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Russification at any cost in occupied Ukraine with children even physically punished for speaking Ukrainian

Russia is intent on eradicating the Ukrainian language and all aspects of Ukrainian identity, with young Ukrainians a particular target

By Halya Coynash

[Kharkiv Human Rights Protection Group](#) (04.11.2024) - Russia's policy of russification on newly seized Ukrainian territory is being carried out more aggressively and at accelerated pace, according to a recent Radio Svoboda report, with the aim being to eradicate the Ukrainian language and all aspects of Ukrainian identity. Although sources living under occupation cannot be identified for safety reasons and the information cannot be independently verified, the methods are largely the same as those earlier applied in occupied Crimea and Donbas.

A standard lie that Russia has used since 2014 to try to justify its armed aggression against Ukraine has been the claim that Russians and Russian speakers were being subjected to intimidation or even persecution. In fact, wherever Russia has seized control, it is Ukrainian speakers and the Ukrainian language itself that have come under attack. Efforts to eradicate education in Ukrainian began immediately in occupied Crimea, and within five years (at the latest), [there were no schools offering education in Ukrainian](#). In the Russian proxy 'Donetsk and Luhansk people's republics', the Ukrainian language was systematically eliminated from all areas of life (details [here](#) and [here](#)).

Russia was still pretending back in 2014, and largely hid behind paramilitary formations in occupied Crimea, or its proxy 'republics', rather than wielding open terror against those viewed as 'too pro-Ukrainian'.

Essentially all pretence was dropped on 24 February 2022, with the methods of coercion and terror applied including abductions, torture and enforced disappearances of Ukrainian civilians, as well as extremely aggressive measures to force Ukrainians to take Russian citizenship.

According to Stanislav Zakharevych, Head of the Sopiivka Village Military Administration (Zaporizhzhia oblast), the Russian invaders immediately set about changing names (mainly back to those used before Ukraine's decommunization). He says that there is also pressure on people to stop them using Ukrainian, with such cases both in the educational sphere, and in day-to-day life.

"In the summer of 2024, parents were directly told that they would be well-advised to not ask for Ukrainian language classes. They were forced to write statements claiming that their children's native language is Russian and that there's no need to learn Ukrainian. Therefore, in most schools, Ukrainian language is not taught at all."

There have also been cases where teachers, many of whom have been brought in from the Russian Federation, have used physical force, smacking children for speaking Ukrainian or 'surzhyk' (Ukrainian which has been heavily influenced by Russian), and telling them to speak Russian.

Nor is this only in schools, Zakharevych says, pointing out that this is an area where people are multilingual, with some speaking not only Ukrainian and Russian, but also Bulgarian. There have been cases where in shops, for example, those using Ukrainian (or surzhyk) have been told by the invaders to speak Russian.

As reported, very many parents in occupied parts of Kherson and Zaporizhzhia oblast tried to avoid sending their children to 'school', where they would be subjected to virulent Russian war propaganda, etc. That, however, has become increasingly difficult, with parents threatened with being stripped of their parental rights if their children do not attend school. There are worse measures also, with adults and children being seized and having their telephones searched for any apps indicating that the children are also studying according to the Ukrainian curriculum.

Ivan Fedorov, the elected Mayor of currently occupied Melitopol (Zaporizhzhia oblast) recently spoke of how Moscow is particularly focusing on brainwashing young people. This is clear from the new 'textbooks' reported here, with their totally distorted account, especially of Ukrainian and Russian history and the events around Russia's aggression against Ukraine. Fedorov explained that teachers are being brought in from Russia to push this narrative; to circulate propaganda; and to encourage children to join various militarized youth formations (like 'Yunarmia', or Russia's 'Youth army'; 'Movement of the First', etc). Pressure and persecution are increasing, with the situation particularly terrifying for young lads, since Russia is using forced passportization as a method of registering such boys, especially 16- and 17-year-olds, with this putting them in danger of conscription or mobilization into the Russian army.

Apparently Russian propaganda media and Telegram channels assert that 'passportization' is voluntary. This is evidently untrue. In some cases, brutally primitive methods are used. Zakharevych explains, for example, that in villages, the Russians simply block all access to and from the village and then go door to door, ensuring 'passportization'.

