



Bishop of Zaporizhia says: “We are saving children who for the enormous scale are victims of rapes by Russians soldiers”.

There are the testimonies of people who managed to escape from Mariupol and other Russian-occupied territories who described the incredible foulness and cruelty of Russian soldiers.

“I am in a total shock learning about the mass rapes of even 10-year-old girls and boys” - says Bishop Jan Sobilo to the Vatican Radio. Bishop Sobilo together with a Protestant pastor is trying to save children from the occupied territories.

The hierarch from Poland is an auxiliary bishop of Zaporizhia, which becomes the first safe place for thousands of refugees after months of war ordeal. In this city, support is provided mainly to the people who were evacuated from Mariupol.

“Unfortunately, the occupiers still hinder the evacuation, and many buses are directed deeply into Russia” - says Bishop Sobilo.

“Some of the inhabitants of Mariupol and other cities made it already to Zaporizhia but this is a small part of what we can expect. The main reason is a problem with transport. Some of the buses have already arrived, but other have been directed to Russia east or stopped at the so-called checkpoints where men are questioned for many hours. The occupiers are trying to obtain as much information as possible by questioning: where they are coming from and what happened around, what kind of resistance points Ukraine has”- says Bishop Sobilo to the papal broadcasting station.

“They have experienced terrible things in the places they were staying. Many of them say that they felt they are already on the other side of life and did not believe that anyone could get them out. Looking at the deaths of their relatives, the neighbours who were buried in the city- they thought that the same fate is awaited for them too. Everyone is still shocked, which shows how much suffering they have experienced. I admire them for their endurance,

that they survived those two months sitting in deep cellars during artillery fire, without being able to get out into the daylight, because they could have been shot straight away. A limited food and not enough water to drink and dreams of surviving were their constant feelings. Scary stories. Your hair bristles just by listening to it. I can't even imagine how the children survived it. This trauma, and traces of war will surely come out for a long time. This is the terrible side of the war and that is why the Holy Father is trying so hard with all possible means to stop this war. I am convinced that Ukraine will win, but even the winners will suffer for a long time because of what the citizens have experienced. This generation that will grow up after the war will have many wounds in their hearts, therefore; I understand why the Holy Father wants to do everything to stop this war".

As much as 80 percent of Zaporizhia Province is in the hands of the Russians. Intensive hostilities are also taking place around Zaporozhia, which is still unconquered.

"Our people who have families in the occupied territories or are even registered with them, go there, and take away whoever they can. We try to save mainly children" - says Bishop Sobilo to the "papal radio station". For such a "safe passage", the occupiers each time charge fees at checkpoints.

"I think Russia has already lost. These atrocities that happened and those about which people will only begin to tell the whole truth when they are fully safe, then will show us the terrible face of this war, and the great suffering of thousands of people" - continues Bishop Sobilo.

There are Protestant communities which, transport children and entire families from the occupied territories with our help. They get along with the occupier, pay the Russians at the checkpoints and save people. Some people are afraid to leave because they are convinced that they will be shot at the nearest Russian police station. One of the pastors says that there are places where children 10 years and older, both boys and girls, are taken from their parents and are massively raped by the Russians. These are such terrifying stories that it is beyond belief that such atrocities and such monstrosity take place in the 21st century. That is why we want to take these children from the hands of aggressors. Those who have a family in these areas go there. They show their ID cards as evidence they have relatives there or even have a registered residence, and then, for a certain fee, they are allowed into some places by the occupiers. Many of them, returning from these occupied territories, say that they would rather experience some cruelty themselves instead listen to what happened to these children.

Bishop Sobilo points out that the crimes committed against the youngest will prove that the invaders violated all international human rights and laws, including those relating to the protection of the civilians during hostilities.

Russia is already unambiguously losing this war by committing such a terrible abuse and such atrocities towards the children" - says the bishop of Zaporizhia.