



Voices of Children Charitable Foundation
NGO "Kharkiv Institute of Social Research"

CHILDREN AND WAR IN UKRAINE

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Introduction

150 days of war, which are in fact 150 days of crimes against humanity and murders of peaceful citizens of Ukraine. Shelling of residential areas, terrorist attacks on places of concentration of the civilian population, killing and maiming of children, destruction of schools and hospitals, deportation and kidnapping of citizens, continuing humanitarian crisis in the occupied territories and attempts to create a food crisis in the world - these are what characterize the five months full-scale Russian invasion of Ukraine.

As at July 24, 358 children were killed, 684 were injured. And these numbers are not final¹.

We bring to your attention a report that briefly describes the key events of the fifth month of the war, related to the situation, problems and needs of children in Ukraine and abroad. Separately, in this report, we analyzed the situation with respect to children's right to leisure and recreation.

The methodology is based on the analysis of statistics, data from official sources and media materials. Also, 10 interviews were conducted with public activists, volunteers, psychologists, parents in the occupation and in the active combat areas, as well as with families who were forced to move to the western and central regions of Ukraine or abroad.

¹ <https://www.gp.gov.ua/ua/posts/yuvenalni-prokurori-358-ditei-zaginuli-vnaslidok-zbroinoyi-agresiyi-rf-v-ukrayini-10762>.

Children under the temporary occupation and in the active combat areas

As at July 19, the updated list of territorial communities that are located in the area of military (combat) operations or that are under temporary occupation, encirclement (blockade), includes nine regions: Donetsk, Kharkiv, Dnipropetrovsk, Luhansk, Zaporizhzhya, Kherson, Mykolayiv, Sumy and Chernihiv. In total, there are currently 314 communities in the list².

Russian troops continue to violate the norms of international humanitarian law in the war with Ukraine, use illicit means of warfare, destroy civilian infrastructure, including children's infrastructure, kill and maim the civilian population. Below we describe the situation in these territories and give examples of Russian war crimes that directly affect Ukrainian children.

Creating a humanitarian crisis

Creating a humanitarian crisis and famine as a prohibited method of war is a constant practice of Russian troops in temporarily occupied territories and active combat areas.

During the ripening and harvesting period, the occupiers **actively fire at agricultural machinery, set fire to fields, steal grain and vegetables from enterprises and farmers.**

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On July 12, during the missile attack by the Russian Federation, several cluster shells exploded in the fields of Gulyaipole territorial community of Zaporizhzhya region. As a result, more than 600 hectares of grain crops of various kinds, including wheat, rapeseed, barley, rapeseed, were burned³.

As at July 20, more than 240 hectares of wheat were burned in Kherson Region as a result of enemy shelling⁴.

In Dnipropetrovsk Region on July 20, the enemy carried out targeted fire on combine harvesters that were operating in the field⁵.

On July 22, it became known that the Russians had already taken about 70,000 tons of grain of the new crop from the farmers of Luhansk Region and brouhly it to Kuban⁶.

² <https://minre.gov.ua/news/onovleno-aktualnyy-perelik-gromad-u-rayonah-boyovyh-diy-na-tot-ta-tyh-shcho-v-otochenni-12>.

³ https://www.npu.gov.ua/news/stoprussia/vorog-prodovzhuje-nanositi-raketni-udari-po-naselenim-punktam-zaporizkogo-krayu-policziya-zbiraje-dokazi-vojenix-zlochiv/?fbclid=IwAR1cTYBS-Rcu85PJVOsxMmZT6er3CU6cfhYfm9SIUQo2SDV_EY58cw-DSwl.

⁴ <https://www.facebook.com/khersonpolice.official/posts/pfbid05ZGj6gPT3FuM44ZGdAWBrvVij3Nwd2sc1mkHNLrtE9Qz4k4pZK51pWcS4FGvfbPRI>.

⁵ <https://www.facebook.com/watch/?v=455051486484809>.

⁶ http://loga.gov.ua/oda/press/news/blizko_70_tis_tonn_zerna_novogo_vrozhayu_rosiyani_vzhe_vidibrali_u_fermeriv.



Firefighters are eliminating the fire in a wheat field as a result of enemy shelling in Mykolaiv region ⁷

According to the data of the operative headquarters for recording environmental crimes of Russia under the State Environmental Inspection, **since the beginning of the war, 3,000 fires have been recorded on an area of more than 1.5 million hectares, of which**

more than a third, or 690,000 hectares, comprise agricultural land⁸.

Besides, many cities and villages **do not have access to gas supply, there are also interruptions in water and electricity supply**. Due to the hostilities and the lack of access to the damage sites, it is extremely difficult to carry out emergency restoration work. As soon as such an opportunity arises, emergency repair teams work in the areas not occupied by Russian troops.

As at July 24, **737 settlements in Ukraine remain without power** due to damage caused by hostilities, **that is about 570.4 thousand consumers** in total. In particular, there are about 355,000 consumers in Donetsk region, over 128,200 in Luhansk region, 30,300 in Mykolaiv region, and 21,700 in Kharkiv region. At the same time, within one day, on July 23, the emergency services of Ukraine managed to restore electricity supply for about 8,500 consumers. More than 242,400 consumers remain without gas supply⁹.

A boy in Mykolaiv carries water brought by volunteers ¹⁰



⁷ <https://dsns.gov.ua/uk/news/nadzvicaini-podiyi/za-minulu-dobu-vogneborci-mikolayivshhini-likvidovali-14-pozez>.

⁸ <https://forbes.ua/inside/urozhay-u-vogni-u-zoni-boyovikh-diy-zgorilo-blizko-350-000-ga-poliv-yaki-vtrati-ta-naslidki-masshtabnikh-pozhezh-12072022-7129>.

⁹ <https://www.facebook.com/minenergoUkraine/posts/pfbid02VMguTMY5PtMNm9Y3HcPGXqaWtKVYFzbZguM18BmZDciDULxy3BcNRY8aHRtPpALhI>.

¹⁰ Photo by Oleksandr Medvedenko.

The biggest problems are expected with the onset of cold weather, because the temporary occupation authorities are not engaged in either repairing power grids or rebuilding housing for local residents. People who have lost their homes are offered to move to the homes of those citizens who were forced to leave due to combat operations¹¹.

Due to the destruction of medical facilities, the theft of medical equipment by Russia, the lack of medicines and the absence of specialized doctors, such as pediatricians, cardiologists, oncologists, residents of a number of settlements have a **significant need for medical care**. There is evidence that people die or their health deteriorates significantly due to diseases that modern medicine treats with drugs or simple medical manipulations. Elderly people and babies suffer the most from this.

It is very difficult to find pressure pills, without them my grandmother has already several times felt very bad. I suspect that there was a heart attack. You can't call an ambulance, the hospitals are full of wounded occupiers. My child also recently had rashes on her body, I treated her with improvised means at my own risk: talc, diclofenac. It seems to be better now, but we've suffered for a month, the crusts were all over her body.

From an interview with parents

Outbreaks of infectious diseases, including cholera, are also observed in Mariupol¹². The same threatens other settlements, where there is lack of purified water, broken communal infrastructure, many uncontrolled burials, limited medical care and access to medicines.

A separate problem is the **ongoing coronavirus epidemic**. The World Health Organization announced a new wave of diseases in Europe caused by new varieties of the Omicron strain. The organization predicts a difficult autumn and winter, calls for wearing masks in public places and to increase the coverage of the population with the vaccine¹³. It is important to strengthen measures (wearing masks, avoiding crowding, vaccination) to prevent the disease, especially in those areas where it is difficult to provide the necessary level of medical care.

