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## Ukraine mourns the best of youth, but it is holding out. Humanitarian emergency in Kharkiv

They were young, in the prime of life. Some of them were pursuing university studies. Others were starting their professional careers. They decided to give up everything to serve and defend their homeland. Ukraine mourns their best young men. Today, a large crowd of scouts led a procession through the streets of Lviv to pay their respects to two volunteer soldiers who died on the battlefield. Their names were Artemy Dimid and Nazar Gladky, just two of hundreds of soldiers killed every day in the warfare. Artem was 27 years old. He was in the United States when the war broke out in Ukraine. He died on June 18, defending his homeland from the 'Russian occupiers'. His body was found covered in mortar shells near Donetsk. He was the son of Father Mykhailo Dymyd, the first rector of Lviv Theological Academy, chaplain of the Maidan during the 'Revolution of Dignity', and of Ivanka Krypyakevych-Dymyd, one of the country's most renowned icon painters. At the family's request, the Ukrainian Catholic University created a bursary fund named after him. The head of the Ukrainian Greek Catholic Church, H.B. Shvechuk, paid homage to his memory: "This death, a heroic death, came as a shock to all intellectual and scientific circles in Ukraine. Today we say: heroes do not die. We pray: God, receive him into Your arms and bestow eternal memory upon him." The other young man was Nazar Gladkyi. He too had volunteered as a soldier. He died at the age of 22, while on a combat mission heading towards Kharkiv.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=HVoN4tokRq8&t=6043s> **"Our young men are worn out but they are highly morally motivated as they know what they are doing and what they are fighting for"**, Father **Andriy Zelinskyy**, military chaplain of the Ukrainian Greek Catholic Church, told SIR. He just returned from Odesa, where he had a number of meetings with officers fighting one of Ukraine's hottest fronts of defence against the Russian invasion. "Ukraine is losing its best youth," added the Jesuit priest. "The first ones who volunteered to fight on the front line of the conflict were young people with a strong sense of responsibility. They were all young men that joined the army to defend their families and their country." The military chaplains are offering them guidance and support. The soldiers recount what they are living on the battlefield and express the heavy toll of losing their friends. "Ours is a spiritual effort that touches on the innermost human dimension to support and protect humanity while at the same time not despising their job, which is to defend their family and their homeland. This job requires courage and humaneness. For there can be no humaneness without courage and no courage without humaneness." **Ukraine is weeping but still holding out.** Russian strikes escalated over the past two days, especially in the region south of Odesa and to the east, on the Donbas border. In the Odesa region, Ukrainian air defence forces shot down Russian missiles, but yesterday a food warehouse in the southern port city of Odessa was hit and destroyed. "It shows that the Russians are firing at anything they want with increasing intensity," says Father **Roman Krat**, parish priest at the Latin-rite Catholic cathedral in Odesa and the bishop's press relations officer. President Volodymyr Zelensky has just returned from a visit to the battered port cities of Mykolaiv and Odessa. "It was a courageous step, much appreciated by the population", he says. "Some of my friends went to see the presidential motorcade on the streets. They also appreciated the fact that he visited Mykolaiv, even though it was dangerous. This shows that he is a brave man and in contrast to Putin who is in hiding, he has chosen to stand by his people. The people appreciate his closeness. War is tiring people out. And there is a risk of getting used to it. We are getting used to the bombs too, to being in danger." But habit does not detract from the certainty of victory. "We are sure that Mykolaiv will hold out," says Father Krat with conviction. By contrast, it is reported that Russia has connected the Kherson region with Russian television channels. "Where the Russians arrive, propaganda arrives with them. They even cut off the Ukrainian telephone network. For this, we will resist, for freedom." But Ukraine needs help. "Europe's weapons have not yet arrived", the priest confirms, "and the Russians are taking advantage of this opportunity to destroy

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everything before reinforcements reach the battlefield." **Critical situation also in Kharkiv.** "We have been hearing non-stop shelling for the past two days," says Father **Gregoryi Semenkov**, chancellor of the Latin-rite diocese of Kharkiv and parish priest at the cathedral. "Fortunately, they have not yet shelled the city centre, but they raided the surrounding forests on the outskirts. However, there is yet another emergency in Kharkiv. "We are running out of relief supplies," says the priest with concern. "We just went and saw five thousand people already waiting in line for their relief packages that we are preparing, to be distributed starting at 11 a.m. We are experiencing what the first disciples experienced in the Gospel with the miracle of the loaves and fishes. Hopefully, we too shall continue to help these people and we hope that Jesus will work the miracle again today." According to the priest, for security reasons, the distribution of humanitarian aid is not carried out in front of the cathedral but at another location. He goes on to explain why humanitarian aid is barely arriving. "We are a long way from Poland," says Fr Gregorio. "It's a long drive and the diesel prices have gone up a lot. You must consider that driving a truck all the way over here can cost up to three thousand Euros."

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