

NEWSLETTER

for the Members of the International
Coalition for the Return of Ukrainian Children



Regional
Center for
Human Rights

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More about the stories of the returned Ukrainian children can be found here:



Statistics on Returns

1,468

As of the end of July 2025

250

19,546

An estimated

1.6 mln

Children returned from deportation, forced transfers, or temporarily occupied territories

Children returned in 2025

Reports of unlawful deportations and forced transfers of children

Ukrainian children remain under the effective control of the Russian Federation

Russia's Refusal of Bona Fide Cooperation on the Return of Abducted Ukrainian Children Marks Latest Round of Istanbul Negotiations

Following the latest round of negotiations in Istanbul on 23 July, Russia [claimed](#) it had “fully processed” the initial list of 339 Ukrainian children submitted earlier by Kyiv. Russian officials alleged that many on the list were never on Russian territory, and that 50 were adults. They stated that Ukrainian children in Russia remain under state care and in appropriate institutions, and urged Ukraine to return children allegedly taken from Russia.

Ukraine responded with caution, emphasizing the importance of depoliticized dialogue, but rejected several Russian assertions as manipulative. According to [Ukrainian officials](#), Russia provided fragmented information on a fraction of children from the initial list, with no response on over 200 names, including children from the Kherson Regional Children's Home. They also clarified that only six children from the list have been returned so far—five from the same family—thanks to long-term Qatari mediation. Ukraine reiterated that forcibly transferred children, including those who have since turned 18, still have the right to come home and called on Russia to share complete data on each case.



European Court of Human Rights Orders Russia to Return Abducted Ukrainian Children

On July 9, in its judgment in the case [Ukraine and the Netherlands v. Russia](#), the ECtHR emphasized that Russia's actions concerning Ukraine follow its broader aims of aggression: to destroy Ukraine as an independent state through the subjugation of its territories and population to Russian control, including by means of forced Russification. The Court found that the unlawful transfer of Ukrainian children has been systemic and ongoing since 2014.

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These actions constitute an administrative practice that violates multiple rights under the European Convention on Human Rights: the prohibition of inhuman or degrading treatment, the right to liberty, the right to family life, the right to education, and the right to non-discrimination. Russia unlawfully displaced children, deliberately amended its legislation to impose Russian citizenship on them and to facilitate their adoption. It indoctrinates children and restricts access to education in the Ukrainian language. The Court concluded that no effective remedies exist for these violations in occupied territories.

The Court also found that Russian authorities rejected all international appeals to establish a transparent mechanism for identifying abducted children and facilitating their return. It ruled that Russia must, without delay, cooperate in the establishment of an international mechanism for the identification, reconnection, and safe reunification of abducted children with their relatives.

Commissioner O’Flaherty Stresses Return of All Unlawfully Transferred Ukrainian Children in Peace Negotiations

On July 8, the Council of Europe Commissioner for Human Rights, Michael O’Flaherty, published a [memorandum](#) on human rights elements for peace in Ukraine, following his visit to the country in March 2025. The Commissioner supports the position that any discussions around peace should address the issue of the unconditional return of all forcibly displaced Ukrainian children. The Commissioner considers that the immediate return of children, even before the end of active hostilities, could help to build trust and should support any discussions around peace. He also stresses the need for international actors, such as the ICRC and OHCHR, to be granted full access to information – including lists, locations, and health status – about these children to enable their identification and to trace their whereabouts.



Council of Europe Holds High-Level Conference on Protecting Ukrainian Kids

On 9 July, the Council of Europe and the Maltese Presidency of the Committee of Ministers co-organised a [High-level stock-taking conference on the situation of the Children of Ukraine: Council of Europe Actions](#) in Strasbourg to assess the current situation of Ukrainian children affected by Russian aggression. Opening the event, Secretary General Alain Berset underscored the suffering of thousands of forcibly displaced children and announced plans to expand the Register of Damage to include a special category documenting harm inflicted on children. Senior representatives from Ukraine and Council of Europe member states highlighted ongoing violations, including mass abductions and forcible russification. They called for urgent international action. The event reaffirmed that the protection of Ukrainian children is a step toward justice, return, and recovery.

Ukrainian Universities and Colleges Open Doors for Youth from Temporarily Occupied Territories

Ukrainian universities and colleges [have opened](#) a special admission pathway for high school graduates from occupied territories and areas of active hostilities. Even without Ukrainian documents like a passport or diploma, applicants can enroll under a simplified procedure using Quota-2. This is a separate set of government-funded places. Instead of taking the national exam, applicants can pass an interview and study tuition-free.

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Students can apply and do interviews either online or in person. Once enrolled, they receive full student rights. The Education Centers help with the whole process. Assistance with departure for young people is provided in coordination with Bring Kids Back UA.

