we had our 9 and 11 forms graduated from our school. The graduation ceremony at our school was impressive as always. And the 11th form graduates also participated in the city graduation ball in Pervomaisk."

But in spite of all odds, the school is preparing for the academic year.

"School is our life, the life of our village," the head teacher says.

In the past, all the celebrations at the Zolotoye school were held in the courtyard, but wartime has changed things, and now the teaching staff have to select a venue for any school event very carefully.

As the students of the Zolotoye school tell us, the village is often shelled at the end of the school day, and each family has developed their own algorithm for such cases.

"When shelling starts, our parents come for us, and we go down to the basement, and after some time we walk home," said Yana Nichayeva, 9th form student.

Every school student in the village knows how to behave during shelling, and the children try not to go out too often.

"I want peace most of all," Yana shared, "So that we could safely go to school and walk, instead of hiding in basements."

Alina Kosyreva, who is in 11th form, remembers the events of 2014 very well, as if it all happened yesterday, and admits that she is already used to shelling and feels more scared when silence comes.

"At first, planes flew over the village, and we were already afraid to leave our homes," the schoolgirl recalls, "And then one night, late at night, there was a noise outside the window, and then a whizz. It was really scary. There is no entry to the basement, and we had to run next door. While I was running, I heard whistling sounds and explosions."

Elena Kononenko, Deputy Head Teacher for Educational Work at the Zolotoye school, notes that children became more mature during the war.

"The fighting brought the children closer together," the teacher notes, "They have become much more responsible for themselves and for others."

The school still remains under fire. In 2021, on the eve of the International Children's Day, the Ukrainian authorities committed one more war crime against childhood. Ukrainian shelling damaged the school named after Roman Salkov and Berezka kindergarten in Zolotoye-5. Over some time, shelling was usually in the morning and in the evening, when children are at home. That time, it began when the little residents of Zolotoye-5 were in class.





# The colours of peace

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Two pigtails, bright elastic bands in her hair, freckles on her cheeks... This is Karina, an amazing little girl who lives on ulitsa Pushkina in Donetsk settlement. We have known her since 2020. She is sociable, more cool-headed than a usual 12-year-old, and is willing to share her experience and her worries with adults. Her house is only a kilometer away from enemy positions, and this has dramatically changed the child's life. Before the war, there were many children on ulitsa Pushkina, and their ringing reminded everyone that life went on in the village.

"Now I am the only child on my street and on the neighboring ones," Karina Alekseeva says "There were a lot of children before the war, but I can't remember many of them now, as six years have passed. And now I don't even have anyone to go for a walk with. And you can't go for a walk much, either. Sometimes you go outside and hardly walk for an hour, and they start shelling. When that happens, everyone runs straight home."

Karina says that she stays at home most of her time, playing with her cat that never sits still. She also watches TV, and draws when there's a blackout (a frequent occurrence in the village). And she is also waiting for her dream to come true very soon.

"My parents will soon get a husky puppy. It will be my birthday present. I am going to train it and play with it. It will also take time."

The Alekseevs have an Alsatian, but, as Karina explained, it is a serious adult dog and you can't really play with it.

Now the front lines near the village are relatively quiet, but neither adults nor children can forget what they have experienced.

"I used to be terrified when they were shooting, but now I do not get really scared. It's scary, of course, but I've got used to it over these six years..."

Karina Alekseeva also shared the most terrible moments of her life.

"We have a chiming clock on the wall,

but it doesn't strike. And when an especially heavy shelling begins, the chimes begin striking very loudly. It feels really creepy. This winter, when I came to the village from school, a heavy shelling began. My grandmother came to meet me and we had to run home over the icy road, because shells were whizzing and exploding all around. And if I was alone, I do not know where I would run."

The girl believes her home to be the safest place for herself. She says that when she is at home during shelling, she is not so scared. And the parents do their best to support their daughter.

"She does not go out for a walk alone, because if she hears shooting, even from afar, she gets frightened," Nadezhda Alekseeva, Karina's mother, says, "She goes with me or with dad, but most of the time she just stays in our yard."

Because of the massive shelling in 2014, the family lived in the basement for three months. Their house was damaged several times by shelling, one dog was killed by shrapnel, and the other one shot down by a sniper. But seven-year-old Karina tried her best not to panic.

"She told us fairy stories in the evenings. Then she calls us: "Dad, Mom." We keep silent. And Karina says: "Well, they fell asleep." And then I could hear that she fell asleep herself. That's how everyone got by in those days," Nadezhda recalls.

When asked why they had not left the village, Nadezhda replied: "No one needs us anywhere, but we are useful at home. You can always leave, but later you may find there is nowhere to go back."

"We believe that it'll go off all right. After all, if you don't believe, then there's no reason to live at all," the woman says, "I wish the children could run carefree on our street, and did not feel afraid when leaving the house. But we still have a difficult situation, so we'll keep going."





## Little troublemakers

"This is our main little rascal," seven-year-old Seryozha pointed at his sister with a sly smile.

"What does that mean? What does she do?"

"She plays all sort of tricks!"

A terrible tragedy split the life of the Mazurs family into "before" and "after": on October 18, 2014, Tatiana, a mother of three, was coming home from work when the massive shelling of Donetsk settlement began. She was fatally wounded, the only one of the passengers of a bus taking people home from work. The father of the family swore at his wife's funeral to avenge her death and joined the people's emergency volunteer corps. He has been missing since then. Grandmother Aleksandra became the only one to look after the three children, with the youngest just two and a half years old.

There are more people in Naberezhnaya ulitsa, where the family lives, than in ulitsa Pushkina. Adults are going about their business, and the kids are running around in small groups. As it is quiet at the front line and the weather is hot, the kids run to take a dip in the river.

We sat on a bench near a house with Serezha Mazur. He picked up a kitten and was patting it casually. Talkative and funny, the boy told us about his life. He complained that his grandmother enrolled him in the cadet corps, and said that it makes him a bit sad: "I won't be here in Naberezhnaya very often!"

Gradually, as it always happened, the talk turned to war. The boy, holding the gray kitten more tenderly to himself, told us how he, his grandmother, and two older sisters lived in the damp cellar of the house. And it seemed that even the freckles on his face had faded.

"If we are walking and we hear it starts banging, we immediately go home. As soon as we get out, they start shelling, and we need to go home."

"We are already so used to the shelling that the silence is even frightening," says the children's grandmother Aleksandra Dmitrievna. "We can't wait for peace to come. That will be utter bliss for us."

The only place in Donetsk settlement where children can engage in creative activities or just play is Ulybka ("Smile") schoolchildren's center. The activities are arranged by educator Yana Medvedeva. A very young girl, who does not look much older than the visitors of Ulybka, has become a sunbeam for the children that illuminates the harsh everyday life at the frontline.

"Children do all sort of things here. We draw with them, do crafts, but most of the time, we play. This space is very important for the children of the village. After all, in towns children can go to all sorts of clubs which we do not have here. And the children don't even have company to walk with. There are about 30 of them in the village, and they often do not even have a chance to meet and play, because they live far from each other. "Ulybka" is a place where they can spend a couple of hours in a team, talking to each other, and relax after school," the educator notes.

The school children's room is visited by kids aged 6 to 15, but sometimes even two-year-olds are brought there by their parents to spend time with other children.

"Children are still children: they have fun and play," Yana Medvedeva says. "But today's children behave differently from pre-war children. They are more wary, but at the same time they really want to have fun. After all, they don't have much fun in their life, and they appreciate it more. When shooting is heard, the children try to keep closer to each other in the room. But they are already used to it. The worst thing is that children are used to the war."





## Childhood in spite of all odds...

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"Our little children have endured more than many adults ever experienced," says Elena Azamova, an organizing teacher in "Ulybka" student's room in Donetsky settlement.

Elena and her husband are bringing up three children. The eldest, Valeria, is 15 years old, Volodya is 10, and little Maria is 9.

"When the war started, Maria was only two. For her, the war is a usual everyday thing. She doesn't remember the times when life was different. Our children certainly know what to do in case of shelling. Every time they leave home, I remind them that if something happens, they should hide in the nearest building. And the doors to the entrances and basements are open all day long here, so that in case of shelling, people can immediately run to safety."

In 2014, the family went to Russia for 9 months, but then came back. They could not stay away from their homeland for a long time. It was only when they came back that they realized the tragedy of their village. But the hardships of the war were not over.

"It is when our children go to school that we feel the worst. The school bus departs at 6:50. It goes through Golubovskoye. It's a long way. This academic year was more or less tolerable, but last year was a complete nightmare. When the children go home, the shelling starts. It seems that it is done on purpose. The children are worried, they call home, the bus stops all the time waiting for the shelling to stop. And we, parents, can't do anything at all."

The Azamovs got married 13 years ago and started looking for a place to live. Tatiana and her husband chose an apartment in a two-story apartment block on ulitsa Shevchenko.

"I liked it so much here. There is a playground nearby, which used to be absolutely packed with kids, and now... We have three kids, and there is another family

with three children; their the eldest is 9 years old, and the younger ones were born during the war. And now I feel upset when children come out to our playground, because there are so few of them. It is bad for the little ones to stay indoors all the time. So they do get out, and when they have just started playing, they hear the bangs."

And ugly "surprises" from the Ukrainian military keep flying over the village at any time, and it's always unexpected, of course.

"I once took the older children to the bus, and the younger one was sick, so she stayed home. We were passing by some trees near the village council, and a shell exploded somewhere in another street nearby. With shell fragments flying between us, we crouched down to the ground, and I, not knowing what to do, covered the children with my own body, as there was nowhere to hide. I hear the second blast, which means that we should be ready for the worst. We were all really scared, and that was a terrible stress for the children."