He stresses that many pensioners had tried to hold out and not take Russian citizenship, but were left with no choice when the invaders refused healthcare without Russian citizenship. As reported, this includes such vital medication as insulin, without which a person will die. Homeowners are threatened with losing their property if they have not 'reregistered' them according to Russian legislation, something they can only do if they have a Russian passport. Parents cannot register their children in school without one parent having Russian citizenship, and, as mentioned, risk having their children taken away if they do not send them to be brainwashed in Russian controlled 'schools'. The list

of methods used is long, and Ukraine's National Resistance Centre reports that from 1 January 2024, Ukrainians on occupied territory will lose any rights without Russian citizenship.

It should also not be forgotten that any demonstration of pro-Ukrainian views, with this probably including insistence on speaking Ukrainian, could result in a person being abducted, accused of 'spying for Ukraine', or other forms of persecution.

Why a negotiated peace in Ukraine could shatter global security

See the full debate on YouTube (*)

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=lowX93HDIE0>

In response to an article by Victor Rud titled "Thirteen Reasons Why a 'Negotiated Peace' in Ukraine Will Shatter Our Security", published in EU Today on 22 October 2024, experts gathered in an online conference to examine the dangers posed by a negotiated settlement in the Russia-Ukraine conflict.

EU TODAY (30.10.2024) – Moderated by Gary Cartwright, publisher of *EU Today*, the panel included Victor Rud, a prominent American attorney, foreign policy analyst, and Chairman of the Committee on Foreign Affairs at the [Ukrainian American Bar Association](#); Willy Fautré, Director of [Human Rights Without Frontiers](#); and Dmytro Shkurko, a Brussels-based correspondent for *Ukrinform*.

The panelists discussed how Western insistence on a "diplomatic solution" could lead to further security risks and the erosion of international rule of law.

The Case Against Negotiations with Russia

Rud opened the discussion by expressing strong opposition to negotiations that might see concessions made to Russia without Ukraine's full involvement. He argued that any such arrangements could signal weakness and a lack of credible deterrence from the West. According to Rud, the US, particularly under previous administrations, has historically underestimated Russia's geopolitical aspirations. He warned that a renewed emphasis on negotiations could not only undermine Ukraine's sovereignty but also embolden other authoritarian regimes, such as China and Iran, creating a broader challenge to the global order.

Rud drew on historical parallels, pointing out the repeated failure of diplomatic agreements to restrain Russia. From the Soviet Union's aggressive postures during the Cold War to the ongoing situation with Ukraine, Rud argued that Western democracies have consistently misread Russian intentions, often treating it as a partner that could be appeased. "We cannot sell parts of the international order," Rud stated, emphasising that Russia's disregard for international borders and law cannot be legitimised through compromise.

Human Rights Concerns and Global Implications

Willy Fautré, a prominent figure within the EU's human rights landscape, reiterated concerns about the risks of a Western-backed peace deal. Fautré warned that Russia's longstanding approach to negotiations, which often excludes key stakeholders such as Ukraine and the European Union, reinforces Moscow's goal to be perceived as a global superpower on par with the United States. He argued that Europe's reliance on negotiations could further erode the West's credibility, adding, "Putin's actions suggest he views NATO as a paper tiger, given the alliance's current reluctance to take decisive action."

Fautré also discussed how Russia's tactics, including using North Korean troops in support of its objectives, demonstrate Putin's disregard for international rules of engagement. He voiced concerns that European nations might eventually accept an unfavourable deal to end the conflict, prioritising economic stability over principles of sovereignty and human rights. According to Fautré, the European Union's reluctance to provide Ukraine with the necessary military defence material limits its influence over the conflict's resolution.

The Conflict in Broader Terms: A Clash of Systems

Adding a Ukrainian perspective, Shkurko outlined the ideological divide that he believes lies at the heart of the conflict. In his view, Russia represents the last imperial state, where individual rights are subordinate to the power of the state. He argued that Ukraine's struggle symbolises a clash between authoritarianism and democratic values, positioning Ukraine as a frontline defender of the West's ideals. "This is a global fight between democracy and dictatorship," Shkurko stated, warning that the stakes extend beyond Ukraine's borders.

