A devastating Russian airstrike struck the Ukrainian city of Sumy this week, killing dozens and injuring many more as civilians gathered for a religious service. What was meant to be a peaceful moment of reflection and healing turned into horror as explosions echoed through the streets, collapsing buildings and sending people running for cover. The targeted strike hit a civilian area, destroying homes and reducing parts of the city to rubble. Families are still searching for loved ones, digging through debris by hand. The images from the scene show crumbled neighbourhoods, blown-apart houses and grief-stricken residents in shock. For the people of Sumy, this was not just another day of war. It was a direct hit to their sense of safety and humanity.

The attack took place in Sumy Oblast, a region bordering Russia that has seen a sharp increase in air operations. Analysts believe this signals a new phase of Russian strategy, focusing on pressure points along the border. Emergency responders described the scene as catastrophic. Firefighters were raised on ladders to extinguish flames reaching the tops of destroyed apartment blocks, while nurses and doctors in blood-stained uniforms rushed to tend to the wounded. Hospitals were quickly overwhelmed. Crowds formed outside emergency rooms as injured civilians waited for treatment. The sounds from the aftermath were as harrowing as the visuals. Sirens, collapsing structures and cries of the injured filled the air in a chorus of chaos.

One image quickly spread across the world. A missile-blasted residential building with its entire front wall missing, revealing what used to be private family rooms. In front of it, a car burned so completely it was unrecognisable. That image became a symbol of the destruction. For Sumy’s residents, this is more than a tragedy. It is a reminder that peace feels further away than ever. Many citizens, exhausted and angry, expressed their frustration. One man shouted, "We are not soldiers. Why are we the target?" It was later reported that the strike may have coincided with a military appreciation event for the 117th Territorial Defence Brigade. The Sumy Oblast Military Administration said Governor Volodymyr Artyukh, who has since been suspended, planned the event. This raised serious concerns about the location's vulnerability and the safety of those in attendance.

In response, world leaders issued strong condemnations. United States President Joe Biden spoke directly with Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy, urging international partners to take coordinated action. "Talk alone cannot end this," Biden said. The United Kingdom, Germany and Italy also condemned the attack, promising new rounds of sanctions. However, criticism is growing over the pace and effectiveness of such measures. Zelenskyy’s words were direct and emotional. "Only real pressure on Russia can stop this." Standing among the ruins, acting mayor Artem Kobzar announced a day of mourning. "We will never forget this day," he said. Experts have warned that unless stronger international action is taken, attacks like this could continue or worsen.

For those living in Sumy, the war is not distant. It is at their doorsteps, in their streets, in their schools and hospitals. The psychological impact is severe, with residents living in constant fear of what might happen next. What was once a functioning city is now quiet and scarred. As Ukraine prepares for the next stage of this brutal war, the world faces an urgent question. Will condemnation lead to real action, or will more cities be left in ruins like Sumy?