



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

CHILDREN AND WAR IN UKRAINE

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Introduction

The cold season slowed down the liberation of Ukrainian territories. At the same time, it brought a load on the heating and energy systems in the conditions of constant shelling of Ukraine's critical infrastructure. The population is forced to adapt to long-hour shutdowns of light, water and heating, which is extremely difficult for families with children, especially babies.

For 10 months in a row, Russian troops continue to commit all kinds of war crimes against the Ukrainian people. They destroy residential buildings, hospitals and schools, mine civilian infrastructure, worsen the humanitarian crisis in the temporarily occupied territories, deport Ukrainian families, involve children in military training and propaganda, create torture cells for both adults and children.

As of December 24, 450 children have already died, 868 children have received injuries of various degrees of severity¹.

We present the report that briefly describes the key events of the tenth month of the war, related to the situation, problems and needs of children in Ukraine and abroad. Separately, in this report, we analyzed the militarization of children and youth by Russia.

2

The methodology is based on the analysis of statistics, data from official sources and media materials. Also, 8 interviews were conducted with public representatives, parents living under 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 and abroad.

The report was prepared in co-authorship and with the financial support of the Voices of Children Charitable Foundation.

¹ <https://www.gp.gov.ua/ua/posts/yuvenalni-prokurori-450-ditei-zagynulo-vnaslidok-zbroinoyi-agresiyi-ri-v-ukrayini-17886>

Children under the temporary occupation and in the active combat areas

On November 30, the list of territorial communities located in the military operation (active combat) areas or under temporary occupation, encirclement (blockade) was updated. We are talking about nine regions: the Donetsk region (66 territorial communities), the Kharkiv region (56 territorial communities), the Dnipropetrovsk region (10 territorial communities), the Luhansk region (37 territorial communities), the Zaporizhzhia region (62 territorial communities), the Kherson region (49 territorial communities), the Mykolayiv region (26 territorial communities), the Sumy region (19 territorial communities) and the Chernihiv region (4 territorial communities). In general, the number of communities in the list has slightly increased compared to the previous month — 329².

Russia continues to violate the norms of international humanitarian law in the war with Ukraine, using illicit types of weapons, shelling civilian and critical infrastructure, killing and terrorizing the civilian population. Below we give examples of war crimes committed by the Russian Federation, in particular against Ukrainian children.

As of December 22, prosecutor's offices are investigating 2,415 cases of crimes committed against children and in the field of child protection. Of these, 855 criminal proceedings are war crimes against children³.

3

According to OHCHR data, from February 24 to December 18, **6,826 civilians died in Ukraine**, including 2,686 men, 1,822 women, **216 boys and 174 girls**, the **sex of 38 children** and 1,890 adults has not yet been determined. Among the 10,769 wounded, **314 were boys and 224 were girls**, and the **sex of 252 children** could not be determined yet. Most of the recorded deaths or injuries of civilians were caused by the use of large-area explosive weapons, including heavy artillery and MLRS, as well as missile and air strikes⁴.

Usage of illicit means of warfare

Russia continues to use illicit weapons on the territory of Ukraine against the civilian population. **Cluster munitions pose a particular danger**. They can be launched from ground guns, launchers, mortars or dropped from the air. They work mainly in the air, scattering many small bombs over a large area, which often do not explode immediately, but remain lying on the ground, that is, they

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

³ <https://zmina.info/news/na-deokupovanyh-terytoriyah-vidnajdeno-54-kativni-zafiksovano-ponad-5-tysyach-vypadkiv-katuvan-ogp/>

⁴ OHCHR believes that the actual figures are much higher, as the information from some areas of intense fighting has been delayed and many reports are still awaiting confirmation. <https://www.ohchr.org/en/news/2022/12/ukraine-civilian-casualty-update-19-december-2022>

can kill and maim people many years after the war. **Phosphorous and thermobaric weapons, butterfly mines**, etc. are also used from time to time.

On December 7, the occupiers used cluster munitions in the city of Yampil in the Donetsk region. The central square of the city and the administration building came under fire. During the shelling, local residents were receiving humanitarian aid. Three people were injured⁵.

On December 12, 2022, the occupying forces of the Russian Federation, using cluster munitions and the Hurricane MLRS, shelled the town of Hirnyk, the Donetsk region. The shells hit the central part of the city. As a result of the shelling, two citizens were killed, and ten more were injured of varying degrees of severity⁶.

On December 22, the Russian occupiers struck the village of Komyshevka in the Zaporizhzhia region with cluster munitions. Residential buildings were damaged as a result of shelling⁷.

On December 23, Russian troops attacked the city of Kherson with phosphorous ammunition⁸.

Attacking, bombing and mining of civilian objects

As of December 15, **Russia launched 5,000 missiles over Ukraine**⁹. 62% of them were aimed at civilian objects¹⁰.

