

# Message to Russians from a Ukrainian Socialist

Monday 20 June 2022, by [BILOUS Taras](#) (Date first published: 5 March 2022).

**This article is from a standard leftist perspective. We don't care so much about upholding strict purity politics and only sharing the work of "true anarchists." We realize that some may associate the author of this article with a soft pro-Russian stance, but that makes his well-founded analysis on the topic even more interesting. (Praleski Team)**

Right now, arguing with Russians who do not condemn the actions of the Russian military in Ukraine - that is the responsibility of anti-war Russians, not Ukrainians. However, I will try to help them a little bit - maybe it will make some kind of difference.

First, for those who ask "Why were you silent for 8 years when Donbas was being bombed?" - I was not silent. For example, here is [my article about the Ukraine aircraft airstrike of the Luhansk Regional State Administration](#) (this is important for me personally, because I am from Luhansk). I have also written [about other instances of civilian deaths from 2014-2015](#) (more on this topic below). On top of that, I demonstrated [against the economic blockade of Donbas](#) and attended the antifascist rally in the center of Kyiv with a sign reading "[Disband the Azov Regiment](#)." In general I have supported a peaceful resolution to the conflict in Donbas.

But now everything has changed. The current invasion by the Russian armed forces - this is imperialist aggression, which must be defeated, or else what awaits is a "new normal," in which military intervention becomes commonplace. When Russia began to bomb Ukrainian cities, I decided to join the Territorial Defense. Unfortunately, it didn't work out, because there aren't enough guns in Kyiv for all the volunteers.

If you still think that the Russian army is only here fighting 'Nazis,' that is not so. In huge queues, older men, hipsters, and bros from the area all stood together waiting for guns. Look at [how the Russian invasion was met by Russian-speaking residents of Berdiansk](#), in southeastern Ukraine. For us, this is a people's liberation war.

I don't understand how Russians can still believe in the propaganda about Nazis being in control of the Ukrainian government, after a Russian-speaking Jewish man from Kryvyi Rih with a peace plan for Donbas became the president. Yes, a peaceful resolution could not be reached, but that is due in large part to Putin's unwillingness to make any concessions. Nevertheless, there was success in achieving an unprecedented reduction in ceasefire violations - there were far fewer civilian casualties. Now due to the Russian invasion, the residents of Donbas are once again living under constant shelling; [the city of Shchastia was razed to the ground by the Russian army](#).

## **On the civilian deaths in Donbas:**

Those who are now asking "why were you silent for 8 years" also need to understand that a significant portion of civilian casualties in Donbas are the result of shelling by the L/DPR and the Russian military. If you don't believe me, then you can read [the report from the human rights center](#)

[‘Memorial’](#). I especially advise reading the section, “Destruction of the villages of Novosvetlivka and Khryashchevatoe in the Luhansk region,” where the responsibility for the absolute majority of the destruction and deaths lies with the militias and the Russian military, who were attempting to drive out units of the Ukrainian Armed Forces. A similar situation happened in Debaltseve, and residents in Donbas died due to L/DPR shelling in [Mariupol’](#), [Volnovakha](#), and other places.

And of course, the biggest case of civilian deaths in 2014 was the fault of the Russian military - the Boeing 777 catastrophe in the Donetsk region. If anyone still believes the Russian propaganda that they weren’t the ones who shot it down - I don’t know how it’s even possible to discuss anything with people like that. But here I want to say something else. In the Ukrainian-controlled territory Stanytsia Luhanska, all this time people [had been able to honor the memory of their fellow villagers, who died as the result of an airstrike by Ukrainian aircraft, as they wished](#). Without the military and the national anthem.

At the same time, in the L/DPR at the Boeing crash site; in Novosvetlivka, Khryashchevatoe, and other places of civilian deaths caused by the actions of militias and the Russian army, it wasn’t like that at all. All this time, the military higher-ups of the L/DPR continued to lie about not being responsible for the Boeing crash, and used people’s deaths - who died because of the military’s very actions - in order to further stir up hatred for Ukraine. At every event in honor of these victims, they lied and spoke about genocide, even though they were the ones who killed these people.

Lastly, regarding the civilian deaths after the conclusion of the ‘hot phase’ of the war: [The number of civilian deaths in Donbas according to the United Nations Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights](#)

As you can see on the graph above, the absolute majority of civilian casualties in Donbas were killed or wounded in 2014-2015, and then the number of victims gradually declined. But there is an important fact which for all these years they did not like to talk about in Ukraine: most of the shelling deaths of civilians since 2016 were in the L/DPR. That is to say, as a result of shelling by the Ukrainian Armed Forces.

Last fall I worked on an article in which I tried to answer the question of why this is so. Unfortunately, due to depression I was unable to finish the work, but [here you can see a table in which I attempted to organize all of the information about civilian casualties from UN and OSCE reports](#). And I do have something to say on this topic.

There is one obvious explanation for this trend, that may occur to anyone who takes a look at the line of demarcation in Donbas. Since February 2015, it has barely changed, but it just so happened that on the front lines on the L/DPR side, there are large cities such as Gorlovka and Donetsk, whereas on the Ukrainian side that is not the case. Mariupol’ is noticeably further from the front than Donetsk. Generally speaking, the population density of the frontline zone on the L/DPR side is higher; ergo, the probability of hitting civilians there was higher.

However, this interpretation is incomplete. The ratio of the number of victims on both sides changed, which required clarification. Here I’d like to cite an [UN OHCHR report](#) (p. 7):

“26. Just as in the previous reporting period, OHCHR noted examples, when the Ukrainian Armed Forces vacated their previously occupied premises in residential areas of Vidrodzhennya and Nevelskoye, which led to a reduction in shelling in these areas. OHCHR expresses its gratitude to the Ukrainian government for such actions, which demonstrate that measures to protect the civilian population during times of armed conflict are practicable and effective from the perspective of complying with

international human rights obligations.”

I did not find any comparable ‘compliments’ addressed to the L/DPR in UN reports. I’m not certain that this is a comprehensive explanation for the differences in the number of casualties on both sides of the conflict boundary, but it definitely accounts for a significant degree of the skew in the data.

Finally, here’s a quote from [my letter to western leftists](#): “Putin can plan whatever he wants, but even if Russia takes Kyiv and installs its own occupation government, we will resist. The battle will continue until Russia leaves Ukraine, and until they pay for all of the victims and destruction. That is why my final words are for Russians: hurry and overthrow Putin’s regime. It is in your best interests, and also in ours.”

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**P.S.**

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