There are also problems with access to food and drinking water. Due to the lack of work and difficulties in receiving payments in the temporarily occupied territories of Ukraine, some people suffer from a lack of food and drinking water. People complain about the significant increase in the price of products. It is impossible to deliver humanitarian aid from Ukraine. Basic food (cereals, sugar, flour, butter) in the form of aid to the population comes from Russia and is distributed by the occupiers at a minimal level, often in exchange for passport data or as payment for clearing rubble caused by Russian shelling. The latter, by

¹¹ <https://gur.gov.ua/content/okupanty-zbyraiut-osobysti-dani-zhyteliv-mariupolia-ta-namahaiutsia-verbuvaty-evakuiovanykh-hromadian.html>.

¹² <https://t.me/mariupolrada/10293>.

¹³ <https://tsn.ua/svit/vooz-oficiyno-zayavila-pro-novu-hvilyu-koronavirusu-v-yevropi-i-poperedila-pro-vazhki-chasi-2114182.html>.

the way, is extremely dangerous, but hunger forces even children to take up this job.

Thus, it is reported that on June 27, during the clearing of debris in the central district of Mariupol, a 15-year-old teenager blew up on a grenade, as a result of which he was injured¹⁴.

We buy everything at very high prices. A jar of yogurt can cost 60 or 80 hryvnias, sugar 100 hryvnias, meat 500 hryvnias. All products are Russian. Or it is written that it was made in "LDNR". The quality is not very good, the cereals are dirty, the sugar is gray, but you have to buy it. And what is given out as humanitarian aid is often expired.

From an interview with parents.

Use of illicit means of warfare

The Russian occupiers continue to shell peaceful settlements, including with prohibited munition. They use several types of cluster munitions, phosphorus bombs and thermobaric weapons in Ukraine, but most often it is cluster munitions because of the large area of damage and the preservation of danger from unexploded and operational components flying around.

Thus, on the evening of July 1, the Russian army shelled the city of Slov'yansk in Donetsk region with cluster munitions. Four civilians died, seven more were injured¹⁵.

On July 12, during the shelling of Mykolaiv, the occupiers used cluster munitions and Tornado-S MRL. A lyceum and a hospital were destroyed, private houses were damaged. 12 people were injured¹⁶.

On July 14, the Russian army struck high-rise buildings and civilian infrastructure in the village of Stepanohirsk, Zaporizhzhia region, with cluster shells. In particular, the local dispensary of family medicine was destroyed¹⁷.

Shelling and bombing of civilian objects

One of the key targets of the Russian occupiers remains civilian objects throughout the territory of Ukraine. As a result of shelling of residential buildings, hospitals, and transport stops, adults and children are killed or injured. Since the beginning of the invasion of Ukraine, the Russian army has carried out 17,300 strikes on civilian targets and only about 300 on military targets¹⁸.

¹⁴ <https://www.gp.gov.ua/ua/posts/yuvenalni-prokurori-vnaslidok-zbroinoyi-agresiyi-rf-v-ukrayini-zaginula-341-ditina-2>.

¹⁵ https://lb.ua/society/2022/07/02/521898_slovyansk_obstrilyali_kasetnimi.html.

¹⁶ <https://www.ukrinform.ua/rubric-regions/3527114-rosiani-obstrilali-mikolaiv-kasetnimi-boepripasami-op.html>.

¹⁷ https://t.me/zoda_gov_ua/10379.

¹⁸ https://cpd.gov.ua/main/%d1%86%d0%bf%d0%b4_%d0%b0%d0%bd%d0%b0%d0%bb%d1%96%d0%b7%d1%83%d1%94-23.



On June 26, a residential building in Kyiv was destroyed as a result of a Russian missile strike. A seven-year-old girl with mine-explosive injuries of moderate severity was taken out from under the rubble. Okhmatdyt's specialists diagnosed the child with numerous wounds, bruises and abrasions. The girl was operated on, now her condition is stable¹⁹

On June 28, Russian troops hit residential buildings in the town of Ochakov, Mykolaiv region, with rockets. Six people were injured, including a three-month-old baby (in a coma), a one-year-old child, and two teenagers aged 13 and 16. Two people died, including a six-year-old child²⁰.

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On July 11, Kharkiv was subjected to rocket fire. Residential quarters were under fire. 16 wounded and 3 dead persons were found²¹.

On July 14, as a result of enemy shelling, a five-storey building was destroyed in the town of Chasiv Yar, Donetsk region. The bodies of 48 victims were extracted from under the rubble, including one child²².

On July 20, the occupiers shelled the Saltiv district of Kharkiv, as a result three people died, including a 13-year-old boy. Two more civilians were injured. A 72-year-old woman received landmine-explosive injuries, her condition is moderate. The condition of the 15-year-old girl is serious²³.

¹⁹ <https://www.ukrinform.ua/rubric-kyiv/3515313-zpid-zavaliv-budinku-na-lukanivci-distali-semiricnu-divcinku.html>.

²⁰ <https://t.me/mykolaivskaoblrada/2772>.

²¹ <https://t.me/kt20220224/1167>.

²² <https://www.facebook.com/DSNSDon/posts/pfbid032UbeyZ5voc4feqmAiKvpYhdzLiWgzi2P2cLQRPEdGWYuGYVgZ1n54jsGDq1UdLX4l>.

²³ <https://t.me/kharkivoda/5979>.



A man holds the hand of his 13-year-old son, who was killed by a Russian missile attack on Kharkiv, July 20²⁴

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A significant number of shelling of civilian objects is indiscriminate. Border areas where there is almost no infrastructure are being shelled. Many missiles fall into landfills, plantations, abandoned buildings and street toilets, **some of them hit places with a large concentration of civilians**. Such crimes cannot be considered only war crimes, they are also crimes against humanity, acts of genocide of the Ukrainian people.

Thus, on June 27, the armed forces of the Russian Federation carried out a missile attack on the city of Kremenchuk, Poltava region, as a result of which a civilian object - the Amstor shopping center - was completely destroyed. 22 people died, 64 were injured, including a nine-year-old child²⁵.

On July 1, the occupiers fired missiles at a residential high-rise building and a recreation center in Odesa. As a result of the attack, 22 people died, including one child. 38 people were injured, including six children²⁶.

On July 14, the Russian army attacked the crowded center of Vinnytsia with cruise missiles. 26 people died, including three children²⁷. 80 wounded persons, including four children, went to the hospital²⁸.

²⁴ REUTERS/Sofiiia Gatilova.

²⁵ <https://interfax.com.ua/news/general/843199.html>.

²⁶ <https://hromadske.ua/posts/u-likarni-pomerla-pracivnicya-bazi-vidpochinku-na-odeshini-u-yaki-vdarili-raketami-1-lipnya-kilkist-zhertv-zroslo-do-22>.

²⁷ https://zaxid.net/kilkist_zhertv_raketnogo_udaru_rosiyan_po_vinnitsi_zroslo_do_26_n1546618.

²⁸ <https://focus.ua/uk/ukraine/522344-stali-izvestny-imena-vseh-pogibshih-v-vinnice-detey-foto>.



A seven-year-old boy is in the hospital after a missile strike into the center of Vinnytsia. The child has got 45% external body burns and 35% internal burns. Upper and lower limbs, respiratory tract, face were burned. There is also a closed fracture of the left arm and several shrapnel fragments in the skull. The boy was taken to the German city of Dresden for treatment. He is in a very serious condition²⁹

As a result of enemy shelling and bombing, **the medical and educational infrastructure of settlements is also destroyed.** As at July 24, **2188 educational institutions were damaged, 221 of them were completely destroyed**³⁰. Part of the districts in the eastern and southern regions plan to transfer the mode of education to an online format.

On July 15, Russian missiles damaged two educational institutions in Kharkiv ³¹.

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On the same day, a Russian missile caused serious damage to a school building in Sinelnyk district of Dnipropetrovsk region ³².