On December 5, 2022, the occupying forces of the Russian Federation used the S-300 air defense system against the civilian population of the village of Novosofivka in the Zaporizhzhia region. A family suffered that was in one of the houses near the place where the rocket hit. Two family members died on the spot, the other three, including a one-year-old child, were injured. Other houses of local residents were also severely damaged¹¹.

On December 8, 2022, military personnel of the aggressor country launched another artillery strike on the city of Kherson and suburban settlements. Two civilians died as a result of the shelling. Damage and destruction was caused to multi-apartment and private residential buildings, as well as to the children's department of the clinical hospital¹².

On December 16, 2022, the occupiers launched a rocket attack on the city of Kryvyi Rih, Dnipropetrovsk region. A one-and-a-half-year-old child died as a

⁵ https://t.me/tymoshenko_kyrylo/2990

⁶ https://t.me/pgo_gov_ua/8064

⁷ https://t.me/komish_gromada/107

⁸ <https://sprotyv.mod.gov.ua/2022/12/23/rosiyany-obstrilyaly-herson-fosforom/>

⁹ <https://t.me/zedigital/2708>

¹⁰ <https://www.ukrinform.ua/rubric-ato/3630885-ponad-60-raket-rosia-vipustila-po-civilnih-obektah-ukraini-zelenskij.html>

¹¹ <https://www.gp.gov.ua/ua/posts/cerez-obstril-okupantiv-sela-na-zaporizzi-postrazdala-rodina-rozpocato-provadzennya>

¹² <https://www.gp.gov.ua/ua/posts/zagibli-ta-poraneni-vnaslidok-cergovogo-obstrilu-xersonshini-rozpocato-provadzennya>

result of an enemy rocket hitting a residential building. Four more children aged between 3 and 10 were injured¹³.



On December 21, at 1:00 p.m., private residential buildings of local residents were damaged in Ochakiv, the Mykolaiv region, as a result of another shelling by Russian military personnel. Three people were injured, including a 10-year-old boy¹⁴.

A house in Ochakiv, the Mykolaiv region, after shelling by the occupiers¹⁵.

On December 22, Russian troops shelled the communities of the Nikopol district, the Dnipropetrovsk region. More than 50 shells were fired at civilians. In Marhanka, up to twenty private houses and farm buildings, several cars and four power lines were damaged. An 8-year-old girl was injured. In the Chervonogrihorivska community, one house was completely ruined, twenty were damaged. Dozens of farm buildings and cars were destroyed, and six power lines were cut¹⁶.

5

In total, as of December 24, **3,126 educational institutions were damaged** due to bombing and shelling by the armed forces of the Russian Federation. 337 of them were completely destroyed¹⁷.

As of December 19, as a result of Russian aggression, **1,132 objects of cultural infrastructure**, not including cultural heritage sites, were damaged. Almost a third of them, 403 objects, were completely destroyed. These are 532 club institutions, 431 libraries, 61 museums and galleries, 17 theaters and philharmonic halls, 91 art education institutions¹⁸.

As of December 10, **144 medical facilities were destroyed and more than 1,000 were damaged** as a result of Russian attacks¹⁹.

¹³ <https://www.gp.gov.ua/ua/posts/yuvenalni-prokurori-450-ditei-zaginulo-vnaslidok-zbroinoyi-agresiyi-rf-v-ukrayini>

¹⁴ <https://www.gp.gov.ua/ua/posts/poranennya-10-ricnogo-xlopcika-vnaslidok-cergovogo-obstrilu-ocakova-rozpocato-rozsliduvannya>

¹⁵ <https://www.gp.gov.ua/ua/posts/poranennya-10-ricnogo-xlopcika-vnaslidok-cergovogo-obstrilu-ocakova-rozpocato-rozsliduvannya>

¹⁶ <https://t.me/dnipropetrovskaODA/2804>

¹⁷ <https://www.gp.gov.ua/ua/posts/yuvenalni-prokurori-450-ditei-zaginulo-vnaslidok-zbroinoyi-agresiyi-rf-v-ukrayini-17886>

¹⁸ <https://mkip.gov.ua/news/8320.html>

¹⁹ <https://moz.gov.ua/article/news/rosijani-zrujnuvali-likaren-na-ponad-1-miljard-dolariv-%e2%80%93-oleksij-jaremenko>



On November 30, a hospital in the town of Bilopillia, the Sumy region, was fired upon by the occupiers. There were patients in the hospital, a teenager died²⁰.

As a result of shelling of civilian infrastructure, 1,318 children were injured. The largest number is in the Donetsk region — 428, in the Kharkiv region — 267, in the Kyiv region — 117, in the Mykolaiv region — 81, in the Zaporizhzhia region — 80, in the Kherson region — 75, in the Chernihiv region — 68, in the Luhansk region — 65, in the Dnipropetrovsk region — 40²¹.

