

Good evening I wrote a speech, I was preparing, I should have started it differently ... but today again the shelling of my country, my city ... again a sleepless night ... again with bated breath for hours waiting ... God forbid that everyone would be alive. .. sorry... And they start a cold winter night without light, water and heat, and I have a sunny, summer day.... And I'm ashamed of it....

Today I want to address you not only as UN members, journalists, politicians, businessmen... But as ordinary people - mothers and fathers, grandparents, brothers and sisters. I want to address you not as a journalist, a documentary filmmaker... But as a daughter, sister, wife and mother... No matter what heights we reach, we will always remain members of our family, we will always remain our children's parents, we will always remain our parents' children. This is the truth of life. We create a whole world in our family and do everything to preserve it. And we are happy when that world flourishes, we cry when we're overcome by its challenges, and feel completely broken when it is destroyed by war.

My name is Kateryna. I am grateful to be here and for the opportunity to reach out to you.

You have just watched a film in which you saw tragedy and unspeakable devastation. But this is only a tiny piece of what is happening in my country... You have seen only a few tragic stories, but there are hundreds of thousands more, millions of broken destinies, and worlds destroyed forever...

It seems to me that the world does not fully understand the scale of this catastrophe! There is likely not a single family left that has not lost someone in this war. But the scariest thing is not even that! It's that this war continues to rage on, with no end in sight. How can we put a stop to it?

Every day, every Ukrainian begins and ends their day by calling their relatives and friends. They enquire as to whether their loved ones who remain back home are still alive.. This has been going on for 9 months now. Yes, today, the 24th of November, marks exactly 9 months of a dreadful and senseless war.

I am grateful to other countries for their help and support for my country. Ukrainians are a very strong, free, cheerful and multicultural people. That is what makes it so difficult to conquer us, even for such a giant like Russia.

The 21st of October was my son's 11th birthday. Imagine my surprise when he refused to celebrate his special day at all, and instead asked me to give him some money, which he donated to a fund that helps children who lost their parents in this war ...

So to those who might refer to themselves as apolitical, or who say that this is a war between Ukraine and Russia, or that there are about 25 other military conflicts taking place in the world at the moment ... I have something to tell you...

This war is not just against Ukraine! This is a war against human values! Ukraine is fighting for the very principles of the civilised world - a frontier against the kind of fear, destruction and misery that Russia and similar aggressors bring with them.

While Russia is preying on innocent Ukrainians, I am especially indebted to Australia, Canada, Poland, Britain and all the other countries who have joined together in supporting us - for every life they have saved, and for every Ukrainian child who can wake up in the morning under a peaceful sky.

We must do everything possible so that the future generations of our people never experience the suffering and horror that the Russian occupiers have brought to my country.

Allow me, now, to tell you a personal story...

Krematorsk Railway Station, April of this year. My friend - a classmate from school - and his family are in line, waiting for the evacuation train. Their children needed to go to the toilet. The grandmother, along with the mother and children, led the children away for a minute. All of a sudden, a huge explosion tore through the station! My classmate was killed instantly... His mother, wife and children did not get a chance to say goodbye to him... a replacement evacuation bus came and took them away.... to this day, I cannot convey with words the grief and pain felt by this family...

Another childhood friend of mine from Boyarka, near Kyiv, went in search of diapers one day for his little child. He disappeared, and for about a month was nowhere to be found. After the cities of Bucha, Irpin and the central part of Ukraine were liberated from Russian forces, his body was found. Yes, the rest of his family escaped and now find themselves in the safety of Canada, but tell me...how can they possibly go on living after that?

And how many more close friends have perished in Kharkov, in Izyum, in Borodienka, in Bucha, in Odessa... Entire families have been murdered, raped, tortured... What does "survival" even look like for their parents, brothers, sisters... No help will bring their loved ones back....! But I beg you, I know that if the whole world unites, then this can be stopped! You can stop it!

Not long ago, when I was volunteering at the Blue Peony Foundation - an organisation established to support Ukrainians fleeing the war to Australia - a mother came to us with 2 children, having just arrived from Mariupol. We treated the boys to a small pack of Oreo cookies, upon which the older boy took a bite out of one and looked at his younger brother, before asking "are all of these for me?" I immediately understood that, from all those months hidden in basements, he had grown used to the fact that he wasn't the only one going hungry. And that every piece needs to be shared with someone else. I then gave him some water - he took a small sip from the glass, before looking around and drinking the rest ... and I realized that this child even went so far as to share every drop of clean water with those around him.

How many more? How many more broken destinies are needed?... Everyone has their own story, their own pain... Just last night a woman and her son turned to me. Their father - a soldier in the 93rd Brigade of the Ukrainian Ground Forces - was missing, somewhere between Bakhmut and Soledar. The last contact they'd had with him was on the 8th of October. They had already received a message from the military registration and enlistment office stating that he was missing. But they continue to believe...to believe that their father is still alive. Perhaps he's in captivity? She pleads with me that I help her in some way. But how? I sent his personal details to all the missing persons search groups, reached out to contacts I have serving in those regions ... but I have no words to console her suffering. And I've received no shortage of similar requests, but what else can I do...