But despite the evil fate, parents strongly support their children's hobbies and interests, distracting their thoughts from the war.

"Our youngest daughter likes cutting things out of paper, she makes various surprise packages, creates kitty figures... She has already made 150 different cat figures, and she arranges them on her pillow before going to bed, and then I collect them at night. The middle child is more into computer games and lego-type things. And our eldest had her dream come true, and now she is a ceremonial guard. She had been practicing marching for two years, and she was accepted. Now she is in the honor guard at various school events. There was fierce competition among the candidates."

But the disappointing thing is that Lera was supposed to be in the honor guard as early as in the last academic year, but because of heavy shelling she was not asked to do that, because there was a risk that the children simply would not go to school and would stay at home instead.

"It is very difficult to protect children from war physically, but we are doing our best to guard their souls. We hug them more often, talk to them, support them, try to fulfill their dreams. After all, living at the front line



makes families more closely-knit, and the community as a whole has become more supportive."

Frunze village, ulitsa Papanina. The front-line reports feature some of the house numbers on this street all the time. The local residents are children of two wars – the Great Patriotic War and the current one.

Oksana Kaznacheeva is a delicate-looking woman, who, like most women of Donbass, has a heavy burden on her shoulders. But this what others believe, and in her opinion, she just has to help those who need it. After all, she is supported by her mighty husband.

"Now there are four of us: me, my husband and two children," Oksana says with regret and does not hide her tears. "And we used to have two bedridden grandmothers. One of them died in 2018, and we buried the second one on May 3. We have lost our elders. It is nice when there is a granny in the family. She could not offer any help to us being bedridden for 11 years, but it feels very sad without her."

Oksana and Aleksandr's eldest son lives in Kharkiv. The parents haven't seen him for more than three years. Their daughter is 17 years old, and now she is making up her mind about her future.

"My daughter is to start her 11th year at school, and so far she has been dreaming of becoming a veterinarian. She really likes animals. The vet in our village is a very nice girl. She is much older than our daughter, but she talks to her and supports her plans in every possible way."

The Kaznacheevs are also bringing up the third child.

"Dima is my nephew, but now he is a son for us. It was my mother who looked after him for the first 8 months, but then she fell ill, and we took him to live with us. We thought that was just for a while, but things turned out differently... Soon, he is going to be ten."

The boy was born with a disability. But neither this nor anything else discouraged Oksana and Aleksandr.

"He is our son for us, not a nephew. We got used to that quickly. At first, I would tell Dima, "Go to daddy," and my husband

remarked that he was not daddy. And now he calls himself Dima's dad."

During the massive shelling of Frunze, Oksana Kaznacheeva assumed another mission for herself.

"Everything happened inadvertently. First, the gas supply line was cut off, then the electricity, and bread trucks could not get to our village either. Three days passed like that. Then I called Anzhelika Nikolaevna (Anzhelika Pirogova, Head of Frunze Village Life Support Department. – Editor's note) and said that I could bake some bread for the community. Flour was collected all over the village. But what motivated her most was probably the fact that a friend called and said that one family had left for Ukraine, and their grandmother stayed at home, and they asked that at least sometimes someone visit her. At first, I baked bread for bedridden people, and then for many more. There was a time when things got really hard for everyone. I baked up to 30 loaves a day. I then put them in bags, and my neighbor Leshka carried them across the field, under shelling. He sometimes had to lie down on the ground in the field, with those bread bags."

Two children, two bedridden grandmothers, and the job of baking bread... What sort of person can manage that? She is just a Russian woman, supported by a Russian man in everything.

"My husband supports me in everything. We never worried that we used our own gas to bake the bread. We just helped people who needed it."

The front line, as Oksana Kaznacheeva notes, has been quieter lately.

"But it sometimes still happens that the chandelier starts shaking. And Dima's epileptic seizures become more frequent then."

But the main desire of the mother of this family has remained unchanged over the recent years.

"I want peace! She wants the war to end and never happen again. I want to hug my elder son!"







## School number 51, we'll be back!

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To be honest, many generations of schoolchildren dreamed of blowing up their school. Some even worked at that by experimenting in chemistry classrooms. Graduates of School No. 51, located in the Yuzhny quarter in the southwest of Lugansk, were no exception. They believed that they would not have to study for some time in a case like that.

On July 13, 2014, the illegitimate Ukrainian government made that silly childhood dream come true...

Number 51. For graduates and teachers of the school, it is not just a number, it is a combat search, a kind of friend-or-foe identification system. And it brings together not only the past generations of students, but also those who should have become a student here but never did.

One Sunday, on July 13, 2014, at about three o'clock in the afternoon, the Yuzhny quarter was shaken by an explosive wave. No one of the residents had experienced such things before, so they did not understand that enemy shells were exploding.

"I heard thuds," Natalia Samoryad, the head teacher of school No. 51, recalls. — Then I heard my neighbors running up the stairs. I tried to get out too, but my apartment door was blocked. Some people helped me. We went outside, and there was deathly silence. One of the men suggested that the explosions were near the school. *And* we went there. What we saw was absolutely terrifying: broken windows, glass everywhere, a broken threshold, and the body of a dead woman..."

Natalia says they did not feel afraid as one might expect them to be in a situation like that. There was a feeling that what had happened was against all possible rules.

"It's a feeling that is difficult to understand. After all, we had been brought up to believe that such a thing was impossible. Remarkably, the people gathered there did not cry. Yes, they were at a loss, but what they actually felt was

rage. They used some harsh expressions in respect of the Ukrainian authorities, both those who escaped and the new ones," Natalia Samoryad said.

The very next day after the first shelling, the teaching staff led by the head teacher, Petr Ostapchuk, as well as the students and their parents, came to the school to clean up. All the broken glass, pieces of stones, and plaster were removed. But their efforts were in vain. On the last day of July, Ukrainian shells hit the school again.

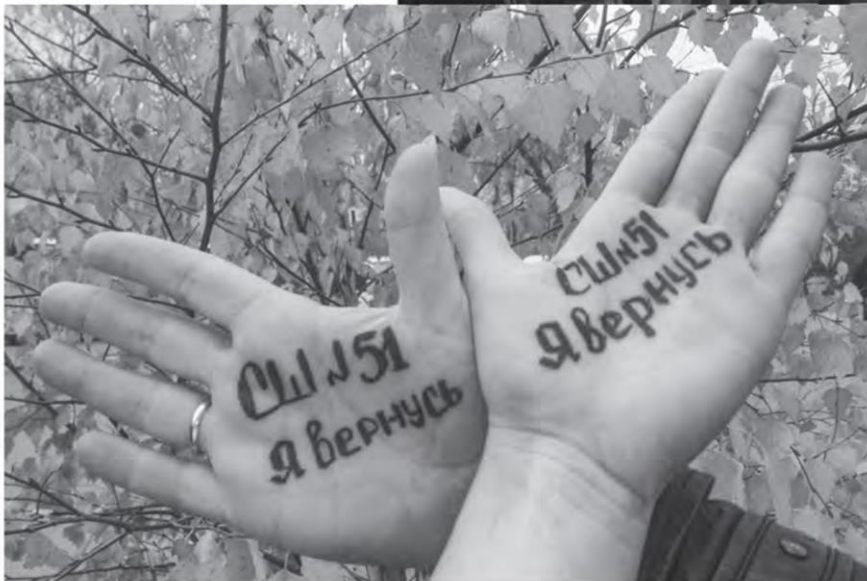
"A school is always a center that unites all generations. And now the area is deprived of its heart," the head teacher says emphatically.

School No. 51 was born in 1986. Over the years, the school developed its own traditions. They were not something extraordinary, but they became so effective that teachers who went to work in other educational institutions used them in their practice. And as Natalia Samoryad said, for many schools, adopting the developments of school No. 51 was a real challenge.

"I had the opportunity to appreciate the character-building work at our school when I got to work at another one. I thought it was the same everywhere. But I found that our school is really special. It had a solid foundation based on Makarenko and Karakovsky system. The main thing is a creative activity done in a group. And the main task for us was to get everyone involved. The first five years were difficult, but we were young, assertive, and tried to get everything right. And we have succeeded."

Let me give just two examples: in the first years of our school, 28 students were supervised by the juvenile delinquents' office, and in the recent years the number of such hooligans fell down to just one to two. There were some years when no students of hours were registered as juvenile delinquents.

"What we achieved was that at some point there were no violations of rules at school more serious than absenteeism," Natalia Borisovna shares.



As well as other schools, we had traditional celebrations: the Knowledge Day, the New Year day, and the Farewell Bell. But we also had our special events, such as open lessons, meetings with veterans, tea parties with the whole class, and by engaging in those activities students became a closely-knit team, and parents found out more about their own children.

"Life has scattered our students around, and now they are in other schools of the town, but they always stand out there. And people often say that the 51st school was destroyed but it still exists..."

Perhaps the teaching staff of school No. 51 was no different from those from other schools, but for their students they will forever remain unique, and not only because of their attitude to the entire educational process. Most of the teachers still see the bombing of the school as their personal tragedy. One of them is Tatiana Tishchenko, the history teacher.

"That day I went outside to get some air, when a neighbor came out and said that he had heard about the shelling of our school on the radio," Tatiana shares her memories. "I just could not believe that. The next day I came to see the school. Of course, that really hurt. When I taught children about the history of wars, I always told them that any conflict could be resolved peacefully, by means of diplomacy. But we were drawn into this war."

