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'Our Men Are Dying for Nothing': Russian Soldier's Widow Makes Anti-War Plea

By Leyla Latypova

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Send-off ceremony at the railway station for mobilized reservists of the Russian Army. **Yevgeny Yepanchintsev / TASS**

Put' Dumoi (Way Home), a Russian movement of mostly wives and mothers of mobilized soldiers calling for the return of their loved ones from the front lines and an end to mobilization, has released a video plea of a soldier's widow decrying the invasion of Ukraine.

The nine-minute-long video recorded by St. Petersburg native Maria Ishkova has gathered over 25,000 views since it was published on Put' Dumoi's Telegram channel late Thursday.

Ishkova claimed to have recorded the video in the Moscow-occupied Ukrainian city of Berdiansk. She traveled there to celebrate the New Year with her husband, who was called up in Russia's "partial" military mobilization last fall and has not been allowed to see his family since.

“I came on my own to the Zaporizhzhia [region] to greet the New Year with my husband,” said Ishkova. “Today…his comrades called me and said that he died.”

“What I want to tell everyone who is fighting for their beloved men … [is that] there is no time left because every day can become fatal, and it most likely will. Fight for them at this very moment, do everything possible,” she continued.

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Ishkova said her husband’s mobilization and death forced her to “wake up” and realize that Russians and their “minimal civic engagement” are “to blame” for the war and its effects on Russian society.

“I came to Berdiansk… and I want to tell you that people here don’t need this [war]. Our men are dying for nothing,” the widow said.

“Let’s be more conscious, let’s make our own choices, let’s not close our eyes to the fact that hundreds of thousands of people are dying today [and] they are not showing this to you on television,” Ishkova said.

A representative for the movement told The Moscow Times that Ishkova is “not ready to talk to the press right now.”

Put’ Dumoi rose to prominence in November when at least 30 of its members staged a protest in downtown Moscow calling on the Russian government to bring mobilized men back from the front lines.

The movement soon became a target of attacks by propagandists and security forces, who accused its members of having ties with the West.

Following a complaint by pro-Kremlin blogger Ilya Remeslo in November, Put’ Domoi’s Telegram channel, which has over 38,000 followers, has been branded as “fake” by the messaging app Telegram.

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Put’ Domoi told The Moscow Times on Friday that the post with Ishkova’s video has not yet warranted any reaction or threats from Russian officials or its vocal backers despite her searing criticism.

“Maria, we send you our deepest condolences. All our women are with you,” Put’ Domoi said in a comment under Ishkova’s emotional video.

“We hope that Vladimir Vladimirovich [Putin] and those responsible for thousands of broken lives won’t drown in the blood of our boys that will fill their elegant glasses to the brim on the New Year! May you burn in hell,” they added.

Some 300,000 reservists were recruited to boost Moscow's troop numbers in Ukraine as part of the "partial" mobilization drive launched in September 2022.

At least 4,787 mobilized men have been killed in Ukraine, according to an independent tally by Mediazona and BBC.

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