Shkurko further emphasised the existential nature of Ukraine's resistance, explaining that despite fluctuating levels of Western support, Ukrainians remain committed to defending their nation. He pointed out that the West's perception of Russian strength has often been exaggerated, which, in turn, has led to a hesitant approach in confronting Moscow directly. Shkurko noted that this overestimation has historically influenced Western defence spending and strategic decisions, leaving Ukraine inadequately equipped in the current conflict.

Misunderstandings of Russian Intentions and the West's Strategic Missteps

Rud underscored the West's apparent misunderstanding of Russian political psychology, stating that a willingness to negotiate may be misinterpreted by Moscow as a sign of weakness. He cited examples from the past 20 years, highlighting moments when the West could have countered Russian actions more decisively. He attributed the current global security challenges, including those posed by North Korea and Iran, to the West's reluctance to assert its influence. According to Rud, the frequent failure of Western policy in dealing with Russia is a result of "our own ignorance, naivety, and the refusal to acknowledge historical experience."

Both Fautré and Rud pointed to the failure of previous agreements, such as the Minsk Accords, which allowed Russia to maintain a foothold in Ukraine without facing significant consequences. Fautré remarked that this pattern signals to other authoritarian regimes that defiance of international norms can be advantageous. Both speakers raised concerns over the implications of a US policy approach that prioritises diplomacy over deterrence, suggesting that this could destabilise the power balance in other regions, particularly in Asia.

A Call for Clearer Western Strategy and Leadership

The discussion ended with calls for more robust leadership from the West. Rud argued that Europe and the United States lack the decisive leadership needed to counter Russian ambitions effectively. The panellists noted that Western democracies' preoccupation with internal political dynamics often prevents them from formulating consistent foreign policies. Fautré pointed out that while Russia has a single, clear leader in Putin, European Union institutions are plagued by bureaucratic gridlock and political divisions.

The participants agreed that there is an urgent need for the West to unify its stance on Russia and that Ukraine's independence and sovereignty should be non-negotiable elements of any diplomatic engagement. Shkurko concluded with an appeal for optimism, stressing that the current resistance in Ukraine could ultimately pave the way for the end of Russian imperial ambitions, with the condition that Western support remains steadfast. He argued that Ukraine's resilience represents a beacon for those striving for freedom, asserting, "We are fighting not only for our future but for a democratic future for all."

Conclusion

The conference illuminated the complexities of negotiating with Russia, revealing that any such efforts would likely have far-reaching consequences. The speakers expressed concerns that an insufficiently robust Western response could not only fail to deter Russia but also embolden other authoritarian regimes. The discussion highlighted a consensus: that the West, particularly Europe, must reconsider its approach to security, recognising the broader ideological stakes at play.

(*) See the other videos of EU TODAY's YouTube channel [HERE](#)

WANTED: A database of over 200 abductors of Ukrainian children to Russia with names & photos

Ukrainian Intelligence has created a Database of over 200 Russians and Ukrainians complicit in abducting children. See Database [HERE](#)

[Kyiv Post](#) (03.06.2024) - HUR's [database](#) said those listed included "everyone involved in the deportation of Ukrainian children: officials who make decisions, [and] participants of 're-education' youth organizations," among whom were officials high and low alongside public figures and Ukrainian collaborators.

The HUR called the act of illegally deporting children a form of "cultural genocide" and said "at least 20,000 Ukrainian children" have been abducted by Russia since the start of the 2022 [full-scale invasion](#) based on official data, while the number is likely much higher in reality.

The individuals being named were categorized into "organizers" and "executors" of the deportation, where the former consisted of officials involved in high-level planning and the latter consisted of officials, public figures and collaborators who supported and took part in relocating the children.

The database lists the official names of the individual, their date and place of birth, tax number, official position or occupation, and description of their involvement in the abductions.

Among the ones being named was Maria Lvova-Belova, Russia's commissioner for children's rights who is the subject of an [arrest warrant](#) issued by the International

Criminal Court ([ICC](#)) alongside Russian President Vladimir Putin for their role in abducting Ukrainian children.

Kyiv Post's intelligence sources report that Ukraine's HUR successfully targeted two boats of the KC-701 Tuna-class, which are utilized by Russian security forces for operations.

The database also included heads of local administrations and organizers of youth camps in Russia aimed at Russifying Ukrainian children.