Her students learned history lessons from life, and they know them well now. Tatiana now remembers some of them with tears in her eyes. Two graduates of our school died defending our Republic.

Aleksandr Merzly dreamed of doing military service and of joining Berkut special unit after that. He was not accepted by the medical commission. Aleksandr died in February 2015 in the midst of the Chernukhino-Debaltsevo campaign. Sergey Eskin teaches at the Lugansk Higher Professional College for Car Servicing. He died in August 2014 during the defense of Lugansk.

"Now, when I pass by the Government House, I always stop at the memorial with Serezha's photo," Tatiana Nikolaevna said.

After the bombing, not everyone could bring themselves to approach their school. We saw photos and videos, but we liked to think that it was someone's cruel joke, and the images were doctored. Only a few months later they made themselves come there. Despair is the word that is enough to describe their feelings. By firing that shell at the school, the Ukrainian army not only destroyed the building. They shot down childhood.

The last time when the 500 students came to study in School No. 51 was on May 25, 2014. Now the walls of the school are a memorial of 27 classes that graduated from it, and the school remembers their laughter, their emotions, love, and friendship.

Today the school, like many others, has its own page in social networks. One day one of the subscribers posted a photo that instantly caught the attention of many graduates, students, and parents, who were scattered all over the planet by then. The photo showed a palm with the words written with a ballpoint pen: "School No. 51, I'll be back."







## Life as the highest value

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Chernukhino settlement. Its history goes back as far as to year 1600. Over the 400 years of its existence, it has known many troubles and many victories, and the last Hero of the Soviet Union was a native of these places. Nowadays, the village is strategically important, as it is located on the border between the Lugansk and Donetsk People's Republics.

In 2014, as 79 years ago, Chernukhino was occupied by the enemy. The village museum presents some carefully preserved evidence of the hardships of the two wars.

Years after the de-occupation of the village, the residents still have painful memories of the horrors they had to endure.

For Elmira Dzhanvelyan, a mother of two, February 3 had always been a happy day, because it is her birthday. But in 2015, it became a gloomy date for her entire family. At 18:55, one of the shells exploded under the window of her house on ulitsa Shchorsa. The shrapnel broke through the wall and wounded her grandmother, who was sitting on the sofa.

Elmira's hands still start trembling when she remembers everything that happened. At that moment, her two four-year-old children were in the house, and she was praying for that whole nightmare to stop.

"I went down to the basement with the kids, but it's really tiny. My mom said that she would not leave granny alone and would spend the night with her in the house. My father kept rushing from the house and back, and then to me and the children, because I felt very scared to stay with two kids in such a situation."

After spending the night in their unsuitable basement, Elmira Dzhanvelyan decided to move to the basement of a neighboring house, whose owners had already left the village. They had to climb through the windows blown out by the explosions.

"The children were not afraid back then. We came up with different stories for them, telling them that jars with some preserved food were exploding in the basement, like pickles which someone had not processed properly. Probably, these stories

helped me to withstand it all myself, without going into hysterics."

Another night with the kids in the cellar. Another explosion was next to the house, and the shock wave threw out the cellar door. On the fifth of February, Elmira's father ran down the street to look for a way to save the children. The way out was found: some the neighbors decided to venture out of the village in their car. There were already five people in the car, but they took Elmira and the children with them. To fit everyone in, the neighbors put their son in the luggage boot. Together they reached Perevalsk, and from there the Dzhanvelyan family went to Lugansk.

"I will be forever grateful to them for saving us."

And there were many other cases of buddy spirit. When the power supply was cut off, one of the pressing issues was the possibility to telephone. One of the residents of ulitsa Shchorsa collected mobile phones from his neighbors and charged them from his generator.

All that time, Elmira's wounded grandmother lay bleeding in the room, and her father was afraid to even light the stove, because there were frequent cases when Ukrainian militants started shooting at houses where they saw smoke coming from the chimney.

On the sixth of February, at his own risk, Elmira's cousin went from Lugansk to Chernukhino to try to pick up his grandmother and parents. That day was agreed upon as the day of silence with the Ukrainian side for the evacuation of the civilian population. But, as the locals tell us, that did not happen.

"Doctors were already waiting in Lugansk. My grandmother was operated on, but three months later she died. Her internal organs were damaged, and she could not walk due to a spinal injury."

As Elmira Dzhanvelyan told us, her grandmother and her parents lived on another street.



But they were forced to leave their home by Ukrainian militants who drove people out of their homes near the intersection of ulitsa Lenina and ulitsa Dudko. They made their fortifications at the crossroads in the center of the village and seeded the streets of the village with mines every night.

Any woman's priority is about saving her children. For Elena Tsymbalyuk and her husband Eduard, who live on ulitsa Oktyabrskaya, the main goal was to save their four children from the war. The eldest son was 11 years old at that time. The boy was brave at first, but even adults can't stand all that, let alone children. And the three younger girls, who are now aged from 6 to 11, were afraid of the roar of explosions.

The family was hiding in the cellar of their house. According to Elena, they had enough to eat, that is, they had jars of home-made preserved foods and cereals. But the desire to escape from the hell around them was very strong. The first time the family tried to escape was on February 6.

"The neighbors came running in the morning and told us that there would be a corridor for evacuation. We quickly packed up the essentials and went to the cross in the afternoon. We felt uneasy, of course. And then they started shooting. My husband was carrying our daughter on his shoulders when bullets began to whistle over their heads. The shelling became very strong, and we went back home.

The second attempt was made on February 9, when a corridor for civilians was agreed again. But even that attempt failed: some people who were passing by Elena Tsymbalyuk's family said that residents were not let out any more. At that time, the family did not return home but went to the bomb shelter of the school. There they spent all the time during the most intense shelling, until the day when the village was liberated.

Many residents of the Republic know firsthand what it's like to spend days and nights in dark bomb shelters with young children and frail old people.

It's hard to imagine how difficult it is for kids to stay without their favorite toys for days on end.

After the liberation of the village, the family moved to the Pereval boarding school, where they stayed until the electricity supply to the village was restored.

Together with Chernukhino settlement, Tsentralny and Sofiyevka were at the forefront of defense. These small settlements had been shelled for the first time by the forces of Kyiv in September 2014, and then it went on for seven long and painful months.

Irina Malashenko, Head of the Department for Life Support of Tsentralny village, recalls:

"None of us could have imagined that a war would be waged against us in the twenty-first century. I was the youngest leader in the territory, starting in the position at the age of 27 in 2010. By 2014, having worked for only four years, I did not have enough experience, I did not know how to behave in that situation, or what to expect and how to act. It was certainly scary. You understand that Tsentralny and Sofiyevka villages are targeted all the time. These are small villages, with about two thousand people living there back then. Most young people have left, it is the elderly who stayed, and those who could not leave their garden and animals. By February 2015, only 136 people remained in Tsentralny. The majority left, unable to withstand the stress, the fear, and the horror that they had to experience every day. And those who remained believed in me, and I drew strength from this faith every day."

Many of those who remained in the villages took refuge in the basement of the building of one of the farms. One of those days, shelling was very heavy, and the farm structure was hit many times.

"People huddled in one corner and began to pray. It was then that we realized that we had become one family, which had a common goal: to survive."







## "Won't we have a cake, Mom?"

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Lugansk and Georgievka urban-type settlements are almost 6 kilometers apart. On 20 July 2014, the forces of Kyiv launched an exploratory attack. Everything happened terribly fast, so there were fatalities among the civilian population of the village. A huge column of Ukrainian armored vehicles entered ulitsa Zheleznodorozhnaya, where the village begins. It was an unequal battle for the fighters of the Lugansk people's emergency volunteer corps. And as early as on 21 July 2014, the Ukrainian forces and punitive battalions occupied Georgievka settlement of Lutuhyne District and stayed there for 43 days.

In the past, life in a besieged city seemed to be the scariest thing that may ever happen. But when you talk to the residents of a settlement that was under enemy occupation, you start thinking that staying without water and electricity is not that terrible. And the worst thing is when you are face to face with the enemy, and your countrymen become loyal servants of the occupier. The enemy, posing as a liberator, deprived the people not only of their settled and stable lifestyle, but also of life as such.

Yulia Glushchenko, a resident of Georgievka urban-type settlement, recalls:

"There was no water, electricity, or gas in the village during the occupation. All this time, people were sitting in basements, going outside very rarely, just to collect water from wells or get food. The Aidar battalion entered ulitsa Parkhomenko and ulitsa Pushkina, dug trenches across and placed armored vehicles in the yards of local residents. People were kicked out of their houses at the outskirts, and the military occupied their houses."

From July 21 to 27, Georgievka was deprived even of bread supplies. Only a week later, local entrepreneurs began to import bread from Petrovskoye village, which is near Krasny Luch. In addition to the interruptions in the supply of bread, local residents also experienced a shortage of water.

You can get water from a well, but not everyone has a well. And at the end of July, Anzhey plant began to distribute water from its well to the local people for free. People just came and took as much as they needed.

"What was happening here is beyond words. We only dreamed of waking up in the morning...", residents of Georgievka tell us.

And not only adults, but also children had to stay in that hell.

Svetlana Voloshina, a resident of Georgievka urban-type settlement, recalls:

"We didn't leave when it all started. We stayed. My daughter Vika was going to be three years old on August 21, 2014. Those were the days of the most active fighting. We were sitting in the basement, when she asked me: "Won't we have a cake, Mom?". I told her we wouldn't have it, "but as soon as the war ends, we'll have a cake." Then she found a piece of styrofoam, divided it into three parts and said: "Mom, this is what we'll have instead of a cake. A piece for you, a piece for grandma, and one for me." After that, they couldn't stand it anymore and left on August 26."

