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Putin losing his teeth on Ukraine for 4 years. A commemoration in Brussels

By Willy Fautré, director of Human Rights Without Frontiers

[The European Times](#) (27.02.2026) - Four years ago, when Russian tanks crossed into Ukraine, the Kremlin imagined a swift, crushing bite—one decisive chomp that would shatter Ukrainian resistance, terrify Europe into submission, and restore Moscow's imperial authority. Instead, as the fourth anniversary of the war arrived, the image that best captures the conflict is not that of a predator feeding, but of one slowly losing its teeth on a prey that can defend itself. Ukraine did not collapse. Russia did not win.

Four Years of Resistance: Achievements, Losses and Challenges – A commemoration in Brussels

On the occasion of the 4th anniversary of the war, many commemorative events were held in Brussels.

On 24-25 February, the Belgian association "Ukraine-EU" organized the screening of movies (with translations in the subtitles) showing various aspects of the war in the premises of the European Economic and Social Committee (EESC). On the program:

"On the Other Side of Peace" (30 min)
"Cyborgs: Heroes never Die" (120 min)
"Mariupol: Chronicle of Hell" (120 min)
"The Little People Who Unleashed a Great War"
"Delayed Consequences"
"Peaceful 21" (120 min)

There were also the presentation of the book "A Story Worth Hearing" by physician and veteran Yevhen Dubrovskiy, panel discussions and award ceremonies.

Three combatants (volunteers) from the front-line testified about their lives under enemy fire. Among which Olga Komant, the driving force of Ukraine-EU (hello@ukraine-eu.com). One film particularly moved me: [On the Other Side of Peace](#). The reason for this is that all victims were asked an important and painful question: 'How did you experience 24 February, the attack and invasion of Ukraine, and what are the consequences for you today?'

Anyone in the United States who is asked a similar question about September 11 does not have to think twice before answering. That day remains a painful scar 25 years later. But all over the world, everyone clearly remembers what he or she was doing on that day.

The message of suffering and distress experienced in all its diversity during half an hour, about 24 February 2022, is deeper and more human than any television programme hosting the best experts although they are also quite useful. The reason is that they are constructed, honestly and intelligently of course, but often too rationally. Emotional testimonies are filtered and short. Ordinary people in their simple environment speak from their heart and take the time to show the disastrous consequences of the war.

The film is truly moving because it is as if the victims are speaking directly to each of us, face to face, in this film. The pain of ordinary people hits us in the face and covers us with their blood. Such a film cannot leave us unmoved and inactive after seeing it. Watch it [HERE](#).

The other movies also have their respective qualities and can be found on You Tube. Example: ["Cyborgs: Heroes Never Die"](#)

Putin biting off more than he can chew

Vladimir Putin, who sought to devour a neighbor, has spent four grinding years wearing down his own power against a target that refused to be swallowed.

From the outset, the invasion was meant to be overwhelming. The Kremlin assumed that Ukraine would fall in days, that Kyiv would be decapitated, and that the world would accept the result as an unpleasant but inevitable fact. That confidence was not merely military; it was ideological. Putin believed Ukraine was not a real country, not a real people, and therefore not a real opponent. **The belief that Ukraine was not a real country was the first tooth he lost.** An allegedly non-existent people and country still prohibits an ogre from swallowing it alive after four years of warfare.

Ukrainians were a real nation. They existed and resisted—at first with desperation, then with organization, and eventually with growing competence. The failure to take Kyiv in the opening weeks was not just a battlefield setback; it was a strategic fracture. Every subsequent phase of the war has been shaped by that initial miscalculation. What was intended as a lightning strike became a grinding war of attrition, one in which Russia has repeatedly slammed its jaw shut on something far harder than expected.

The **second tooth Putin lost was military credibility in the eyes of the West.** Before the invasion, Russia marketed its armed forces as modern, professional, and fearsome. Four years later, the image lies in ruins. The war exposed deep weaknesses: corruption hollowing out logistics, rigid command structures unable to adapt, and a system that punished initiative while rewarding loyalty. Russia's military power progressively appeared to be far less formidable than advertised. Ukraine, by contrast, learned quickly, innovated constantly, and turned necessity into strength. The longer the war lasted, the more Russia's bite weakened.

A **third tooth fell on the economic front.** The Kremlin assumed that Europe would fracture under internal pressure and cowardice, that energy dependence would paralyze Western governments, and that sanctions would be symbolic at best. Instead, Russia found itself increasingly isolated. Sanctions did not cause instant collapse, but they worked like a poison. The war reshaped Russia's economy into something more brittle, more militarized, and less capable of long-term growth. A predator can survive on brute force for a while, but without healthy teeth, it struggles to feed itself. He is now vulnerable to the vagaries of the global economy and the geopolitical upheavals.

The **fourth tooth Putin lost was narrative control.** The invasion was framed as a heroic defense against NATO encroachment, a civilizational struggle to restore historical unity. But narratives require results. Four years on, the story no longer convinces as it once did. Ukraine still stands. Its language, culture, and political identity are stronger than ever, not weaker. Far from returning to Russia's orbit with bread and salt, Ukraine has cemented itself as a separate nation with a shared sense of sacrifice and purpose. Every missile strike that failed to break Ukrainian morale only reinforced the very identity the Kremlin tried to erase. Moreover, more European countries have joined NATO and a military defence of Europe by the Europeans is emerging.

Other teeth are now shaking because their roots are slowly getting rotten. Politically, the war has also eaten away at Putin's political authority from within, even if the effects can still remain under control. While open dissent has been crushed, loyalty built on fear is not the same as legitimacy built on success. Each year of fighting without victory has raised uncomfortable questions among elites and ordinary Russians alike. Why are so many dying? Why are resources vanishing? Why does the promised triumph never arrive? The Kremlin can suppress these questions, but it cannot erase them. Over time, they wear down the foundations of power, like gums inflamed from constant strain.

What about the future?

The future is unpredictable because Russia's war on Ukraine and the West is Putin's personal war but he goes on believing that he can swallow Ukraine whatever the human costs and despite four years of evidence.

Moscow remains dangerous, but danger is not the same as respect. Countries now view Russia less as a partner or rival and more as a chronic risk—unpredictable, sanction-ridden, and willing to burn the future of its own people for the sake of imperial nostalgia. Putin sought to intimidate and paralyze the EU countries with fear in particular. Instead, he is teaching them how to live without him and despite him.

The human, military and material losses have been immense on both sides: lives lost, cities destroyed, families uprooted, and futures postponed. Ukraine has paid in blood for every Russian tooth knocked loose. But endurance matters. Survival matters. Four years into the war, Ukraine exists, not as a conquered territory or failed state, but as a battered yet functioning nation, still choosing its own path. That alone represents a strategic defeat for the Kremlin.

For Putin, Ukraine was thought to be an easy meal—a demonstration of strength to awe the world. Instead, it has become the battlefield where his power has been ground down, bite by bite.

Four years on, the image is clear. Ukraine still stands, wounded but unbroken. It has become the shield that Europe cannot do without.

Putin, who came to consume, although uninvited, has spent these years gnawing on something he could not swallow—losing his teeth one by one on a nation that refused to disappear.

Draft law on regional & minority languages under fire. Which solution?

By Willy Fautré, director of *Human Rights Without Frontiers* (Brussels) and former *chargé de mission* of the Cabinet of the Ministry of Education and the Belgian Government (*)

HRWF (11.11.2025) - On 13 October 2025, the Cabinet of Ministers of Ukraine registered in the Verkhovna Rada [draft law No. 14120](#) (**) revising the minority languages to be protected in conformity with [the European Charter for Regional or Minority Languages](#). (***)

The revised proposed list of minority languages to be protected

If adopted, the draft law would apply on the following languages: Belarusian, Bulgarian, Gagauz, Crimean Tatar, Modern Greek, German, Polish, Romanian, Slovak, Hungarian, Czech, and Hebrew.

It is to be noted that Crimean Tatar and Czech languages are added to the list but that Jewish (Yiddish) was renamed Hebrew and the name "Moldovan" disappeared.

Criticism immediately erupted accusing Ukraine of excluding the language of the Moldovan minority and the Russian language from the protection of the European Charter.

Two issues need to be analyzed.

Why did the Moldovan language disappear from the list and what is the status of the language of the Moldovan minority in Ukraine?

Is the exclusion of the Russian language legal according to the European Charter or legitimate?

What is the state language of Moldova?

After the collapse of the Soviet Union, the Declaration of Independence of Moldova (27 August 1991) declared that the state language was the **Romanian language**.

However, the Constitution of Moldova adopted on 29 July 1994 stated in **Article 13(1)**: "The state language of the Republic of Moldova is the **Moldovan language**, and its writing is based on the Latin alphabet."

In December 2013, the [Constitutional Court of Moldova](#) ruled that the Declaration of Independence takes precedence over the Constitution in matters of the state language, and therefore [the "Romanian language" is the official state language](#).

On 16 March 2023 [the Parliament](#) passed a law to replace in all legislation (including the Constitution) the phrase "Moldovan language" with "Romanian language". It was published in the [Official Gazette](#) on 24 March 2023.

On 15 January 2025, the [Constitutional Court of Moldova](#) confirmed that the state language was the Romanian language.

The change has symbolic, linguistic and [political significance](#).

Noteworthy is the unchanged presence of the Gagauz language in the Ukrainian draft law.

[The autonomous region Gagauzia in Moldova](#) is legally recognised by the Law on the Special Status of Gagauzia (No. 344-XIII of 23 December 1994). Its population (about 110,400 inhabitants) speaks a form of Turkic language identified as Oghuz but they are primarily Orthodox. The Church in Gagauzia is part of the dominant pro-Russian Moldovan Orthodox Church under the Patriarchate of the Russian Orthodox Church supporting Putin's war on Ukraine.

In Moldova, Gagauz is officially recognised as one of the languages of Gagauzia (alongside the state language of Moldova and Russian) but the **practical usage**, especially in education, public life and inter-ethnic communication, is much weaker than the legal status would suggest.

In conclusion, it is therefore not true that Ukraine excluded the state language of Moldova from the minority languages to be protected on its territory.

The Russian language in Ukraine, an insoluble demographic state of play

The most recent (and only) complete population [census](#) for Ukraine was conducted in **2001**. Since then, no full national census has been carried out. About 25 years later, a whole generation of old (Sovietized and Russified) people has been slowly disappearing while a young generation has been educated in schools in the Ukrainian language and

has integrated a Ukrainian identity. For these and other reasons, it can be expected that the 2001 statistics have dramatically changed.

The Ukrainian language along with the Ukrainian cultural self-identification must have been boosted upwards while the Russian language along with the Russian/ Soviet self-identification was sharply decreasing, especially since Russia's invasion and partial occupation of Ukraine.

This trend is confirmed by the latest results of a survey conducted by the sociological group [Rating](#) in August 2022: nowadays, 58% of Ukrainians speak only Ukrainian at home and only 9% of Ukrainians only use the Russian language in everyday life. From these figures, the number of Ukrainians speaking both languages to varying degrees in daily life could easily be deduced.

It is however impossible to make a comparison with the situation in 2001 as the mainly Russian-speaking regions of Donbass and Crimea have been respectively partly or fully occupied and depopulated by Russia. Moreover, millions of Ukrainians live outside the country.

In the current territorial and demographic context of a country under threat of ongoing occupation, it is impossible to gather reliable statistics. However, the status of the Russian language until now and tomorrow in the sovereign part of Ukraine raises a number of questions. Is the European Charter one of the books of a "democracy Bible" out of which there is no salvation?

