
Thousands Huddle in Donetsk Shelters Afraid to Go Home

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Shelters in the Petrovka neighborhood have not been empty since last June, and not many taxi drivers will agree to take you there, but they will ask you instead, "Petrovka, you mean where people get bombed?"

One of the shelters is located in the basement of the House of Culture, a place where humanitarian aid for neighborhood residents was distributed until recently.

In late January, intense shelling was resumed, preventing volunteers from distributing food and basic other basic necessities.

Two days ago, a projectile just missed destroying then House of Culture, said Liubov Mikhailovna, who has been living permanently in the shelter since last August with her two children.

She explained "We were very scared; the children woke up and began to cry, my eldest son ran upstairs, climbed down into the basement of the building and there all the windows were broken, there was glass everywhere."

Her younger son, age 4, goes out to the streets only for 20 minutes every day, and has been instructed not to wander far from the shelter's entrance, Mikhailovna added.

In fact, all the children in the shelter are pale.

They do not go to school and many have developed a persistent cough.

On this particular day, some German journalists have given them candy, which Mikhailovna did not appreciate.

“They should have brought them fruit, they need vitamins, not candy,” she said.

Currently, 65 people are living permanently in the shelter, mostly families with children.

They are fraction of the thousands of Ukrainian children trapped in a dozen bomb shelters in Donetsk suffering from enormous levels of stress and often severe cold and the lack of the most elemental facilities for hygiene, according to the United Nations Children’s Fund, UNICEF.
