

# The Justice & Peace Podcast

Dear change maker,

In this booklet, you can find the transcriptions of every episode of our Finding Safe Havens podcast series. We hope you will be inspired and empowered.

We are all change makers.

Kind regards,

Justice & Peace

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Join us in making safe havens possible for everyone. As an NGO, Justice & Peace depends on donations. Please support us with a donation as of €5 euros and contribute to creating more sustainable, just and welcoming societies.



Finding Safe Havens series

Episode 1

Title – Viktoria

[Viktoria] And the life that I've been living before that was over. Because something new started for all the Ukrainians.

[Music interval]

[Voice over] Welcome to the Finding Safe Havens podcast by Dutch human rights organisation Justice & Peace.

How do you imagine a safe haven?

In this podcast series you'll listen to the stories of different people from The Hague. With the outbreak of the Ukraine-Russian war, hundreds of thousands of people fled Ukraine. Among them is Viktoria, who is now sharing her experience of leaving her family behind and starting a journey into the unknown, in the pursuit of a safe haven.

The Dutch movement of Samen Hier, meaning Together Here in English, is dedicated to creating safe pathways and safe havens for people who had to flee their homes. Get involved through the link in the description of the podcast.

[Music interval]

[Viktoria] My name is Viktoria Gopko and I'm gonna tell you a story about Ukraine, about my country who has a war nowadays. I just wanna share my feelings and probably the feelings of all the Ukrainians that live there for now.

I remember the day, it was 24 of February, and I woke up in my bed suddenly, my mother was calling me and she told me the war has started. And was such a terrible feeling, such a kind of pause inside of me, and then the panic started and I didn't know what to do. She told me 'You need to pack your stuff, some needed stuff you need for leaving, some loafs of bread, passport, ID card... I was running out of time, and I took my backpack and I moved to my parents'. And life that I've been living before that was over. Because something new started for all the Ukrainians.

I was thinking about my life and about everything that I had only yesterday, and what I should do these days and what I should do now. I came to my parents and everyone had such a huge panic at that time – and all the people, especially with small children, tried to escape from the city because nobody knew what to do. They tried to arrange some things, you know, like a car, but they had no opportunity to collect at least their stuff. They took almost nothing with them and they moved where(?). And I remember the picture of the

train station of Kharkiv, this is the city that is at the borders with Russia, and the picture is crowded with people – I don't know how many people were there, it was just crushed, just crushed and there was only one train to take them out of Ukraine. And it was so meaningful for me, because I got this panic attack inside of me and I was thinking that nobody can escape from here and everybody is gonna die right here, just buried alive. It was just no decision for that because you are alive, but you can't say anything, can't do anything, you are like captured in this country and have no choice to move further.

And it was a hard decision to speak with my family, to ask them to move in another country, another place and they told me: ' We are not going to do that. Because this is our home, our place. We really wanna stay here, it doesn't matter if it's safe or not.'

Then I decided to move by myself as I was feeling some calling in my soul to move to another place. I didn't know what to do, I didn't know where to go, I didn't have any possibility, any place for that. I moved to Poland – it was a really long way, the train took 40 hours. Without any stops, with a lot of people inside, without any lights. We heard a lot of bombing outside the train – it was really dangerous – but people were trying to save their lives and the life of their children.

After this long way, I moved to Poland, to a quiet place in a village and I was living for 2 or 3 weeks there with unknown people. And I didn't know what to do and it was a really hard time for me to understand that I am separated from my family, separated from my friends, but still I choose this way and I need to continue that.

And I was waking up in the morning with heart attacks that I don't know if my parents were still alive and if I need to move back to Ukraine or if I need to continue my path. It was a pretty hard decision for me, but I decided to follow my intuition and I decided to move further. I tried to ask which place I should go to and which country and a friend of mine that had moved to the Netherlands told me they offer some opportunities and they provide some living for Ukrainians. And I decided to move to the Netherlands.

[Music interval, Viktoria singing]

[Viktoria] It was free flight for Ukrainians, I took my tickets and I moved to the Netherlands. I remember that day that I arrived in Eindhoven. My host family met me in the train station and I remember it was the husband with his son and they were standing at the train station. The son was so cute, so lovely! It was like a new page of my life. I am here in the Netherlands and I am going to start the new page of my life, with these new people, with this new country, with new opportunities.

It was a long way, a lot of experiences, a lot of feelings inside of me. A lot of separation, a lot of loneliness, and I always had the desire to move back to Ukraine. I was thinking that I

didn't have that but I did! I believe that for all the Ukrainians that are now living abroad, they are living in two countries at the same time. They are feeling the same about their city, their country every day, every moment. You wake up every morning and you are thinking about Ukraine, what is going on in Ukraine, what is going on with your family – especially if they are still in Ukraine.

I wanna say that it was really hard and difficult lessons but I truly believe it was important for us to feel what it is really important in our lives and what was really well in our lives. To get rid of everything else that is not needed, to trust life and go by yourself, go on and continue your own way. Even if you don't know where to go. To find this peace and power inside of you no matter what. To still be open to life even in this unknown conditions. To still wake up in the morning no matter where you are, be grateful for what you have, the life you have, the place where you live. The breaths that you take and the hope you have in your heart.

Try to find some light even if it is dark outside. Try to believe in the sunrise even if it feels it won't come.

I am really grateful for everything that I had, and I wish for all of us to be strong inside and continue to believe in love, light and in finding the peace inside of us.

[Music interval]

[Voice over] This was the story of Viktoria. In [justiceandpeace.nl](https://justiceandpeace.nl) you can find more stories. Read, be inspired and learn more about how to contribute to sustainable, just and welcoming societies. Thank you for listening! Follow this podcast and stay tuned for more.

[Music interval fading out]