A destroyed school in the city of Kramatorsk, Donetsk region, July 21 ³³



Almost 900 health care facilities were damaged, 127 hospitals were completely destroyed. 90 ambulances were shot and disabled, 250 were captured. 450

²⁹ <https://tsn.ua/ukrayina/obgorilo-oblichchya-i-dihalni-shlyahi-ulamki-a-cherepi-likari-rozpovili-pro-stan-poterpilogo-u-vinnici-hlopchika-2116042.html>.

³⁰ <https://www.gp.gov.ua/ua/posts/yuvenalni-prokurori-358-ditei-zaginuli-vnaslidok-zbroinoyi-agresiyi-rf-v-ukrayini-10762>.

³¹ <https://www.facebook.com/MNSKHARKIV/posts/pfbid02nBhEMmviA9cUUHY7SB56KdZu9v5WkGdLq7Gr8Wiko6fDhRfPk71wY5Hg1geBZRSfl>.

³² <https://t.me/dnipropetrovskaODA/1320>.

³³ https://t.me/pavlokyrylenko_donoda/4206.

pharmacies were damaged and do not work, 41 ones were completely destroyed³⁴.

On July 9, as a result of shelling in Druzhkivka, Donetsk region, the hospital and other civil infrastructure of the city were damaged³⁵.

On July 12, Mykolaiv was subjected to massive missile fire. Two medical facilities and residential buildings were hit. Four people were injured³⁶.

On July 21, Russian shelling hit one of Kharkiv's medical facilities³⁷.

Besides, there is evidence of **Russian occupiers using civilian facilities (cultural and educational institutions) as headquarters and/or warehouses for military equipment and ammunition**. Actually, this means that the enemy uses the local population as a human shield in the war. The practice of importing ammunition under the guise of humanitarian aid to the population of the occupied territories has also been recorded³⁸.

Murder, wounding, cruel treatment and sexual abuse of children

Many facts of murders, injuries and violence against children by the Russian military remain unpublished due to the temporary occupation of part of the country's territory. However, individual evidence of crimes is still recorded by our law enforcement agencies. Work is ongoing to establish events in the liberated territories and in the active combat areas.

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Thus, on June 27, **Russian troops fired at a crowd of people who came to collect technical water** in Lysychansk, Luhansk region, as a result of which at least 8 people died and 21 were injured. Among the victims, one child died and one was injured³⁹.

On June 28, it became known that one of the servicemen of the Russian Armed Forces was suspected of violating the laws and customs of war. According to the investigation, on March 15, a **Russian military committed physical and psychological violence against a family** living in one of the villages of Chernihiv region. Having entered the victim's house, the suspect threatened to kill the man and his young son, holding them at gunpoint and trying to prevent possible resistance, while another unidentified Russian soldier tried to sexually assault the 15-year-old stepdaughter of the owner of the house. The girl's mother managed to stop his criminal activities⁴⁰.

³⁴ <https://www.ukrinform.ua/rubric-ato/3535627-zagarniki-poskodili-majze-900-obektiv-zakladiv-ohoroni-zdorova-v-ukraini-lasko.html>

³⁵ https://t.me/pavlokyrylenko_donoda/3977

³⁶ <https://t.me/mykolaivskaODA/1744>

³⁷ https://t.me/ihor_terekhov/355

³⁸ <https://gur.gov.ua/content/pislia-udariv-zsu-okupanty-v-khersonskii-oblasti-pochaly-zavozyty-boieprypasy-pid-vyhliadom-humanitarnoi-dopomohy.html>

³⁹ <https://t.me/luhanskaVTSA/3828>

⁴⁰ <https://www.gp.gov.ua/ua/posts/nasilstvo-nad-simjeyu-v-odnomu-z-sil-cernigivshhini-cergovomu-viiskovoslužbovcyu-rf-povidomleno-pro-pidozru>

On July 15, **Russian soldiers killed a mother and her underaged daughter in Kherson**⁴¹.

Abduction and forced deportation of children

According to estimates, **2 million people were deported from Ukraine, several hundred thousand of them were children**⁴². The exact figure cannot be set at this time. According to the National Information Bureau, the known figure is 5.1 thousand children. Only 46 of them have managed to return to Ukraine so far⁴³.

Deported **Ukrainians undergo a severe filtration procedure when leaving for Russia**. The US was able to identify at least 18 filtration camps for Ukrainian citizens and noted that the Russians were preparing for filtration before the full-scale invasion⁴⁴.

During filtering, which can last for weeks, people are taken away their documents, intimidated, fingerprinted, their personal belongings and correspondence in mobile phones are inspected, everyone is **interrogated, including children**. Below is one of the stories told to journalists of the "Investigation.Info".

One day, they knocked at a hotel room in Kazan, where Olena was deported with her mother and a nine-year-old daughter. Olena was told to come down for interrogation. They asked about whether her property suffered as a result of the actions of the Ukrainian military, how she was forced to learn the Ukrainian language, and others. "I wrote a statement saying that I refuse to have my nine-year-old child interrogated," Olena recalls. "The next day, they still drew up a protocol from my words, the same as mine, only with the name and surname of my daughter. And they made the child sign. The assistants of the investigator visited our hotel and came to everyone to make all the children sign. I say, "I have a young daughter, she doesn't have any signature rights yet." They said, "We don't care, she can just draw a flower there"⁴⁵.

At the same time, the **practice of illegal adoption of children from Donbas by Russian families continues**. On July 14, the governor of the Moscow region Andrii Vorobyov announced the completion of the procedure for the transfer of nine children from the so-called DPR into the care of families from the Moscow region⁴⁶. On the same day, the Children's Ombudsman of the Russian Federation under the Putin administration, Maria Lvova-Belova, reported the transfer of 32 children in the families in Moscow and the regions of Moscow, Voronezh, Kaluga and Tula, as well as in Yamalo-Nenets Autonomous District. In total, **108 Ukrainian**

⁴¹ <https://www.gp.gov.ua/ua/posts/yuvenalni-prokurori-353-ditini-zaginuli-vnaslidok-zbroinoyi-agresiyi-rf-v-ukrayini>.

⁴² <https://hromadske.ua/en/posts/okkupanty-deportirovali-na-territoriyu-rf-uzhe-okolo-dvuh-millionov-chelovek-iz-ukrainy-zelenskij>.

⁴³ <https://life.pravda.com.ua/society/2022/07/22/249669>.

⁴⁴ <https://hromadske.ua/posts/ssha-viyavili-18-filtracijnih-taboriv-yaki-okupanti-stvorili-dlya-ukrayinciv-nyt>.

⁴⁵ <https://www.slidstvo.info/news/rosijski-slidchi-dopytuyut-ukrayinskyh-ditej-ta-zmushuyut-yih-pidpysuvaty-protokoly-dopytu>.

⁴⁶ <https://gur.gov.ua/content/v-rf-rozshyryuyut-masshtaby-viyskovoyi-pidhotovky-dlya-ditey.html>.

orphans, who have acquired Russian citizenship, were planned to be transferred in a few days⁴⁷.

Besides, the **occupiers continue the practice of kidnapping children of officials, public activists and the military** in order to exert pressure and achieve necessary goals, such as establishing an occupation regime, intelligence gathering, and influencing the guerrilla movement in Ukraine.

On July 7, it became known about the release of the 16-year-old son of the head of Zaporizhzhya district of Zaporizhzhya region. Below is the teenager's account of the captivity.