At the time of publication, Belarusian nationals such as Dzmitry Shautsou, head of Red Cross's Belarusian chapter that was suspended over [its role in abducting Ukrainian children](#), were not included in the database.

In November 2023, Kyiv Post reported that a teenager was returned to Ukraine after being forcibly deported from Mariupol to Russia and subsequently [received a military summons](#) for the Russian military.

Qatar regularly rescues Ukrainian children illegally transferred and kept by Russia

By Willy Fautré, director of Human Rights Without Frontiers

[The European Times](#) /HRWF (28.05.2024) - On 22 May, it was announced that 13 Ukrainian children were returned from Russian-occupied territories to their homeland thanks to the mediating role of Qatar and a Ukrainian NGO.

Qatar mediated the release of six Ukrainian children, all male and aged between six and 17 held in Russia, as part of its efforts to reunite families separated by the ongoing conflict between Moscow and Kyiv, the [Ministry of Foreign Affairs](#) of Qatar announced.

The Qatari embassy in Moscow hosted the children and their families during the reunification process to ensure their safe return to Ukraine via Minsk.

During their stay under the protection of Qatar, medical, psychological and social support was provided to the children to facilitate recovery and reintegration.

The remaining children were returned through the framework of the NGO *Bring Kids Back UA* plan, initiated by President Volodymyr Zelensky.

One can wonder why the EU or some of its member states, the USA, Canada or any other Western democracy have not managed to organize similar mediation operations directly or indirectly, especially through the International Coalition for the Repatriation of Ukrainian Children. Ukrainian media outlets regularly cover family reunification cases but have only mentioned one case sponsored by the UN and no cases by the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC).

The mediation of Qatar involved Children's Rights Commissioner for the President of the Russian Federation Maria Lvova-Belova and the Ukrainian Parliament Commissioner for Human Rights Dmytro Lubinets.

Qatar's rescue operations

In 2023, on [October 16](#), Qatar secured the first such repatriation of four Ukrainian children from Russia following Kyiv's request.

On [November 19](#), joint mediation by Qatar and the United Nations led to the release of orphaned Ukrainian teenager, Bohdan Yermokhin, from Mariupol, after he was taken to Russia during the war.

On [December 5](#) Qatar reunified six additional Ukrainian children with their families.

In 2024, on [February 19](#), the Gulf state mediated the release of 11 Ukrainian children, including one with disabilities, held in Russia.

On March 21, [Qatar reunited children](#) with their families and facilitated their safe transfer from Ukraine to Russia via Belarus.

On [20 April](#), Qatar announced that 20 Ukrainian and Russian families, including 37 children, had arrived in Doha as part of Qatar's ongoing mediation efforts to reunite those separated by the conflict.

Qatar hosted the families from April 18 till April 27, where they received medical and psychological support.

Qatar and Russia's war on Ukraine

Qatar has maintained a balanced foreign policy since the start of the Russia-Ukraine conflict, communicating with both sides while repeatedly calling for the need for dialogue to end the conflict.

In July last year, Doha pledged [\\$100 million](#) in aid to Kyiv during a meeting between Qatari Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs Sheikh Mohammed bin Abdulrahman Al Thani and Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky.

Sheikh Mohammed's visit to Ukraine came a month after a stopover in Moscow on June 22, where he met Russian Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov. The Qatari official had called for respecting Ukraine's territorial dignity and independence, as well as the UN Charter.

In March 2022, Qatar was among 141 countries that voted on a UN resolution demanding Russia's "immediate and complete" withdrawal from Ukraine.

Qatar, a seasoned mediator, had previously expressed its openness to facilitate dialogue between rivals Russia and Ukraine ["if asked"](#) by its international partners.

NGOs rescue children from Russian-occupied territories and Russia

Human Rights Without Frontiers calls upon the UN, the EU and states supporting Ukraine to fund Ukrainian NGOs rescuing at high risks Ukrainian children deported by and to Russia

In Ukrainian: <https://hrwf.eu/україна-но-рятують-українських-дітей-д/>

In Russian: <https://hrwf.eu/78391-2/>

By Willy Fautre

HRWF (22.05.2024) - Since the beginning of the year, it was publicly reported by Kyiv that several Ukrainian non-governmental organizations had rescued more than a hundred Ukrainian children deported by and to Russia.

