

Backstory – for those of you who cannot view this video, here’s an abridged version of their story: With their Father killed in the opening weeks of the War, Slava’s mother did her best to take care of him and his four siblings in their home in the far southeastern region of Ukraine. One day, Slava and his mother left in search of food and other aid supplies when a Russian artillery attack ensued which fatally injured Slava’s mother, and hours later, she died in his arms.

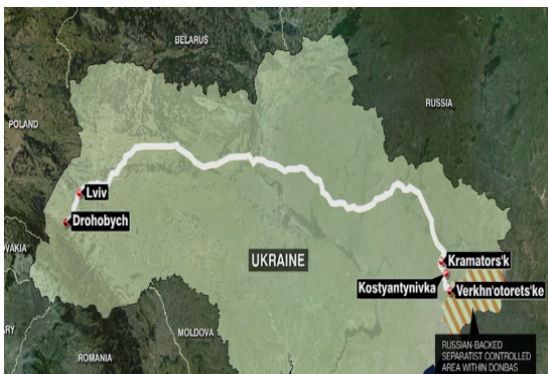
Since the Russian attack was still ongoing, Slava could only bury his mother in a shallow, makeshift grave (left by an artillery explosion), then he had to go home and explain to his siblings what had happened. You really owe it to yourself to watch this video, because there you’ll see the organic raw emotions that were overwhelming Slava as he re-told this story.

With no living relatives and all their friends either dead or being refugees living elsewhere, Slava had to borrow money to move his family to a safer area, and the government provided them with a small, one-bedroom flat in Drohobych, where we found them.

When we first met Slava and offered our aid, he was at first hesitant, even going so far as asking me what I would get out of this, what I expected in return for my offer of assistance. When I told him that I wanted nothing in return (except for maybe sending me a few photos every now and then), that eased his mind, but clearly, he was still somewhat shocked by the fact that, in his words, *“you would travel halfway around the world just to offer to give me help for whatever my family needs?”*

But Slava gradually opened-up and explained to me how they had been living off donations as he struggled to juggle “parenting” and trying to find a job and compatible work schedule. So I told him to consider my offer and once I’m back in the US we’ll message each other to see how we can best help him and this siblings. That follow-up conversation has just begun, so keep checking back here for future progress reports.

The Yalov Family’s Trail of Tears



After Viacheslav’s mother died in his arms and he had buried her in a makeshift grave, he had to return home to tell his four siblings what had happened. With their home destroyed and having no other family in Ukraine, and with their village in the path of the advancing Russian army, Slava made the decision to lead his family to somewhere safer to live. That trek took them more than 700 miles to Drohobych, where they knew no one, but there the Ukrainian government had offered them the use of a small one-bedroom flat, which is where we met up with them.