

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

1,600

As of the end of August 2025

101

19,546

An estimated

1.6 mln

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

Children returned in August 2025

Reports of unlawful deportations and forcible transfers of children

Ukrainian children remain under the effective control of the Russian Federation

Ukrainian Children at the Heart of the Peace Process

In August, calls for the return of thousands of abducted Ukrainian children were voiced by President of Ukraine [Volodymyr Zelenskyy](#) and [Ursula von der Leyen](#) during a meeting with U.S. President Donald Trump. U.S. Secretary of State [Marco Rubio](#) underlined that there can be no ambiguity on this issue and that children must never be used as a bargaining chip in broader negotiations. In a letter to Vladimir Putin, U.S. First Lady [Melania Trump](#) stressed the importance of protecting the innocence of children. With gratitude for this initiative, First Lady of Ukraine [Olena Zelenska](#) [responded](#) with her own letter, drawing attention to Russia's abduction of Ukrainian children. Whether the return of abducted children was discussed with Vladimir Putin in Alaska on August 15 [remains](#) uncertain. But it is evident that no just and lasting peace can exist without reuniting forcibly displaced children with their families.



Photo: AP

Russia Urged to Immediately Return Abducted Ukrainian Children

The International Coalition for the Return of Ukrainian Children, together with 40 countries, the EU, and the Council of Europe, has called on Russia to immediately return forcibly displaced Ukrainian children. The Coalition demands information on their whereabouts, access for humanitarian organizations, and an end to cease the manipulation of children's identities, placement in Russian families or institutions, and exposure to indoctrination and militarization.

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As part of these efforts, the EU has reaffirmed that it will continue to impose sanctions on those who steal Ukrainian children and attempt to erase their identity. Leaders stressed that the return of children should be unconditional and cannot be used as a bargaining chip.

You can read the Coalition's Joint Statement here: https://www.president.gov.ua/storage/j-files-storage/01/40/01/ff9affae8ad4761f75d7bc589d9e934b_1754396362.pdf



Over 65,000 Ukrainian Children Targeted by Russia's "Re-education" and Military Training Camps

In the summer of 2025, Russia's Ministry of Education [planned to displace](#) around 65,000 Ukrainian children into so-called "re-education camps." 2,200 children allegedly [attended](#) federal camps such as "Artek" in occupied Crimea, "Orlyonok" and "Smena" in the Krasnodar region, and "Okean" in Primorsky region. Between January and August 2025, the displacement of more than 10,700 children [was covered](#) in Russian propaganda media.

Alongside the Soviet-style camps, Ukrainian children were being placed in militarized facilities such as "Young Patriot" near Moscow, "Avangard" in Volgograd region, [Preobrazhensky](#) Defense and Sports Center of the Russian Airborne Forces in Moscow, "Guardman" in Penza region and ["Red Detachment"](#) in Rostov region. Programs [include](#) wearing military uniforms, drills, weapons and engineering training, parachute, drone exercises, tactical medicine, meetings with Russian soldiers, and war games.



Prime Minister of Norway Visits Child Rights Protection Center in Kyiv

On August 25, the Child Rights Protection Center [hosted](#) Prime Minister of Norway Jonas Gahr Støre as part of President Volodymyr Zelenskyy's Bring Kids Back UA initiative. Together with the Head of the Office of the President of Ukraine, Andriy Yermak, and Ombudsman Dmytro Lubinets, the discussion focused on returning Ukrainian children forcibly displaced by Russia and highlighted the difficult and lengthy process of identification and repatriation, as well as psychological support and reintegration. The Prime Minister also met young people who had already come home thanks to the initiative.



Occupation Authorities Push Adoption of Ukrainian Children by Russians

In early August, the so-called "Ministry of Education and Science of the LPR" [occupied Luhansk region] [published](#) an "adoption database." It lists profiles of 294 Ukrainian children who may be placed under guardianship or adopted by Russian citizens. The database allows searches by age, gender, eye color, and other criteria. Some profiles do not include photos, which may indicate that the occupation authorities want to hide the children's earlier forcible transfer from other occupied areas. The youngest child in the database is only a few months old.

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МИНИСТЕРСТВО
ОБРАЗОВАНИЯ И НАУКИ
ЛУГАНСКОЙ НАРОДНОЙ РЕСПУБЛИКИ

Министерство образования и науки Луганской Народной Республики » Банк данных на усыновление

БАНК ДАННЫХ



310


Число детей, информация о которых
содержится в региональном банке данных

International humanitarian law [forbids](#) any change of the personal status of children from occupied territories. Forcible transfer of children from one group to another with the intent to destroy a nation [is](#) an act of genocide. The Hague Conference on Private International Law has urged Russia to [stop](#) transferring Ukrainian children into Russian families. UN agencies have [issued](#) similar calls. Despite this, occupation authorities have repeatedly [confirmed](#) the adoption of Ukrainian children by Russians. This practice [continues](#) in 2025.