Is the European Charter a Bible or a Sacred Scripture?

The Council of Europe has nowadays 46 Member States. Only **25 States – including no more than 16 out of 27 EU Member States - have ratified the Charter**, including Ukraine: Armenia, Austria, Bosnia-Herzegovina, Croatia, Cyprus, Czech Republic, Denmark, Finland, Germany, Hungary, Liechtenstein, Luxembourg, Montenegro, Netherlands, Norway, Poland, Romania, Serbia, Slovakia, Slovenia, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland, Ukraine and the United Kingdom.

France (1999) and Italy (1998) signed but never ratified the Charter.

12 States have neither signed nor ratified the Charter: Andorra, Belgium, Bulgaria, Estonia, Greece, Ireland, Latvia, Lithuania, Monaco, Portugal, San Marino, and Turkey.

Can it be said that the CoE Member States having ratified the Charter satisfactorily implement it? Not necessarily but their status in international institutions has not been suspended.

Can it be said that the States which have not signed or ratified the Charter are not democracies? They are and their membership in international institutions has not been questioned or changed.

Can it be said that linguistic minorities are oppressed in those democratic countries and that their societies have dangerously lost their social cohesion? International human rights reports are not saying that they are countries of particular concern.

Belgium, which is one of the founding Member States of the EU and hosts the major EU institutions, has neither signed nor ratified the European Charter but it has shown enough political will, determination and perseverance to review and deeply reform the architecture of the State. This took several decades but the linguistic issues do not

represent any more a pressing threat of dislocation of the country and its society despite its linguistic, cultural, economic and political diversity.

The European Charter for Regional or Minority Languages is not a sacred text or a sacred cow but it gives orientations and guidelines enabling States in search of solutions to meet the needs of the users of regional or minority languages inside their legitimate and sovereign borders.

The practice of a number of States having chosen, for various reasons, not to sign or ratify the European Charter shows that it is possible to greatly satisfy the expectations of users of languages having a historical presence on their territory. Belgium is not the sole example.

This is a way that Ukraine should exploit to find its own solution to the issue of its 9% monolingual Russian-speaking citizens, about 3,5 million people according to the current demographic situation.

Is it the Russian language or the users of the Russian language that must be protected in Ukraine?

If the focus is on the users rather than on the language itself, the discussion can be moved away from the confrontation on the concepts of minority language and regional language. A new space of discussion could hereby be opened to look for a solution outside the scope of the European Charter.

In this case, a number of questions arise before opening a discussion and must be answered. Is there an organized group of users of the Russian language who expect to further feel wronged by the upcoming law 14120? If so, what are their concrete grievances and demands? What demographic weight do they represent in the current borders of the sovereign Ukrainian State. It can indeed be expected that they will not be a regionally located homogeneous group and that they will not be superimposable on one or several ethnic groups.

The contribution of think tanks in Ukraine would be needed to answer such questions and to explore alternative solutions outside the terminology and the literal reading of the European Charter. The purpose of this mechanism was designed and drafted in peacetimes to avoid civil wars and to guarantee social cohesion inside states, not for the exceptional case of a sovereign state invaded by a neighbouring country which had colonized it during centuries, imposed its language on its populations and is trying to do the same again in the 2020s.

Human Rights Without Frontiers is also willing to participate in this effort, by opening its columns to meaningful papers and organizing a webinar.

() The author was involved, as a chargé de mission of the Cabinet of the Ministry of Education and afterwards of the Belgian State, in projects aiming at bringing the various linguistic communities of Belgium closer to each other in the mid-1980s at a time when Belgium was engaged in a painful process of revision of its constitution and building a new State architecture. This political process took a few decades.*

He was also one of the six founding members of the "Centre d'Animation en Langues." From 1980 to 2010, this civic multi-lingual association, which occupied over 50 staff, promoted the learning of the languages of the other linguistic communities of the country among various segments of society, such as youth and lawmakers.

*(**) Draft Law on Amendments to Certain Laws of Ukraine in Connection with the Update of the Official Translation of the European Charter of Regional or Minority Languages*

*(**) Called "European Charter" or "Charter" in the rest of the article.*

No to the extradition of Ivan Borisov to Russia, over a dozen European NGOs say!

Borisov Case a Test of Ukraine's Commitment to European Human Rights Standards. Support of NGOs is Welcome at international.secretariat.brussels@hrwf.org

Human Rights Without Frontiers (14.08.2025) - *Brussels* - European and Ukrainian human rights organizations are appealing to Ukrainian authorities to grant pre-asylum status to Ivan Borisov, a Russian educational video producer and long-time resident of Ukraine, married to a Ukrainian citizen, who has publicly criticized Russia's assault on Ukraine. In deteriorating health, Borisov is currently detained in Mykolaiv Oblast after the State Migration Service deprived him of his permanent residency status. Human rights organizations say this is not an isolated case, and that the migration authorities have repeatedly violated the law and international standards in the course of the war.

"The Ukrainian State Migration Service is violating the Ukrainian Constitution and the European Convention on Human Rights in this case," according to Willy Fautre, president of Brussels-based NGO Human Rights Without Frontiers.

"If Ukraine wants European support, it should fulfill its human rights obligations as a member of the Council of Europe," he added.

Borisov is facing possible extradition to Russia, where he has been sentenced to prison for his opposition to the Russian invasion. He is also threatened with being included in a prisoner exchange with Russia.

"Borisov supports our defense against Russian aggression, and extradition would be a death sentence. He has acted in good faith to comply with regulations, but is apparently being persecuted because of his Russian nationality," stated Yevgeniy Zakharov, Director of the Kharkiv Human Rights Protection Group.

This statement is endorsed by the following human rights organizations:

Human Rights Without Frontiers International (Belgium/ Brussels)

CAP/Liberté de conscience (France)

Noodt Foundation (Netherlands)

Helsinki Committee for Human Rights in Serbia

Forum for Religious Freedom-Europe (Austria)

Kharkiv Human Rights Protection Group (Ukraine)

Center for Civil Liberties, Oleksandra Matviichuk, Head of the Board (Ukraine/ Kyiv)

Human Rights Centre ZMINA, Tetiana Pechonchyk, Head of the Board (Ukraine, Kyiv)

Educational Human Rights House, Serhiy Burov, Executive Director (Ukraine/ Chernihiv)

Human Rights Group "SICH", Natalia Kozhina, Executive Director, (Ukraine/ Dnipro)

Protection for prisoners of Ukraine, Oleh Tsvilyi, Director, (Ukraine/ Kyiv)

NGO Bakhmat, Volodymyr Berezin, Head of the Board, (Ukraine/ Donetsk region)

Ukrainian Helsinki Human Rights Union, Oleksander Pavlichenko, Executive Director (Ukraine)

NGO «Terytoriya Uspikhy», Inha Dudnik (Ukraine/ Kropivnitskiy)

For more information: HRWF international.secretariat.brussels@hrwf.org

Background

Ivan Borisov was born on September 3, 1979 in Kirov, Russia. He has been married to Maryna Rubynova, a Ukrainian citizen, since August 16, 2011; the couple live in Dnipro. In 2018, Borisov obtained a permanent resident certificate from the Ukrainian migration authority based on his marriage.

The migration authority deprived Borisov of his Ukrainian permanent resident status and detained him on June 11, 2025, when he and his wife responded to an invitation to appear for a refugee status application review.

Borisov's problems began when he wasn't provided with a new passport for foreign travel by the Russian consulate in Odesa, where he submitted all the necessary documents in December 2021. Russian officials claimed that his passport was never issued, and that he needed to apply again in Russia, or in any other consulate outside Ukraine. Fearing persecution, he decided he would stay in Ukraine. The Ukrainian migration authority in Dnipro told Borisov that he could continue to legally reside in Ukraine even with his expired passport, as his permanent residence certificate was valid then.

Upon his reaching the age of 45 years in 2024, his permanent residence certificate needed to be replaced. But that was possible only if he had a valid Russian passport. Borisov then prepared an application for refugee status. His application was rejected orally, without explanation. His lawyers filed a lawsuit against the migration authority for lawless inactivity. This case was considered in 2025, and is apparently still under consideration.

In 2025, Borisov was put on an international wanted list by the Russia Federal Security Service (FSB), and that criminal proceedings were initiated against him in Russia. He was sentenced to four years imprisonment under Subparagraph "c" Paragraph 2 Article 280.4 of the Criminal Code of Russia: "public calls for activities directed against the security of the Russian Federation." The sentence included texts from his posts on social media asking to donate money to friends serving in the Ukrainian Armed Forces.

Given that new circumstance, Ivan sought to file his application for refugee status with the migration authority once again. On June 5, 2025, he was again rejected, and when he asked for a formal rejection on paper, but none was provided. The following day, he filed a written statement about the refusal to review his application for refugee status, and added 65 pages of his application along with proof of his support for Ukraine.

On June 9, 2025, police came to the Borisov's apartment under orders to deliver Ivan to the migration authority at 7 Lypynskoho Street in Dnipro. Officials issued an administrative protocol for his violation of the migration law, stating that he never applied for his resident permit replacement upon reaching the age of 45 years, but said that if he paid the fine he could stay in Ukraine legally. The Deputy Head of Department for Illegal Immigration Prevention asked that Ivan appear the next day, as "someone from the top wants to review your application for refugee status." Borisov and his wife appeared as requested but were told to return the next day due to technical problems.

When they returned on June 11, Ivan was detained, all his Ukrainian documents were revoked, he was identified as an illegal alien and ordered to leave Ukraine before June 19, but was kept in detention as he had no valid documents whatsoever, as his Russian internal passport also expired when he reached the age of 45. At this point Borisov fell ill with high blood pressure. He was taken to the MCC Detention in the Mykolaiv Region,

put under quarantine, allowed no visitors, and could not leave his cell except for three short walks every day, or when he was to be present in court via videoconference. On June 12, the migration authority filed a lawsuit asking to detain Ivan for the period of up to 6 months for his identification and deportation. On June 13, that lawsuit was not satisfied by the court of first instance, so they filed a notice of appeal. That notice of appeal has not yet been considered.

In the course of his efforts to comply with the law, and regularize his status, Borisov has been repeatedly harassed and bullied by guards and interrogated by members of some undisclosed Ukrainian security services (possibly Security Service of Ukraine).

Remember Odesa's Tragedy on May 2, 2014

"I was in Odesa to investigate the issue, two weeks after the tragedy which claimed over 40 lives" (Willy Fautré, director of Human Rights Without Frontiers). See [our report on our website](#).

[ECHR](#) (13.03.2025) - Today's Chamber judgment in the case of [Vyacheslavova and Others v. Ukraine](#) (**application no. 39553/16 and 6 others**) concerned violent clashes between Maidan supporters and opponents and the fire in the Trade Union Building in Odesa on 2 May 2014, which resulted in heavy casualties.

The seven applications were lodged by a total of 28 individuals. Twenty-five of the applicants lost their next of kin – either in the clashes or as a result of the fire – and three of the applicants survived the fire with various injuries.

Among the applicants' relatives who lost their lives on that day, were Maidan supporters and opponents and, possibly, simple passers-by. Respecting the applicants' choice, who often preferred not to mention their or their relatives' political views, the Court only indicated the political views of the individuals concerned where that was essential for establishing and understanding the events or where, in any event, the applicants themselves had made that information public.