Olga Bursuk, a resident of Georgievka urban-type settlement, recalls:

"On the first night, when the shelling of the Rovenky turn began, our youngest son Stas woke up screaming and crying. He was three years old at the time and couldn't talk yet. And when the place was being shelled and they were sitting in the basement, he began to say whole phrases. I remember waking up in the cellar in the morning and saying, "Mom, there is no banging today, let's go for a walk."

One day, Ukrainian soldiers knocked on our door and asked for water. Stas then jumped out with a toy gun and started screaming: "I'm a separatist!" They laughed but said nothing.

He still hasn't recovered from those days, and he's scared of loud noises. Every time a big car passes by, he immediately becomes alert. And when there was the first thunderstorm in May, he said: "Mom, let's run to the cellar."



## "At night, I had a dream about the war"

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On July 27, 2020, additional measures to reinforce the ceasefire regime came into force. But that did not help the residents of the front line regions of the Lugansk People's Republic get some quiet sleep. Both children and the elderly constantly feel some nervous tension that accumulated during the war years. But the Donbass personality, which people here develop since early childhood, does not allow them to give up and encourages them to keep on going.

It so happened that on the second quiet day, the children of the front line settlements of Donetsk, Golubovskoye and Berezovskoye received some visitors. Young Lugansk volunteers brought sweets and prepared an entertainment program.

The children tried to find answers to riddles and joined in dances. And there was also a big sheet of drawing paper with the sun painted on it, and the children wrote their wishes there. All of them had most ordinary dreams, like any child on planet Earth. One of them wants to have a horse, another one a Lamborghini, or a parrot, or a cell phone.

Artem, a 6-year-old resident of Berezovskoye, wished to become a superhero. His plan for the future is to buy the fastest car in the world. This year the boy will go to the first form. But he will not study in the local school: he is going to Moscow. His parents were forced to move to Russia.

This is what Ukraine did to our family," Aleksandr Chepak, Artem's grandfather who brought him to the festive event, told us. "There is nothing for young people to do. There are no jobs, and it is dangerous to be here. Now they came to get passports, and we rented an apartment for them in a safer place in the village. And we live on the outskirts, they shouldn't be in a place like that."

Aleksandr Nikolaevich does not really believe that the truce will last long.

"Our side observes agreements and does not shoot, but the other side can't be trusted. They have been really hard on us since the new year... To sum up, we have only sordid memories

about Ukraine. I now have three bullets sticking out of my window and doors, and I collected a whole lot of scrap metal, things that they shoot at us," a resident of Berezovskoye said.

The adults joined the children in making a wish. However, every adult had the same one: they wanted peace.

In Donetsk, the meeting was held in "Ulybka" school student's room, the only place where the village children can come to have a great time. And as the head of the village's life support sector noted, the event organized by volunteers is very important for local children.

"We decorate the playgrounds here, but there are no children to play," said Olga Kobzar. "We have no club here, no school, and no kindergarten. This is very bad and deplorable. And we used to have a wonderful kindergarten. Its walls still remain there, but now it needs overhauling. I really hope that the kindergarten in the village will open again, and there will be happy laughing children there. I hope the room for school children will also be improved and will become more beautiful and attractive. Children will come to spend time there. I hope that there will be new playgrounds for children in the village, and a children's ice cream parlour. I always want something better for the kids."

Alla Kryuchkova, the head of the life support sector of the village, also wrote her wish on the sunny circle: "Peace for the children of Golubovskoye". However, she does not believe in the promises given by Ukraine's side either.

"Yesterday (on July 27, 2020) we were woken up by two loud explosions. Everyone feels very stressed. The majority of the villagers are old people, but there are also a lot of children," Alla Vladimirovna said.

Before the war, theaters used to come to perform plays for the village children. And now the only entertainment the children have is playgrounds, where they go for a walk despite the deadly danger that is present every second.







The event on July 28 was held in the local club of Golubovskoye settlement. Adults were happy to join the children in a ring dance. But the cultural institution is not only a place for major celebrations. The head of the center personally initiated the creation of children's clubs.

"We do crafts and create pictures with children," Maria Rekiyan said. "Of course, the main thing for the children is just to meet other children. Children can just drop by, we turn on music for them, and they dance and play. In general, the club is a leisure center for our children, since the village school is closed."

Although the club is located on ulitsa Shirokaya, where Ukrainian shells often fall, the residents of the village celebrate all significant dates right next to the club.

Usually, mostly old people stay in their villages, but there are also some young families. One of them is the Yerunov family. Yulia and her husband are raising their daughter Tanya. The girl is only 4 years old, and she has never seen life without war. Parents come up with a variety of entertainment to distract Tanya from the war.

When asked why she and her husband have not left the village, Yulia replies: "Why should I leave the house built by my grandfather?"

Things are no better, or even worse, in Berezovskoye, where the event, due to the constant threat of shelling, was held outdoors, to our surprise. There is a monument to an armored train near the Golubkovskaya railway station. The kids gathered around it.

"It is believed that the safest place in our village is here. Since the new year, we have been shelled very heavily, and the shelling was absolutely unpredictable,"

Inna Taskanova, the head of the village's life support sector, noted. "And when we discussed with the kids' parents where it was best to have our event, we decided to gather near the station."

The children of Berezovskoye, and there are a little more than 20 of them residing in the village permanently, also have no opportunities to engage in activities where they could discover their talents. They remembered the event organized by volunteers for a long time.

"I met one girl who told me that her younger sister had been talking about the event all evening," Inna Ivanovna said. "Even though there are not many children here, there should be more interesting events for them."

One could see how children of the front line villages are thirsty for cultural activities and entertainment just by looking at them reacting to the show. In Golubovskoye and Berezovskoye children joined games almost immediately, but the children of Donetsk settlement were a disappointing sight. It took them a long time to get involved in the game offered by the volunteers. And it wasn't childish shyness; it was a scary thing, a lack of life inside.

Residents of front line villages shared their feelings after the onset of silence. After all, they are already used to the fact that things usually get quiet before a strong storm.

"We couldn't sleep all night. Everyone was listening, trying to hear something. "The silence is very frightening," said a resident of Donetsk. "But on the other hand, it makes us feel happy. Now it is difficult for me to believe it can be quiet."

"And I had a dream about the war today," a resident of Golubovskoye said softly, as if afraid to scare off the unexpected front-line silence.

# Donbass Childhood Shot Dead



## A child whose hair turned grey

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The situation on the front line is escalating again, and every day civilians of the Lugansk People's Republic become live targets for the Ukrainian army. But, despite the danger that remains there every second, painstaking work is continued in order to record the war crimes of the Ukrainian regime, and to collect facts for drafting complaints to the European Court of Human Rights.

Olga Khudyakova, who lives in Golubovskoye settlement, is a mother of four. The eldest daughter is 15 years old, and the youngest child is just going to turn two. It became a real test for a large friendly family. Days and nights, they hid in the basement of the house from the endless shelling of Ukrainian militants. But it is often only due to children that adults do not fall into despair.

"Sonya was two and a half years old. So this miracle baby saved us all then: she sang songs to us in the basement, and recited poems to us. And through the air vents, our laughter could be heard in the street," Olga recalls the events of 2015. "There's no other way. Our little one did not realize that was shelling, and tried to cheer us up."

In Golubovskoye, the school does not work, and children from the village have to take a special bus to go to a school in Kirovsk. The school bus has been mentioned in frontline reports more than once.

"As the bus descends from Kirovsk, they start targeting it. We are terribly worried every time we wait for our children from school. Sometimes during shellings the connection with the children was lost, the driver did not answer the phone, and no one knew where the bus was. And when the bus arrives, the driver hardly stops to drop a kid near their home.

The house where Olga lives with her husband and children was shelled several times by Ukrainian forces: in January and June 2015, and then in 2017 and 2019. For several years, a man-sized funnel from a multiple-launch rocket system gaped in the vegetable garden.

"Mom lives close from us, and her house was hit by a shell on January 20, 2015. We took her and granny to our place and then we sat in the basement together all night. The next morning, my husband and I ran out to heat something to eat. As soon as the table was set, Kolya called everyone to get out of the basement, but multiple-launch rocket systems started shelling the village. The doors were broken, the windows were blown out, we only managed to cover the children with our bodies."

Olga's mother, Natalia, lost her closest family member in the war.

"My mother was a superager, but because of the constant shelling, she became a quadriplegic, and she died at the age of 91. Before the war, she used to be very active. She used to joke: "When I die, put a hoe and a shovel in my grave, and I will keep working there," Natalia Bochkovskaya recalls sorrowfully. "She loved to entertain guests, did needlework, baked pastry for weddings and for seeing off those who went to do military service. It's a pity when such people are taken away by the war."

The war unleashed by the Ukrainian post-Maidan government has taken a heavy toll on the health of all members of Olga Khudyakova's family. But the worst thing is that it affected children. Of course, adults are doing their best to help the child's psyche both at home and at school. But...

One of the most terrible memories for the Khudyakovs was when the eldest daughter, who was 9 years old at the time, happened to be under fire in the courtyard of the house.

"We couldn't calm her down for three hours," Natalia Fedorovna recalls. "She was blindsided, didn't move, and didn't say anything. She was terribly scared."

Fortunately, the girl was not hit by shell fragments. But the 9-year-old now has gray hair.

