

FREEDOM FOR UKRAINE

Thousands flee in terror as war zone is engulfed by floodwater

TENS of thousands of civilians fled their homes in the flooded Ukrainian region of Kherson yesterday after the Kakhovka dam was blown up in a suspected Russian attack.

As a massive rescue operation continued 24 hours after the blast, the elderly, infirm and young children sobbed as they faced horrific ordeals with water engulfing dozens of villages and settlements.

Some spent the night on roofs, while others climbed trees to escape the torrents of water.

Ukraine accused Russia of "carrying out one of the largest terrorist attacks and environmental catastrophes of the 21st century".

Some 300 animals also died at the Nova Kakhovka zoo after the

By **Mark Reynolds**

dam explosion, the ministry revealed. With around 42,000 people in the flood zone, the United Nations warned the attack would have "grave and far-reaching consequences".

Meanwhile, Russia continued to shell the area yesterday, killing one person, Ukrainian authorities said.

Evacuated

Satellite images revealed the scale of the devastation, with one showing a flooded port and industrial area in the regional capital city of Kherson, which is under Ukrainian control.

On the ground, terrified civilians were evacuated from settlements

along the southern stretch of the Dnipro river as streets, town squares and homes were submerged.

Some in Kherson ran for cover as they came under fire from Russian artillery while fleeing their homes, many in tears.

Mykola, 73, walked down the street towards dry land, soaked from the shoulders down and carrying what few possessions he could save. He said the water in his apartment had been up to his chest.

Minutes later, cracks of incoming artillery sent him and others stumbling for cover. But shelter could not be easily found, as water crept silently higher on Kherson's streets.

Ukrainian police released a video of an officer carrying an elderly

woman to safety and others rescuing dogs in villages being evacuated as the waters rose.

On the Russian-controlled bank of the Dnipro, the Moscow-installed mayor of Nova Kakhovka said water levels had risen to 11m (36ft).

Residents reached by telephone there said some had decided to stay despite being ordered out.

"They say they are ready to shoot without warning," said one man, Hlib, after encounters with Russian troops.

Russia has controlled the dam since early in its 15-month invasion, although Ukrainian forces recaptured the Dnipro's northern bank last year. Both sides had long accused the other of plotting to destroy the dam.



Rescue... Ukrainian troops help to evacuate residents from flooded homes and streets in Kherson yesterday as Russia continued to shell the devastated region



Catastrophe...part of Kherson city under water yesterday

Boycott scotched! Drinks giant's whisky still on sale



On sale...Dewar's in Moscow store

BACARDI'S Scotch whisky is still available in Russia, despite a vow to boycott Vladimir Putin's regime, the Daily Express can reveal.

The drinks giant had announced it would "pause" all Russian exports within weeks of the invasion of Ukraine.

It also ceased marketing investment in Moscow, gave \$1million to Kyiv and produced a Ukraine-themed edition of Irish whiskey.

But this week, we were able to buy its whisky brands at stores in Moscow and the Siberian city of Novosibirsk.

Batches of Dewar's and William Lawson's, both distilled in Scotland, were bottled as recently as the end of March.

It comes months after Pernod faced a backlash after confirming it had resumed trade with Moscow.

Last night Mark Dixon, who launched the Moral Rating Agency, to monitor firms dealing with Putin, said those operating in the country smacked of "from Russia with blood".

He added: "Fuelling the Russian economy only makes its invasion

EXCLUSIVE By **Cyril Dixon** in London and **Will Stewart** in Moscow

of Ukraine more affordable." Labour MP Sir Chris Bryant, below, said: "This is sickening. It's as if these people value profits more than humanity. They should be ashamed of themselves."

Bermuda-based Bacardi, which has UK brands, offices and distilleries, showed solidarity with Ukraine shortly after Putin's invasion last February.

The Daily Express has made repeated attempts to ask the company about how its products had been supplied to Russian shops, but has received no reply.

Bacardi, which prides itself on "doing the right thing by both people and planet" had said it was suspending Russian exports and freezing advertising. It also

donated \$1million (£800,000) to humanitarian aid projects for Ukraine through the Red Cross and Mercy Corps.

The handout paid for the distribution of food and medical supplies, critical care and first aid training, uniting war-dispersed families and other emergencies.

Bacardi's Irish Whiskey Teeling also brought out a "United We Stand" edition in support of Ukraine, with a blue and yellow strip across the black bottle.

The batch of 300 quickly sold out and each £73 sale price donated to charities helping Ukrainian families - with a special leaning towards children.

Bacardi said at the time: "Our priority is to ensure the safety and wellbeing of our people, especially those directly affected by the ongoing war in Ukraine. We are supporting our

people in Ukraine with resources and services necessary during this time of great need."

But at a Moscow branch of Krasnoye i Beloye (Red and White), we discovered William Lawson's blended whisky with a bottling date of March 26 2023 stamped on the label.

The same store had other recent batches of both Bacardi Scotches, with the most recent Dewar's bottled on New Year's Day.

Red and White in Novosibirsk had William Lawson's bottled on February 21 and Dewar's White Label on January 5.

Metro in Novosibirsk was selling a bottle of William Lawson's "Super Chilli" whisky, bottled on March 20, and Dewar's White Label from March 8.

Magnit in Moscow had White Label which was bottled on December 23 - nine months after the exports suspension.

Industry sources claim the widespread availability of the brands implies Bacardi still has a distribution network functioning in Putin's Russia. However, this has not been

confirmed. The company has been asked about the claim but has not responded.

Dewar's is distilled and bottled in Scotland before being exported. William Lawson's is sent to Russia and bottled there.

Other drinks companies which pulled out of Russia after the invasion included Diageo, which markets Johnnie Walker whisky and Guinness, and Pernod maker Pernod Ricard.

Pernod, which described itself as "deeply shocked and saddened" by the war faced a backlash in April when it admitted resuming sales to Russia.

It said the decisions to restock supplies of Beefeater gin and Jameson whisky, "were not taken lightly".

Many companies joined the boycott voluntarily, even though the Government has banned only the export of military or strategic products to Russia.

The Daily Express has contacted Andrew Carney, Bacardi's communications director for western Europe, for comment.



Readily available...William Lawson's bottles seen on sale in a shop in Moscow

BACARDI ceased exports to Russia, provided humanitarian aid to Ukraine and put out packaging with the Ukrainian flag, only for its whisky then to be exposed for sale on Russian shelves with fresh dates.

Fuelling the Russian economy only makes its invasion of Ukraine more affordable so we call on Bacardi to tell us how its brands have appeared for sale in Putin's Russia.

Allowing Russians to enjoy Western products - if that is what Bacardi is doing - only undermines the critical message that their country is a pariah state.

The announcement by Bacardi 30 days after Russia's February 2022 invasion of Ukraine promised the company had "paused exports to Russia and frozen advertising

COMMENT

MARK DIXON
Founder, Moral Rating Agency

investments in the market". Moral Rating Agency research shows this sentence has since been deleted from its website.

When fellow drinks titan Pernod Ricard dared to try to slip back into Russia last month, the MRA called for a boycott of its products until Pernod ate its words and dropped the ghastly plan.

We now call for Bacardi to explain itself or, if it won't, for a boycott of Bacardi products, not just Dewar's and William Lawson's, but also Grey Goose, Martini, Bombay Sapphire, Bacardi itself, and the whole connected family.