In the case, the European Court of Human Rights Court held, **unanimously**, that there had been: violations of Article 2 (right to life/investigation) of the European Convention on Human Rights, on account of the relevant authorities' failure to do everything that could reasonably be expected of them to prevent the violence in Odesa on 2 May 2014, to stop that violence after its outbreak, to ensure timely rescue measures for people trapped in the fire, and to institute and conduct an effective investigation into the events; and a violation of Article 8 (right to respect for private and family life) in respect of one applicant (application no. 39553/16) concerning the delay in handing over her father's body for burial.

Principal facts

Between November 2013 and February 2014, a series of protests took place in Ukraine, first in Kyiv and then in other regions, including in Odesa, in response to the suspension of the preparations for the signing of the Ukraine-European Union Association Agreement and a strengthening of economic ties with Russia instead. Those protests, which became known as "Maidan", culminated in the ousting of the President of Ukraine and a series of political changes. That triggered, in turn, some pro-Russian protests. In eastern regions

of Ukraine armed groups began to forcibly take control of administrative buildings across the Donetsk and Lugansk Regions, announcing the creation of self-proclaimed separatist entities which enjoyed military, economic and political support from the Russian Federation. The Russian Federation also started to exercise effective control over Crimea through the active involvement of its military personnel in the events leading to the so-called "referendum" and the subsequent purported integration of the peninsula into the Russian Federation.

By 2 May 2014, Odesa had been living through a period of several months of social tensions, including the violent dispersal of Maidan protests by the police in late November 2013, the attack on Maidan supporters on 19 February 2014 by an organised and well-equipped group of private individuals, with the police passively observing the events, and the unsuccessful attempt of pro-Russian protesters to storm the Odesa Regional Council building on 3 March 2014 to force through decisions in favour of federalisation and a local referendum. Both Maidan supporters and opponents had so-called self-defence units possessing some protective equipment and arms. While violent incidents had overall remained rare in Odesa, the situation was volatile and implied a constant risk of escalation.

In early March 2014 pro-Russian activists set up a tent camp at Kulykove Pole Square.

In late April 2014, fans of the Odesa Chornomorets and Kharkiv Metalist football clubs announced a rally "For a United Ukraine" on 2 May 2014 before the match that afternoon. The rally participants were to walk from Soborna Square to the stadium located 2.5 km east of the departure point (whereas the anti-Maidan activists' tent camp was about 3 km south). Shortly thereafter, anti-Maidan posts began to appear on social media describing the event as a Nazi march and calling for people to prevent it. Intelligence obtained by the Security Service showed signs of possible incitement to violence, clashes and disorder. The Ministry of the Interior's cybercrime unit also detected social media posts evoking mass riots.

On 2 May 2014 limited police forces were deployed to the city centre and the stadium, in accordance with a standard contingency plan for a football match. They did not intervene when anti-Maidan protesters started gathering not far from Soborna Square, supposedly to prevent the march participants from destroying the anti-Maidan activists' tents at Kulykove Pole.

As soon as the march began to make its way towards the stadium, anti-Maidan activists approached and attacked the demonstrators, some firing shots at them, still with no interference from the police.

Both sides used pyrotechnic devices and airguns, and threw stones, stun grenades and Molotov cocktails. Some police officers and certain anti-Maidan protesters were wearing similar red adhesive tape on their arms.

At 4.10 p.m., the first victim, Mr Ivanov (application no. 59531/17), a pro-unity activist, was shot in the stomach. He was taken to hospital but died during surgery. There is video footage showing a pro-Russian activist wearing a balaclava standing by the police and firing numerous shots from a Kalashnikov-type assault rifle, with no reaction from the police. Other video footage shows that person with the rifle later leaving the scene alongside the deputy head of the regional police. At a certain point anti-Maidan activists drove back their opponents. It was then, at about 4.20 p.m., that Mr Biryukov (application no. 59531/17) was fatally injured. Shortly afterwards, a fire engine was hijacked by some pro-unity supporters but was released a few hours later. At around 5.45 p.m., numerous shots were fired towards anti-Maidan activists from a hunting gun

by someone standing on a nearby balcony. It was around that time that Mr Zhulkov, Mr Yavorsky and Mr Petrov (application no. 76896/17) were killed.

The clashes in the city centre claimed six lives in total, including five relatives of nine of the applicants. Pro-unity protesters eventually gained the upper hand in the clashes and charged to the pro-Russian tent camp at Kulykove Pole. Anti-Maidan protesters took refuge in the Trade Union Building, a five-storey building facing the square. They barricaded themselves inside the building using wooden pallets from the tent camp and wooden and plastic furniture found in the building. They took with them from the tent camp a fuel-powered electric generator, boxes containing Molotov cocktails and the products needed to make them.

Maidan activists started setting fire to the tents. A group of pro-Russian protesters on the roof of the Trade Union Building threw Molotov cocktails at the crowd below; pro-unity activists retaliated by throwing Molotov cocktails at the building. Gunshots were reportedly fired from both sides.

Despite numerous calls to the fire brigade, which was less than 1 km away, the fire service regional head instructed his staff not to send any fire engines to Kulykove Pole without his explicit order.

At 7.45 p.m., a fire broke out in the Trade Union Building. The fire extinguishers in the building did not work. The police called the fire brigade, to no avail. Some of the people in the building – including Mr Dmitriyev (application no. 59339/17) – tried to escape by jumping from the upper windows. He survived the fall and was taken to an ambulance. A number of people fell to their deaths, including the son of Ms Radzykhovska (application no. 59339/17) and the son of Ms Nikitenko (application no. 47092/18). Video footage shows pro-unity protesters making makeshift ladders and platforms from a stage in the square and using them to rescue people trapped in the building. Other video footage shows pro-unity protesters attacking people who had jumped or had fallen.

The regional head of the fire service finally ordered fire engines to be sent to the scene. Fire ladders were used to rescue people from the upper-floor windows. Firefighters entered the building at around 8.30 p.m. and put out the fire. The police arrested 63 anti-Maidan activists who were still inside the building or on the roof. They were released two days later, when a group of several hundred anti-Maidan protesters stormed the local police station where they were being held.

The fire claimed 42 lives. Fourteen of the deceased were the next of kin of 16 of the applicants. Many people, including Mr Didenko, Mr Dmitriyev and Mr Gerasymov (application no. 59339/17), sustained burns and other injuries.

The domestic investigations, which were launched later on various dates, comprised numerous interrelated sets of criminal proceedings evolving over time. Depending on whether the investigations concerned private individuals, the police or the fire service, they were entrusted to different authorities, which apparently did not coordinate their efforts. Many of the suspects absconded.

Several others were eventually released from criminal liability owing to the expiry of the ten-year limitation period. In some cases, the proceedings reached the trial stage, where they have remained pending for years. The only case completed by a final judicial decision was that in respect of the deputy head of the regional police who, having fled to Russia, was convicted in absentia for complicity in organising mass riots.

Full European Court:

State negligence in clashes between Maidan supporters and opponents in Odesa in May 2014: [Vyacheslavova and Others v. Ukraine](#)

See the famous Oliver Stone's **documentary "Ukraine on Fire"** mainly about the modern history of Ukraine. The section on the 2 May events starts at 1h16.

<https://youtu.be/IwZApPCFXIc?si=nA-tIM1pCP9OowcB>

See Dumskaya Report today 2 May 2025:

https://dumskaya.net/news/2-maya_7749-187740/ua/

Other useful articles

<https://www.bbc.com/ukrainian/articles/c8j03w027zko>

<https://suspilne.media/odesa/1008059-cekali-virok-desat-rokiv-ak-espl-rozgladav-spravu-pro-podii-2-travna-v-odesi/>

<https://www.radiosvoboda.org/a/rishennya-yevropeyskoho-sudu-z-prav-lyudyny-odesa/33346971.html>

Case of missing Ukrainian children in Crimea under Russian jurisdiction raised in Strasbourg

Notification to Russian Government of a case concerning ten Ukrainian children from Crimean childcare institutions

[Registrar of the Court](#) (14.04.2025) - The European Court of Human Rights has given notice to the Government of the Russian Federation of the application Ukrainian Helsinki Human Rights Union on behalf of ten Ukrainian children v. Russia (application no. 6719/23) and requested that they submit their observations.

The case concerns ten Ukrainian children who were in childcare in Crimea in 2014 when Russia asserted jurisdiction over the peninsula. According to the association (UHHRU) acting on their behalf, Russian nationality was forced on the children and they were put up for adoption and may have been adopted. There has been no information on their whereabouts since 2014, despite the Ukrainian authorities' repeated requests.

See also a previous [press release](#) on the case concerning a request to the European Court by UHHRU to grant an urgent interim measure (under Rule 39 of the Rules of Court) to stop the adoptions.

A [statement of facts](#) submitted to the parties, with questions from the Court, is available in English on the Court's website. The Court's ruling in the case will be made at a later stage.

Principal facts

The application was lodged by the Ukrainian Helsinki Human Rights Union (UHHRU) on behalf of ten minors, born between 2009 and 2013, who are Ukrainian nationals by birth.

In 2014 the children were wards of the Ukrainian State living in childcare institutions in Crimea. At the time they were aged between one and five years old.

According to UHHRU, following Russia's assertion of jurisdiction over Crimea in 2014, over 4,000 children deprived of parental care were automatically declared Russian citizens. Despite the Ukrainian Government's requests, Russia refused to transfer the children to the Ukrainian authorities and initiated adoption procedures.

UHHRU submit that the ten children in the present case were put up for adoption and may have been adopted, judging from the sudden disappearance in 2023 of some of the children's names from adoption websites in Russia.

Currently, UHHRU has no contact with the children and there is no information regarding their whereabouts.

Complaints

Relying on Article 8 (right to respect for private life) of the European Convention on Human Rights, UHHRU argues that the arbitrary change of the children's citizenship and their adoption, which was facilitated by the Russian authorities in the context of the ongoing war in Ukraine, deprived them of their social identity as Ukrainian nationals.

Relying on Article 5 (right to liberty and security) of the European Convention, UHHRU also complains about the Russian authorities' keeping the children in institutions after establishing effective control over Crimea.

Procedure

The application was lodged with the European Court of Human Rights on 14 January 2023.

On 8 February 2023 the Court received a request for an interim measure under Rule 39 of the Rules of Court, in which UHHRU argued that there was an imminent risk that the applicants could be adopted, and that this was being facilitated by the Russian authorities. On 14 February 2023 the Court decided to refuse the request on the basis that it related to events (the adoption of the applicants) after 16 September 2022, the date on which the Russian Federation ceased to be a Party to the Convention, and issued a [press release](#).

At the same time, the Court decided to grant the case priority, anonymity, and confidentiality under Rules 41, 47 § 4 and 33 § 2 of the Rules of the Court.

On 25 March 2025 the Government of Russia were given notice of the application with questions from the Court. The Government have until 31 July 2025 to submit their observations and were invited to confirm, within three weeks of the date on the Court's letter, whether they intend to comply with this deadline.

In its hybrid war, Russia manipulates minors in Odesa to commit criminal offenses

"Do not burn the car - there will be problems": how Russian special services recruit teenagers in Odesa

By Oleksandra Ponomarenko and Natalia Korshak

[Suspilne Media](#) (11.04.2025) - 25 teenagers suspected of criminal offenses are currently held in the Odesa detention center. 14 of them are held under articles related to national security. Journalists from [Public Odesa](#) visited the detention center to learn more about the conditions of stay of juvenile prisoners, as well as to hear the personal stories of those who were recruited by representatives of Russian special services.

