

## **Heartbreaking scenes at Ukraine border sees thousands of kids separated from dads**

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A Ukrainian rail hub was swamped by desperate families fleeing to Poland yesterday as brave fighters piled on to trains heading the other way to join the war against Russia.

Refugees from all over the strife-torn nation have flooded west to the city of Lviv to escape Vladimir Putin's Russian invasion force.

*This heartbreaking picture shows a little boy crying at the train station*

*A volunteer takes care of a child as thousands of women and children cross the border after Russian attacks, at the Siret border crossing in Siret, Romania*

*Refugees from all over the strife-torn nation have flooded west to the city of Lviv*

*People wait at the border as they try to escape Ukraine*

The huge exodus overwhelmed the train terminus 43 miles from the Polish border, sparking a stampede across tracks towards platforms.

But across the border in the Polish city of Przemyśl, in an awe-inspiring site, hundreds of determined Ukrainian men wearing combat gear boarded trains heading towards the war zone.

Many had shepherded loved ones to safety before leaping on to the first train back to the front line.

One of them, Sergei Motorov, 42, said: "I left my daughter with my parents to protect her from what is happening but now I'm going straight back to Ukraine to join the resistance.

"I cannot stand by and let this happen to my country."

Until last week, volunteer freedom fighter Alexei Anishyn, 29, was a police officer in the Ukrainian city of Kryvyi Rih.

As he boarded a train to Lviv, he warned Russian President Putin: "I will defend my country until my last breath. I'm prepared to die to save it.

"We all are. I have military experience and will fight to the death. Putin must die."

Hundreds of men, many wearing army fatigues and carrying body armour, lined up on the station platform in Przemyśl to answer inspirational Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy's call to arms.

Ukraine barred all men aged 18 to 60 from fleeing the war zone " to make them available to fight.

Ukrainian law student Oleh, 21, travelled from his home in the Czech Republic.

He said: "This was an easy decision for me. I want to save my home and my people.

"We are focused on what we have to do and we will stay for the last drop of blood."

Aleksander Malovanyi, 46, from Kyiv, was injured by a Russian rocket attack fighting for Ukraine in Luhansk in 2014 but is now prepared to take up arms once again.

He said: "Ukraine is my home, it's where my family live. I'm worried for them, not for me.

"I'm going back to defend my homeland in its hour of need. If we don't, Putin will get away with this and that must never happen."

Hundreds of women and children fleeing Ukraine arrived in Poland in jam-packed carriages without water or food after a gruelling 17 hours at the border.

They waited on a platform at the station to be processed " as their men boarded the same train heading in the opposite direction.

The fighters' war cry contrasted with tumultuous scenes across the frontier in Lviv as young children and elderly relatives bolted across rail tracks attempting to board trains.

Fights broke out in the ticket hall as seats on all services heading away from the war zone sold out. But thousands of refugees continued to pour into the station begging for help as the sound of air raid sirens filled the air across the city.

Dads were seen putting their children on trains to safety and kissing them goodbye " before dashing back to face the overwhelming firepower of Putin's invaders.

Tears flowed as weeping youngsters pressed their faces against the steamy train windows as carriages pulled out.

One dad, Ruslan Gladkiy, 35, was seen putting his nine-year-old son Hordeiy on to a train and fighting back tears as he told him "Look after your mum" before the train pulled away.

Ruslan is married to Galina, 37. They also have a four-year-old daughter, Emilia. He said: "It was a very difficult moment. I did not want to say goodbye to my family.

"I am staying and will be defending my country and hopefully it won't be too long before I see them again. I will miss them."

More heartbreaking scenes of the mounting refugee chaos emerged in neighbouring Hungary, where a bewildered little boy was pictured weeping after arriving in Zahony.

Back in Lviv, mum Miliena Zaschitnikova, 21, arrived with son Max, four, and her mother Inna yesterday after her husband Andrei joined the war against Russia.

But they found that all international train services had sold out and were left shivering outside the station among thousands with nowhere to go yesterday as temperatures plunged.

Miliena said: "We're stuck in this chaos. I bought my little boy a toy train for the journey but that's the only train he's going to get today. We have nowhere to stay tonight and no way to escape the war.

"We are trying to smile and keep my little boy happy because he's too young to understand what we're going through. We're all living through a nightmare made by Vladimir Putin."

Tania Yokovchuck, 30, was also stuck outside the station, struggling to comfort her crying two year-old son Karar.

She said: "We arrived here hoping to escape but it's turned into a dead end" it's impossible to get train tickets.

"And now I don't know what to do or where to go and are desperate to find somewhere to sleep. No one here knows how this will end."

Iraqi Ruba Hussein, 19, told The Sun how she had unexpectedly become a refugee twice in 12 months after fleeing her war-torn homeland to Kyiv.

Student Ruba said: "A month ago I would never have believed I could become a refugee again.

"But now we're all running for our lives again thanks to Vladimir Putin. I ran from a terrible place where innocent people died in conflict all the time.

"And now the same thing is happening in a peaceful European country where we had made our home.

"I knew we had to get out when I heard the explosions as the Russians entered Kyiv and now we're stuck here and having to sleep on a cold factory floor tonight. There's no way out."

At the Polish border crossing point at Medyka, some refugees told how they walked 20 miles to cross to the sanctuary of Poland.

Weighed down by bags and pulling suitcases behind them, the steady stream of women and children overwhelmed the frontier post.

Aid agencies have warned that up to five million are set to flee as Putin steps up his senseless onslaught sparking the biggest refugee crisis since World War Two.

Mum-of-four Ivano Frankivsk, whose kids are all under 13, said: "All I could think about was the children.

"What we have left behind is not important. We do not know what the future holds."

*Dad Ruslan says goodbye to his son Georgi at Lviv station*

*Georgi says goodbye to his dad from the train*

*Russian President Vladimir Putin ordered the invasion of Ukraine*

- The Sun