I was taken off the car when I tried to leave Melitopol. I expected to be told something, but they didn't say anything. They checked my phone, all correspondence, photos, messages. When I arrived at the prison on April 8 at 1 p.m., I was sent to solitary confinement. At seven o'clock in the evening, I was summoned for a short questioning. They asked about my attitude to the war, whether I consider the Russians to be fascists and Orcs, what I do in general. I don't know exactly what the aggression was at this point, but I was scared. However, I kept calm. I answered their questions without emotions, so as not to provoke further aggression, further inquiries. The conditions were as follows: a room two by two metres without fresh air, with the toilet that did not function. I was fed mainly with dry ration and canned food. Of course, I had pressure problems, a bad psychological condition. But after 48 days I was transferred to a hotel in Melitopol, it made me feel better. Every eight or ten days, I was allowed to talk to my dad for two or three minutes. There was a man beside me who listened to what I was saying. And with my mom a little more, five minutes at the most⁴⁸.

The **local population is threatened with abduction of children and the deprivation of parental rights**. Thus, on July 5, it was reported that in the temporarily occupied areas of Zaporizhzhya region, **Russians forced Ukrainians to send their children to kindergartens and schools with the Russian curriculum, and for refusing to do so, they threaten** to take the children away and register them in boarding schools⁴⁹.

Separation and de facto abduction of children also take place within families if there are certain conflicts. Under conditions of war and temporary occupation, it is impossible to legally obtain joint custody if one of the parents decides to raise a child alone.

I am from Donetsk, but now I live in Transcarpathia. My husband, whom I want to divorce, stayed in Donetsk and received a Russian passport. I made a big mistake of listening to him and his mother and giving them our eight-year-old son for a while, because they said that really missed him. As it turned out, they were deceiving me in everything. It's no longer possible to come and take him away. It

⁴⁷<https://life.pravda.com.ua/society/2022/07/19/249602>.

⁴⁸<https://m.glavcom.ua/interviews/90-dniv-polonu-istoriya-poryatunku-16-richnogo-vlada-buryaka-859906.html>.

⁴⁹<https://gur.gov.ua/content/okupanty-prymushuiut-ukraintsiv-viddavaty-ditei-u-shkoly-z-rosiiskoju-navchalnoiu-prohramoiu-v-razi-vidmovy-pohrozhuut-pozbavliaty-batkivskykh-prav.html>.

is extremely difficult to communicate on Skype, they limit communication under various pretexts. There's been no connection for a week now. My husband said they were going to Russia on vacation to the seaside. Then he said that he was not allowed to live Ukraine and that only his mother and his sister were going with the child. The only way of communication is over his sister's phone. But as long as I called, they picked up the phone once and didn't answer. I am writing to my husband, begging him to do something — but all in vain. He is just laughing at me. I don't even know where my child is or if he's still alive. What shall I do? How to communicate with him? Where should I appeal next? I'm just going crazy!

From the story of a child's mother

Recruitment and participation of children in war and propaganda

According to the Main Intelligence Directorate of the Ministry of Defense of Ukraine, **the Russian Federation is expanding the scale of military training for children.** As an example, 500 cadet and about 1,000 junior army classes were opened in Belgorod and Belgorod Region⁵⁰. Due to the fact that citizens of Ukraine are massively deported to Russia, there is a significant risk of Ukrainian children entering such classes.



Screenshot of a video about the classes of the Yunarmy ("Young Army") in Mariupol, Donetsk Region, July 18⁵¹

The involvement of underage Ukrainians in pro-Russian organizations is also taking place in the temporarily occupied territories of Ukraine. Then there are the Yunarmy branches in the so-called DPR and LPR. For children, they conduct military training: they teach to march, to disguise themselves on the ground, to jump with a parachute. In the temporarily occupied territories of the South, "public organizations" are also actively formed, such as "Young builders of Kherson

⁵⁰<https://gur.gov.ua/content/v-rf-rozshyryuyut-masshtaby-viyskovoyi-pidhotovky-dlya-ditey.html>.

⁵¹https://t.me/youngguard_youngarmy/353.

region", "Youth of Kherson", which carry out the so-called military-patriotic education. **The participation of Ukrainian youth in them is increasingly becoming forced.**

To create an image of mass support of the occupation regime by the local youth, participation in the "Your Step" project organized by the Ministry of Education of the Russian Federation is actively promoted. The Federal Agency for Youth Affairs of the Russian Federation has announced the holding of all-Russian children's and youth competitions "Planet of Big Change" and "Big Change" in the occupied territories. At the invitation of representatives of the St. Petersburg branch of the All-Russian military-patriotic movement "Yunarmia" on July 31, the youth from the so-called DPR will take part in the main naval parade in St. Petersburg⁵².

It is predicted that the **creation and activities of such organizations and activities will increase**. This is evidenced by the signing by Putin of the law on creation of the all-Russian movement of children and young people. The purpose of the movement is to form a worldview of children based on the values and traditions of the peoples of Russia, love and respect for the Motherland⁵³. Movement branches will be created in each region of the Russian Federation on the basis of educational institutions, organizations in the field of culture and sports, as well as institutions for orphans and children deprived of parental care⁵⁴.

It should also be noted that the **US State Department has included Russia in the list of countries** that use human trafficking, forced labor and **recruiting child soldiers**. The invaders use children as human shields in a full-scale war against Ukraine. There are numerous facts of children's work at Russian checkpoints in Donbas since 2014⁵⁵.

Recommendations

- To maintain contact with the occupied territories at all times by all possible ways and means. Local authorities, state institutions and agencies should know their working mode, powers and procedures in different situations. This will help to maintain the peace and confidence of the population in the decisions of the state.
- To inform the population of the occupied territories about the safety rules, compliance with which will help to prevent abuse and murder by the Russian military, mobilization to the army of the occupier, as well as mine safety rules. Always remind children of the importance of the rules of safe

⁵²<https://gur.gov.ua/content/rashysty-na-tymchasovo-okupovanykh-terytoriakh-namahaiutsia-zaluchyty-ukrainsku-molod-do-novostvorenykh-prorosiiskyykh-orhanizatsii.html>.

⁵³https://t.me/rian_ru/171083.

⁵⁴<https://sozd.duma.gov.ru/bill/126384-8>.

⁵⁵<https://focus.ua/en/world/522782-rossia-popala-v-spisok-stran-torguyushchih-lyudmi-i-verbuyushchih-detey-soldat>.

behavior during air raid alarms in bomb shelters and at home. Parents should limit as much as possible the stay of children in places where they can get hurt or injured. This also applies to the ban on visiting forest belts, beaches and rivers that can be mined.

- To promote the organization of humanitarian corridors and the delivery of humanitarian assistance to the occupied territories of Ukraine and active combat areas, which are suffering from a humanitarian disaster, to stockpile food, water and medicines in territories where there is a significant risk of Russian occupation.
- As soon as possible, organize the evacuation of the population from Mariupol to Donetsk region, where, in addition to the humanitarian crisis, there are cases of spread of infectious diseases among the residents.
- To promote the recording of all crimes committed by the Russian military: murders, mutilations, cruel treatment, rape of children. An integral part of this process is the formation of trust and persuading the citizens to address law enforcement agencies with statements and evidence of the crimes committed, in particular through the Internet and telephone communication.
- To maximize the use of international channels to monitor the condition of children who have been deported to Russia, to document the crimes committed against them. To promote to greater involvement of international organizations and volunteer communities in the process of returning Ukrainian children home.
- To conduct informational and explanatory conversations with children about online security rules and available schemes of recruitment/involvement of adolescents in the war (transfer of intelligence data, participation in campaigning, etc.).
- To conduct information campaigns on the prevention of the coronavirus epidemic throughout Ukraine, especially where it is difficult to ensure the necessary level of medical care.
- To promote the provision in Ukraine of a sufficient number of medicines and medicines (medical masks, oxygen, test systems, vaccines, etc.) necessary for the prevention and control of the coronavirus epidemic.

Displacement of children in Ukraine and abroad

According to the latest data, there are 2 million 331 thousand children abroad who left Ukraine due to the Russian invasion⁵⁶. There are about 3 million internally displaced children in Ukraine⁵⁷.