According to the deputy head of the pre-trial detention center for social and educational work, Oleh Panichenko, the situation with the number of minors in the detention center changed during 2024. If at the beginning of the year only two teenagers were detained for property crimes, by the end of the year there were already 25 of them, among which 14 are suspected of committing offenses against the foundations of national and public security.

Teen recruitment mechanism via Telegram

Some of the minors who are currently in pre-trial detention for crimes against the foundations of national security say that the first contact with potential customers of the offenses took place through a job advertisement in Telegram channels. In some cases, recruitment was accompanied by psychological pressure, in particular threats against relatives.

"I was looking for a part-time job in the telegram channel. I wrote that I was looking for a job, 16 years old. The curator, called himself Sasha, came to me in about a day or two. He said there was a job like this: \$1,700 per car. I agreed. But then I changed my mind and refused. After that, he hacked my Telegram account and began to threaten me: "I have all your contacts, mom, dad, younger brothers and sisters, if you don't do this and that, there will be problems." I had to do it," Svetlana shared her story.

After the arson, the girl was detained. She has been in custody in the detention center for two months and is awaiting a court decision.

Danylo and his friend, looking for ways to make money quickly, received an offer that seemed easy to them. For \$1,000 a day, they were offered to burn cars, in particular, of TCC employees. Together with a friend, they purchased the necessary materials and set fire to two cars.

"With a friend, we went to buy material, found the car together, and two weeks later we took it on fire. Then we walked for another week and a half, decided to set fire to another car and that's it. We received the money, then three or four days later we were already arrested. I've been here for eight months and now, while the trials have begun, the main ones," Danylo said.

How to work with minors in SIZO

The Department of Execution of Criminal Punishments emphasizes the importance of a comprehensive approach to working with minors who are in detention centers. According to the representative of the institution, Vadym Yagodkin, the goal of the work is not only to ensure the legal process, but also to support teenagers in social and educational terms. At the same time, the official draws attention to external risks and the role of parental control.

"We want to show that children are exposed to the fake work offered by the aggressor state. And we want to emphasize that the participation of parents in this process is very

important, because parents should control their children and understand what they are doing," Vadym Yagodkin emphasized.

In the detention center, teenagers fully study, participate in sports activities, have sessions with psychologists and have the opportunity to meet with parents or lawyers. According to Marat Abdullayev, the head of the Next charity foundation, young people can participate in volunteer initiatives on the basis of the organization, which allows them to directly interact with their peers.

"On the basis of our organization, they can be involved as volunteers. But then, according to the principle of equal equality, they can communicate with other young people, convey to them the fact that prison is not romance, as can be seen from some films," commented Marat Abdullayev.

Why minors are recruited

"One of the reasons why children are recruited is because they do not always understand the consequences of their actions and do not critically assess the risks. This is what the enemy takes advantage of, involving minors in criminal activities. In any case, the best option is to contact law enforcement agencies, the Security Service of Ukraine has a permanent, official chatbot. This will make it possible to avoid or mitigate punishment, even after a crime," Anna Shevchuk said.

"I made a big mistake in my life, I broke a lot of things. If I advise something to my peers, I would say that it is better to stay at home, study, work at a normal job, because it ends badly later," the guy shared.

Co-author: Anastasia Chornomorets

See more pictures [HERE](#)

11 more children rescued from the territories occupied by Russia despite Trump

President Trump promised to help make sure deported Ukrainian kids are returned home by Russia but ended the funding of a U.S. University tracking the missing children...

HRWF (03.04.2025) - Ukraine successfully brought back 11 children who had been forcibly taken to Russia as well as Russian-occupied territory, Presidential Office head Andriy Yermak announced on April 2.

The children have been returned home under the President of Ukraine's initiative, Bring Kids Back UA, **according** to Yermak.

Since February 2022, at least 20,000 **Ukrainian children have been abducted** from Russian-occupied territories and sent to other Russian-controlled areas of Ukraine or to Russia itself, according to a Ukrainian **national database**, "Children of War." Only 1,256 children have been returned thus far.

Trump Funding cuts hamper tracking efforts

On 19 March, President Trump said during a phone call with President Zelenskyy that he would “work closely with both parties to help make sure those children were returned home”, [according to a press release issued by the White House](#).

But, at the same time, the Trump administration ended a government-funded initiative led by Yale University's Humanitarian Research Lab (Yale HRL) that tracked the children.

The organization issued [a scathing report about the camps in December 2024](#), which included footage of Ukrainian teenagers in Russian camps engaging in weapons training.

Russia's full-scale invasion of Ukraine included a systematic campaign of forcibly moving children from Ukraine into Russia, fracturing their connection to Ukrainian language and heritage through “re-education,” and even disconnecting children from their Ukrainian identities through adoption. Children documented by the Yale Humanitarian Research Lab (HRL) range in age from four months to 17 years, and many have families looking for them in Ukraine.

In March 2023, the International Criminal Court (ICC) issued arrest warrants for **Russian President Vladimir Putin** and Children's Commissioner Maria Lvova-Belova, citing their involvement in the unlawful transfer of Ukrainian children. Russia dismissed the ICC's decision as “outrageous and unacceptable.”

[A spokeswoman for Eurojust](#), Europe's agency for criminal co-operation, said on 18 March it had been informed by Washington that it was ending its support for the International Centre for the Prosecution of the Crime of Aggression against Ukraine, which was collecting evidence to prosecute Putin, among others.

A group of Democratic lawmakers has called on the administration to restore the Yale HRL program and impose sanctions to punish officials in Russia and its ally Belarus involved in forcefully taking away Ukrainian children from their country and russifying them.

Findings of Yale University's Humanitarian Research Lab (Yale HRL)

- More than **19,000 children** from Ukraine have been deported to Russia. Only 1,236 children have been returned to Ukraine. The actual number of children remaining in Russia is likely significantly higher.
- Yale HRL has identified more than 8,400 children from Ukraine who have been systematically relocated to at least 57 facilities—including 13 facilities in Belarus and 43 facilities in Russia and Russia-occupied territory.
- Russia targeted vulnerable groups of children for deportation, including orphans, children with disabilities, children from low-income families, and children with parents in the military.
- There are documented cases in which children were **physically abused**, denied communication with their families in Ukraine, and given inadequate access to food and care after being taken to Russia.
- Russia has refused to give Ukrainian authorities a list of children taken to Russia— as required by international law —and has engaged in various activities to conceal their forced deportation and illegal adoption of children from Ukraine.
- The kidnapping and indoctrination, including military training, of children from Ukraine was ordered by Russia's President Vladimir Putin and executed by Russia's federal, regional, and occupation officials. Russia's security services and criminal investigative agency systematically targeted vulnerable groups of children and transported them to Russia, where regional officials subjected them to re-education and listed children for adoption. Russia's Investigative Committee has

set recruitment quotas and designated a cadet school for children from Ukraine, creating a direct pipeline into federal security service.

- Russia's President Vladimir Putin and Presidential Commissioner for Children's Rights Maria Lvova-Belova have been [indicted by the International Criminal Court \(ICC\)](#) for the forced deportation of Ukraine's children.
- Hundreds of children--including those with families--were taken from Ukraine and illegally placed for adoption in Russia or placed in Russian families. In at least one case, [Russia's government re-issued the child's birth certificate](#), changing the child's name and place of birth. Such changes in personal information present significant barriers to identifying the child for return.

These actions may constitute [war crimes](#) and [crimes against humanity](#) and were the basis of the Biden-led U.S. Government atrocity determination in 2023. Ensuring that children are returned prior to any negotiations for the end of the war protects these children--and children in the future--from being taken as hostages during conflict.

You can read HRL's previous reports on Ukraine's children here: [Humanitarian Research Lab Publications](#).

Qatar and Bring Kids Back return five more children from Occupied Donbass and Crimea

HRWF (29.03.2025) - Five more Ukrainian children who were in the territories occupied by the Russian army were returned to Ukraine on 27 March. These are minors aged 11 to 16 from [Luhansk region](#), [Donetsk region](#), Zaporizhzhia region and Crimea.

Qatar is the only country to successfully act as a broker between Russia and Ukraine on the return of children who have been separated from their families during the three-year war.

The UN institutions and Western countries are unable to repatriate Ukrainian children kept against their will in Russia or in the Ukrainian Occupied territories despite their loudly announced appointments of various special envoys for the liberation of Ukrainian children. Only Qatar organizes such rescue operations.

Among those returned is a 12-year-old girl. Her parents are divorced, and her father is in captivity of the Russian army.

"In three years of full-scale invasion, the girl changed her place of residence twice, had conflicts with her mother. In the past year, the condition of both mental and physical health has significantly deteriorated in a minor. Fortunately, we helped my grandmother to arrange custody of the girl. In the future, the child will be provided with all the necessary assistance," Lubinets said.

A boy whose father treated them cruelly was also returned from the occupied territories of Ukraine.

"Despite the facts of physical violence against the child, the "local" social services were in no hurry to help the child. The mother tried to take the boy out on her own, but the attempts were unsuccessful. And only thanks to the appeal to our Office and the involvement of the unchanging predecessor of the State of Qatar, the mother and her son were reunited," the ombudsman's page said.

The head of the Office of the president Yermak also [said](#) that a 10-year-old boy was returned from the occupation. He lived in the temporarily occupied territories with his sick grandmother.

"When the war started, his mother was in another city. She tried to take her son on her own several times, risking everything, but to no avail. Now the family is together again and safe on the territory of Ukraine."

State negligence in clashes between Anti- and Pro-Maidan supporters in Odesa in May 2014, the ECtHR rules

"I was in Odesa to investigate the issue, two weeks after the tragedy which claimed over 40 lives" (Willy Fautré, director of Human Rights Without Frontiers). See [our report on our website](#).

[ECHR](#) (13.03.2025) - Today's Chamber judgment in the case of [Vyacheslavova and Others v. Ukraine](#) (**application no. 39553/16 and 6 others**) concerned violent clashes between Maidan supporters and opponents and the fire in the Trade Union Building in Odesa on 2 May 2014, which resulted in heavy casualties.

The seven applications were lodged by a total of 28 individuals. Twenty-five of the applicants lost their next of kin – either in the clashes or as a result of the fire – and three of the applicants survived the fire with various injuries.

Among the applicants' relatives who lost their lives on that day, were Maidan supporters and opponents and, possibly, simple passers-by. Respecting the applicants' choice, who often preferred not to mention their or their relatives' political views, the Court only indicated the political views of the individuals concerned where that was essential for establishing and understanding the events or where, in any event, the applicants themselves had made that information public.

In the case, the European Court of Human Rights Court held, **unanimously**, that there had been: violations of Article 2 (right to life/investigation) of the European Convention on Human Rights, on account of the relevant authorities' failure to do everything that could reasonably be expected of them to prevent the violence in Odesa on 2 May 2014, to stop that violence after its outbreak, to ensure timely rescue measures for people trapped in the fire, and to institute and conduct an effective investigation into the events; and a violation of Article 8 (right to respect for private and family life) in respect of one applicant (application no. 39553/16) concerning the delay in handing over her father's body for burial.

Full European Court:

State negligence in clashes between Maidan supporters and opponents in Odesa in May 2014: [Vyacheslavova and Others v. Ukraine](#)

See the famous Oliver Stone's **documentary "Ukraine on Fire"** mainly about the modern history of Ukraine. The section on the 2 May events starts at 1h16.

<https://youtu.be/IwZApPCFXIc?si=nA-tIM1pCP9OowcB>

Italy to restore the cultural heritage of Odesa damaged by Russian shelling

What about France, Greece, Germany... which have also had historical links right from the foundation of that city?

