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Olympic Star Oksana Baiul Launches Program to Help Ukrainian Refugees

Oksana Baiul won the gold medal for figure skating at the 1994 Olympics.

By Ali Sar

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Oksana Baiul. **oksanabaiul.com**

Hollywood —Ukrainian Olympic gold medalist Oksana Baiul says she still cannot believe what is happening in her home country.

In an emotionally charged roundtable session before the Hollywood Foreign Press Association the skating star said when "Putin announced the invasion I couldn't believe it."

"I speak to people [in Ukraine] frequently and what Russian soldiers are doing there is unthinkable. I can't imagine what's going to happen to him [Putin]. I just have no words what he is doing," she said.

A native of Dnipro, Ukraine, the 44-year-old Baiul has been splitting her time between America and Ukraine, currently living in Las Vegas. Ukraine's first Olympic gold medalist says she will be moving to Louisiana where she and her husband will launch a program to help refugees from Ukraine find work.

In the meantime, she is keeping in touch with relatives in her home country where a cousin is fighting and his wife is making flags for the soldiers.

"It just hurts me to think about them," she says, adding "what they are going through."

Baiul said she speaks to Ukrainian friends and that "some of them are sending their kids to Romania and Poland, but mothers and fathers are not leaving their soil [home]...they want to stay in Ukraine and they want to fight."

"We are not going to surrender," she continued. "When Putin did this my first reaction was: How can he make 45 million Ukrainians like him? I said it's not possible because we are not Russia, we are Ukraine."

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