Only NGOs can put words into action with concrete rescue operations, not international institutions or states. In exchange, they would expect that the United Nations, the European Union and governmental institutions of various countries supporting Ukraine against Russia's unprovoked aggression against Ukraine would spontaneously and generously fund their activities but this is not the case.

Some rescue operations in May in Zaporizhzhia and Kherson oblasts

On 17 May, Ukraine returned **four children** from Russian-occupied territory in Kherson Oblast, local governor Oleksandr Prokudin said.

The evacuated children were three brothers and a sister, aged from two to 12 years.

The rescue operation was conducted by the children's parents in collaboration with **Save Ukraine**, a Ukrainian humanitarian NGO.

The children arrived on Ukraine-controlled territory and received psychological and medical support, the [governor](#) said.

On 15 May, the Reintegration Ministry reported that the non-governmental Ukrainian organization **Child Rights Network** brought back a 17-year-old orphan, Denys, from Russian-held territories in Zaporizhzhia Oblast. He was 16 years old when he was abducted. He was then living in Kherson with his two deaf parents, who could not speak and could not fight back when Russian troops abducted him.

He spent 10 months in a Russian camp in Occupied Crimea until he was rescued by volunteers of an NGO. He had been living in the Russian-occupied territories under the supervision of his neighbor and searching for options to move to Ukraine-controlled territory since the beginning of Russia's full-scale invasion, according to the ministry's [statement](#).

Denys's aunt previously appealed to the ministry to help in bringing the boy back. Currently, Denys lives under his aunt's guardianship.

The boy was sent to the rehabilitation center in the city of Truskavets in Lviv Oblast for further recovery.

On 14 May, **Child Rights Network** returned [six children](#) from Russian-occupied territories in Kherson Oblast.

Some rescue operations in March

On 22 March, nine Ukrainian children previously deported by Russia or held in Ukraine's Russian-occupied territories were brought back to Ukraine, said Ukraine's Ombudsman Dmytro Lubinets.

The children were returned with the help of [Qatar](#), which has played a major mediation role in **returning** Ukrainian children who had been deported or forcibly transferred to Russia, and within the framework of the approved action plan of Ukraine's president **Bring Kids Back UA**.

According to Lubinets, two three-year-old sisters, a six-year-old boy, and a 10-year-old girl were rescued from orphanages after their guardians and relatives appealed for their return. A 12-year-old girl was returned and reunited with her mother.

"Children were forced to attend Russian schools, where they were told that there was no independent state of Ukraine," Andriy Yermak, Ukraine's Presidential Office head, [wrote](#) on Telegram.

According to Lubinets, one of the girls who was returned had a disability and was not given proper medical care while being held in Russian-occupied territory. She will now reportedly receive proper care.

Some rescue operations in February

An international team of investigators have tracked down eight Ukrainian children, believed to have been abducted during Russia's invasion, reported Anna Holligan in The Hague & Diana Kuryshko, BBC Ukraine correspondent in an [article](#) titled "Ukraine's missing children tracked down in Russia by digital sleuths"

More than 60 detectives used digital open source techniques to trace the missing children whose presence in Russia had been mentioned in their propaganda.

Experts from 23 countries at Europol's headquarters in The Hague used advanced facial recognition to find recent images of the children online. Geolocation experts analysed photos and videos and used satellite data to determine where they were being kept.

According to the BBC, [18 Ukrainian children](#) who were transferred to Russia and then returned home took part in a recreational camp in Irshava in the Zakarpattia region of western Ukraine, organised by a foundation set up by a Ukrainian billionaire.

About statistics: only 2.5% of children stolen by Russia were rescued

According to the official Ukrainian Database of [Children in War](#), about 20,000 **children** have been separated from their families in Ukraine, forcibly transferred by Russia to its own territories and the occupied Ukrainian regions where they have forcibly been registered as Russian citizens since the start of its full-scale invasion of Ukraine,

Many journalists, media outlets and even officials keep on writing that less than 400 children have been brought back home as mentioned on the website of the Ukrainian Database. These are however outdated statistics of 2022. They have unfortunately not been updated for lack of staff, failing to include more cases of enforced disappearances. Over a hundred children are thought to have been rescued since 1 January 2024. Most of them, if not all of them, were not on the lists of the Database.