6 On November 30, 2022, the occupiers shelled the town of Bilopillia, the Sumy region, with artillery from the territory of the Russian Federation during an hour. A 15-year-old boy who was riding a bicycle on the street died as a result of the shelling²².

On December 6, during the rocket attack by the enemy, the village of Kuprianivka, the Zaporizhzhia region a 15-year-old girl was injured²³.

On December 14, an 8-year-old boy died as a result of enemy shelling in the city of Kherson²⁴.

On December 15, a 16-year-old girl was injured in Marganets, Dnipropetrovsk region, as a result of shelling by Russian troops²⁵.

On December 22, as a result of enemy shelling of the village of Magdalinivka, the Zaporizhzhia region, two boys, aged 3 and 15, were injured²⁶.

²⁰ <https://suspilne.media/328420-z-teritorii-rosii-obstrilali-bilopilla-na-sumsini-e-rujnuvanna-zaginuvidlitok/>

²¹ <https://www.gp.gov.ua/ua/posts/yuvenalni-prokurori-450-ditei-zaginulo-vnaslidok-zbroinoyi-agresiyi-rf-v-ukrayini-17886>

²² <https://www.gp.gov.ua/ua/posts/zagibel-15-ricnogo-xlopca-vnaslidok-obstriluprikordonnogo-mista-na-sumshhini-rozpocato-provadzennya>

²³ <https://www.gp.gov.ua/ua/posts/yuvenalni-prokurori-443-ditini-zaginulo-vnaslidok-zbroinoyi-agresiyi-rf-v-ukrayini-17119>

²⁴ <https://www.gp.gov.ua/ua/posts/yuvenalni-prokurori-447-ditei-zaginulo-vnaslidok-zbroinoyi-agresiyi-rf-v-ukrayini>

²⁵ <https://www.gp.gov.ua/ua/posts/yuvenalni-prokurori-449-ditei-zaginulo-vnaslidok-zbroinoyi-agresiyi-rf-v-ukrayini>

²⁶ <https://www.gp.gov.ua/ua/posts/yuvenalni-prokurori-450-ditei-zaginulo-vnaslidok-zbroinoyi-agresiyi-rf-v-ukrayini-17834>

The facts of war crimes are still being established in the de-occupied territories of Ukraine.

On December 3, it became known about the death of a 17-year-old girl due to shelling of the village of Kozacha Lopan, the Kharkiv region in May²⁷.

On December 15, during the recording of war crimes committed on the territory of the Mykolayiv region, in the village of Novopetrivka, the Bashtanka district, it was established that three sisters were killed due to shelling by the occupiers: the two older ones were 16 years old, the younger one was 14 years old²⁸.



14-year-old Artem from Kherson is in the hospital. The boy was wounded at the end of November during a massive shelling of the city, when he was walking to the basement. The shell exploded right in the yard of his house. The teenager received multiple shrapnel wounds to his legs and abdomen. A long-term treatment and rehabilitation awaits him²⁹.

Separately, it is important to note the **mining of civilian objects by the Russian military**, as well as the widespread remains of weapons, which pose a significant danger to local residents and people who are in the temporarily occupied territories and active combat areas or are returning to the de-occupied territories of Ukraine.

²⁷ <https://www.gp.gov.ua/ua/posts/yuvenalni-prokurori-443-ditini-zaginuli-vnaslidok-zbroinoyi-agresiyi-rf-v-ukrayini>

²⁸ <https://www.gp.gov.ua/ua/posts/yuvenalni-prokurori-447-ditei-zaginulo-vnaslidok-zbroinoyi-agresiyi-rf-v-ukrayini>

²⁹ <https://life.pravda.com.ua/health/2023/01/5/252177/>

On December 7, the parents of eight minor children were blown up by a mine in the Zhytomyr region. The couple was driving a car³⁰.

On December 10, two teenagers blew themselves up with a shell in the ruins in the temporarily occupied Mariupol. Both were injured and brought to the hospital³¹.

It became known about the death of two boys aged 14 and 17 near the town of Toretsk, the Donetsk region, on December 14. They blew up on an anti-tank mine³².

Besides, **the occupiers use civilian objects as "human shields"**. Russians place their military equipment in state institutions, residential areas, and on the territory of private houses. Schools and hospitals often become the location of military headquarters.

Thus, on November 26, it became known that in the town of Nova Kakhovka, the Kherson region, the occupiers partially dismantled the roof of one of the buildings of the Novokakhovka School No. 10 and installed large-caliber mortars there. Shielding themselves with the civilians, the Russians are shelling the positions of Ukrainian defenders and the civilian population on the right bank of the Dnieper. The settlements of Kozatske, Vesele and Odradokamianka are in the impact zone³³.

