

First look at chaos left by Russian troops at Chernobyl nuclear plant in pictures
Metro



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New photos from the [Chernobyl](#) former nuclear plant reveal the reckless destruction left behind by its Russian occupiers as they were forced out.

Hallways overflowing with litter, broken windows and taunting messages gratified on walls were among the scenes left for the Ukrainian defenders to find.

While news teams were allowed into Chernobyl shortly after [Ukraine](#) recaptured it last month, it's thought to be the first time photographers have had full access to its labs and offices since



The site is no longer a working power station, but radioactive waste is stored there and containing it safely requires round-the-clock care from nuclear experts. After Putin's forces seized the area on February 24, the first day of the invasion, they held

its 170 Ukrainian defenders into captivity in the basement and forced its technical staff to keep working under an apparently chaotic new regime (Picture: Anadolu)



While teams from Russia's nuclear energy agency were brought in, Russian troops were later revealed to have been ignorant of basic safety procedures and kept the Ukrainian staff in a constant state of terror (Picture: Anadolu)



Oleksiy Shelestiy, an electricals supervisor, revealed how he was constantly wracked by the possibility of an 'accident' as staff were banned from going home and became exhausted. Speaking to the AFP news agency on Monday, he said: 'It was mentally and emotionally difficult. '[But] emotional and psychological pressure did not allow me to focus on this. We just tried to do our job and tried to control all the parameters so that nothing could happen.' (Picture: Anadolu)



Another engineer previously said Ukrainian staff had to constantly appease the easily-offended occupiers in order to be allowed to make decisions about running the facility (Picture: Anadolu)



In one room containing a fuse board, live electrical wiring appeared to have been left uncovered, suggesting Putin's troops paid little heed to fire hazards (Picture: Anadolu)



Valeriy Semonov told the BBC he was forced to steal fuel from the Russians to keep the generator running when power to the site was cut off for three days. He said: 'If we had lost power, it could have been catastrophic. Radioactive material could have been released. 'The scale of it, you can well imagine. I wasn't scared for my life. I was scared about what would happen if I wasn't there monitoring the plant. I was scared it would be a tragedy for humanity.' (Picture: Anadolu)



Much of the site has been damaged. Drone footage released by Ukraine shows many of them stayed in trenches they dug in the so-called 'Red Forest' behind the plant, which is one of the most radioactive places on Earth (Picture: Getty)



While Ukraine's investigations suggest the Russian occupiers were exposed to a 'shocking' amount of radiation, experts say the wider public have been spared from any risks (Picture: Anadolu)



The head of the International Atomic Energy Agency, Rafael Grossi, later said 'an increase in the levels' of radiation in the area had been detected but insisted the matter was under control. He added: 'The situation is not one that could be judged as posing a great danger to the environment and to people at the moment we were taking these measures.'