The exact figures are unclear, and where they are is mostly unknown. The BBC has compiled evidence from many children who said they were separated from parents, were not allowed to go home or call their relatives.

In 2023, the International Criminal Court issued an arrest warrant for the Russian President Vladimir Putin and his Children's Rights Commissioner Maria Lvova-Belova for the unlawful deportation of children.

Russia denies the accusation and says it has protected vulnerable children by moving them from a war zone for their own safety.

Maria Lvova-Belova says some 730,000 children have been brought to Russia, most of them with their parents or other relatives and that 2,000 children were 'evacuated' from Ukrainian orphanages for their 'safety', although she makes no mention of forcible displacement.

Unlike the issue of exchange of war prisoners, Russia remains far away from any international attempt to reunify the deported Ukrainian children with their original families and to repatriate the orphans to their country of origin but prefers to promote their illegal adoption by Russian families and hereby to forcibly russify them in flagrant violation of the international conventions.

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Today we have good news. Three children have been returned home Ukrainian teen forcibly transferred to Russia says upon return that 'Every child feels abandoned'

11 December 2023

[Do not forget the thousands of Ukrainian children kidnapped and deported by Russia](#)
[Do not forget the thousands of Ukrainian children kidnapped and deported by Russia](#)

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Zelensky at the meeting of the International Coalition for the Return of Ukrainian Children
Dozens of countries have taken up the return of Ukrainian children from the Russian Federation
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Ukraine has already returned 522 deported children in total -Lubynets
"Every child feels abandoned." Exclusive interview with Bogdan Yermokhin, returned from Russia

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The State of Qatar Facilitates Ongoing Successful Efforts to Reunify Ukrainian Children with their Families
Qatar announces return of six Ukrainian children from Russia

19 November 2023

"Glory to Ukraine!" – the first words of Bogdan Yermokhin, deported from Mariupol to the Russian Federation, on Ukrainian land

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3 Ukraine children to be released from Russia after Qatar mediation

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1 September 2023

11 children who were kept by Russians in the occupied part of Kherson region were returned to Ukraine

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Deportation, Treatment of Ukraine's Children by Russian Federation Take Centre Stage by Many Delegates at Security Council Briefing

Imposing Sanctions and Visa Restrictions on Individuals and Entities Russia to Promote Accountability for Forced Transfer and Deportation of Children During Russia's Illegal War Against Ukraine

21 July 2023

Stolen generation. Russia systematically abducts children from Ukraine gives them to Russian families

8 May 2023

Andriy Yermak in meetings to discuss return of Ukrainian children illegally deported by Russia

25 January 2023

[Ukraine returns four abducted children from Russian captivity](#)

Complicity of Belarus' Red Cross in the deportation of Ukrainian children

The complicity of Belarus' Red Cross and its head denounced in an oral statement at the UN in Geneva. Watch the 1'25" video in English with sub-titles in Russian [HERE](#)

HRWF (03.04.2024) - On 2 April, CAP/ Liberté de conscience made an oral statement supported by Human Rights Without Frontiers about the complicity of Dzmitry Shautsou, the head of the Red Cross in Belarus, in the deportation of Ukrainian children to Russia. This intervention took place in the framework of the 55th Session of the UN Human Rights Council attended by the national delegations of all the UN Member States.

The original version is on the UN WebTV:

<https://webtv.un.org/en/asset/k14/k14m782f1n> (Click on the title and then around 1h 26'56" for direct to the statement).

The oral statement read by Christine Mirre has also been posted on YouTube with sub-titles in Russian by Dr Evgeniya Gidulianova:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=VoVIAr1cMWk>

Oral statement by CAP/ Liberté de conscience

"With Human Rights Without Frontiers, we are deeply concerned about the situation of about 20,000 Ukrainian children forcibly transferred from the Ukrainian occupied territories by and into Russia.

Just a few hundreds of them could be rescued and brought back to their families in Ukraine, mainly by NGOs but also in some cases thanks to the efficient mediation of Qatar.

Belarus was also involved in this crime against humanity.

Dzmitry Shautsou, the head of the Red Cross in Belarus, supported and actively participated in the deportation of Ukrainian children.

