

## RETURN DATE: UNKNOWN

*The war in Ukraine through the eyes of a teenage refugee (Germany, Poland)*  
27:22 minutes, airing on public television in 2023



### **TYMUR TSAPLIENKO, 17, SHARES HIS JOURNEY TO SAFETY AFTER RUSSIA INVADED UKRAINE, SHEDDING LIGHT ON LIFE AS A YOUNG REFUGEE AND THE COST OF WAR.**

War's trauma—families separated, homes and friends left behind—shadows a generation of young Ukrainian refugees. According to UNICEF, more than two million Ukrainian children have crossed into neighboring countries since Russia invaded Ukraine in 2022.

In his film *RETURN DATE: UNKNOWN*, 17-year-old refugee Tymur Tsapliienko helps us to begin to understand the impact of Russia's invasion on Ukraine's exiles as well as what has led to this crisis. Tymur makes a connection between the war and Europe's dependence on Russia's fossil fuels.

When the invasion began, Tymur's parents took him to the closest NATO member country, Poland. As war correspondents, they both knew what war meant. Tymur and his mother crossed the border to safety, while his father and brother remained in Ukraine. (Army-age male citizens are not allowed to leave without a special permit.)

Tymur and his mother now live in Bavaria, Germany, guests along with fellow refugees in a centuries-old monastery. He is completing high school and trying to make decisions about his uncertain future. He longs for family, school friends and a home. He grapples with anger and a sense of powerlessness.

Tymur's film travels a reverse journey, from Germany back through Poland to meet his father, who was injured in a Russian bombardment while reporting for a Ukrainian news channel and whom he hasn't seen in months. Along the way, he interviews other teenage refugees. Each conversation helps him understand the conflict and his own feelings toward it.

Through Tymur's eyes we glimpse displays of human solidarity and even hope for a chance at a new life.

### **KEY SCENES OF "RETURN DATE: UNKNOWN" INCLUDE:**

- An interview with a teenage environmental activist who blames the conflict on Europe's thirst for Russia's fossil fuel
- An interview with a teenage refugee who grew up in a region now occupied by Russia
- Tymur reuniting his dream to become a pilot and help his country
- Reuniting with his father
- Tymur discussing with his father how to cope with hate toward oppressors

### **DIRECTOR'S STATEMENT—Tymur Tsapliienko**

The process of making this movie was one of the most remarkable experiences of my life. The chance to tell my own story as well as the story of my nation, Ukraine, proved itself incredible. Working alongside my mentor, Rom Barnea, broadened my vision on filmmaking and storytelling, creating amazing emotions and days to remember.

### **MENTOR'S BIO—Rom Barnea**

Rom Barnea is a Tel Aviv-based entrepreneur, photographer, social activist, actor and curator. He is a co-founder and creative director of Pendulum, which creates content aimed at social causes, as well as founder of Fish Out of Sea, a photography initiative for and by refugees. He specializes in creating content with storyteller ambassadors from within the community, particularly people with special needs, youth-at-risk and NGO workers.

### **MENTOR'S STATEMENT**

From our first calls to our last shooting day together, I was thrilled by how this mature young person carries himself in his war-torn world; Tymur comes across as an experienced filmmaker and storyteller. His sharp eye captures moments that escape everyone else. This film touches on subjects that are simultaneously

universal and personal. It's a tale of war and how one copes with it, in an attempt to make peace within yourself while your country is falling apart; how to still breathe life into your dreams while the unknown is hovering not too far off. Tymur has taught me a lot, and I'm sure he'll do the same to anyone watching this film.

## **EXECUTIVE PRODUCERS**

Stephanie Apt, Holly Carter and Greg Baxter/Kiki Price

## **ABOUT BYKIDS**

[BYkids](#) produces real-world films for kids, by kids. Talented young storytellers from around the world are paired with seasoned filmmakers to create powerful documentaries about their lives. In partnership with public television and education innovators, we share their films and their educational resources to help make global issues feel personal, relevant and actionable for millions of students. Our work serves as a catalyst for change, igniting important conversations and inspiring a new generation of social activists.