These figures continue to increase due to active combat and the established temporary occupation regime in parts of eastern and southern Ukrainian territories. It should be noted that there are currently no official humanitarian corridors for the departure of the civilian population of Ukraine. The Russian Federation blocks most of the evacuation routes, because it wants to use the local population as a human shield during the deoccupation of territories by the Armed Forces of Ukraine.

Evacuation is often organized by local authorities, NGOs and volunteers. At the state level, daily evacuation trains in the East of Ukraine are provided by Ukrzaliznytsia. The Ministry of Reintegration of the Temporarily Occupied Territories of Ukraine (hereinafter referred to as the Ministry of Reintegration) also reported that during the full-scale war it managed to evacuate more than 350 thousand civilians⁵⁸.

Besides, **a large proportion of people leave the temporarily occupied territories on their own, by their own transport or use minibuses.** Not everyone can afford the latter option. The fare reaches 8 thousand UAH and more⁵⁹. The transport is periodically fired at, the occupiers demand money, often take away food and medicine. In addition, the Russian military does not let everyone out. It is most difficult for young and middle-aged men to leave. Approximately several thousand citizens are evacuated every day.

On July 11, **more than 1.1 thousand people were able to leave the temporarily occupied territories of Kharkiv oblast, 295 of them were children**⁶⁰.

On 16 July, a group of civilians was evacuated from the territory of the Sviatohirska Lavra. This is a family that was hiding in the premises of Lavra from constant artillery shelling from the side of the occupiers: father, mother and three children. It should be noted that the youngest child was born a few days ago. An elderly married couple was also able to leave. There are currently up to 600 civilians in Lavra, of whom more than 50 are children, including four infants⁶¹.

⁵⁶<https://www.facebook.com/UA.EU.NATO/posts/pfbid0RW1tCAU5rrmRCHfY8PzWWbNyg8tvJPTznKpSCesQDuhb7uXPo4W1E2gF8GWA4xNdl>.

⁵⁷<https://www.unicef.org/press-releases/nearly-37-million-children-displaced-worldwide-highest-number-ever-recorded>.

⁵⁸<https://minre.gov.ua/news/iryna-vereshchuk-z-tot-hersonshchyny-ta-zaporizhzhya-planuyemo-evakuyuvaty-dekilka-desyatkiv>.

⁵⁹<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=tkdWvcWhte0>.

⁶⁰<https://suspilne.media/259472-z-okupovanih-teritorij-harkivsini-11-lipna-viihali-ponad-1100-ludej>

⁶¹<https://gur.gov.ua/content/z-terytoriyi-svyatohirskoyi-lavry-evakuyuvaly-hrupu-myrykh-zhyteliv.html>.

On July 20, the civilian population was evacuated from the temporarily occupied territory of Zaporizhzhia region. 1,345 people were evacuated, 362 of them were children⁶².



Evacuation of residents of Kharkiv region from the occupied territories, July⁶³

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The state authorities daily call on the citizens of Ukraine to evacuate. At the same time, some initiatives of the Ministry of Reintegration may slow down the decision-making of Ukrainians on leaving for safer territories. In particular, we are talking about a draft law that provides for the establishment of criminal liability for the acquisition of Russian citizenship⁶⁴. Such an offer does not take into account the **widespread practice of forced passporting and intimidation of residents of the occupied territories**. If such a law is adopted, some people who were forced to obtain a Russian passport will be afraid to leave for the unoccupied territory of Ukraine and will not be able to save themselves and their children.

At the same time, more people are expected to move from the temporarily occupied territories and active combat areas in autumn. This is primarily due to the onset of cold weather and the inability to organize the heating season due to the destruction of energy enterprises and damage to utility systems in many settlements in the East and South of Ukraine. Approximately 500,000 new displaced persons are expected⁶⁵.

⁶²https://zrda.gov.ua/news/16648-situatsiia_shchodo_rosiiskogo_vtorgnennia_stanom_na_21072022_148_doba.html.

⁶³Photo by Sashka Brinzi. <https://www.mediaport.ua/evakuaciya-yak-zhiteli-harkivshchini-viyizhdzhayut-iz-zahoplenih-rayoniv>.

⁶⁴<https://www.facebook.com/vereshchuk.ukraine/posts/pfbid0JDPBBUzhDYskqUk3SSaQyk8jTqAtcU2rNHzwJ7ckuNZYpdsUA6dnFDukZRWjnpAl>.

⁶⁵<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=LZTMkCBzFM>.

The problem of housing future IDPs is also added to the problem of living **more than 1.1 million IDPs in places of collective residence**, most of which are educational institutions (62%) or are not adapted for living in winter (summer sanatoria, cottages, etc⁶⁶). The state has not yet developed effective solutions for the placement and relocation of families who have such a need. In this regard, the government relies mostly on international partners and charitable foundations⁶⁷.

We live in a school with three families together. We have nine children, five grandmothers and a grandfather. It's difficult because it last for five months already. Two months ago, we had our showers fixed, before that, we could wash in the bowls. I sleep on a few blankets to make it a little softer, because the beds are very old. I want to move to a separate house. Volunteers promised to help us. We can't afford it, it's expensive. There is an option in the village, but it is far to the city. And I will not get humanitarian aid there. So, it will turn out to be the same, because we will have to spend more money on food.

From interviews with parents

In general, since February 24, Ukraine has lost 6% of the area of its housing stock. The number of Ukrainians left without a housing already exceeds 3.5 million people, or 8% of the country's population⁶⁸.

The **employment of internally displaced persons also remains a problem**. According to the Ukrainian portal Robota.ua, the survey of employers indicates a reduction in staff in 60% of companies. The number of employees decreased the most in such areas as logistics and transport; medicine and pharmaceuticals; tourism, hotels, restaurants; marketing, advertising, PR; retail trade⁶⁹. The labour market is recovering gradually, but unevenly. In western and central regions, there is more job offers, but IDPs record sometimes biased attitudes of employers towards IDPs. In the East and South of the country, on the contrary, there are far fewer offers, people are forced to sit without a job or go to less skilled and less remunerated jobs.

*The production where I worked was hit by a missile, so there is no more job. Maybe after the war, the owners will restore something, but for now, I'm unemployed. My husband is a bartender, and now, of course, he is without a job. We live on social benefits for a child, and my husband goes somewhere and sometimes repairs something: someone needs to clog the windows, someone needs to fix the pipes. We thought about moving to Poltava, where it is quieter, but the prices for housing **there are very high!** I don't know, let's watch, because I would like my daughter*

⁶⁶<https://www.humanitarianresponse.info/en/operations/ukraine/document/protection-cluster-guidance-note-alternative-housing-solution-idps>.

⁶⁷<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=LZTMkCBrZFM>.

⁶⁸https://cpd.gov.ua/main/%d1%86%d0%bf%d0%b4_%d0%b0%d0%bd%d0%b0%d0%bb%d1%96%d0%b7%d1%83%d1%94-23. ||| UNTRANSLATED_CONTENT_END |||

⁶⁹The survey was conducted at the end of June, a sample of 721 companies. <https://budni.rabota.ua/ua/news/yak-zminilasya-robotu-ukrayinskih-kompaniy-za-4-misyatsi-viyni-rezultati-doslidzhennya-robotu-ua-2>.

to go to a real school, not online. And in Kharkiv, most likely, it will be online schooling.

From interviews with parents

The government tries to stimulate the employment of displaced people. Thus, a compensation program for labor costs for each employed person from among the IDPs has been introduced. Employers can receive a state payment of UAH 6.5 thousand for each employee for two months from the date of his/her employment. As of July 14, almost 7.4 thousand Ukrainians who were forced to move to the safer regions have received work in this way⁷⁰.