About a month before the war, my son began to study the Second World War at school. And when the war in Ukraine began, he asked if this was the start of World War 3. The day we were crossing the border into Poland, we were surrounded by more than 10,000 women and children. The border had been closed for some time, it had started to snow, with a temperature of about minus 11 degrees ... people stood huddled together like sardines and did not know what would happen next ... We could see more and more people approaching, and that was when the stampede began. The screams of children rang out around us, before my son yelled out, "People, what are you doing? We're going to crush each other!" His plea fell on deaf ears, however, and in the ensuing crush, his rib was injured. But this was nothing compared to the news we received a few days later, when we learned that our friends who had been evacuated shortly after us had been shot and killed in their car.

While politicians take their time thinking, sending commissions, deciding what steps to take next... the people of my country continue to die.

Children are left orphaned and disabled. I can't even imagine how many generations will now grow up with unbearable psychological trauma.

But do you know what the worst thing is? I think I'm starting to get used to it. Growing accustomed to the fact that my sisters, nieces, friends and relatives remain there. They report hearing constant sirens and explosions, often losing the ability to communicate, as well as having to go without electricity or heating for days on end. All the while anticipating, even expecting, the latest bombardment of rockets on the civilian population, the next families to die.

Peace is a global value! It's an inherent human right, vital for every person on earth!

My life as I know it can be divided into two parts - all that came before the 24th of February this year; and everything that has happened to me since that fateful day. If you'd have asked me to describe myself the day before my country was invaded, I would have called myself a successful, confident and beautiful woman with stars in my eyes. Fast forward to the present day, and those once optimistic eyes are now filled with confusion, loss and fear. I fled my burning home, amid the sounds of sirens and bombs, but with a heart nevertheless full of resolve and a confidence that the light will ultimately overcome the evil.

Recently Patrick, the head of the UNAA, approached me and asked what I thought it meant

to be a refugee? Some of you may have seen the famous sculpture, Emigrant, by the renowned French sculptor Bruno Catalano. It depicts a man holding a suitcase in his left arm, only that this arm is one of the few parts of his body that remains intact. Beyond his head, upper torso and his legs below the knees, he has no body to speak of, and it is only thanks to the suitcase in his hand that this sculpture is able to stand. So, what does it feel like to be a refugee? I would say it's when you don't even have a suitcase ...

You go through every day with a burning, yet powerless, desire to return to the life you once knew...your life before the war. That life in which all the people you love, the people you grew up with, were still alive and well!

War changes people...it breaks your spirit and slowly grinds you down... unfortunately, I speak from experience. Nowadays, I sometimes find myself staring into the mirror; my head spinning through endless questions, troubles and uncertainties. I glance at a reflection that is completely unfamiliar to me and reluctantly ask myself ... who are you? No one... A refugee in a strange, far away country... A frightened, uncertain yet highly driven being that runs and runs and is afraid to stop.

Do you remember at the beginning of my speech, when I spoke about the small worlds within each family? Well, my particular world has been shattered. And how do I go about rebuilding it while this war carries on? I haven't quite figured that out yet.

As summer in Ukraine neared its end, my family and I began to understand that we would most likely be spending the winter in Australia. I started learning English, but to my horror I soon found that my brain was resisting. I turned to my psychologist, who explained to me that the severe stress my brain was under meant that the pathways needed to add an entirely new vocabulary and way of thinking were largely going to be blocked for some time.

By the way, I apologise for my English - it's a work in progress.

My main occupation in Australia is as a volunteer - donating my time to support and assist refugees from Ukraine, as well as those still there.

I am very grateful to Australia for its help and support to the people of my country. I want to share with the people of Australia, who have been so unbelievably warm and welcoming, a piece of my country's culture. Though we are far from Ukraine, all our efforts are geared towards helping the Ukrainian people. Our aim is to bring peace closer through kindness, honesty, and light. It is time to fight against darkness, cruelty and lies, to make sure that each life matters. I am sure this victory is very close, because we are all united.

Thank you for the invitation to speak in front of you today, and to share my story. Glory to Ukraine! Glory to the heroes!

1. 2. My son is a very smart adult talented child. unlike me, he speaks excellent English. we were lucky he was taken on a full scholarship to a very good private school he participates in swimming competitions, mathematics olympiads, studies at a programming school. no friends yet. although there were a lot in Ukraine. but I think it's a matter of time. As he says to moms, I don't want to be friends anymore, it's very painful to lose ... but I'm sure that time will heal everything.
2. 3. There is no future between Ukraine and Russia, there cannot be a joint future. after what this country did to my people and in my country, I don't think that it will be forgotten and say goodbye quickly. Ukrainians have never been hostile to Russia. even now we don't need anything from her, just leave us alone, let us live freely on our land. I really liked the statement of my colleague from Ukraine after the European Parliament declared Russia a terrorist state last night. Russia has only today... and Ukraine has tomorrow!
3. 4. Yes, I am very grateful to the Australians for their help, support and understanding.
4. 5. now I am looking for a job
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