By Willy Fautré, director of Human Rights Without Frontiers, and Dr Ievgeniia Gidulianova

[HRWF](#) (24.02.2025) – Many pledges were made by EU countries to provide financial assistance to big cities of Ukraine for the restoration of their architectural heritage heavily damaged by Russia's war but few of them have kept their promises.

Italy is an exception as far as Odesa is concerned, a city whose creation after 1794 was deeply influenced by Italian architects. Italy has started implementing an ambitious program of restoration of the historical center of the city damaged by Russia's bombing since the beginning of the war.

France, Greece, Germany... have also played an important role in the city-planning, the construction of housing and cultural places but no state funding from these countries has reached Odesa for the rebuilding and restoration of such places and the cultural heritage of the city. Noteworthy though is the contribution of Leroy Merlin Solidarity Charitable Foundation, created by Leroy Merlin Ukraine to help victims of the war in Ukraine. Leroy Merlin Ukraine is a branch of a private French company, Leroy Merlin, a French gardening retailer doing business in several continents.

For three years of Russia's full-scale war against Ukraine, about 10 large-scale attacks have been carried out on Odesa and its buffer zone. As a result, [about 170 of Odesa's monuments](#) which are part of the UWorld Cultural Heritage area protected by UNESCO, called the "Historical Center of Odesa", have already suffered varying degrees of damage.

Italy's contribution

A large-scale program for the restoration of historical and cultural monuments is being launched in Odesa with the support of the Italian Agency for Development Cooperation ([AICS](#)). At working meetings with representatives of the agency, they discussed financing and technical aspects of the restoration of the city's iconic objects.

In particular, the Italian funding will concern the following historic places:

- **Odesa National Art Museum:** Restoration of the building and modernization of the premises for the preservation of valuable artistic items.
- **Odesa Museum of Western and Eastern Art:** Large-scale repair and restoration works to open all exhibition halls and make the museum more convenient for visitors.
- **Odesa Regional Philharmonic:** Improvement of the equipment and the acoustics, which will allow holding world-class concerts.
- **Odesa Literary Museum:** Introduction of modern multimedia technologies and restoration of historical premises.

Italy – Odesa, a historic love story

Odesans lovingly call their city "the pearl by the sea". And today the international aura of the city is confirmed by the official status of UNESCO, which includes the historical center of Odesa in the list of the world cultural heritage.

Throughout the 19th century, key buildings in the center of Odesa, most of which still adorn the city, were designed by talented architects from Italy, such as

Francesco Frapolli (1770 ca.-ante 1819)
Giovanni Frapolli (1775 ca.-1826), his younger brother
Francesco Boffo (1780-1867)
Alexander Digby (1758-1840)
Cayetano Dall'Acqua (...-1868)
Franz Morandi (1811-1894)

These famous architects shaped the face, the heart and the soul of Odesa. See a non-exhaustive list of their works in the Annex.

Since the beginning of the war, some of their constructions were partly destroyed by Russian missile strikes.

The main devastating attack took place on 23 July 2023, targeting [29 historic buildings and places Odesa](#), such as:

- **The Orthodox Transfiguration Cathedral (1795-1808)** 3 Soborna Square, Odesa (Architects: **Francesco Frapolli**, hired by the Duke of Richelieu, with P. Kharlamov, Glukhov, V.V. Vanrezant). The cathedral was destroyed in 1936 and subsequently rebuilt in 1999-2006 under the leadership of the outstanding Ukrainian architect Vladimir Meshcheriakov. The cathedral was (again) partly destroyed during Russian bombing on 23 July 2023.
- **The Manuc Bey Mansion (1845-1846)**, (Architects: **Cayetano Dall'Acqua** and Alexander Shashin). Prominent Ukrainian novelist, short story writer, and playwright Mykola Hohol lived in the building in 1848. The facility was now used as a kindergarten.
- **Kovalevsky's House (1846)** built in Italian Palazzo Strozzi style (Architects **Cayetano Dall'Acqua** and Alexander Shashin). The facility is used as a residential house. It was partly destroyed during Russian bombing on 23 July 2023.
- **The House of Scientists** (formerly the Palace of Count Tolstoy). It was built in the **1830s** by architects **F. Boffo** and **D. Torricelli** and rebuilt in the **1850s** by architects **L. Otton** and **Cayetano Dall'Acqua**
- **Odesa National Art Museum** (formerly the Palace of Countess Naryshkina). It was built in **1824-1828** by architects **Francesco Boffo** and **E. Mesner**. The building was damaged in a missile strike on July 23, 2023 and subsequently re-damaged in a missile strike on November 5, 2023.

Russia specifically targeted the [UNESCO-protected historic center of Odesa](#), said Odesa Oblast military administration head, Oleh Kiper. "Everything that was created by great architects whose hard work is now being destroyed by cynical inhumans!," Kiper noted.

On 31 January 2025, another Russian missile strike hit and seriously damaged 19 other prestigious buildings under UNESCO protection, including some built by architect Alexander Bernardazzi who belonged to a dynasty of famous architects from the Italian-speaking region of Switzerland :

- **Odesa State Philharmonic (1894-1899)**, the former location of the New Merchant Exchange built in 1894-1899, 15 N. Strokatoy Street/Italian Street, Odesa (Architects: Alexander Bernardazzi with Vikenty Prokhasky).
- **Bristol Hotel (1898-1899)**, 15 Italian Street, Odesa (Architects: Alexander Bernardazzi with A.B. Minkus).

- **Building of the Mutual Credit Society (1901-1903)**, 10 Italian Street/18 Grecheskaya Street, Odesa.
- **Residential building (1850s)**, 19 Italian Street, Odesa, (Architect: Franz Morandi).

The historical Italian presence in Odesa

After the foundation of Odesa in 1794, Italians started arriving in great numbers in the city. In 1797 they made up about 10% of the population. For more than a century the Italians of Odesa greatly influenced the culture, art, industry, society, architecture, politics and economy of the city. Among the works created by the Italians of Odesa it is worth mentioning the Primorsky Boulevard complex, consisting of two semi-circular buildings with a monument to the French Duke Richelieu, former mayor of Odesa (1803) and governor of the oblast (1805-1814) and the famous Potemkin Stairs as well as the Odessa Theater (burned down in 1873). The first troupe in the Odesa Theater was completely Italian.

Until 1864, the Italian language was taught as a compulsory subject in many schools in Odesa.

“By 1809, there were at least 10 Italian firms exporting grain. (...) The common commercial language, and very nearly the *lingua franca* of the city. At Odesa, the earliest street signs – and also those in many shops were in both Italian and Russian” (Odessa, A History 1794 – 1914, by Dr. Patricia Herlihy, 411 pages, Harvard University Press, pp 39 and 44).

“As the owners of the major trading houses and with strong family and business connections with the Mediterranean, Italians dominated city life, a recapitulation of their role when Genoese and Venetian trading centers ringed the Black Sea,” (Odessa, Genius and Death in a City of Dreams, by Dr. Charles King, Professor of International Affairs and Government at Georgetown University, p 68).

Until the 1870s, Odesa's Italian population grew steadily. From the following decade this growth stopped, and the decline of the Italian community in Odesa began its turn. The reason was mainly the gradual integration into the Slavic population of Odesa, i.e. Russians and Ukrainians.

The Revolution of 1917 sent many of them to Italy, or to other cities in Europe. In Soviet times, only a few dozen Italians remained in Odesa, most of whom no longer knew their own language. They disappeared completely by WW II.

ANNEX

Italian architect Francesco Frapolli (1770 ca.–ante 1819)

In 1778. - The Neapolitan Francesco Frapolli under the leadership of F. Devolan began to work on the construction of the port and the city.

End of the 18th century - He developed a project for the development of the Greek Market Square, combining residential and trade and warehouse functions in the shopping arcades. On the same principle, he later built up the New Market Square.

End of the 18th century – The house of Felix Deribas (Odesa, Deribasovskaya, 22), a combat officer, diplomat and philanthropist who was the younger brother of the founder of Odessa, Joseph de Ribas. He was born in Naples (Italy) into the illustrious family of a Spaniard, Don Miguel de Ribas y Boyons, a renowned Spanish nobleman, and Margaret Plunkett, a highborn Irish woman.

1795-1808 – Odesa, Soborna Square, 3 – Odesa Transfiguration Cathedral (together with P. Kharlamov, Glukhov, V.V. Vanrezant, D. Frapolli). The cathedral was destroyed in 1936

and subsequently recreated in 1999-2006 under the leadership of the outstanding Ukrainian architect Vladimir Meshcheriakov. On July 23, 2023, the Cathedral was partly destroyed as a result of a Russian missile strike.

1798 – Odesa, 26 Deribasovskaya Street – Apartments of visiting officials (demolished in 1873)
Beginning of the 19th century - Odesa, Deribasovskaya, 23 / Krasny Lane - Pogolato Apartment House (demolished in 2015)

Beginning of the 19th century - Odesa, Nezhenskaya Street, 13/ Novobazarny Lane - Trade Shops

Beginning of the 19th century - Odesa, Greek Square, 8 / Ivan Lutsenko Lane, 7 - Kamkov's Shops

Beginning of the 19th century – Odesa, Konnaya Street, 36 / Wilhelm Habsburg Lane – Zhevakhov's Trading Rows (together with the Italian architect A.A. Digby).

The beginning of the 19th century - Odesa, 14 Ukrainian Heroes Avenue - Krasny Row (Zhebrak's shop)

The beginning of the 19th century - Odesa, Torgovaya Street, 39 / Nezhinskaya Street, 35 / Malanova Lane, 18 - Trading Row.

The beginning of the 19th century – Odesa, 25 Deribasovskaya Street – Trading Rows (demolished in 1873)

1804 – Odesa, 13 Deribasovskaya Street – F. Frapolli's House

1804-1808 – Odesa, 55 Evropeyskaya Street – Holy Trinity Greek Church

1804-1806 – Odesa, Pasteur Street, 5 – City Hospital (old hospital) (together with the architect J. Thomas de Thomon).

1804-1809 - Odesa, Teatralny Lane, 1 City Theater (burned down in 1873) (together with the architect J. Thomas de Thomon).

1804-1810 - Odesa, Grecheskaya Square, 4-6 / Ivan Lutsenko Lane, 3-5 – Tsikalioti's Lavka

1804-1814 - Odesa, Grecheskaya Square, 15 - Lavka

1804-1814 - Odesa, Grecheskaya Square, 17 - Lavka

1804-1814 – Odesa, Krasny Lane, 16 - Shopping arcades of the Greek market

1804-1814 - Odesa, Grecheskaya Square, 19 - Poznyakov's Lavka (demolished in 1893)

1804-1814 - Odesa, Grecheskaya Square, 23/Krasny Lane - Kislov's Lavka

1805 – Odesa, 92 Bazarnaya Street/6 Uspensky Lane – House of D. Potylitsa

1805 – Odesa, Uspensky Lane, 6/Bazarnaya Street, 92 – House of the Assumption Church.

1805-1819 – Odesa, Evropeyskaya Street, 33 – Catholic Cathedral of the Assumption of the Blessed Virgin Mary (demolished in 1851)

1808 – Odesa, Sofievskaya Street, 7 - Mansion of Sofia Konstantinovna Pototskaya.

1808-1814 - Odesa, Krasny Lane, 16 - Museum "Filiki Etairia" of the Center of Greek Culture - former Greek row

1808 -1814 years - Odesa, Torgovaya Street, 28 / Novobazarny Lane - Trade Row of M. Gaikovskaya

1812 - Odesa, Bazarnaya Street, 22 / Marazlievskaya, 64 - House of Y. Oberth

1812 – Odesa, Svyatoslav Karavansky Street, 33 – The building of the Odesa Post Office (together with F. Wunsch).