According to opinion polls, the dynamics of return-to-work rates observed in the last three months has somewhat slowed down. Today, 59% of those who had jobs before the war work. Instead, **the number of those who still lost their jobs increased** (from 35% in June to 39% in July). Most of them are among the residents of the eastern regions, women, the poorest, those who work in the private sector or have their own business, as well as among IDPs. In the dynamics by regions, there is a further increase in the number of unemployed among residents of the eastern regions (in June 53%, in July 57%). The half of the employed reports that wages declined by 10% or more⁷¹.

The IDPs also **complain of delayed cash assistance for them and a shortage of humanitarian aid.** All this slows down the integration of internally displaced persons into communities and sometimes forces them to return to active combat areas. In addition to the danger of shelling civilian objects in regions close to the borders with Russia, as well as to the temporarily occupied territories, **there is a mine danger for the civilian population.** As of July 21, the SES pyrotechnic units were involved 162 times for one day only. 603 items of explosive ordnance, including 12 aerial bombs, were identified, recovered and disposed of. In total, since the beginning of the military invasion of the Russian Federation, 164 thousand explosive objects and 663 kg of explosive substance, including 2092 aviation bombs, have been defused⁷².

We plan to return, because there we have a house for which we do not have to pay. Here, without work, we have already eaten all our savings. There are shelling almost every day, but many people have returned to Kharkiv. If you follow certain safety rules, this is possible. I'm worried about the child, of course. But the son also misses home and relatives. If I don't find a job this month, there's no other way out.

⁷⁰<https://www.me.gov.ua/News/Detail?lang=en-UA&id=2952230f-ba24-478d-95d4-8c03da160987&title=Maizhe7-4-TisiachiVpoZnaishliRobotuZavdiakiProgramiKompensatsiiVitratNaOplatuPratsiRobotodavtsiam>.

⁷¹ The survey was conducted by the sociological group "Rating" on July 23–24, 2022. Sample population: 1000 respondents. Survey method: Study representativeness error with a confidence probability of 0.95: no more than 3.1%. https://ratinggroup.ua/research/ukraine/pyatnadcat_obschenaci_opros_ukraina_v_oinny_zanyatost_i_dohody_23-24_izulya_2022_goda.html.

⁷²<https://dsns.gov.ua/en/news/operativna-informaciya-shhodo-roboti-pirotexnicnix-pidrozdiliv-dsns>.

Humanitarian aid is almost no longer available here. Only for pensioners and mothers with a few children.

From interviews with parents

As for the education of children, the percentage of schools that will run offline from September is currently impossible to calculate. By mid-August, the preparation of all communities for the start of the new academic year will continue. The shelters of educational institutions are checked for the absence of windows and transit communications; the availability of independent sources of electrical power and a generator; the availability of water and food for a minimum of 48 hours; the availability of seats, beds and places for having meals; the presence of two exits⁷³. Schools that will not be able to provide the necessary conditions or that are located in places where constant combat activity will be maintained will switch to online learning mode.

Варто також згадати про кілька важливих державних ініціатив, спрямованих на дотримання та захист прав внутрішньо переміщених осіб, а також дітей, які залишилися без піклування дорослих.

It is also worth mentioning several important state initiatives aimed at respecting and protecting the rights of internally displaced persons, as well as children who are left without adult care.

Thus, on June 28, the government supported the proposal of the **Ministry of Reintegration to introduce the position of an IDP commissioner** — a key official in the state who will protect the rights of displaced citizens⁷⁴.

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In addition, the Ministry of Social Policy is developing changes to the procedure for the adoption of children in martial law. It is noted that the result of the work will be **clear norms of adoption under martial law** to implement the child's right to education in the family and prevent any illegal actions against children⁷⁵. At the same time, there is already a **nationwide program "The child is not alone"**, within which more than 1,000 Ukrainians have passed all stages of selection and special training to be ready to accept children in their families who were left without adult care during the war for various reasons⁷⁶.

With regard to moving abroad, as of 24 July, the number of Ukrainian refugees, according to UNHCR estimates, was 6.1 million. **3 million 716 thousand people received temporary protection in the countries of Europe**. The largest number of refugees from Ukraine with the status of temporary protection in Poland comprises 1 million 180 thousand people. Then there are Germany and the Czech Republic,

⁷³<https://life.nv.ua/ukr/kids/yakim-bude-navchannya-u-shkolah-ukrajini-z-1-veresnya-oflayn-chi-distanciynim-ministr-osviti-50255813.html>.

⁷⁴<https://www.kmu.gov.ua/news/uryad-stvoriv-posadu-upovnovazhenogo-z-pitan-vnutrishno-peremishchenih-osib>.

⁷⁵<https://www.ukrinform.ua/rubric-society/3518875-v-ukraini-gotuut-novij-poradok-usinovlenna-ditej.html>.

⁷⁶The program of the Office of the President together with the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) and the Ministry of Social Policy of Ukraine.

<https://www.president.gov.ua/news/zavdyaki-programi-ditina-ne-sama-inicijovanij-upovnovazhenoy-76301>.

respectively, 670 thousand and 396 thousand. Many Ukrainians got temporary protection also in Italy (143 thousand), Spain (128,000), Bulgaria (123,000).), France (92 thousand), Slovakia (79 thousand).), in Great Britain (99 thousand), Austria (77 thousand), the Netherlands (68 thousand).), Lithuania (60,000), Switzerland (57,000).), Belgium (51 thousand). Turkey welcomed 145,000 of our citizens, however, temporary protection for them is not provided there. More than 1,826,000 Ukrainians crossed the border with **Russia**. There are no data on any status of these people⁷⁷.

Based on the number of refugees per person, the largest influx of Ukrainians was experienced by the Czech Republic, Poland, Estonia, Lithuania, Bulgaria and Latvia⁷⁸.

At the same time, there is also a significant return of Ukrainians from abroad — **about 3 million have already arrived in Ukraine**⁷⁹. In other countries, people still suffer from a lack of housing, work, and money. The language barrier and the need for one parent (mother) to take care of the children limit the opportunities to fully establish a life abroad. At the same time, many political decisions are made in European and American countries that make life easier for Ukrainian citizens and provide additional protection for our children.

On June 29, the **Council of the European Union adopted a political statement on the protection of the rights of migrant children from Ukraine** in the context of the Russian war of aggression against Ukraine⁸⁰.

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On June 30, 2022, **Ukraine and Poland signed a political declaration on the social protection of children affected by hostilities and armed conflicts**. The states declared their mutual desire to protect the rights of children who left Ukraine for Poland, to preserve and protect their lives and well-being, as well as to further strengthen and develop cooperation⁸¹.

On July 7, MEPs supported the European Commission's proposal to allow Ukrainians who left for the EU because of the war **to use a Ukrainian driver's license and canceled the requirement to change it for an EU driver's license**. Also, our fellow citizens were exempted from the obligation to take a new driving test while they have the status of temporary protection⁸². This greatly facilitates the movement of Ukrainians in their own transport abroad and allows them not to spend money on a new exam and change of driver's license.

⁷⁷ https://data.unhcr.org/en/situations/ukraine#_ga=2.228732760.514168680.1646989952-176134281.1646551413.

⁷⁸ https://twitter.com/EU2022_CZ/status/1546517573487017988.

⁷⁹ https://twitter.com/EU2022_CZ/status/1546517573487017988.

⁸⁰ <https://www.msp.gov.ua/news/21994.html>.

⁸¹ <https://www.msp.gov.ua/news/21998.html>.

⁸² <https://www.europarl.europa.eu/news/en/press-room/20220701IPR34341/ukrainians-can-keep-their-driving-licences-in-the-eu-say-meps>.