And then, once again, the Ukrainian military reminded the Khudyakovs of themselves. The roof of their house, which had just been repaired, was damaged during an hour-long shelling.







# Children who are the same age as the war

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On April 14, 2014, the decree of the self-proclaimed President of Ukraine Oleksandr Turchynov on the beginning of the so-called anti-terrorist operation came into force. In fact, that was a war against the residents of the unsundered Donbass. Millions of people were shocked, disoriented, and confused by the news. But there were some families who apparently didn't notice it. They felt delighted because of a new person came to this world.

"She gives me the power to go forward," says Yulia Slavskaya, a resident of Rodakovo, whose daughter Kira, a child of unlimited energy, spends every day exploring the world around her.

Yulia calls her daughter to meet the visitors.

The girl came hopping and skipping into the room, and a couple of minutes later she was already getting acquainted with a new miracle: a flash on a journalist's camera. Then Kira began to paint unicorns in the coloring books in bright colors, being fascinated about the process.

"My favorite color is pink," the girl chirped, "and I also like yellow and lilac. And we went to the circus not long ago. And the clown there asked if anyone could help him. And I raised my hand and went to him. And there was also a clown who played a joke on another one. And they let me pat a python!"

The urban-type settlement of Rodakovo in Slovianoserbsk District is known for its large railway junction, which became the target of Ukrainian militants' attacks. The first massive shelling hit the school building. On August 30, 2014, multiple rocket launchers with cluster rounds started carpet-bombing the school area. The shelling caused fire in the school. An entire wing of the building burned down, and window glazing was broken. It took several days to extinguish fire everywhere

in the charred, soot-covered building. When the school staff came to work the next day, they were shocked and broke into tears. But they pulled themselves together and began to erase the war from the face of the school, from the hearts, and from the souls. Just a month later, the school was ready to welcome its students. Some parents, as if to spite the war, painted a fabulous forest on school walls, with flowers and butterflies.

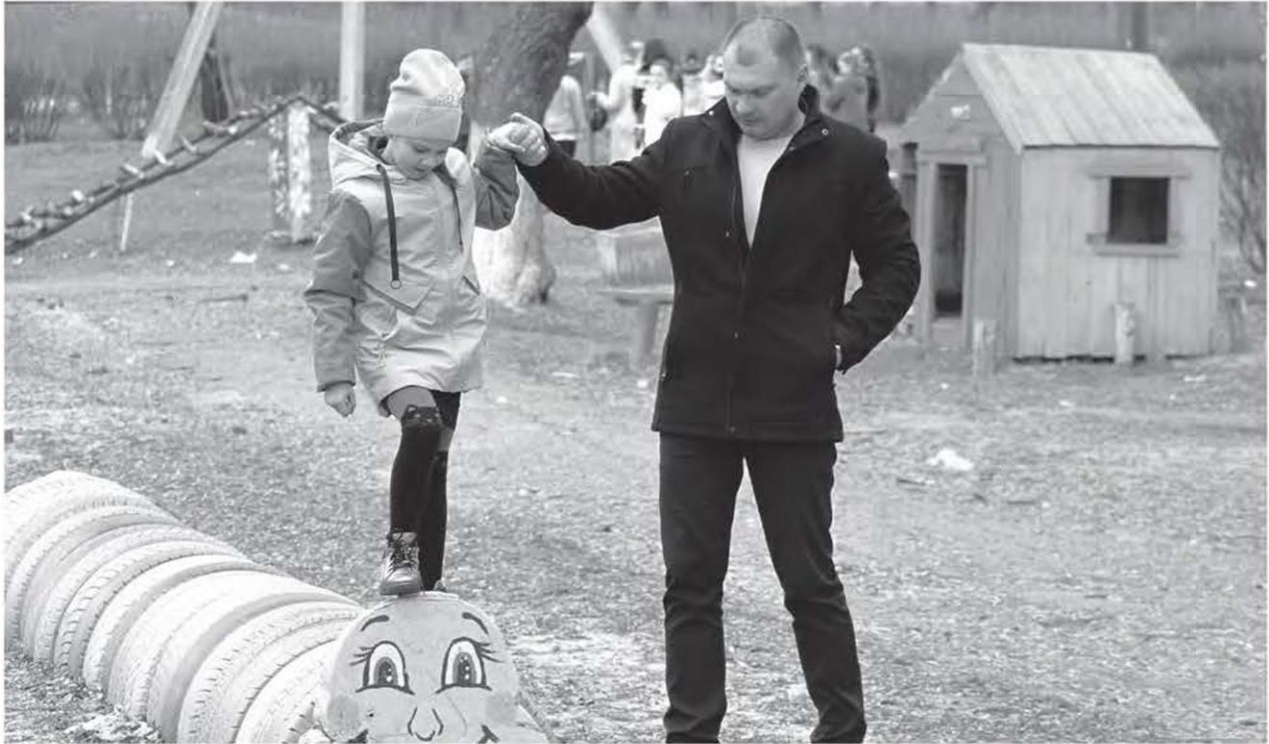
Like any child, Kira is ready to embrace the whole world with her little arms. Today she has so many things to take care of, and she discusses all of them with her mother, because on September 1 she will set off on her journey to school life.

"Until now, even though seven years have passed, I'm uncomfortable when I think that on the day when my daughter was born, Ukraine declared war on us," Yulia Slavskaya confessed to us. "At first, we were just so happy because we had a child... And then it was very hard. But it's good that she was born then. Kira gave us hope for life, willingness not to give up to break through, not to go gentle. She has always been giving us a reason to live."

The parents made two attempts to save their baby from the war. The first one was in the summer of 2014.

"Kira's dad worked at the Lugansk mine, but it was bombed, and the work stopped," our interlocutor recalls. "We decided to leave because the fighting was getting closer and closer. It was scary, but not so much for ourselves, but for the child."

First, they went to a small village in Ukraine, where Yulia's relatives lived. But they couldn't find work there, so they went on further. The young family could not fit in Artemovsk, a town of the Donetsk People's Republic occupied by the armed groups of Ukraine, employers did not want a man who was registered as residing in Rodakovo. They were also constantly stressed because of the bad attitude



of the occupiers to local residents and visitors to the town.

"Sometimes we had to spend three days on a train with the baby. It was very hard, and we decided to go back home."

The second attempt to save Kira, who was 10 months old then, from the war was made after a heavy shelling of the Rodakovo railway station on February 10, 2015. But the family returned after only one month away from home.

"It is probably careless of us, but we don't have a packed bag at the door," a smiling Yulia Slavskaya says today. "We believe that everything will be fine."

We met Kira Gromik and her dad Andrey in a park in Artemovsk, a town near Perevalsk. We stopped near the playground, and a group of high school students led by a teacher passed by, engaged in a vivid discussion. For some reason, it was then that it dawned on me: throughout our Republic, children who are the same age as Kira have never seen life without war, and older children can hardly remember what it's like to live without being afraid.

This year, the Gromiks will celebrate the 12th anniversary of their family. Eleven years ago, Natalia, a kindergarten teacher, and Andrey, who was a welder back then and today is the chief engineer of the Alchevsk interdistrict gas production facility, had a son who they called Danil. But the young parents decided right away that they also needed a daughter in their family. And on April 14, 2014, they gave the world a little girl, Kira.

Kira Gromik, unlike her namesake from Rodakovo, looks totally serious and focused, and there is a good reason for that: after all, she has nearly completed her first year at school.

"The first ultrasound showed us that we were going to have a girl. After a while, fingers crossed, my wife and I went to the second ultrasound scan, which confirmed that we were going to have a daughter," Andrey Gromik recalls. "The grandparents immediately began to prepare gifts for their granddaughter.

Year 2014 was difficult, that's true, but we were so delighted to have Kira. Yes, the difficulties began soon: a shortage of food, especially baby food, and termination of financial support. But all that did not matter because we were so happy to have a daughter."

"In the summer of 2014, we were in the Crimea, and we had railway tickets to go back. When it was time to go home for us, the railway stopped working. We tried various ways to get home. Finally, a private vehicle took us there. I just witnessed the restoration of Tsentralny and Chernukhino settlements, where I managed to see the scale of the tragedy firsthand," Andrey Gromik says. "Now we live, work, and raise children. We try to be optimistic, because we should lead children to believe that the future is bright!"

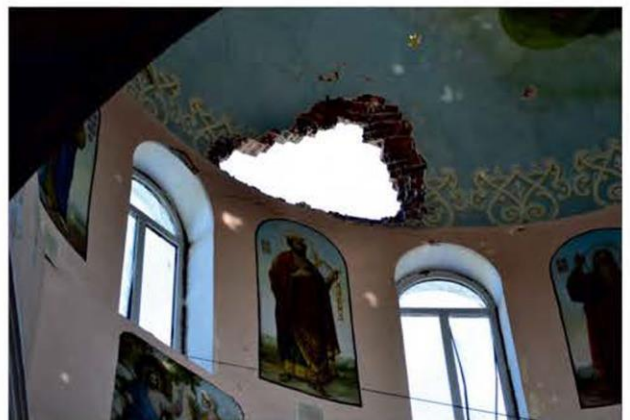
Turchynov's cannibalistic policy was continued by Poroshenko, who, just a couple of months before the Debaltsevo kettle, said the words that left painful scars in the soul of every resident of Donbass:

"We'll have jobs, and they won't. We'll pay pensions, they will receive nothing. Our pensioners and children will receive allowances, and theirs will not. Our children will go to schools and kindergartens, and theirs will stay in basements. Because they don't know how to do anything. This is exactly how we will win this war."

