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Felipe Sahagún

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One month down, 11 to go

Hi Felipe,

On the evening of 23 February 2022, I was in Kyiv eating dinner at the home of the Ukrainian novelist Andrey Kurkov. Andrey cooked Borscht. He was optimistic; I wasn't. I thought a terrible storm was coming. At 11pm we hugged and said farewell. Out on the street, in the ancient centre of the capital, I took a call from a well-placed Ukrainian contact. He told me: "the invasion will begin at 4am."

At 4:30am, a colleague called to say Russian tanks had crossed the international border and were heading our way.

There were explosions in the distance. We went to the hotel's bomb shelter. At breakfast, I donned my "PRESS" flak jacket and walked down to Independence Square. Thousands were already fleeing to the border. It felt like a moment in history and a dark turn for our century.

It's hard to believe that this week marks two years of all out war. With no end in sight and international interest fading, you can help sustain our vital reporting from Ukraine. It takes less than a minute to contribute – and no amount is too small.

What happened in Bucha still haunts me. I visited the city in April 2022, days after the Russians pulled out. Russian troops had gone from house to house, detaining, torturing and executing men. Their bodies were left on the

street and in basements. The soldiers raped women and shot a female mayor.

It's hard to see so much destruction. In January 2022 I travelled to Mariupol, just before the invasion. Some of the people I met there disappeared. Russia laid waste to the city and has killed between 20,000 and 100,000 people. Nobody knows the exact figure. We've seen nothing like this since the second world war.

I was in Kharkiv last month. The Russians bomb the city most evenings. You wake to see ruined houses, shattered apartment blocks and lives torn apart by missiles and random violence.

The Guardian has had a team on the ground in Ukraine since before the war began. Those who have been part of a rolling reporting team here include Shaun Walker, Emma Graham-Harrison, Dan Sabbagh, Charlotte Higgins, Peter Beaumont, Isobel Koshiw, Lorenzo Tondo, Pjotr Sauer, Bethan McKernan, Julian Borger and Daniel Boffey. Our job is to report the story of

the war, and of the ordinary people caught up in it.

We travel in a team in a Land Cruiser: I am with our Ukrainian driver Oleg, security guard Jake and my photographer colleague Alessio Mamo. Within shelling distance we wear helmets, flak jackets and ballistic glasses. We have a special bond.

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The war, I fear, won't finish anytime soon. But I don't think we should be too doomy. Two years ago most people believed Russia would occupy Kyiv and topple Zelenskiy's government. That didn't happen and Ukraine has fought back. It has liberated half of its territory and has driven Russia's fleet from the Black Sea. Last year's Ukrainian counter-offensive failed and Russian troops are moving forward. Last week they captured the city of Advika. So far, though, Ukraine has prevented large-scale enemy advances. Much depends on the provision of weapons to Kyiv by the US, EU and UK.

Often we meet civilians living close to the frontline who carry on their lives amid the booms and thumps. But society is pretty united. People want Ukraine to be a member of the EU and Nato and a decent, ordinary, progressive, democratic country. They believe in victory, even though this seems far off. They are paying a huge price for freedom and the right to live the way they want.

It has been a privilege to tell the Ukrainian people's story. We need readers like you to support us, so that we can continue to bear witness to their resilience, heroism and to tell their stories.

Please support us today. You can do so from as little as €1 just once, or better yet, power us every single month from €2 – it really makes all the difference in the world.

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