NGOs Submit Reports to UN Highlighting Russia’s Systematic Violations against Ukrainian Children

Non-governmental organizations have submitted reports to the UN Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights as part of Russia’s periodic review. [The Regional Center for Human Rights](#), [the Voices of Children Charitable Foundation](#), [the Ukrainian Child Rights Network \(UCRN\)](#), [the Centre of Civil Education “Almenda,”](#) [the Reckoning Project](#), and [Human Rights Watch](#) are among the organizations involved. They report that Russia follows a deliberate policy toward children in occupied areas, which includes forcible displacement, unlawful placement with Russian families, alteration of personal data, and imposition of Russian citizenship. Children also face militarization and political indoctrination through military-style classes, cadet corps, and “re-education” camps.

The submissions highlight the destruction of Ukraine’s education system, the removal of Ukrainian textbooks, and the ban on the Ukrainian language. These actions are linked to a policy of colonization: the resettlement of Russian citizens, including teachers and cultural workers directly involved in re-educating children. Human rights defenders stress that these practices are systematic and amount to a serious violation of the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights.



1. **The Regional Center for Human Rights (RCHR)** is a Ukrainian NGO founded in 2013 in Sevastopol. Since 2014, it has documented international law violations by the Russian Federation in occupied Crimea, expanding its work after the full-scale invasion in 2022. Current priorities of RCHR in the context of armed conflict include, among others, countering (1) grave violations against children, (2) the destruction and appropriation of the cultural heritage of Ukraine, and (3) forcible change in the demographic composition of the population in the occupied territories of Ukraine.
2. RCHR lawyers represent victims of human rights violations before the ECHR, UN treaty bodies (HRC, CERD), and mechanisms such as the WGEID. The HRC’s Views in *Bratsylo and Others v. the Russian Federation*, with RCHR’s legal participation, marked the first case addressing human rights and IHL violations in occupied Crimea. The team has also submitted multiple reports to the HRMMU, the CRC, the UN Special Rapporteur on extrajudicial executions, the UN Special Rapporteur on the right to education and the ICC. One such submission, on the transfer of Ukrainian children to Russian families, contributed to the ICC’s arrest warrants for Russian officials. RCHR’s analytical work has been referenced in UN reports and the ECHR judgment in *Ukraine v. Russia (re Crimea)*.
3. RCHR’s partners – **the Voices of Children Charitable Foundation and the Ukrainian Child Rights Network (UCRN)**, co-authors of this submission, possess substantial experience in the return and psychosocial reintegration of children who were deported, forcibly transferred, and/or held in territories under the effective control of the Russian Federation.
4. A coalition of organisations intends to present its views on the Russian Federation’s compliance with the ICESCR, focusing on its seventh periodic report, the state’s replies, and related issues in the context of the armed aggression against Ukraine, for consideration during the 78th Session of the Committee in Geneva.

I. Forcible displacement and transfer of Ukrainian children to Russian families (Articles 2(2), 4, 5(1) and 10(1) of the Covenant)



U.S. Senator Graham: Russia Could Be Designated a State Sponsor of Terrorism

U.S. Senator Lindsey Graham [announced](#) that he will introduce a special bill to designate Russia a state sponsor of terrorism if it fails to return nearly 20,000 forcibly displaced Ukrainian children. He said the step would isolate Moscow and make cooperation with Russia unacceptable for governments and businesses around the world. Ukraine has asked Washington to take this step since 2022, but previous administrations rejected it, saying the move could block diplomacy. However, in 2024, the U.S. Department of State [listed](#) Russia among 13 countries that sponsor human trafficking.

Russia's Commissioner for Children's Rights Admits Her Role in Displacement of Ukrainian Children

On August 13, Russia's Commissioner for Children's Rights, Maria Lvova-Belova, [gave an interview](#), where she addressed the issue of Ukrainian children under Russian control. Lvova-Belova confirmed that Russia has repeatedly received lists of Ukrainian children for reunification with families since 2022. The Commissioner claimed to personally arrange placements of Ukrainian children into Russian families. Lvova-Belova also admitted her awareness of the ICC arrest warrants and sanctions as well as readiness to repeat everything "ten times again" alongside Vladimir Putin. She claimed that Ukrainian children were taken to Russia due to "confusion," "medical conditions," or "evacuations," while downplaying numbers and portraying reunifications as regular and cooperative. The interview highlights her acknowledgment of facts that strengthen international accusations against her role in the forcible displacement and Russification of Ukrainian children.

Russia Expands Propaganda Lessons to Kindergartens, including Occupied Regions

Russia [will introduce](#) "Conversations About Important Things"—weekly classes to teach 'patriotism,' 'morality,' and 'traditional values'—to children aged three to seven in 100 kindergartens across 22 regions, including the occupied territories of Donetsk and Luhansk. The program, already implemented in schools since 2022, was extended to preschoolers last year after approval by Vladimir Putin.



More information can be found here:



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



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