

Ukraine says Russian strike killed 51 in one of the deadliest attacks of the war

A Russian missile strike killed at least 51 people, including a child, in a village near the eastern Ukrainian city of Kupiansk on Thursday, officials say, in one of the deadliest attacks against civilians since the conflict began.

Moscow's forces targeted a cafe and a shop in Hroza, in the Kharkiv region, soon after midday local time, according to Ukrainian Interior Minister Ihor Klymenko.

Scenes emerged of emergency workers wading through dense rubble in the aftermath of the attack.

Doctors are treating the six people injured by the strike.

Bodies of the deceased, including a 6-year-old boy, were removed from the destroyed buildings, said Oleh Synhubov, a regional military official. The bodies of 29 victims have been identified, the Ukrainian interior minister said. The other bodies were sent to facilities in the city of Kharkiv.

There were locals inside the store when the missile ripped through, Ukraine's interior minister said, triggering a scale of devastation not seen since an attack on a railway station in Kramatorsk in early 2022 killed more than 60 people.

A wake for a fallen Ukrainian soldier was being held at the village cafe when the missile struck, killing several members of the of soldier's family, Dmytro Chubenko, spokesperson for the Kharkiv Regional Prosecutor's Office, told Ukrainian media outlet RBC.

The fallen Ukrainian soldier had previously been buried in the city of Dnipro, but his relatives wanted him to be reburied in the village where he was originally from, Chubenko said.

"The wake was attended by the son of the deceased, who was also a soldier," he said. "The son, along with his wife and mother, were in a cafe and were killed by a rocket," he added.

According to the latest death toll, the attack wiped out about one fifth of the village, which was home to 330 people.

There was a similar attack in the nearby town of Pervomaiske, when people were also saying goodbye to a fallen soldier, according Chubenko also said. "His fellow soldiers were present then. Today, there were only civilians at the site of the attack."

Hroza was hit by an Iskander missile, according to Ukrainian officials. The Iskander is a ballistic missile with a relatively short range, that depending on configuration carries a warhead of between 500 and 700 kilograms.

It has been extensively used by the Russians against Ukraine, causing substantial civilian casualties. Hroza is located about 40 kilometers from the frontlines of the war near Kupiansk, the city in Kharkiv that Russian forces seized early on in the war before losing it a year ago.

The Ukrainian military has since been trying to resist advances from Moscow. For Kyiv, the city is strategically important to prevent Russia from accessing the nearby Oskil River – where it is much easier to cross than further south.

'Demonstrably brutal'

Ukrainian Defense Minister Rustem Umerov said the strike shows Kyiv needs more defense systems to "protect our country from terror," amid fears of dwindling military aid from Western allies.

His comments came amid political upheaval in the US Congress, the lawmaking branch of government, and drained ammunition stocks among NATO countries, which threaten the flow of military aid to Kyiv.

Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky said the attack was “a demonstrably brutal Russian crime – a rocket attack on an ordinary grocery store, a completely deliberate terrorist attack.”

“Russian terror must be stopped. Anyone who helps Russia circumvent sanctions is a criminal. Everyone who still supports Russia is supporting evil,” Zelensky said on the sidelines of a European leaders summit in Granada, in southern Spain.

“Russia needs this and similar terrorist attacks for one thing only: to make its genocidal aggression the new normal for the whole world.”

Zelensky sought reassurance from European leaders [on Thursday](#), telling reporters Europe’s “biggest challenge” will be to preserve its “unity” in the face of Russia’s invasion.

Ukrainian Prime Minister Denys Shmyhal called the attack “brutal and cynical.”

“Dozens of people were killed, including a child. It is impossible to describe this horror in words,” he posted on Telegram.

“We must stop the Russian terror so that enemy missiles and shells do not take any more lives or injure any more people. This can only be done in a coordinated and united manner, with the help and support of our partners,” Shmyhal added.

The UN’s humanitarian coordinator in Ukraine said images arriving from the scene of the attack “are absolutely horrifying,” accusing Russian forces of carrying out a war crime.

“Our thoughts are also with the people of Ukraine, who had to witness today, once again, another barbaric consequence of Russia’s invasion,” Denise Brown said.

“Intentionally directing an attack against civilians or civilian objects is a war crime. Intentionally launching an attack knowing that it would be disproportionate is a war crime.”