

Ukrainian migrants fear for family back home and rally against ADF not sending Taipans to help

Nearly two years on since Russia invaded Ukraine, Ukrainian migrants are living in fear for their families as the war becomes “normal life”.

[Tia Ewen](#), The Mercury, January 20, 2024 - 2:58PM



Olena Khmarska, Mariia Romanova, and Vice President of the Association of Ukrainians in Tasmania, Ivan Shevchenko rally on Parliament Lawns in Hobart for the Australian Government to send its retired fleet of Taipan helicopters to Ukraine. Picture: Linda Higginson

Nearly two years on since Russia invaded Ukraine, migrants living in Tasmania live everyday in fear for their loved ones back home.

Olena Khmarska, who has lived in Tasmania for the past five years, watches the news everyday in fear for her family in Ukraine.

“My life is half and half because I have my family – my mother, my brother and his family in Ukraine and my life here,” she said.

“When I see there is a bomb attack, I message my mum asking if she’s okay and in a safe place. Nearly every night, a bomb attacks.

“It’s normal life now for them and it’s very hard.”



Mariia Romanova, Olena Khmarska, and Vice President of the Association of Ukrainians in Tasmania Ivan Shevchenko rally on Parliament Lawns for the Australian Government to send its retired fleet of Taipan helicopters to Ukraine. Picture: Linda Higginson

After moving to Hobart seven months ago with her mum Olha Stetsenko, 15-year-old Mariia Romanova said she missed her Dad, who is serving in Ukraine's military.

"I have most of my family in Ukraine," Mariia said.

"It's very hard for all of us even though we're not there. We can still feel their pain and it does hurt."

Despite speaking with her dad nearly every single day, Mariia said she felt scared about the conflict.

"It's very scary. We don't know what's going to happen tomorrow. You feel very scared for your family because you cannot really help them but we hope for the best," she said.



The Association of Ukrainians in Tasmania rally on Parliament Lawns in Hobart for the Australian Government to send its retired fleet of Taipan helicopters to Ukraine. Picture: Linda Higginson

"People are dying every single day and it's not their fault that it's happening.

"Civilians, they're dying, and we have to support them. It's very nice in Tasmania that we can help and do fundraisers."

It comes as a rally was held at Hobart's parliament Lawns on Saturday after the federal government rejected Ukraine's request to access the Australian Defence Force's retired fleet of Taipan helicopters. The government said the Taipans weren't in flying condition and would require "huge investment" to do so.



The Association of Ukrainians in Tasmania rally on Parliament Lawns in Hobart for the Australian Government to send its retired fleet of Taipan helicopters to Ukraine. Picture: Linda Higginson

The helicopters will be dismantled and buried at a defence site.

"These 45 Taipans would go a long way to replacing the Ukrainian helicopters which are reported to have been lost in operations since the start of the full-scale Russian invasion," Association of Ukrainians in Tasmania vice-president Ivan Shevchenko said.

"They would provide a significant boost to Ukraine's air power which will help to defend freedom and democracy, and save lives.

"Almost two years since the start of Russia's full-scale invasion, Australia now risks simply standing by, instead of standing up for what's right.