1812 – Odesa, Pokrovsky Lane, 1 – The building of the Odesa Post Office (together with F. Wunsch).

1812 - Odesa, Sadovaya Street, 1 / Torgovaya Street - Trade Shops of F. Sicard

1812-1819 – Odesa, 32 Konnaya Street/Wilhelm Habsburg Lane – House with Shopping Arcades (together with the Italian architect A.A. Digby).

1812-1819 – Odesa, 11 Nezhinskaya Street/17 Konnaya Street/Novobazarny Lane – House with Shopping Arcades (together with the Italian architect A.A. Digby).

1812-1822 – Odesa, 11 Ukrainian Heroes Avenue – Church of the Intercession of the Virgin (demolished in 1936) (together with the Italian architect A.A. Digby).

1812-1819 – Odesa, 27 Torgovaya Street / 6 Malanova Lane – New Bazaar Lavka.

1812-1819 - Odesa, Torgovaya Street, 37 - Lavkas of K. Deere (together with the Italian architect A.A. Digby).

1820s - Odesa, Sadovaya Street, 1/Torgovaya Street, 19a - Fundukley Shopping Rows at the New Market

1822 – Odesa, 25 Bunin Street/European Street – House of J. Yeni (demolished in 1841)

Italian architect Giovanni Frapolli (1775 ca.-1826)

Beginning of the 19th century - Odesa, Svyatoslav Karavansky Street, 39 / Ukrainian Heroes Avenue, 8-10 / Evreyskaya Street, 50 - Avchinnikovsky Rows

1795 – Odesa, 33 Grecheskaya Street / 23 Evropeyskaya Street – Prokopeus apartment building

1795 - Odesa, Rishelyevskaya Street, 1-3 - Volkonsky (Renault) House (on Rishelyevskaya)

1798 – Odesa, Deribasovskaya Street, 26 – accounting office
 1811-1812 – Odesa, 8 Gogol Street / 2 Nekrasov Street – A. Schaller's house
 1812 -1819 – Odesa, Torgovaya Street, 37 – Lavki K. Dir
 1816 – Odesa, 37 Kobleskaya Street / 17 Vsevolod Zmienko Street – M.M. Kiryakov House
 1817 - Architectural complex of the port quarantine (with François Challe).
 1819 – Odesa, 54 Italian Street – Giovanni Frapolli's own house
 1819 – Odesa, 45 Heroes of Ukraine Avenue / 110 Panteleymonovskaya Street – Parakonny's Lavka
 1820 – Odesa, Devolanovskaya Street – House of the Quarantine Paramedic
 1820 – Odesa, Kanatnaya Street, 62 – S. Ignatenko's house
 1820 – Odesa, 12 Grecheskaya Street / 6 Kachinsky Street – apartment building.
 1820 – Odesa, Troitskaya Street, 8a – residential to Bensjuliati
 1820 – Odesa, 35 Uspenskaya Street / 42 Kanatnaya Street – A. Shenker House
 1821 – Odesa – Church building on Peresip
1821 – Odesa – Drawing up planning drawings for the Old Bazaar
1821 – Odesa, Khersonskaya Street – reconstruction of the city hospital
 1821 – Odesa, Vsevolod Zmienko Street, 25 – house of A. Shedever
 1821 – Odesa, Koblevska Street, 36 – residential building
 1822 – Odesa, 13 Gavannaya Street/20 Deribasovskaya Street – Tyuneev's House
1822 -1823 – Odesa, Prymorska Street, 1 / Polsky Descent, 2 – Customs warehouse of Porto Franco (destroyed in 2021)
 1823 – Odesa, Primorsky Boulevard, 10 – Valba House (in 1858 it was reconstructed for F. Rodokanaki by architects F. Morandi and I. Dallakva, in 2009-2002 – an attic floor was added)
 1823 – Odesa – Barriers and outposts to establish the borders of Porto Franco around the city
 1824 – Odesa, 1 Deribrsovskaya Street / 2 Kachinsky Street – F. Ilkevich's House (demolished in 1845)
 1824 – Odesa, 75 Italian Street / 61 Malaya Atnautskaya Street – I. Khrustitsky's house
 1824 - Odesa, Universitetskaya Street, 1 - apartment building (later rebuilt).
 1824-1826 - Odesa, Primorsky Boulevard, 3 - Marini Mansion (was rebuilt at the end of the XIX century by the architect V. Kabiolsky)
 1825 – Drawing up planning drawings for the New Bazaar.
1825 - Shopping arcades on Novobazarnaya Square; Stables and other economic and industrial buildings
1825 – Odesa, Soborna Square, 3 - the bell tower of the Odesa Cathedral of the Transfiguration of the Savior (the cathedral was built together with Fyodor Shestakov and Francesco Frapolli, Francesco Boffo, A.I. Shostak, I.I. Krug) (was destroyed in 1936 and recreated in 1999-2006 under the leadership of the outstanding Ukrainian architect Vladimir Meshcheriakov.
 1825 – Odesa, 22 Svyatoslav Karavansky Street / 17 Rishelyevskaya Street – F. Koble's residential building
 1825 – Odesa, 4 N. Strokatoy Street – residential building
 1825 – Odesa, N. Strokatoy Street, 24 / European Street – Kumbari's House.
 1825 – Odesa, Grecheskaya Street, 32 – a residential building
 1825 – Odesa, Preobrazhenskaya Street, 68 / Uspenskaya Street, 107 – I. Churilov's house
 1826 - Odesa, Torgovaya Street - shops.
 1826-1827 – Odesa, Primorsky Boulevard, 6 – residential building of E. Sontag
 1820s – Odesa, Heroes of Ukraine Avenue, 45 – residential building
 1820s - Odesa, Rishelyevskaya Street, 76 - residential building
 1820s – Odesa, Deribasovskaya Street, 3 – Ilkevich's House
 1820s - Odesa, Heroes of Ukraine Avenue, 16 - Krasny Row
 1820s - Odesa, 20 Heroes of Ukraine Avenue / 13 Necheporenko Lane - Krasny Row
 1820s – Odesa, Nechiporenko Lane, 7 – Krasny Ryad (Zhebrak's house)
 1820s – Odesa, Pokrovsky Lane, 8/Heroes of Ukraine Avenue, 15 – Protasovsky Row
 1820s – Odesa, Pokrovsky Lane, 10 / Heroes of Ukraine Avenue, 17 – Protasovsky Row
 1820s – Odesa, Pokrovsky Lane, 17 / Heroes of Ukraine Avenue, 19 – Protasovsky Row
 1820s – Odesa, Pokrovsky Lane, 14/Heroes of Ukraine Avenue, 21 – Protasovsky Row
 1820s – Odesa, 47 Evreyskaya Street/6 Pokrovsky Lane/13 Heroes of Ukraine Avenue – Protasiv Row

Italian architect Francesco Boffo (1780-1867)

Many outstanding architectural monuments that have survived to this day are associated with his name.

Among them:

Early 1820s – Odesa, Torgovaya Street, 17 – Fundukley's Residential House. It was rebuilt by D. Mazirov

1821-1824 – Odesa, Starosennaya Square – Prison Castle

1824-1828 – Odesa, Vsevolod Zmienko Street – St. Paul's Lutheran Church. It was the first Lutheran church in Odesa. At the end of the 19th century, it was rebuilt

1826-1828 - Odesa, at the intersection of Rishelyevskaya and Lanzheronovskaya streets - the House of the mayor (together with A. Melnikov). The house has not been preserved

1826-1830 - Primorsky Boulevard Complex (together with A.I. Melnikov). The complex consists of two semi-circular buildings: the building of public offices and the house of Zavadovsky, the monument to Duke Richelieu. This complex dividing Primorsky Boulevard into 2 parts is considered one of the main landmarks of Odesa and is one of the most recognizable objects.

1826 - Vorontsov Palace with an elegant colonnade (together with A.I. Melnikov)

1826 – Italian palazzo for the landowner Shidlovsky (today's Palace of Sailors)

1827-1831 - Odesa, Soborna Square, 3 - Belfry of the Odesa Cathedral of the Transfiguration of the Savior (the cathedral was built together with Fyodor Shestakov and Giovanni Frapolli, Francesco Boffo, A.I. Shostak, I.I. Krug). It was destroyed in 1936 and recreated in 1999-2006 under the leadership of the outstanding Ukrainian architect Vladimir Meshcheriakov.

1829-1833 – Odesa, Institute of Noble Maidens with Institutions and a Large Garden.

1828 – Odesa, Deribasovskaya Street, 13 – Frapolli Residential House (partially preserved)

1828 – Odesa, Chernomosk Cossack Street – Marazli residential building with a warehouse

1828-1834 – Odesa, Primorsky Bultvar – the building of the old merchant exchange (together with G.I. Torricelli and I.I. Kozlov). In 1870, the building was rebuilt and as a result was decorated with sculptures on the roof and side facades by Luigi Domenica Iorni, a professor at the Milan Academy of Arts, a teacher at the Odesa Art School. Now this building is occupied by the Odesa City Council.

1830 – Odesa, N. Strokatoy Street – "Boulevard Station" – a movable police station with an invariable fire tower for observation from a height. Now it functions as a fire department.

1830 – Odesa, Primorsky Boulevard, 9 – Shidlovsky's Palace

1830 – Odesa, Primorskaya Street – Fundukley's mansion

1830 – Odesa, Kanatnaya Street – Kopsha's residential building

1832 – Odesa, at the intersection of Polskaya Street and N. Strokatoy Street – a residential building

1832 – Odesa, 19 Polskaya Street – Fairy's and Savin's apartment building

1832 – Odesa, Grecheskaya Street, 23 – Rzheluska's residential building

1834 – Odesa, 11 Grecheskaya Street/11 Italian Street – Talyansky's residential building

1834 – Odesa, Preobrazhenskaya Street – Elizarov's residential building

1835 – Odesa, Uspenskaya Street – Ispara's residential building

1835 – Odesa, 14 Grecheskaya Street – Remer's residential building

1835 – Odesa, Grecheskaya Street, 35 – Filipakki's residential building

1835 – Odesa, 6 Italian Street – Yagnitsky's residential building is the oldest "high-rise" building in the city

1835 – Odesa, Italian Street, 2 – Marazli residential building

1835 – Odesa, Rishelyevskaya Street – Eypard's residential building

1835 – Odesa, in the VIII quarter of the 1st part of the city – Portnova's Residential Building

1835 – Odesa, Pasteur Street, 1 – Brazhinsky's House

1835 – Odesa, Pasteur Street, 11 – residential building

1835 – Odesa, Pochtovaya Street – Jewish School (not preserved)

1835 – Odesa, Primorsky Boulevard, 11 – Palace of Duke Lopukhin with a gazebo on the slopes. Subsequently, it was rebuilt by architect Y. Dmitrenko into the "London" hotel.

1836 – Odesa, Svyatoslav Karavansky Street, 39

1836 – Odesa, Preobrazhenskaya Street – Yagnitsky's residential building.

1836 – Odesa, Rishelyevskaya Street – Vaskova's residential building.

1830s – Odesa, Primorsky Boulevard, 15 – Fouca Palace. Later it was rebuilt for another owner by the Italian architect F. Morandi.

