



A Voluntary Charity working in Ukraine and Moldova

with roots going back to 1990



Voices from Ukraine – Irina

Irina is a schoolteacher. Her husband was killed last year, just three days before they would have marked seventeen years of marriage. He should have called her that day. He always did. But the phone stayed silent. Worry grew into dread, and then into something colder. It was only after three long days that the call finally came—not from him, but from one of his comrades.



He told her her husband had died in his arms. Artillery had rained down on them without pause for three days and nights. They were supposed to be leaving the front line, changing shifts, when the bombardment struck. There was no time. No chance.

As Irina told the story, the pain surfaced quickly, her voice cracking, tears falling before she could stop them.

She had to hear the worst news of her life over the phone, The pain of receiving such devastating news over the phone was made even worse by the fact that her children were nearby and overheard the conversation.

For a year after his death, there was no help. No support from the army, no pension. They only survived because of the occasional kindness of his fellow soldiers, who sent money when they could, out of loyalty and compassion.

It took months of struggling through paperwork and silence to prove that he had died in service. Only then did the state begin to provide a small pension—for their children. Dasha is sixteen. Jenea is ten. This support will end when they each turn eighteen. It is not enough, but it is something.

Dasha was just 15 when her father died, she kept her grief to herself at first. She focused on caring for her mother, on staying composed when the world had fallen apart. She now studies architecture in Vinnytsia and lives in a dormitory. The sirens still unnerve her. They pull her mind back to memories she tries not to revisit. Still, she dreams of continuing her studies.

Irina is deeply afraid that she won't be able to cope in the years ahead. And yet, she keeps moving forward. She volunteers, helping soldiers on the front line. She stays in contact with her husband's old comrades, trying to remain close to the part of him that still exists in memory and friendship.

At school, she organizes small fundraising events— arranging cake sales and collections among the parents. They usually raise between 6,000 to 10,000 hryvnia—just enough to buy night vision goggles or repair the old cars and pickups that bring supplies to the front. She does this not for glory or recognition, but because it is what she can do.



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In the village where she lives, there is a memorial in the centre. On it are the names and faces of those lost in the war—including her husband. Every day, she passes by and sees him there. Perhaps it is comforting, perhaps it reopens the wound. Or perhaps the two feelings live side by side.

We later visited the director of a nearby school, his son was also killed in the war. In the entrance hall, like in many schools across Ukraine is lined with photographs of the fallen. Young faces, frozen in time. Smiling, brave, and gone. Frequently, these images are accompanied with a few words about them, about the schooling, further education, career and family.



This is the world Irina now lives in. A world of absence, and endurance. Of love held in memory, and of the quiet, ongoing cost of war. This is the daily reality for Irina, her children, and many others. It is a story of grief, resilience, and unwavering love.

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