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At Least 18 Killed in Russian Missile Strike on Ukrainian Shopping Mall

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t.me/V_Zelenskiy_official

A Russian missile strike on a crowded mall in the central Ukrainian city of Kremenchuk on Monday has killed at least 18 people, Ukrainian authorities said, amid global outrage toward the attack.

Video footage shows plumes of black smoke rising from the burning shopping center in the industrial city of Kremenchuk as dozens of rescuers rush around the perimeter and fire trucks parked nearby.

"The occupiers fired missiles at a shopping center where there were over a thousand civilians. The mall is on fire, rescuers are fighting the fire. The number of victims is impossible to imagine," Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky wrote on Telegram.

He later called the strike "one of the most brazen terrorist acts in European history" in his evening broadcast on Telegram.

Ukraine's state emergency services said early Tuesday that 18 people have died, including one person who succumbed to their injuries in the hospital. Another 59 people were hospitalized with injuries, 25 of whom were placed in intensive care.

Dmytro Lunin, the governor of the Poltava region where Kremenchuk is located, had earlier placed the death toll 13, with more than 40 people wounded.

Embed:

The Ukrainian defense ministry said the strike was deliberately timed to coincide with the mall's busiest hours and cause the maximum number of victims.

The Ukrainian air force said the mall was hit by Kh-22 anti-ship missiles fired from Tu-22 bombers from the region of Kursk in western Russia.

"The missile fire on Kremenchuk struck a very busy area which had no link to the hostilities," the city's mayor Vitali Maletsky wrote on Facebook.

Lunin denounced the attack as a "war crime" and a "crime against humanity," saying it was a "cynical act of terror against the civilian population."

Ukrainian Foreign Minister Dmytro Kuleba called on Kyiv's allies to supply more heavy weapons and impose fresh sanctions on Russia.

"Russia is a disgrace to humanity and it must face consequences," he wrote on Twitter.

Presidential aide Mykhaylo Podolyak accused Russia of being a "terrorist state."

The U.S. ambassador to Ukraine Bridget Brink said the world would "hold the Kremlin accountable for its atrocities in Ukraine."

Russia has not yet commented on the strike. In the past, Moscow has denied targeting civilians and accused Kyiv and its Western allies of staging such attacks.

The strike in Kremenchuk comes as leaders of the G7 group of industrialized nations discuss new punitive measures against Moscow over its four-month invasion of Ukraine.

It also follows a wave of reported Russian strikes on a number of Ukrainian cities over the weekend, including Kyiv and Kharkiv.

"On the night of June 25, Russian troops launched a massive missile strike on the territory of Ukraine. In total, more than 50 missiles of various types were fired: air, sea and land-based," the Ukrainian Armed Forces said in a statement Sunday.

Analysts have warned that Russia could retaliate to the West's supply of more heavyweight weapons to Ukraine, such as the U.S-made High Mobility Artillery Rocket System (HIMARS) that arrived in Ukraine last week.

Military officials in Kyiv say the system has already been put to use by Ukrainian forces.

"Artillerymen of the Armed Forces of Ukraine skillfully hit certain targets — military targets of the enemy on our Ukrainian territory," Chief of Ukraine's General Staff Valeriy Zaluzhnyi said, specifically addressing the HIMARS system on Telegram.

Unverified videos published over the weekend showed the apparent aftermath of HIMARS strikes against Russian positions near the eastern Ukrainian city of Izyum.

AFP contributed reporting.

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