Thanks to the efforts, the number of children from the mentioned areas in Ukrainian universities and colleges increased steadily. At the same time, the Russian Federation constantly obstructs this process. Recently, they passed legislation introducing yet another obstacle: starting July 23, the Russian Federation began enforcing [new exit regulations](#) for territories under its effective control, which will make it impossible to cross the border after January 20, 2026, without a biometric passport, significantly hindering the return of Ukrainian children.

General Keith Kellogg: The U.S. Will Demand the Return of All Abducted Ukrainian Children

On July 17, during his official visit, the Special Presidential Envoy for Ukraine, General Keith Kellogg, [met](#) with children returned from Russian-controlled territories at the Child Rights Protection Center. Earlier, the Special Envoy emphasized that in the post-war recovery, Ukraine must focus not only on rebuilding infrastructure but also on addressing urgent humanitarian issues. He specifically [stated](#) that the United States will demand the return of all illegally kidnapped Ukrainian children.



The July 2025 issue of Time spotlighted the abduction of Ukrainian children from occupied territories by Putin's regime

The July 17, 2025, [cover story](#) of TIME magazine, titled 'The Kidnappings' by Simon Shuster, exposes Russia's systematic abduction of Ukrainian children. Since 2022, Russian authorities have displaced over thousands of children, eradicating their Ukrainian identities, and forcibly placing them with foster families. According to Shuster, this is not a humanitarian effort but a deliberate political strategy and international crime. The article highlights both the trauma faced by families and the relentless efforts of Ukrainian officials and volunteers working to bring these children home. The International Criminal Court says these abductions are a war crime. But Russian high-ranking officials portray them as a heroic mission.



Prosecutor General's Office of Ukraine Submits Case on Deportation and Forcible Transfer of Children from Kherson to Court



On July 16, Ukrainian juvenile prosecutors [submitted](#) to court an indictment against individuals involved in the deportation of two young children from Ukraine to Russia and the forcible transfer of 46 children to the occupied Crimea. The case concerns institutionalized children from the Kherson Regional Children's Home. Among the accused are sanctioned Russian officials, including a State Duma deputy, representatives of the occupation administration, and the leadership of the child care institution.

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The investigation found that perpetrators displaced children under the pretext of undergoing medical examinations, despite the absence of any medical necessity. Subsequently, they received Russian identity documents, and one child was adopted in Russia under an altered identity. Russia continues to deny the forcible transfer of this group of children.

Displacement of Ukrainian Children to “Re-Education Camps”

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[50 children](#) from the occupied Kherson region and [100 children](#) from the occupied Zaporizhzhia region participated in the third shift of the ‘Time of Young Heroes.’ This is a project organized by the ‘Warrior’ [‘Воин’] Center in Volgograd (Russia).

Alongside children from the so-called Donetsk and Luhansk People Republics, as well as Russian regions, they receive military training, tactical medicine instruction, lessons on the fundamentals of Russian national security, and drone operation skills. Importantly, there is data suggesting that Ukrainian children are also being [involved](#) in the production of drones and their software components. This initiative is carried out under the direct order of the Russian president. According to [official reports](#), four shifts of the ‘Time of Young Heroes’ are planned for the summer. Around 3,400 teenagers are expected to participate. This is an increase from 2,600 children involved in 2024. It is known that among the [876 participants](#) of the fourth shift, there are also Ukrainian children.



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Russians [displaced](#) 25 children from the occupied Zaporizhzhia region to the Preobrazhensky Defense and Sports Center of the Russian Airborne Forces Foundation in Moscow.



The agenda of a two-week military-style program includes tactical training with active-duty officers, shooting practice, obstacle courses, and so-called “lessons in courage”. According to the self-proclaimed Zaporizhzhia Ministry of Education, the initiative aims to integrate children into the Russian state and raise future soldiers. ‘Perhaps one day, some of these boys and girls will wear shoulder straps with three stars and tell new recruits, ‘My journey began in Preobrazhensky,’ [emphasized](#) the so-called Ministry.

Ukrainian Intelligence Obtains New Evidence of Russian Abductions of Children from Occupied Territories

In the course of a large-scale cyber operation, the Defence Intelligence of the Ministry of Defence of Ukraine [gained access](#) to the servers of the so-called ‘government of Crimea.’ The servers contained documents confirming the forcible transfer of children from the occupied regions of Kherson, Zaporizhzhia, Donetsk, and Luhansk to the occupied Crimea. These files include thousands of records on forcibly displaced children, personal profiles, unlawful decisions on unlawful foster care by Russian citizens, and addresses of the children’s relocation within Russia. According to the representative of the Main Directorate of Intelligence Andriy Yusov, the retrieved data has already been handed over to law enforcement and will be used in ongoing criminal proceedings. It helps to ensure accountability as well as to locate and return the abducted children.

More information
can be found here:



<https://www.bringkidsback.org.ua>



<https://rchr.org.ua/en/>