1830s - Odesa, 47 Evreyskaya Street/13 Ukrainian Heroes Avenue/6 Pokrovsky Lane – Zhebrak's house with shops

1830 – Odesa, Primorsky Boulevard, 13 – Mayurov's Palace

1830s – Odesa, Italian Street, 3

1841 – The Potemkin Stairs (with Gergio Torricelli). This staircase is the largest in Europe.

1841 – Odesa – School of the Lutheran community near the Church of St. Paul

1841 – Odesa, Lanzheronovsky Descent 1 / Polskaya Street, 6 – Gerbolini's residential building

1841 – Odesa, 30 Toitskaya Street/Rishelyevskaya Street – Trushevsky's residential building

1842 – Odesa, Customs Square – Ilkevich's residential building

1843 – Odesa, the intersection of 1 Sadovaya Street and Torgovaya Street – Richelieu Gymnasium

1843 – Odesa, Sadovaya Street – Sicard's Palace

1844 – Odesa, Teatralny Lane, 8 – F. Boffo's own house

1845 – Odesa, Rishelyevskaya Street, 38 – Dmitriev's residential building

1845 – Odesa, Kanatnaya Street – Giorrt's residential building

1846 – Odesa, Olgievskaya Street, 2 – Francesco Boffo's own warehouse for grain storage

1846 – Odesa, Valikhovskaya Lane – Francesco Boffo's own warehouse for grain storage

1846 – Odesa, Valikhovsky Lane – Stiefel's warehouse

1846 – Odesa, Krasny Lane – Skibra's residential building

1847 – Odesa, Preobrazhenskaya Street – Zbishevskaya's residential building

1849 – Odesa in the LXIV quarter of the city – a residential building of Vetkhra

1852 – Odesa, Lanzheronovskaya Street, 26 – residential building Strats

1852 – Odesa, Karantinnaya Balka – Fedorov's warehouses

Italian architect Alexander Digby (1758-1840)

1822-1824 - [Noviko Bridge](#) connecting two sections of Pochtovaya Street (now Svyatoslav Karavansky street) above the Quarantine Beam leading to the port (now Devolanovsky Descent) – This **first stone bridge of Odesa** was inaugurated in a solemn ceremony in the presence of the Governor-General of the Novorossiysk Territory, Alexander Langeron (French), and the then mayor of Odessa, Nikolai Tregubov.

Italian architect Cayetano Dall'Acqua (...-1868)

His most famous projects:

1831-1832 – Odesa, Sabaneev Bridge, 4 – Reconstruction of the house of Count Tolstoy (now the House of Scientists). The house-museum was seriously damaged during a Russian missile attack on July 23, 2023.

1831 -1834 – Odesa, Sabansky Lane/Kanatnaya Street – Reconstruction of the Sabar barracks

1836-1849 – Odesa, 11 Gogol Street – A. Troshchinsky's house (together with A. Shashin)

1840-1843 – Odesa, 8 Lanzheronovskaya Street – Palais-Royal Group (together with G.I. Torricelli).

1840s – Odesa, Greek Square – A. Mayurov's Round House

1850 - early 1860s - Odesa, Svyatoslav Karavansky Street, 32 - Paraskev estate

1850 – Odesa, 30 Italianskaya Street – F. Goltsfart House

1858 – Odesa, 4 Futurists Lane – The mansion of Prince Pavel Abomelik (together with L. Otton)

1869 – Odesa, 18 Italianskaya Street – Reconstruction of the house of P. F. Frantsov, with the printing house of the South Russian Society of Printing

Mid-19th century - Odesa, Lanzheronovsky Descent Street - Stairs and retaining walls of Lanzheronovsky Descent

1875 – Odesa, Gogol Street, 9 – Shemyakin's house

Italian architect Franz Morandi (1811-1894)

Among his creative achievements in Odesa:

1840s - Odesa - St. Michael's Church on Moldavanka

1843 – the project of the building of the main synagogue (built in 1850-1859 according to his second project of 1846)

1844 - Odesa, Bernardazzi Street, 4/6 - Ascension Church (now the Church of St. Mary Magdalene, Equal-to-the-Apostles).

1848-1849 - House of Compassionate Sisters (together with A. Shashkin).

1849 – He developed a general plan for the development of the city. It outlined new barracks, the Horse Market, the New Christian and Slobodskoye cemeteries, the development of the embankment under Primorsky Boulevard, the arrangement of the Senny Ryad near the Privoz market, the improvement of Theater Square and the Outer Boulevard. In the course of the implementation of this plan, the legendary Odesa suburbs - Moldavanka and Peresyp - acquired regular developments.

1850 - Odesa, Primorsky Boulevard, 10 - residential building

1850-1859 – Odesa, adjacent house-palaces on European Square at No 4 and No 6

1850s – Odesa, 19 Italian Street – residential building Seriously damaged by Russian missile strike 31.01.2025

1850s - Odesa, Italian Street, 66 - a residential building

1850s - redevelopment of the city hospital

1850s - reconstruction of the building of the City Duma

1850-1859 - Odesa, at the corner of Evreyskaya Street and Rishelyevskaya Street - Main Synagogue

1853 - Roman Catholic Church at 33 Evropeyska Street (together with Geonsiorovsky). Now the Cathedral of the Assumption of the Blessed Virgin Mary.

1853 – Odesa, Panteleymonovskaya Street, 26 – Morandi's own house

1861 – Odesa, Prayer house on Remeslennaya (now V. Korzhenko Street) 50 (now a residential building with office premises).

In 1867, on the initiative of Morandi, the reconstruction of the central city prospek began, which now bears the name of the Avenue of Ukrainian Heroes. In the early 1870s, Morandi installed cast-iron fences near the green spaces on the avenue.

1867 – Odesa, Prayer House on Remeslennaya Street (now V. Korzhenko Street), 21 (the current building is occupied by the synagogue of the Chabad community)

Sources of information for researchers

[On the organization of the matter of accounting and protection of architectural monuments on the territory of the Ukrainian SSR](#)

[On the inclusion of cultural heritage objects of national importance in the State Register of Immovable Monuments of Ukraine](#)

[State Register of Architectural Monuments](#)

The first prisoner exchange of 2025 after the 11 swaps in 2024. EU 'out of the game'

By Willy Fautré, director of Human Rights Without Frontiers and Dr Ievgeniia Gidulianova

HRWF (31.01.2025) - On 15 January, **25 soldiers** and civilians **returned to Ukraine** from Russian captivity. The same number of prisoners was handed over to Russia.

Our research below shows that the new exchange took place again with the support of the United Arab Emirates (UAE) and the EU was again "out of the game" despite repeated public statements that the EU is "deeply involved" in the repatriation of Ukrainian prisoners of war and deported children. Their last statement was made at the 28 January session of the Subcommittee for Human Rights of the European Parliament in Brussels.

Ukrainian President Zelensky said that among those released there were defenders of Mariupol and Azovstal, as well as Kharkiv, Donetsk, Zaporizhzhia, Kherson. He also noted that they were seriously injured and ill.

Among the returnees there was also a civilian. The occupiers seized him in the Kyiv region and illegally detained him. The Coordination Headquarters for the Treatment of Prisoners of War said that all repatriated servicemen were soldiers, including sailors. The youngest released is 24 years old and the oldest 60.

The injured have, in particular, vision loss, limb amputations, complex wounds caused by bullets and land mines. Among the diseases are tuberculosis, oncology, gangrene...

Overview of the 11 exchanges or prisoners of war (POW) in 2024

December 2024

Source : [Hundreds of soldiers freed in the latest prisoner exchange between Russia and Ukraine \(AP\)](#)

Approximate date: End of December

Approximate numbers:

According to Kyiv: 189 Ukrainians
87 soldiers from the army including 14 officers, 43 from the national guard, 33 border guards, 24 from the navy and two civilians.

According to Moscow:
150 Ukrainians/ 150 Russians

Facilitator of the exchange: U.A.E.

October 2024

Source : [95 at large: LIST of those released from captivity 18 October 2024 Russia, Ukraine conduct prisoner swap, exchange of bodies](#)

Approximate date: 18 October

Approximate numbers:

According to Kyiv: 95 Ukrainians
Among those released from captivity: National Guardsmen, military sailors, soldiers of the Armed Forces of Ukraine, border guards, representatives of other units of the Security and Defense Forces. 69 soldiers and sergeants and 26 officers.

According to Moscow: [The Ministry of Defense reported on the exchange of prisoners of war between the Russian Federation and Ukraine in the "95 for 95" format](#)
95 Ukrainians/ 95 Russians

Facilitator of the exchange: U.A.E.

September 2024

Source : [For the second day in a row, Ukraine exchanged another 103 soldiers](#)

Approximate date: 14 September

Approximate numbers:

According to Kyiv: 103 Ukrainians
Among them: privates and sergeants, 21 officers, and there were also two Chernobyl guards.

According to Moscow [The Ministry of Defense of the Russian Federation announced the return of 103 soldiers captured in the Kursk region](#)
103 Ukrainians/ 103 Russians

Facilitator of the exchange: U.A.E.

Source : [Defenders of Azovstal and not only. Ukraine returned another 49 soldiers from captivity](#)

Approximate date: 13 September

Approximate numbers:

According to Kyiv: 49 Ukrainians
Among the released are 23 soldiers and sergeants, 19 officers, 7 are civilians. Among them were 23 women, including Ukrainian civilians, who were illegally detained by the Russians. It was also possible to release women who were subjected to inhumane treatment, in particular, due to forced participation in the so-called "trial" of the defenders of Mariupol. Crimean activist [Nienia Umerova](#), who was captured by the Russians while crossing the border of Georgia, was released.

According to Moscow: [Russia and Ukraine exchanged prisoners](#)
49 Ukrainians/ 49 Russians

Facilitator of the exchange: U.A.E.

August 2024

Source : [On August 24, Ukraine exchanged prisoners of war with the Russian side with the assistance of the United Arab Emirates. 115 Ukrainian soldiers returned home](#)

Approximate date: 24 August

Approximate numbers:

According to Kyiv: 115 Ukrainians
These were soldiers of the National Guard, the Armed Forces, the Navy, the State Border Guard Service

According to Moscow: [The Ukrainian side returned 103 Russian soldiers captured in the Kursk region, the same number of servicemen of the Armed Forces of Ukraine were handed over to Kyiv](#)
115 Ukrainians/ 115 Russians

Facilitator of the exchange: U.A.E.



July 2024

Source : [Exchange with the Russian Federation: 95 prisoners of war returned to Ukraine](#)

Approximate date: 17 July

Approximate numbers:

According to Kyiv: 95 Ukrainians
These were soldiers of the Armed Forces of Ukraine, the National Guard and border guards.

According to Moscow: [The exchange of prisoners between the Russian Federation and Ukraine on July 17 was the fifth since the beginning of 2024](#)
_95 Ukrainians/ 95 Russians

Facilitator of the exchange: U.A.E.

June 2024

Source : [Ukraine returned 90 fighters from Russian captivity, including defenders of Mariupol](#)

Approximate date: 25 June

Approximate numbers:

According to Kyiv: 90 Ukrainians
These were soldiers of the National Guard, Navy, armies, territorial defenders and border guards.

According to Moscow: [Another exchange of prisoners of war was carried out: 90 Russian servicemen were returned](#)
90 Ukrainians/ 90 Russians

Facilitator of the exchange: U.A.E.

May 2024

Source : [Ukraine returned 90 fighters from Russian captivity, including defenders of Mariupol](#)

Approximate date: 31 May

Approximate numbers:

According to Kyiv: 75 Ukrainians
These were sergeants and officers of the Armed Forces of Ukraine, the National Guard of Ukraine, the State Border Guard Service of Ukraine and civilians. 19 people captured from Zmiinyi Island, 10 defenders of Mariupol and Azovstal, Ukrainian soldiers captured in different locations.

