

RUSSIA ANNOUNCED CEASEFIRE IN MARIUPOL TO EVACUATE CIVILIANS

ON DAY 36 OF WAR ONLY BY UNHCR & ICRC

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USPA NEWS - According to the Russian defense Ministry, Russia announced ceasefire from 31 st March to evacuate civilians from Mariupol, the besieged Ukrainian city. The Russian side announces a ceasefire and opens humanitarian corridors for the exit of residents of Mariupol from Mariupol to Zaporizhzhia, via the Russian-controlled port of Berdiansk, would be opened from 10am (0700 GMT) on Thursday, the ministry said. "For this humanitarian operation to succeed, we propose to carry it out with the direct participation of the UN High Commissioner for Refugees and the International Committee of the Red Cross," the ministry statement said. The Russian ministry asked Kyiv to guarantee the "unconditional respect" for the ceasefire through written notification to the Russian side, the UNHCR and ICRC before 6am (0300 GMT) Thursday. Source: ICRC and AlJazeera Channel TV

ICRC WAS EXPECTING FOR A LONG TIME THE GREEN LIGHT TO EVACUATE SAFELY THE CIVILIANS

It is three weeks that ICRC is attempting to evacuate civilians, unsuccessfully due to the numerous halts... This (even late) announcement by the Russian Minister of Defense to allow a human corridor to enable evacuating civilians from Mariupol is a great relief, for the humanitarian Organization of Red Cross but more importantly for the civilians, mostly women, carrying their kids, and elderly, disabled, people, hoping to be assisted and protecting from the armed conflict. "Amid devastating scenes of human suffering in Mariupol, a second attempt today to start evacuating an estimated 200,000 people out of the city came to a halt. The failed attempts yesterday and today underscore the absence of a detailed and functioning agreement between the parties to the conflict. The ICRC is not and cannot in any way be the guarantor of a ceasefire agreement between the parties or of its implementation. As a neutral and impartial humanitarian intermediary, the ICRC has been facilitating the dialogue between the parties on the safe passage of civilians. In addition, the ICRC needs satisfactory security guarantees in order to operate. Today, our teams began opening up the evacuation route from Mariupol before hostilities resumed. Our teams remain in Mariupol and are ready to help facilitate further attempts if the parties reach a detailed agreement, which is for the parties alone to implement and respect. We remind the parties that staff, vehicles and buildings bearing the Red Cross emblems are protected under international law, as are the emblems themselves which must not be misused. We continue to remind the parties to the conflict of their obligations to respect international humanitarian law and to protect civilians and civilian infrastructure." (Source ICRC, 2 March 22)

THE SIEGE OF MARIUPOL IS A HUMANITARIAN CATASTROPHE-----According to European Council reports, "Thousands of residents of the city are increasingly desperate as drinking water, food, and medication has become extremely scarce. The incessant shelling has killed thousands of inhabitants and continues to erase what still remains of the city's infrastructure, including schools and hospital wards. With many families unable to bury their dead, bodies of some of the victims are reportedly left strewn in the streets, while others have allegedly been buried in mass graves. This terrible suffering cannot be allowed to go on any further. The desperately needed life-saving humanitarian and medical aid must urgently be allowed to reach the men, women and children of Mariupol. Humanitarian corridors must be agreed upon without delay to allow those who wish to leave the city to safely do so, and the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) to gain immediate access to the city. The siege of Mariupol is a humanitarian catastrophe. The blatant disregard for civilian life and the suffering of the people of Mariupol must end immediately." (Source European Council Report 28 March 2022)

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