Poroshenko's henchmen worked hard to implement his threats. Yes, the children had to spend time in basements. And even now they have to go down there sometimes. But our children go to schools and kindergartens, they make models and invent things, play with the ball and play house! Poroshenko made a mistake: we can do everything. And most importantly, we are able to overcome hardships.

On the day when war against Donbass was declared, the girls were receiving congratulations and gifts from their closest people: grandparents and friends. But the first to congratulate her were her parents, of course. Not only they had given her life, but also protected her during the war. *And* now this creature born in the middle of spring is skipping her way forward. Against all odds!

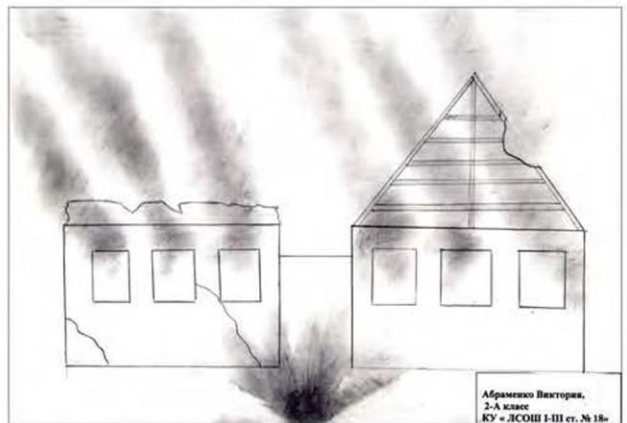








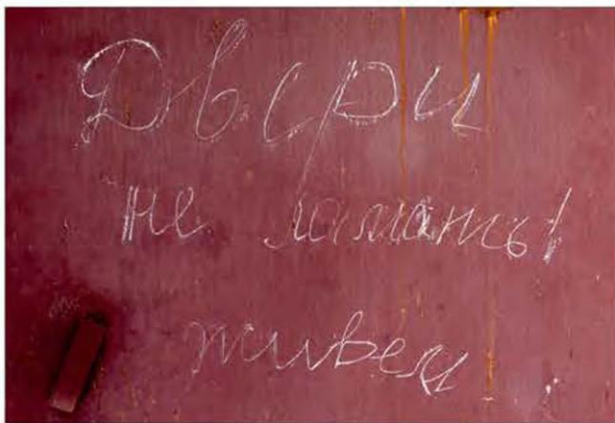












We don't want war!  
We don't want losses!  
We don't want war!  
We only believe in happiness!  
It is so important to have peaceful sky above us!

And it's bitter to hear in the news  
That a school and a maternity hospital were  
destroyed by bombs somewhere nearby...  
So what is going on in this world?!  
We hate living in basements,  
It's damp, and there's dust and that eternal darkness...

We want all children to smile,  
Instead of running to the basements scared by explosions...  
We want to wake up early in the morning  
And to know that we will not be killed,  
That we'll return to schools and universities,  
That we'll be walking outside again.

That we will celebrate special days at home,  
And not in the shelter, as it was this time.  
We'll finally have a chance to see our relatives...  
DONBASS WILL NOT KNEEL!

*Margarita Korolyova, 11th form*





# **CHAPTER III**

## **THE RIGHT TO LIVE**

In the third part of the book we planned to spotlight the official and legal aspects of life during war but... the facts of our existence do not allow us to write about military legislation standards distantly, describing and classifying all the terror faced by children, women and elderly people from a legal perspective. Our life is a striking historical example of struggling for the truth and justice against the background of international political standoff of Russophobia, artificially developed and praised by the global politics. Existential noncompatibility of Russia and the USA, conditioned by America's pursuit to retain unlimited hegemonism, has dire consequences. Horrifying with its cynicism, turning ideologies of millions of people and the very system of legal regulation of the whole country upside down – a result of influence exerted by the USA on Ukraine estimates of thousands of ruined lives in that undeclared war.

Ukraine cannot be called a fully functional state anymore: any state must protect its citizens, create systems for protection and enforcement of human rights and freedoms in all circumstances. The Ukrainian state betrayed its people following the collective West directions, spiralled into self-destruction through killing and tormenting its citizens. Ukrainian military and political leaders systematically create such a legislative environment in which genocide and aggressive war are legal and supported by laws and regulations at all levels of political power.

It is clear that there is almost no more talk about justice in such an information and political framework. Yet it is an objective fair court (judgment seat) verdict that should finish all armed conflicts. It is necessary in order to give people hope for the triumph of justice and punishment for criminals, to bring relief for hearts, aching for those killed and wounded, with appropriate assessment of the committed crimes. There is no way forward until the wounds are healed, until human dignity is recovered, and until those responsible are justly punished.

For three thousand years the humanity has been keeping track of humanization of its life. First of all it was necessary to reconsider the approach to evaluation of human life in the system of methods, means and ways of state power implementation. All fields of activities of states and society were in need of humanization: social, economic, political, martial. Its aim was to establish such world order where human life would be of the uppermost value. And the way to gaining this aim was many hundreds of years long, many millions of human lives had been cut by the time the humanity managed at least to come closer to such a perception of the value of life. And the very moment when words on the ban on wars, on threatening anyone with war are being written, when the whole law branch limiting war is being developed, genocide and aggression are being banned and persecuted, it all breaks off. No peace has been brought, guns haven't fallen silent.

The Law of the Hague (consisting of sixteen Conventions of 1899 and 1907 aimed at limitation of means and methods of warfare) didn't work. The First World War became known in history as the war where chemical and biological weapons were used for the first time. After the Second World War, which gave a shock with its unprecedented number of civilians' deaths, the Law of Geneva was developed. The Law of Geneva was aimed at protecting civilians from warfare consequences. It was accompanied with division into the law of international armed conflicts and the law of non-international armed conflicts, such concepts as "war victim", "Protecting Power" and others appeared. And of course the famous Martens Clause brought the civilization to the mental line after crossing which every individual would lose their human principle and break ties with the social consciousness. These days this line has been crossed by many. The high-minded focus on the priority of life and peace has been lost. Politicians are equipped with all instruments ranging from economic embargo to genocide. And for them the ends justify all the means. They do justify as the modern life needs resources more than people. This is what has conditioned all the armed conflicts of the recent decades.



Ukrainian politicians, members of armed forces who give and execute orders to open fire of the cities and villages of Donbass have crossed that symbolic line, drawn by F. F. Martens, having forgotten both about humanism and their moral obligation to their people. All conventions which constitute the Law of the Hague and Geneva have been signed and ratified by Ukraine long ago. This means that their standards and principles are implemented into its national legislation on the basis of which Ukrainian civil and military servants should have acted. Those people's minds should have carried all these limitations and restrictions, not the policy of all-permissiveness and violence.

The cynicism of this war is in the very fact that at its first stage the Ukrainian army and its territorial battalions were militated against by doctors and mineworkers, teachers and agrotechnicians. It is evident that it had only one goal that was to initiate a conflict, while its reasons were of no matter. Nazism ideology which was released from the darkness of historical sidelines by American curators in due time justified everything: children's deaths and their mothers' sufferings. Silence is what horrifies most of all. Silence of the global political elite, blindness of international human rights authorities, aimed at protecting the present and the future of the human civilization.

Our goal is to move forward step by step. Gathering the truth bit by bit, capturing all the traces of the criminal activity of Ukrainian military and political leaders. And definitely every second remembering the names of all those who died in this war: defenders, citizens, friends, relatives, family members, children. Measure up to the memory of the fallen!

*We will remember everyone by name,*

*Remember them with all our sorrow...*

*It's needed – not for the dead!*

*It's needed – for the living!*

*We will remember those who died in battles*

*Proudly and firmly...*

## Basic international legal acts regulating the International Humanitarian Law:

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- ✓ Convention (I) for the Amelioration of the Condition of the Wounded and Sick in Armies in the Field. Geneva, 12 August 1949. (CGI-IV 1949)
- ✓ Convention (II) for Amelioration of the Condition of Wounded, Sick and Shipwrecked Members of Armed Forces at Sea. Geneva, 12 August 1949. (CGI-IV 1949)
- ✓ Convention (III) relative to the Treatment of Prisoners of War. Geneva, 12 August 1949. (CGI-IV 1949)
- ✓ Convention (IV) relative to the Protection of Civilian Persons in Time of War. Geneva, 12 August 1949. (CGI-IV 1949)
- ✓ Protocol Additional to the Geneva Conventions of 12 August 1949, relating to the Protection of Victims of International Armed Conflicts (Protocol I). Geneva, 8 June 1977. (API 1977)
- ✓ Declaration in accordance with Article 90, Additional Protocol I. Acceptance of the International Fact-Finding Commission, in accordance with Article 90, Additional Protocol I. (API Declaration art.90)
- ✓ Protocol Additional to the Geneva Conventions of 12 August 1949, and Relating to the Protection of Victims of Non-International Armed Conflicts (Protocol II). Geneva, 8 June 1977. (APII 1977)
- ✓ Convention on the Rights of the Child. New York, 20 November 1989. (CRC1989)
- ✓ Optional Protocol on the Involvement of Children in Armed Conflict. New York, 25 May 2000. (Opt Prot. CSC 2000)
- ✓ The Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court, 17 July 1998. (ICC Statute 1998)
- ✓ Convention for the Protection of Cultural Property in the Event of Armed Conflict. The Hague, 14 May 1954. (Hague Conv. 1954)
- ✓ First Protocol to the Hague Convention of 1954 for the Protection of Cultural Property in the Event of Armed Conflict. The Hague, 14 May 1954. (Hague Prot. 1954)
- ✓ Second Protocol to the Hague Convention of 1954 for the Protection of Cultural Property in the Event of Armed Conflict. The Hague, 26 March 1999. (Hague Prot. 1999)
- ✓ Convention on the Prohibition of Military or Any Other Hostile Use of Environmental Modification Techniques. New York, 10 December 1976. (ENMOD Conv. 1976)
- ✓ Protocol for the Prohibition of the Use in War of Asphyxiating, Poisonous or Other Gases, and of Bacteriological Methods of Warfare. Geneva, 17 June 1925. (Geneva Gas Prot. 1925)
- ✓ Convention on the Prohibition of the Development, Production and Stockpiling of Bacteriological (Biological) and Toxin Weapons and on their Destruction. Opened for signature in London, Moscow and Washington on 10 April 1972. (BWC1972)
- ✓ Convention on Prohibitions or Restrictions on the Use of Certain Conventional Weapons Which May be Deemed to be Excessively Injurious or to Have Indiscriminate Effects. Geneva, 10 October 1980. (CCW 1980)

