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‘End This Cursed War’: Russian Border Village Residents Appeal to Putin Amid Displacement

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Residents displaced by fighting between Ukrainian and Russian forces in the Kursk region have grown increasingly vocal about government failures to ensure their safety and provide promised compensation for destroyed property, with a group of people from one village near the ongoing clashes calling on President Vladimir Putin to bring an end to the war in Ukraine.

“We ask you to end this cursed war, which has claimed the lives of many innocent people,” said an elderly man reading out a collective letter from residents of Olgovka addressed to Putin. “We’ve been left homeless... We’ve been living in hell over the past three months.”

The man, filmed alongside dozens of other residents from Olgovka in a video posted online, likened the situation in the war-torn village to “scenes from a horror film.”

Residents of other border towns and villages in the Kursk region have also referred to the

grinding conflict as "cursed" in separate video appeals to the Russian president. Authorities in Moscow, which have banned calling the full-scale invasion of Ukraine a "war," officially refer to the conflict as a "special military operation."

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"We often hear from people words like 'Thank God, we're still alive'," the elderly man in the video of Olgovka residents said. "But not everyone survived. Some of our neighbors were killed. Some are missing since an evacuation order was never given."

"We want our children to live in peace, not to constantly hear air raid sirens," the man continued. "Hear us, the residents of border regions, and take action. After all, we're forced to endure all this not by our own will."

The independent investigative news outlet Agentstvo reported that displaced Kursk region residents have uploaded nearly 40 separate video addresses to Putin on the social media website VKontakte since early November.

In their video appeals to Putin, displaced residents have said local officials informed them that work to repair their homes would take up to five years.

Last week, displaced residents from the Sudzhansky and the Bolshesoldatsky districts staged protests in the regional capital of Kursk, accusing local authorities of failing to compensate them for destroyed property or to provide them with suitable temporary accommodation.

Kursk region Governor Alexei Smirnov has since sacked two district heads, although local authorities accused the displaced residents of holding unauthorized rallies.

More than 150,000 people living in Kursk region towns and villages near the border with Ukraine have been forced to evacuate their homes after Kyiv launched a surprise incursion on Aug. 6. The displaced residents of Olgovka and other villages said they evacuated themselves without any help from the authorities.

Both the scale of the evacuations and the cross-border fighting has not been seen in Russia since World War II, when Nazi Germany invaded the Soviet Union. Russian authorities have repeatedly invoked historical parallels with that conflict and Moscow's current war against Ukraine.

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