In the exercise of his duties, he was seen in camouflage and with a chevron bearing the pro-war letter Z.

He was recently put under sanctions of the European Union, the United States and the Baltic States.

The International Federation of the Red Cross has finally suspended the Belarus Red Cross.

As a reminder, the ICC in The Hague has issued arrest warrants against Russian President Vladimir Putin and Russian Commissioner for Children's Rights Maria Lvova-Belova.

We recommend that the OHCHR closely works with the international community to get the reunification of Ukrainian children deported by and to Russia with their families."

Do not forget the thousands of Ukrainian children kidnapped and deported by Russia

Only 517 Ukrainian children out of 20,000 could be rescued

Press release on the eve of the session of the UN Committee on the Children's Rights which has Russia on its agenda

HRWF (20.01.2024) - On the eve of the session of the UN Human Rights Committee in Geneva, thousands of Ukrainian children kidnapped and deported by Russia, whose parents are desperately searching for a way to get them home should not be forgotten by the international community, said the Brussels-based NGO, Human Rights Without Frontiers, in a press release issued today.

In December, President Zelensky a few children deported to Russia from Ukraine's Occupied Territories were released with the mediation of Qatar.

All in all, **only 517 Ukrainian minors out of 20,000 missing ones** have been rescued in various separate and individually designed special operations, according to The platform "Children of War" created on behalf of the Office of the President of Ukraine by various official Ukrainian institutions.

The same platform has posted the pictures, names and dates of birth with the place of disappearance of **19,546 deported children** and their number continues to grow.

Statistics: 20,000? 300,000? 700,000?

It is impossible to establish the exact number of deported children given the ongoing full-scale aggression, difficult access to the temporarily occupied territories and the failure of the Russian side to provide reliable information on this matter.

Daria Herasymchuk, Adviser to the President of Ukraine on Children's Rights and Children's Rehabilitation, notes that the aggressor country, Russia, could have illegally deported up to **300,000** children from Ukraine during the war.

As of June 2023, the Interdepartmental Coordination Headquarters of the Russian Federation for Humanitarian Response indicated in its statement that since 24 February 2022, **307,423** children have been taken from Ukraine to the territory of Russia.

Russia's Commissioner for Children's Rights Maria Lvova-Belova [said](#) that the number of such Ukrainian children is **more than 700,000**.

Russia cynically calls the illegal transfer of Ukrainian children an "evacuation," but the UN panel of inquiry concluded that none of the cases it examined was justified on safety or health grounds, nor did they meet the requirements of international humanitarian law."

Russian authorities are creating obstacles to prevent Ukrainian children from being reunited with their families.

In its report on the issue, the OSCE [notes](#) that the Russian authorities began working on the "transfer" of Ukrainian children for adoption or care by Russian families since 2014, after the occupation of Crimea.

According to the Russian program "[Train of Hope](#)", anyone from any part of the country could adopt Ukrainian children from Crimea, who were then granted Russian citizenship.

At the end of September 2022, Russian President Vladimir Putin [signed a decree](#) on the "accession" to the Russian Federation of the partially occupied regions of Zaporizhzhia, Kherson, Donetsk and the occupied region of Luhansk in Ukraine. After that, children from these newly occupied regions also began to be enrolled as citizens of the Russian Federation and forcefully adopted.

On 17 March 2023, the [International Criminal Court](#) issued an arrest warrant for Russian President Vladimir Putin and Russian Presidential Commissioner for Children's Rights Maria Lvova-Belova for the war crime of unlawful deportation of population and unlawful transfer of population from occupied areas of Ukraine to the Russian Federation, in prejudice of Ukrainian children.

Recommendations

Human Rights Without Frontiers supports the recommendations of the UN Secretary-General, who urges:

- Russia to ensure that no changes are made to the personal status of Ukrainian children, including their citizenship;
- all parties to continue to ensure that the best interests of all children are respected, including by facilitating family tracing and reunification of unaccompanied and/or separated children who find themselves outside borders or control lines without their families or guardians;
- parties to the conflict to grant child protection authorities access to these children to facilitate family reunification;
- his Special Representative on "Children and Armed Conflicts", together with United Nations agencies and partners, to consider ways to facilitate such processes.