- ✓ Protocol on Non-Detectable Fragments (Protocol I). (CCW Prot. I 1980)
- ✓ Protocol on Prohibitions or Restrictions on the Use of Mines, Booby-Traps and Other Devices (Protocol II). (CCW Prot. II 1980)
- ✓ Protocol on Prohibitions or Restrictions on the Use of Incendiary Weapons (Protocol III). (CCW Prot. III 1980)
- ✓ Protocol on Blinding Laser Weapons (Protocol IV to the 1980 Convention). Adopted on 13 October 1995 (CCW Prot. IV 1995)
- ✓ Protocol on Prohibitions or Restrictions on the Use of Mines, Booby-Traps and Other Devices as amended on 3 May 1996 (Protocol II annexed to the Convention of 1980). (CCW Prot. II a 1996)
- ✓ Convention on Prohibitions or Restrictions on the Use of Certain Conventional Weapons Which May be Deemed to be Excessively Injurious or to Have Indiscriminate Effects. (Incl. Protocols I, II and III). Geneva, 21 December 2001. (CCW Amdt 2001)
- ✓ Convention on the Prohibition of the Development, Production, Stockpiling and Use of Chemical Weapons and on their Destruction.





# Extracts from the Convention on the Rights of the Child

*Adopted on 20 November 1989 by the United Nations General Assembly*  
**WAS RATIFIED BY UKRAINE IN 1991**

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A document aimed at protecting all the fundamental rights of all children in the world was adopted and opened for signature, ratification and annexation by General Assembly resolution 44/25 on 20 November 1989 and entered into force on 2 September 1990, in accordance with article 49.

## *Article 1*

For the purposes of the present Convention, a child means every human being below the age of eighteen years unless under the law applicable to the child, majority is attained earlier.

## *Article 2*

1. States Parties shall respect and ensure the rights set forth in the present Convention to each child within their jurisdiction without discrimination of any kind, irrespective of the child's or his or her parent's or legal guardian's race, colour, sex, language, religion, political or other opinion, national, ethnic or social origin, property, disability, birth or other status.

2. States Parties shall take all appropriate measures to ensure that the child is protected against all forms of discrimination or punishment on the basis of the status, activities, expressed opinions, or beliefs of the child's parents, legal guardians, or family members.

## *Article 4*

States Parties shall undertake all appropriate legislative, administrative, and other measures for the implementation of the rights recognized in the present Convention. With regard to economic, social and cultural rights, States Parties shall undertake such measures to the maximum extent of their available resources and, where needed, within the framework of international co-operation.

## *Article 6*

1. States Parties recognize that every child has the inherent right to life.

2. States Parties shall ensure to the maximum extent possible the survival and development of the child.

## *Article 8*

1. States Parties undertake to respect the right of the child to preserve his or her identity, including nationality, name and family relations as recognized by law without unlawful interference.

2. Where a child is illegally deprived of some or all of the elements of his or her identity, States Parties shall provide appropriate assistance and protection, with a view to re-establishing speedily his or her identity.

## *Article 12*

1. States Parties shall assure to the child who is capable of forming his or her own views the right to express those views freely in all matters affecting the child, the views of the child being given due weight in accordance with the age and maturity of the child.

2. For this purpose, the child shall in particular be provided the opportunity to be heard in any judicial and administrative proceedings affecting the child, either directly, or through a representative or an appropriate body, in a manner consistent with the procedural rules of national law.







**Article 13**

1. The child shall have the right to freedom of expression; this right shall include freedom to seek, receive and impart information and ideas of all kinds, regardless of frontiers, either orally, in writing or in print, in the form of art, or through any other media of the child's choice.

**Article 14**

1. States Parties shall respect the right of the child to freedom of thought, conscience and religion.

**Article 16**

1. No child shall be subjected to arbitrary or unlawful interference with his or her privacy, family, home or correspondence, nor to unlawful attacks on his or her honour and reputation.

2. The child has the right to the protection of the law against such interference or attacks.

**Article 19**

1. States Parties shall take all appropriate legislative, administrative, social and educational measures to protect the child from all forms of physical or mental violence, injury or abuse, neglect or negligent treatment, maltreatment or exploitation, including sexual abuse, while in the care of parent(s), legal guardian(s) or any other person who has the care of the child.

**Article 24**

1. States Parties recognize the right of the child to the enjoyment of the highest attainable standard of health and to facilities for the treatment of illness and rehabilitation of health. States Parties shall strive to ensure that no child is deprived of his or her right of access to such health care services.

**Article 26**

1. States Parties shall recognize for every child the right to benefit from social security, including social insurance, and shall take the necessary measures to achieve the full realization of this right in accordance with their national law.

**Article 27**

1. States Parties recognize the right of every child to a standard of living adequate for the child's physical, mental, spiritual, moral and social development.

**Article 28**

1. States Parties recognize the right of the child to education, and with a view to achieving this right progressively and on the basis of equal opportunity...

**Article 30**

In those States in which ethnic, religious or linguistic minorities or persons of indigenous origin exist, a child belonging to such a minority or who is indigenous shall not be denied the right, in community with other members of his or her group, to enjoy his or her own culture, to profess and practise his or her own religion, or to use his or her own language.

**Article 31**

1. States Parties recognize the right of the child to rest and leisure, to engage in play and recreational activities appropriate to the age of the child and to participate freely in cultural life and the arts.



2. States Parties shall respect and promote the right of the child to participate fully in cultural and artistic life and shall encourage the provision of appropriate and equal opportunities for cultural, artistic, recreational and leisure activity.

*Article 37*

States Parties shall ensure that:

(a) No child shall be subjected to torture or other cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment. Neither capital punishment nor life imprisonment without possibility of release shall be imposed for offences committed by persons below eighteen years of age;

(b) No child shall be deprived of his or her liberty unlawfully or arbitrarily. The arrest, detention or imprisonment of a child shall be in conformity with the law and shall be used only as a measure of last resort and for the shortest appropriate period of time.

*Article 38*

1. States Parties undertake to respect and to ensure respect for rules of international humanitarian law applicable to them in armed conflicts which are relevant to the child.

*Article 39*

States Parties shall take all appropriate measures to promote physical and psychological recovery and social reintegration of a child victim of: any form of neglect, exploitation, or abuse; torture or any other form of cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment; or armed conflicts. Such recovery and reintegration shall take place in an environment which fosters the health, self-respect and dignity of the child.

*Article 46*

The present Convention shall be open for signature by all States.





# Extracts from the Geneva Conventions

*Adopted on 12 August 1949*

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## **Article 1**

The High Contracting Parties undertake to respect and to ensure respect for the present Convention in all circumstances.

## **Article 2**

In addition to the provisions which shall be implemented in peacetime, the present Convention shall apply to all cases of declared war or of any other armed conflict which may arise between two or more of the High Contracting Parties, even if the state of war is not recognized by one of them.

The Convention shall also apply to all cases of partial or total occupation of the territory of a High Contracting Party, even if the said occupation meets with no armed resistance.

Although one of the Powers in conflict may not be a party to the present Convention, the Powers who are parties thereto shall remain bound by it in their mutual relations. They shall furthermore be bound by the Convention in relation to the said Power, if the latter accepts and applies the provisions thereof.

## **Article 3**

In the case of armed conflict not of an international character occurring in the territory of one of the High Contracting Parties, each Party to the conflict shall be bound to apply, as a minimum, the following provisions:

1. Persons taking no active part in the hostilities, including members of armed forces who have laid down their arms and those placed hors de combat by sickness, wounds, detention, or any other cause, shall in all circumstances be treated humanely, without any adverse distinction founded on race, colour, religion or faith, sex, birth or wealth, or any other similar criteria.

To this end, the following acts are and shall remain prohibited at any time and in any place whatsoever with respect to the above-mentioned persons:

*a)* violence to life and person, in particular murder of all kinds, mutilation, cruel treatment and torture,

*b)* taking of hostages,

*c)* outrages upon personal dignity, in particular humiliating and degrading treatment,

*d)* the passing of sentences and the carrying out of executions without previous judgment pronounced by a regularly constituted court, affording all the judicial guarantees which are recognized as indispensable by civilized peoples.





2. The wounded and sick shall be collected and cared for.

An impartial humanitarian body, such as the International Committee of the Red Cross, may offer its services to the Parties to the conflict.

The Parties to the conflict should further endeavour to bring into force, by means of special agreements, all or part of the other provisions of the present Convention.

The application of the preceding provisions shall not affect the legal status of the Parties to the conflict.

