

As Donetsk Civilians Live in Constant Fear of Ukrainian Shelling, a Reporter on the Ground Details the Terror

Documenting Kiev's attacks on residential areas is becoming a horrible, tragic routine

By [Eva Bartlett](#)

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Heavy Ukrainian shelling of central Donetsk on April 28 [killed nine civilians](#) - including an eight-year-old [girl and her grandmother](#) - and injured at least 16 more. The victims were burned alive when the minibus they were in [was hit](#) by a shell.

Another tragic day for the people of the Donbass. More Ukrainian war crimes, slaughtering 9 civilians in Donetsk yesterday, including 1 child, and injuring at least 16 more when Ukraine rained munitions down on residential areas of the city, once again. pic.twitter.com/hQanExMWul

— Eva Karene Bartlett (@EvaKBartlett) [April 29, 2023](#)

The attack also targeted a major hospital, apartment buildings, houses, parks, streets, and sidewalks. All civilian areas - not military targets.

[According to](#) the Donetsk People's Republic's (DPR) Representative Office in the JCCC (Joint Monitoring and Co-ordination Center on Ukraine's War Crimes), Kiev's forces fired high-explosive fragmentation missiles "*produced in Slovakia and transferred to Ukraine by NATO countries.*" Regarding an earlier shelling on the same day, the JCCC [noted](#) that US-made HIMARS systems were used, targeting "*exclusively in the residential, central quarter of the city.*"

I was outside of Donetsk interviewing refugees from Artyomovsk (also known as Bakhmut)

when both rounds of intense shelling occurred, the first starting just after 11am. I returned to see a catastrophic scene, with a burnt-out bus – still smoking – and some of its passengers' charred bodies melted onto the frame. This tragic picture was sadly not a one-off event.

Elsewhere, city workers were already [removing debris](#) and had begun repaving damaged sections of the roads. I've seen this following Ukrainian shelling many times, including on January 1 this year, when Ukraine fired 25 Grads [into the city centre](#). Similarly, in July 2022, Ukrainian shelling downtown killed four civilians, including two in a vehicle likewise gutted by flames. When I [arrived at the scene](#) about an hour later, workers were repaving the affected section of the street.

The [damage to](#) the Republican Trauma Center hospital was quickly cleaned up, but videos shared on Telegram immediately after the shelling show a gaping hole in one of the walls. [The room](#) concerned contained what was, apparently, Donetsk's [sole MRI](#) machine.

Along Artyoma street, the central Donetsk boulevard targeted countless times by Ukrainian attacks, the destruction was evident: Two cars caught up in the bombing, residents of an apartment building boarding up shattered windows and doors, the all-too-familiar sound of glass and debris being swept away. In [the residential area](#), the first to be targeted that day, in a massive crater behind one house, the walls and roof of another home were intermixed with rocket fragments.

Short clip from what I saw at the sites bombed by Ukraine yesterday.

Longer clip & more info here: <https://t.co/baapVcthhrpic.twitter.com/XoNNCxlgMY>

— Eva Karene Bartlett (@EvaKBartlett) [April 29, 2023](#)

Another year of Ukrainian war crimes

In April 2022, following strikes on a large market area in Kirovsky district, in western Donetsk, which killed five civilians and injured 23, I went there to document the aftermath, not expecting to see two of the five dead still lying in nearby lanes. This shelling was just before noon, a busy time of day in the area. Bombing at such periods is an insidious tactic to ensure more civilians are maimed or killed.

Double and triple striking the same areas is another method used by Ukrainian forces. In an [interview last year](#), the director of the Department of Fire and Rescue Forces of the DPR Ministry of Emergency Situations, Sergey Neka, [told me](#), *"Our units arrive at the scene and Ukraine begins to shell it. A lot of equipment has been damaged and destroyed."*

Andrey Levchenko, chief of the emergency department for the Kievsky district of Donetsk, also hit by Ukrainian attacks, said: *"They wait for 30 minutes for us to arrive. We arrive there, start assisting people, and the shelling resumes. They wait again, our guys hide in the shelters, as soon as we go out, put out the fire, help people, then shelling resumes."*

Excerpts from my report on Ukraine's targeting of Donbass rescuers, war

crimes.