Recommendations

- To continue informational and explanatory work regarding the timely evacuation of families with children from territories that are temporarily occupied, subject to regular shelling, or where there is a significant danger of the start of active combat. At the same time, it is important to avoid intimidation of criminal liability for actions committed during the temporary occupation, mostly under compulsion (in particular, acquisition of Russian citizenship).
- To strengthen informing citizens about possible options for leaving the occupied territories, in particular, on the territory of the Russian Federation and the Autonomous Republic of Crimea. In such situations, it is important to interact with volunteer and public initiatives in these territories, as well as in the territories of states bordering the Russian Federation, in order to provide assistance to Ukrainians in emigrating to European countries.
- To develop state programs to support the return of Ukrainians with children from Europe, which would provide for compensation payments and employment or business prospects.
- To provide citizens with clear signals of prohibition or permission to return to previously occupied territories, as well as to territories that were subjected to significant shelling. Such statements must be accompanied by information about the security and infrastructure of specific settlements.
- To continue informational work at the state level regarding the prevention of children being harmed by mines and other explosive devices. For this purpose, to conduct information campaigns in the media, distribute visual materials on mine danger and other risks in de-occupied territories and territories where active combat took place.
- To strengthen activities on providing employment opportunities for the internally displaced persons. To do this, to conduct a market assessment of the offers and qualifications of the IDPs, to intensify measures for the retraining of citizens, to create new jobs and interact with employers in the issue of employment of displaced persons.
- To study the needs of internally displaced persons in housing, to perform an analysis of the area of available communal housing in order to plan state housing and regional programs for the placement of IDPs.
- Before the beginning of the heating season and the new academic year, to promote the resettlement of people from places of collective dwelling on the basis of educational institutions and/or places that are not adapted for living in winter. To develop alternative housing offers in accordance with the capabilities of communities hosting IDPs.
- When planning the face-to-face learning process for the next year, to properly prepare bomb shelters, check alert systems, update educational emergency plans and procedures for various types of hazards in educational institutions. To organize the training of schoolchildren in the rules of behavior and evacuation during an air raid.

Child's right to rest and leisure

Article 31 of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child provides for a child's right to rest and leisure, the right to participate in games and recreational activities appropriate to his/her age, to freely participate in cultural life and engage in the arts. Besides, it is important to respect and encourage the child's right to comprehensive participation in cultural and creative life, to contribute to providing him/her with appropriate and equal opportunities for cultural and creative activities, leisure and recreation⁸³.

Leisure and recreation today are integral ways to replenish a child's resources to counteract the traumatic consequences of war and increase stress resistance in new living conditions. Activities with children help to distract them from the everyday life of war, immerse them in a familiar atmosphere, and return to peaceful everyday life.

It is especially important for children to rest, change activities, play games and not see his/her permanently worried mom or dad. We do not know when exactly the war will end, and it is impossible to live in constant tension. Rest is, first of all, taking care of yourself and your child in the future, filling with strength. Therefore, if there is an opportunity for the mother to rest with the child or to send the child to the camp, it should be used. It is important to continue children's childhood, it passes very quickly.

From an interview with a psychologist

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Summer and vacations are the most favorable time for organizing children's recreation and health. However, the war complicates this process for several reasons. And above all, it is a danger. Many summer resorts and recreation centers have become inaccessible due to the occupation, the risk of coming under shelling, mining of territories and coastal zones. The State Tourism Development Agency has published a list of prohibited types of recreation in wartime conditions. It comprises:

- rafting, hiking, walks and excursions near critical infrastructure, military and strategic facilities;
- mass events (festivals, concerts, etc.);
- visiting tourist spots close to the borders with Belarus and Russia;
- visiting some mountain routes, reservoirs, forests in different regions;
- rest in the East of Ukraine, in particular in the front-line zones;
- traveling in the territories that were under occupation⁸⁴.

Currently, in Kyiv region, we especially emphasize to parents not to go to the forest, not to go to the river. You can come across an anti-personnel mine or a mine trap. There are a lot of them in general, it is almost impossible to notice a

⁸³ https://zakon.rada.gov.ua/laws/show/995_021.

⁸⁴ https://www.tourism.gov.ua/blog/podorozhi-pid-chas-viyni-yakih-pravil-bezpeki-var-to-dotrimuvatis?fbclid=IwAR03J2Cuw1ykQ-MyPVGjahoO4rdVjKCJtPxjps7_pSniynm6bmTfXmIRfw.

stretched wire. It will probably take years to demine all this. Therefore, we organize rest for children only in verified places that were not occupied, were not fired upon, or in closed areas.

From an interview with a representative of a public organization

It is also dangerous to rest in the occupied territories and at the seaside due to the mining of the sea by anti-ship mines. Currently, Odesa, Berdyansk, Skadovsk, Kobleve and other popular tourist developed settlements of Kherson, Odesa, Mykolaiv and Zaporizhia regions are not suitable for recreation.



An empty beach in Berdyansk, Zaporizhzhia region, July 5⁸⁵

At the same time, some families still visit the beaches and swim in the sea, although there are many cases of mines being carried ashore, deaths and injuries due to this.

On July 2, two people struck the explosives on the beach in Karolino-Bugaz, Odesa region. One man died⁸⁶.

On July 8, an 11-year-old boy was seriously injured as a result of missile fragments falling on the beach in Skadovsk, Kherson region, which is temporarily occupied by the Russian troop⁸⁷.

On July 14, professionals of the Naval Forces of Ukraine detonated a sea mine near one of the beaches of Odesa — a few meters from the shore. The mine was brought to the coast by a storm⁸⁸.

⁸⁵ Фото RadioSvoboda.org (RFE/RL). <https://nv.ua/ukraine/events/genichesk-bez-svyazi-i-pustaya-kirillovka-cto-proishodit-na-kurortah-v-okkupacii-novosti-ukrainy-50254432.html>.

⁸⁶ <https://suspilne.media/256471-u-kurortnomu-selisi-karolino-bugaz-odeskoi-oblasti-na-uzberezzi-pidirvalasa-mina>.

⁸⁷ <https://www.facebook.com/100064555155257/posts/pfbid0uARZay7jaJo7Fw5SnKCPnqrKSLZfgp-hdK2eUsup76AygnTRkAxeCfGAtpEXKaGYyl/?d=n>.

⁸⁸ <https://t.me/operativnoZSU>.

On July 15, an explosion occurred in the coastal waters of one of the beaches of Odesa. A local resident decided to swim in the sea and stuck an unknown explosive device⁸⁹.

In addition to the sea beaches, **part of the beaches on the banks of rivers and lakes are also closed due to possible contamination by explosive objects**. Explosive technicians and sappers have already removed 700 such items from the water, clearing 33 hectares of water areas. 80 times it was necessary to involve trained divers in underwater demining. In general, beaches in Chernihiv, Sumy, Odesa, Mykolaiv, Zaporizhzhya, Kharkiv, Donetsk, Luhansk, Kyiv regions and Kyiv have not officially been opened this year. According to the State Emergency Service, last year there were 1,679 places of water recreation in the country, of which 1,239 were beaches. **Today, it is allowed to relax in 240 locations, including 194 beaches**⁹⁰.

Due to the threat of danger, **permitting measures are also limited in places where people gather**. Thus, in Kyiv and some other cities, decisions are made to prohibit the operation of children's and entertainment areas on the territory of shopping centers; restrictions on entertainment events; reducing the number of visitors to leisure centers in accordance with the possibilities of bomb shelters, etc. However, behavior during an air raid, in particular, leaving places of crowding and hiding in the nearest shelters, need special attention and an increase in informational and explanatory work among the population.

Another reason for limiting children's opportunities for recreation and leisure is the **destruction of the relevant infrastructure**. The Russian occupiers regularly shell sports complexes, children's camps and sanatoriums, centers for children's creativity, cultural institutions, shopping centers, etc.