#### *Article 4*

Persons protected by the Convention are those who at a given moment and in any manner whatsoever, find themselves, in case of a conflict or occupation, in the hands of persons a Party to the conflict or Occupying Power of which they are not nationals.

Nationals of a State which is not bound by the Convention are not protected by it. Nationals of a neutral State who find themselves in the territory of a belligerent State, and nationals of a co-belligerent State, shall not be regarded as protected persons while the State of which they are nationals has normal diplomatic representation in the State in whose hands they are.

The provisions of Part II are, however, wider in application, as defined in Article 13.

Persons protected by the Geneva Convention for the Amelioration of the Condition of the Wounded and Sick in Armed Forces in the Field of August 12, 1949, or by the Geneva Convention for the Amelioration of the Condition of Wounded, Sick and Shipwrecked Members of Armed Forces at Sea of August 12, 1949, or by the Geneva Convention relative to the Treatment of Prisoners of War of August 12, 1949, shall not be considered as protected persons within the meaning of the present Convention.

#### *Article 13*

The provisions of this Section cover the whole of the populations of the countries in conflict, without any adverse distinction based, in particular, on race, nationality, religion or political opinion, and are intended to alleviate the sufferings caused by war.

#### *Article 14*

In time of peace, the High Contracting Parties and, after the outbreak of hostilities, the Parties thereto, may establish in their own territory and, if the need arises, in occupied areas, hospital and safety zones and localities so organized as to protect from the effects of war, wounded, sick and aged persons, children under fifteen, expectant mothers and mothers of children under seven.

Upon the outbreak and during the course of hostilities, the Parties concerned may conclude agreements on mutual recognition of the zones and localities they have created. They may for this purpose implement the provisions of the Draft Agreement annexed to the present Convention, with such amendments as they may consider necessary.

The Protecting Powers and the International Committee of the Red Cross are invited to lend their good offices in order to facilitate the institution and recognition of these hospital and safety zones and localities.

#### *Article 15*

Any Party to the conflict may, either direct or through a neutral State or some humanitarian organization, propose to the adverse Party to establish, in the regions where fighting is taking place, neutralized zones intended to shelter from the effects of war the following persons, without distinction:



a) wounded and sick combatants or non-combatants;

b) civilian persons who take no part in hostilities, and who, while they reside in the zones, perform no work of a military character.

When the Parties concerned have agreed upon the geographical position, administration, food supply and supervision of the proposed neutralized zone, a written agreement shall be concluded and signed by the representatives of the Parties to the conflict. The agreement shall fix the beginning and the duration of the neutralization of the zone.

#### *Article 16*

The wounded and sick, as well as the infirm, and expectant mothers, shall be the object of particular protection and respect.

As far as military considerations allow, each Party to the conflict shall facilitate the steps taken to search for the killed and wounded, to assist the shipwrecked and other persons exposed to grave danger, and to protect them against pillage and ill-treatment.

#### *Article 17*

The Parties to the conflict shall endeavour to conclude local agreements for the removal from besieged or encircled areas, of wounded, sick, infirm, and aged persons, children and maternity cases, and for the passage of ministers of all religions, medical personnel and medical equipment on their way to such areas.

#### *Article 18*

Civilian hospitals organized to give care to the wounded and sick, the infirm and maternity cases, may in no circumstances be the object of attack, but shall at all times be respected and protected by the Parties to the conflict.

States which are Parties to a conflict shall provide all civilian hospitals with certificates showing that they are civilian hospitals and that the buildings which they occupy are not used for any purpose which would deprive these hospitals of protection in accordance with Article 19.

Civilian hospitals shall be marked by means of the emblem provided for in Article 38 of the Geneva Convention for the Amelioration of the Condition of the Wounded and Sick in Armed Forces in the Field of August 12, 1949, but only if so authorized by the State.

The Parties to the conflict shall, in so far as military considerations permit, take the necessary steps to make the distinctive emblems indicating civilian hospitals clearly visible to the enemy land, air and naval forces in order to obviate the possibility of any hostile action.

In view of the dangers to which hospitals may be exposed by being close to military objectives, it is recommended that such hospitals be situated as far as possible from such objectives.

#### *Article 19*

The protection to which civilian hospitals are entitled shall not cease unless they are used to commit, outside their humanitarian duties, acts harmful to the enemy. Protection may, however, cease only after due warning has been given, naming, in all appropriate cases, a reasonable time limit, and after such warning has remained unheeded.

The fact that sick or wounded members of the armed forces are nursed in these hospitals, or the presence of small arms and ammunition taken from such combatants and not yet handed to the proper service, shall not be considered to be acts harmful to the enemy.





**Article 20**

Persons regularly and solely engaged in the operation and administration of civilian hospitals, including the personnel engaged in the search for, removal and transporting of and caring for wounded and sick civilians, the infirm and maternity cases, shall be respected and protected.

In occupied territory and in zones of military operations, the above personnel shall be recognizable by means of an identity card certifying their status, bearing the photograph of the holder and embossed with the stamp of the responsible authority, and also by means of a stamped, water-resistant armlet which they shall wear on the left arm while carrying out their duties. This armlet shall be issued by the State and shall bear the emblem provided for in Article 38 of the Geneva Convention for the Amelioration of the Condition of the Wounded and Sick in Armed Forces in the Field of August 12, 1949.

Other personnel who are engaged in the operation and administration of civilian hospitals shall be entitled to respect and protection and to wear the armlet, as provided in and under the conditions prescribed in this Article, while they are employed on such duties. The identity card shall state the duties on which they are employed.

The management of each hospital shall at all times hold at the disposal of the competent national or occupying authorities an up-to-date list of such personnel.

**Article 21**

Convoys of vehicles or hospital trains on land or specially provided vessels on sea, conveying wounded and sick civilians, the infirm and maternity cases, shall be respected and protected in the same manner as the hospitals provided for in Article 18, and shall be marked, with the consent of the State, by the display of the distinctive emblem provided for in Article 38 of the Geneva Convention for the Amelioration of the Condition of the Wounded and Sick in Armed Forces in the Field of August 12, 1949.

**Article 22**

Aircraft exclusively employed for the removal of wounded and sick civilians, the infirm and maternity cases, or for the transport of medical personnel and equipment, shall not be attacked, but shall be respected while flying at heights, times and on routes specifically agreed upon between all the Parties to the conflict concerned.

They may be marked with the distinctive emblem provided for in Article 38 of the Geneva Convention for the Amelioration of the Condition of the Wounded and Sick in Armed Forces in the Field of August 12, 1949.

Unless agreed otherwise, flights over enemy or enemy-occupied territory are prohibited.

Such aircraft shall obey every summons to land. In the event of a landing thus imposed, the aircraft with its occupants may continue its flight after examination, if any.

**Article 23**

Each High Contracting Party shall allow the free passage of all consignments of medical and hospital stores and objects necessary for religious worship intended only for civilians of another High Contracting Party, even if the latter is its adversary. It shall likewise permit the free passage of all consignments of essential foodstuffs, clothing and tonics intended for children under fifteen, expectant mothers and maternity cases.





The obligation of a High Contracting Party to allow the free passage of the consignments indicated in the preceding paragraph is subject to the condition that this Party is satisfied that there are no serious reasons for fearing:

a) that the consignments may be diverted from their destination, or

b) that the control may not be effective, or

c) that a definite advantage may accrue to the military efforts or economy of the enemy through the substitution of the abovementioned consignments for goods which would otherwise be provided or produced by the enemy or through the release of such material, services or facilities as would otherwise be required for the production of such goods.

The Power which allows the passage of the consignments indicated in the first paragraph of this Article may make such permission conditional on the distribution to the persons benefited thereby being made under the local supervision of the Protecting Powers.

Such consignments shall be forwarded as rapidly as possible, and the Power which permits their free passage shall have the right to prescribe the technical arrangements under which such passage is allowed.

#### *Article 24*

The Parties to the conflict shall take the necessary measures to ensure that children under fifteen, who are orphaned or are separated from their families as a result of the war, are not left to their own resources, and that their maintenance, the exercise of their religion and their education are facilitated in all circumstances. Their education shall, as far as possible, be entrusted to persons of a similar cultural tradition.

The Parties to the conflict shall facilitate the reception of such children in a neutral country for the duration of the conflict with the consent of the Protecting Power, if any, and under due safeguards for the observance of the principles stated in the first paragraph.

They shall, furthermore, endeavour to arrange for all children under twelve to be identified by the wearing of identity discs, or by some other means.

#### *Article 25*

All persons in the territory of a Party to the conflict, or in a territory occupied by it, shall be enabled to give news of a strictly personal nature to members of their families, wherever they may be, and to receive news from them. This correspondence shall be forwarded speedily and without undue delay.

If, as a result of circumstances, it becomes difficult or impossible to exchange family correspondence by the ordinary post, the Parties to the conflict concerned shall apply to a neutral intermediary, such as the Central Agency provided for in Article 140, and shall decide in consultation with it how to ensure the fulfilment of their obligations under the best possible conditions, in particular with the co-operation of the National Red Cross (Red Crescent, Red Lion and Sun) Societies.

If the Parties to the conflict deem it necessary to restrict family correspondence, such restrictions shall be confined to the compulsory use of standard forms containing twenty-five freely chosen words, and to the limitation of the number of these forms despatched to one each month.

#### *Article 26*

Each Party to the conflict shall facilitate enquiries made by members of families dispersed owing to the war, with the object of renewing contact with one another and of meeting, if possible. It shall encourage, in particular, the work of organizations engaged on this task provided they are acceptable to it and conform to its security regulations.

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