In August, the Donetsk Fire & Rescue Dpt Director told me 40 employees had been injured, 4 killed. In past few days, reports from the DPR note 14 more rescuers have been killed, 9 more injured. pic.twitter.com/fzhcRoOwLT

— Eva Karene Bartlett (@EvaKBartlett) [September 3, 2022](#)

I was here in Donetsk in mid-June, during a day of particularly intense Ukrainian shelling of the very centre of the city, [which killed at least five civilians](#). The DPR authorities reported that “*within two hours, almost 300 MLRS rockets and artillery shells were fired.*” One Grad rocket hit a maternity hospital, tearing through the roof.

The following month, Ukraine fired rockets containing internationally-banned ‘petal’ mines. The [streets of central Donetsk](#), as well as the western and northern districts and other cities, were littered with the hard-to-spot mines designed to grotesquely maim, but not necessarily kill, anyone stepping on them. These mines keep claiming new victims to this day – when I [last wrote about them](#) here, 104 civilians had been maimed, including [this 14-year-old boy](#). Three had died of their injuries. Since then, the number of victims has risen to [112](#).

Even with warning, these nefarious “petal”/“butterfly” mines dropped by Ukraine on Donetsk are hard to see & easy to miss.

Ukraine is committing war crimes against the civilians of the Donbass, and has been for 8+ years. pic.twitter.com/p5byG95GVG

— Eva Karene Bartlett (@EvaKBartlett) [August 1, 2022](#)

In August, heavy Ukrainian shelling of the centre of Donetsk [hit](#) directly next to the hotel I was staying in, along with dozens of other journalists and cameramen. Six civilians were killed that day, including one woman outside the hotel, as well as a child. [She](#) been a talented ballerina due to leave to study in Russia soon, and along with her grandmother, her ballet teacher was also killed that day, herself a world-famous former ballerina.

Three bouts of Ukrainian shelling of the city centre in a span of just five days in September killed 26 civilians. Four were killed [on September 17](#), among them two people burned alive inside a vehicle on the same central Artyoma Street. Two days later, [16 civilians were killed](#), the remains of their bodies strewn along the street or in unrecognizable piles of flesh. Three days later, Ukraine struck next to the central market, [killing six civilians](#), two in a minibus, the rest on the street.

In my subsequent visits to Donetsk and surrounding cities in November and December, I filmed the aftermath of more Ukrainian shelling (using HIMARS) of civilian areas of Donetsk and the settlement of Gorlovka to the north. The November 7 shelling of central Donetsk could have killed the toddler of the young [mother I interviewed](#). Fortunately, after hearing the first rockets hit, she ran with her son to the bathroom. When calm returned, she found shrapnel on his bed.

The November 12 shelling of Gorlovka [damaged a beautiful](#) historic cultural building, destroying parts of the roof and the theatre hall within. According to the centre’s director, it was one of the best movie theatres in Donetsk Region, one of the oldest, most beautiful,

and most beloved buildings in the city. He noted that the HIMARS system is a very precise weapon, so the attack was not accidental.

The shelling goes on

Early morning during Easter Mass on April 16, the Ukrainian army fired 20 rockets near the Cathedral of the Holy Transfiguration in the centre of Donetsk, French journalist Christelle Neant [reported](#), noting that one civilian was killed and seven injured. The shelling extended to the central market just behind the cathedral. Just over a week prior, on April 7, another shelling [of that market](#) killed one civilian and injured 13, also considerably damaging the market itself.

Ukraine continues to shell the western and northern districts of Donetsk, also pounding Gorlovka, as well as Yasinovatya just north of Donetsk ([killing two civilians](#) some days ago).

On April 23, [shelling in](#) Petrovsky, a hard-hit western Donetsk district, killed one man and injured five more. The same day, in a village northeast of Donetsk, a rocket [killed two women](#) in their 30s. Security camera footage shows the moment when the women attempted to take cover. The munition that killed them hit directly next to where they huddled.

A few days later, on my way to interview refugees from Artyomovsk sheltering in another city, I passed along the tiny village where those women were killed. It's a road I've driven a dozen times or more, a quiet, calm, scenic region of rolling hills, a lovely river, a beautiful church. It's far from any front line. The murder of these two women was another Ukrainian war crime.

The people here are constantly terrorized by Ukrainian shelling or the threat of it, and have been since Kiev started its war on the Donbass in 2014.

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