On July 3, as a result of enemy shelling, the sports complex in the city of Zelenodolsk, Dnipropetrovsk region, was damaged⁹¹.

⁸⁹ <https://t.me/odesacityofficial/9493>.

⁹⁰ <https://suspipline.media/254588-u-kevi-ta-9-oblastah-ukraini-plazi-zakriti-dsns>.

⁹¹ <https://www.facebook.com/MNSDNE/posts/pfbid02LEfQy3gxsFrXWKfdD1hLgoX7qZiAcAY9ryvivDuNf2bzTh3yEijKvUwB16w2HwTal>.



On July 10, the territory of the children's sanatorium in Kharkiv was damaged as a result of missile strikes of the Russian Federation⁹².

On July 18, Russian occupiers shelled the city of Orikhiv, Zaporizhzhya region, as a result of which a music school and a kindergarten were destroyed⁹³.

During the military invasion, **more than 530 Ukrainian cultural and art institutions have already been destroyed**. Religious sites (33% of cases), theaters and houses of culture (15% of cases) were the most often under fire⁹⁴.

Destroyed House of Children's Creativity in Gulyaipole, Zaporizhzhya Region, July 12⁹⁵

Lack of financial opportunities in a significant number of families is no less an obstacle for the organization of leisure and recreation of children. Loss of work, displacement, fall in hryvnia led to parents being forced to give up rest for children. Moreover, this applies not only to internally displaced children, but also to children throughout Ukraine.

Due to the closure of airspace, resting abroad is now noticeably more expensive than last year. Logistics seems too complicated, because now it will take much longer to get to the countries where Ukrainian families are used to resting (Turkey, Egypt). This can be done by ground transport only at least to the nearest foreign city with an airport. In this case, the road can take up to several days. In addition to the unforeseen expenses due to the war, some Ukrainians also invested in recreation in advance, purchasing summer tours abroad in the winter. Now these funds mostly offer to spend on other tours after the war.

We planned to go to Turkey as usual. Sea air is recommended for the child due to asthma. The vouchers have already been bought. But now they're cancelled.

⁹² https://t.me/prokuratura_kharkiv/4887?single.

⁹³ <https://www.facebook.com/110tro/posts/pfbid027ckEywXdQGM9dTFe1JK2nUv8ServbMZMWq8QwXTcKtudXZ4KReLSdqGyTzCwmewEl>.

⁹⁴ <https://cpd.gov.ua/main/1%d%b%b%04%d%b%b%000d000b1d%d%b%b%96071d%d%b%b%831b%b%94-23d>.

⁹⁵ https://t.me/zoda_gov_ua/10300.

We were offered to fly a plane from Moldova, but Moldova still should to be reached somehow. I can't afford it right now. The eldest son is in the army, all the money goes there, I was transferred to work for half a rate. We will relax, probably, in the apartment, we will watch movies about the sea.

From interviews with parents

Therefore, some families are looking for opportunities for a vacation in Ukraine, the cost of which has also increased. School summer camps do not work everywhere, because there are no appropriate shelters in some schools, and displaced people still live in some of them. Families in difficult life circumstances, raising a child with a disability, large families and other socially vulnerable categories of the population with the organization of rest and recreation should be assisted by the state. For this purpose, free vouchers to health resorts and recreation facilities are allocated every year. However, this summer, only a quarter of children with disabilities will receive such a voucher — about 40 thousand.⁹⁶ The recreation will also be organized for about 60 thousand children, whose parents participate in combat, and for more than 100 thousand children from large and low-income families⁹⁷.



A tour from the Voices of Children CF for displaced children, Lviv region⁹⁸

The leisure and recreation activities of children in Ukraine are developed by NGOs, charitable foundations and volunteers. The Voices of Children Charitable Foundation has been organizing the leisure of displaced children (drawing, reading fairy tales, conducting workshops, excursions, etc.) for their psychosocial

⁹⁶<https://www.facebook.com/watch/?v=384500256994115>.

⁹⁷<https://life.pravda.com.ua/columns/2022/06/8/249018>.

⁹⁸ Фото Дмитра Демішева.

support almost since the beginning of the full-scale war. In summer, five different formats of camps are organized for both displaced children and local children. There are also family forms of camps, where in addition to recreation, children and parents are provided with psychological support by professionals⁹⁹.

State authorities are also trying to increase the scope of rest for children through intergovernmental agreements and direct communications of Ukrainian and foreign municipalities. In addition, Ukrainian government has simplified the travel of groups of children abroad for rest and recreation under martial law, which makes it possible to ensure an organized departure in a short time and to have guarantees for the return of children to Ukraine, to make this process controlled and safe¹⁰⁰.

From 27 June to 7 July, vacations for two groups of Ukrainian children were arranged in a camp in Mersin (Turkey). The initiative was implemented in cooperation with the Ministry of Youth and Sports of Turkey and Ukrainian unions¹⁰¹.

On July 4, it was reported that agreements had been reached as to the rest and recreation of 250 Ukrainian children in the Republic of Poland¹⁰².

Children who have been forced to flee the war abroad also need rest and recreation. Preschool and school institutions in many European countries offer them to attend day camps, local excursions, workshops. However, this is usually the case for younger children, as far fewer activities and opportunities are organised for teenagers.

The younger daughter has already gone to the camp with other children several times. They paint there, go to the greens, study birds. And the older one is left to herself, I don't know what can be invented for her. I try to go somewhere with them for the weekend — to the park, to the lake, etc.

From interviews with parents

According to parents who are abroad, when organizing an independent holiday for children, there may be difficulties when moving from one European country to another. For example, to go to the sea or to the mountains. Difficulties are associated with the delay and/or inconsistency in the registration of temporary protection for Ukrainians. Without such a status, border guards can consider Ukrainians as tourists who violated the 90-day period of stay in Europe. This threatens a fine and deportation to Ukraine.

We settled in Poland, we were issued PESEL quite quickly. I thought that this was temporary protection, but it turned out that it was valid only on the territory of Poland. And only now there are conversations about Poland providing us with documents that will be accepted by other countries. I was never able to take the

⁹⁹<https://voices.org.ua>.

¹⁰⁰<https://www.ukrinform.ua/rubric-society/3521668-u-dpsu-rozpovili-ak-grupi-ditej-mozut-viihati-za-kordon-na-vidpocinok.html>.

¹⁰¹<https://www.ukrinform.ua/rubric-diaspora/3518825-u-tureckomu-mersini-vidciniv-dveri-tabir-dla-ukrainskih-ditej.html>.

¹⁰²<https://www.msp.gov.ua/news/22008.html>.

children to my sister in Spain. But it's good I found out it before I went. When your life was just getting better, I didn't want to be deported from Europe.

From interviews with parents

Recommendations

- To strengthen parental education on behavior during anxiety. Above all, this applies to leaving crowded places, in particular entertainment centers, playgrounds, etc., and hiding in the nearest bomb shelters.
- Parents should take a responsible approach to the organization of rest and leisure for children. When planning an independent vacation, find out about the **availability of shelters along the route** of the trip. When choosing an institution for the child's recovery, pay attention to the preparation and action plan in case of various types of hazards, make sure that there are bomb shelters.
- To promote recreation for as many children with disabilities, children from single-parent families, children whose parents died during the war, and other vulnerable categories as possible.
- Local authorities and non-governmental organizations should properly consider safe conditions for rest and recreation of children: prepare bomb shelters, check alert systems, develop a procedure for actions in case of occurrence of various types of hazards.
- State authorities should constantly communicate with the governments of foreign countries, charitable foundations, donors in other countries on the organization of rest and recreation of Ukrainian children abroad.
- To promote the provision of temporary protection to Ukrainians abroad in the prescribed form and as soon as possible.

Voices of Children Charitable Foundaton

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