According to Moscow: [Special operation, May 31: Russia and Ukraine exchanged prisoners](#)

75 Ukrainians/ 75 Russians

Facilitator of the exchange: U.A.E.

February 2024

Source (Title and link): [A new exchange of prisoners took place 100 for 100](#)

Approximate date: 8 February

Approximate numbers:

According to Kyiv: 100 Ukrainians

Among the rescued servicemen there were 49 soldiers of the National Guard of Ukraine, 25 border guards, 26 servicemen of the Armed Forces of Ukraine, including 11 territorial defenders.

According to Moscow: [Russia and Ukraine exchanged a hundred soldiers each](#)
100 Ukrainians/ 100 Russians

Facilitator of the exchange: U.A.E.

January 2024

Source: [Ukraine has returned more than 200 people from captivity of the Russian Federation. Here's What We Know](#)

Approximate date: 31 January

Approximate numbers:

According to Kyiv: 207 Ukrainians

These 207 Ukrainians were soldiers of the Armed Forces of Ukraine, the National Guard, the State Border Guard Service of Ukraine, the National Police — private people, sergeants, and officers.

According to Moscow: [How the largest exchange of prisoners between Russia and Ukraine took place](#)

195 Ukrainians/ 195 Russians

Facilitator of the exchange: U.A.E.

3 January 2024

Source: [The largest exchange of prisoners during the full-scale invasion: 230 Ukrainians were released](#)

Approximate date: 3 January

Approximate numbers:

According to Kyiv: 230 Ukrainians

Among them were 130 people – 55 servicemen of the Armed Forces of Ukraine – 38 soldiers of the National Guard – 1 State Border Guard Service - National Police and 6 civilians who were illegally deprived of their liberty.

According to Moscow: [The Ministry of Defense of the Russian Federation returned 248 servicemen from Ukrainian captivity](#)

230 Ukrainians/ 248 Russians

Facilitator of the exchange: U.A.E.

Suspicion of fabrication of a criminal case

Oleg Maltsev, an internationally recognized Ukrainian scholar in bad health, is in pre-trial detention in a prison denounced as unsanitary by the European Court of Human Rights in 2021. He may be driven to death.

By Willy Fautré, Human Rights Without Frontiers

[The European Times](#) (18.11.2024) - On 23 September 2024, the Security Service of Ukraine (SBU) declared that they had “neutralized an operational combat group of the Russian GRU” (Military intelligence service of Russia’s armed forces). The alleged plot was attributed to Dr. Oleg Maltsev, an internationally recognized Ukrainian scientist, as his [list](#) of publications shows. The SBU presented him as a traitor to Ukraine, a saboteur, a ‘gypsy,’ a cult leader and a pseudoscientist but Maltsev who is known as a staunch defender of Ukraine denied any involvement in any pro-Russian activity.

Oleg Maltsev was arrested on 14 September 2024 and has been held since then in the Odesa Detention Centre (SIZO), reportedly in life-threatening conditions. Ukrainian law enforcement authorities have officially charged him with attempting to disrupt the constitutional order of the country and creating an unauthorised paramilitary organisation.

International support of the academic community

It is worth noting that Oleg Maltsev is far from being an ordinary scientist, both in Ukraine and abroad. His research spans psychology, criminology, sociology, and philosophy, reflecting a diverse academic focus. For example, [American professor Jerome Krase](#) (1) expressed his support for him, recognizing his significant scholarly contributions.

He has also garnered support from other prominent figures, such as the Ukrainian academic [Maxim Lepskiy](#) (2) and French scholar [Dr. Lucien-Samir Oulahbib](#) (3), a sociologist and political scientist.

Dr Oleg Maltsev, a prolific scholar in the eye of a media cyclone

Since his arrest, Dr. Maltsev has been the target of an unprecedented defamatory media campaign which has unfolded in both Ukraine and Europe, labeling him a “fake scientist”

and alleging that his academic work serves as a front for purportedly illegal activities against Ukraine.

Regarding the media reports and posts on Telegram, it was clear that there had been a deliberate leak of information aiming at harm him as there is a principle known as the secrecy of pre-trial investigation. His lawyer suspects it was coming from the pre-trial investigation agency itself.

Maltsev holds two doctorates in Ukraine - one in psychology and one in philosophy - which have been officially validated by the Ukrainian Ministry of Education and Science. In over 20 years of academic work, his extensive body of [research publications](#), including numerous co-authored monographs and scientific articles, is evidence of his internationally recognized academic expertise.

Maltsev's studies about the criminal subcultures of Southern Italy have earned him significant recognition. He has also created a psychological profile of serial killers, identifying three distinct types of such criminals. Most of his works are publicly accessible on his website: <https://oleg-maltsev.com/>, as well as in Google Books.

Judicial harassment starting in December 2023

Maltsev's lawyer, Yevgenia Tarasenko, has issued an official [statement](#) regarding his case. She notes in it that prior to his arrest, he faced fabricated criminal prosecution by Ukrainian law enforcement for over a year.

Efforts were made to not only impede his scientific work but also to accuse him of various offenses under the Criminal Code of Ukraine. Furthermore, according to her statements, Ukrainian law enforcement attempted in December 2023 to blackmail him: to extort money from him or to arrest him on charges she deemed unfounded. It was a letter from an unidentified email address offering him 'to resolve all issues for a certain compensation.' Although he hardly paid attention to it, he filed a complaint. From early March until 12 September 2024, Maltsev's home was repeatedly searched by the police... and was finally put in custody.

From the lawyer's perspective who was interviewed by [The Journal of International Security Affairs](#) on 1 October 2024, a scientist like Oleg Maltsev should be a source of pride for Ukraine, given his unprecedented connections within the national and international scientific community. However, instead of receiving the accolades he deserves, he finds himself imprisoned on serious criminal charges, she says. Maltsev is the target of what she describes as a "smear campaign" of deliberate persecution.

What is behind the scenes?

Who is pulling the strings behind this case, for what reason and what for? This is not clear at all.

According to a source within the European Academy of Sciences of Ukraine, which is chaired by Dr. Jerome Krase and of which Oleg Maltsev is a member of the Presidium, this may be linked to his research efforts starting in 2022 on some disputed issues. As a result of ongoing harassment, one of his papers has remained unpublished.

His first work is a book on war crimes, co-authored with American professor and scholar on global terrorism Harvey Wolf Kushner (4). This book explores the phenomenon of war crimes by examining recent events in Ukraine over the past two years and the private military company "Wagner Group" but also contains Maltsev's studies on criminal

organizations in Southern Italy. The book also discusses emerging trends in war crimes that, sadly, we may all face in the near future.

His second work is based on some unique research conducted by him and his team for two years. It is about a self-defense discipline that he invented and called "[Urban Tactical Shooting](#)" (UTS). It is an innovative sport shooting discipline, which not only provides individuals with shooting skills and recreational opportunities, but also teaches participants how to use different types of weapons in multiple life situations for self-defense.

UTS uses tactical models, procedures, scenarios and environments to provide individuals with survivability skills in times of war and methods to protect themselves from attackers. UTS enables individuals to preserve life and reduce physical and psychological trauma. In a conflict zone, shooting skills can be vital for civilians, allowing them to evacuate more efficiently and safely from areas of active combat. Mastery of these skills can complicate the efforts of opposing forces attempting to prevent safe passage through dangerous territories. This new shooting discipline is also beneficial for professionals in the security industry, rescue workers, and law enforcement personnel.

Furthermore, Oleg Maltsev holds the position of head of the International Tactical Sport Shooting Association and participates in the Olympic discipline of Skeet. While training in Skeet, Maltsev also conducted scientific research, resulting in four published books, all of which are available on his official website and were reviewed by athletes of this discipline.

A source in the European Academy of Sciences of Ukraine suggests that the development of the UTS may have led to the prosecution of Oleg Maltsev because of the interests of some business entities feeling that their market in this area would be threatened by such a discipline.

It was also assumed that the attack could come from the Orthodox Church or the anti-cult movement that he had heavily criticized in some of his writings or in relation with the documentary movie titled '[License for Crimes](#)' released in 2019 but he did not find these theories very convincing.

What are the real reasons of Maltsev's prosecution? His research about war crimes? His work about mafia activities? Conflict of interests in business? Or something else? At this stage, it is still impossible to identify the persons or groups of interest that are pulling the strings behind the scene. There are certainly vested interests but as of today they have not been identified.

Detention conditions

Oleg Maltsev is currently being held in the Odesa pretrial detention center, which has been recognized as the worst one in Ukraine. This facility, built in the late 19th century, is in deplorable conditions. This situation has been denounced by the European Court of Human Rights in the case *Deriglazov and Others v. Ukraine* (*Applications nos. [42363/18](#) and five others*).

Oleg Maltsev suffers from several medical problems, including bronchial asthma and diabetes. However, these factors did not prevent the Ukrainian court from remanding him into custody without the option for bail.

In the meantime, "special conditions" have been imposed on Maltsev in the Odesa detention center: for 10 days he was not permitted to wash and he is continuously moved from one cell to another, adhering to a principle of "from bad conditions to even

worse.” This is an old tactic from Soviet times intended to exert psychological pressure on individuals. Dr. Maltsev is currently being held in solitary confinement - a small, damp room with no heating or adequate ventilation. In such conditions, a person with bronchial asthma is virtually doomed to die.

It should be up to the court to decide whether Oleg Maltsev is guilty of anything or not. However, he may not survive long enough to be tried.

- (1) **Prof. Dr. Jerome Kruse** - Emeritus professor and Murray Koppelman professor at Brooklyn College of the City University of New York. He is the President of the European Academy of Sciences of Ukraine. Expert in sociology, gentrification in Brooklyn, Brooklyn ethnic groups, Italian-American politics, culture, race, class, urban life and Ethnicity in New York. His recent books include *COVID-19 in Brooklyn: Everyday Life During a Pandemic* (2023) and *Race, Class, and Gentrification in Brooklyn: A View from the Street* (2016).
- (2) **Prof. Dr. Maxim Lepskiy** is a full Professor, Doctor of Philosophy, Professor of Social Sciences and Administration at Zaporizhia National University (ZNU). In 2002-2003, he worked as the head of the Department for Internal Policy of the Zaporizhia Regional State Administration. From June 2004 to September 2019, he was the Dean of the Faculty of Sociology and Management of ZNU. More [here](#).
- (3) **Lucien-Samir Oulahbib**, born 1956 in Algeria, is a French sociologist, political scientist, writer and journalist who taught at the University Lyon 3 from 2007 until 2019. He taught at the University Paris X from 2005 to 2007 and now teaches at Albert le Grand Institute. He manages the Dogma philosophy journal together with Isabelle Saillot. His writings tackle contemporary French nihilism, radical Islamism and antisemitism.
- (4) **Harvey Wolf Kushner** is an American scholar of global terrorism. Chair of the Department of Criminal Justice, The Roosevelt School, Long Island University, Brookville, New York. Author of numerous writings and five books on terrorism including the multi-award winning Encyclopedia of Terrorism. He participated in the investigation of the September 11 terrorist attacks in the U.S.

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-нво-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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Ukrainian teen forcibly transferred to Russia says upon return that 'Every child feels abandoned'

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

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[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 subtitles in Russian by Dr Evgeniya Gidulianova:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=VoVlAr1cMWk>

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.
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