8

On November 28, the occupiers began setting up an ammunition depot in the center of Mariupol, the Donetsk region, 100 meters away from school №65³⁴.

On December 18, the General Staff of the Armed Forces of Ukraine reported that in some settlements of the Vasylivka district of the Zaporizhzhia region, the occupiers had placed personnel in functioning school premises³⁵.

According to the mayor of Melitopol, the Zaporizhzhia region, the invaders' military equipment is located on the territory of at least five educational institutions of the city³⁶.

At the same time, the occupiers are trying in every possible way to force the population to visit these institutions and establishments. Thus, in the south, the Russians question children if they are outside during school hours. Doctors brought from the Russian Federation also check during medical examinations arranged by the Russians, whether a child is studying in a Russian school. Besides, the Russians check the phones of children and their parents to make sure that the

³⁰ <https://zt.npu.gov.ua/news/politsiia-ziasovuie-obstavyny-zahybeli-podruzzhzia-na-pivnochi-zhytomyrshchyny>

³¹ <https://t.me/andriyshTime/4941>

³² <https://www.gp.gov.ua/ua/posts/yuvenalni-prokurori-449-ditei-zaginulo-vnaslidok-zbroinoyi-agresiyi-rf-v-ukrayini>

³³ <https://sprotyv.mod.gov.ua/2022/11/26/okupanty-vlashtuvaly-pozycziyi-dlya-minometiv-na-dahu-shkoly/>

³⁴ <https://t.me/andriyshTime/4601>

³⁵ <https://www.facebook.com/GeneralStaff.ua/posts/pfbid0HqBsonuGReil6quZtW8gUb5CMHZxn8irAz7Vu6Q7YzvWy9wW1sn6zbUggC9WCX6LI>

³⁶ https://t.me/ivan_fedorov_melitopol/1069

Ukrainian online school application isn't installed. The invaders promise one-time payments of 10,000 rubles if the family agrees to go to the occupiers' schools. Another reason to insist on attending educational institutions with a Russian curriculum is, of course, the propaganda of the Kremlin's vision of occupation and imposing their culture and language³⁷.

Murder, wounding, cruel treatment and sexual assault of children

After the de-occupation of the Ukrainian territories, evidence of murders, torture and abuse of the population, including children, by the Russian occupiers are still reported.

Thus, residents of the recently liberated village of Snigurivka of the Kherson region told journalists from the *Slidstvo.Info* that the Russians kidnapped not only Ukrainian soldiers, but also women and even children. **Soldiers of the Russian Federation kidnapped teenagers and threatened to cut off the girls' fingers** if they did not tell about the Ukrainian military. "They took away women. And children. On the 7th or 8th, Russians kidnapped me and my girlfriend and took us to the basement of the elevator. We spent there four days without food and water," said 15-year-old Nastya. She also added that the Russians abducted two other girls, whose whereabouts are still unknown³⁸.

9

On December 2, two servicemen of the Russian Federation were found guilty of violating the laws and customs of war. At the beginning of March 2022, they, being in the village of Buzova, the Bucha district, the Kyiv region, brutally treated the local population, including women and children. The militarymen of the aggressor country broke into a private house. At gunpoint, **they beat and tortured four men in front of women and minor children, who were also threatened with guns**. After tortures and threats, the convicts took money and valuables belonging to the victims³⁹.

In total, as of December 22, **the prosecutor's office discovered 54 torture cells and initiated 5,079 criminal proceedings on the facts of torture** and other inhumane treatment resulting from the full-scale invasion of the Russian Federation into Ukraine⁴⁰. According to the Ukrainian Parliament Commissioner for Human Rights, **several torture cells, where children had been kept, were discovered**. They were not given food, water was given every other day and they were told that their parents had abandoned them. One boy was held in a torture cell and tortured for taking pictures of Russian equipment on his phone⁴¹.

³⁷ <https://sprotyv.mod.gov.ua/2022/11/29/na-tymchasovo-okupovanomu-pivdni-okupanty-shukayut-ditej-yaki-ne-hodyat-do-rosijskyh-shkil/>

³⁸ <https://www.slidstvo.info/warnews/zaplanovani-znushhannya-pid-chas-okupacziyi-snigurivky-rosiyany-za-spyskamy-vyvozyly-lyudej-do-kativen/>

³⁹ <https://www.gp.gov.ua/ua/posts/katuvali-meskanciv-bucanskogo-raionu-dvox-viiskovix-rf-zasudzeno-do-12-rokiv-za-gratami>

⁴⁰ <https://zmina.info/news/na-deokupovanyh-terytoriyah-vidnajdeno-54-kativni-zafiksovano-ponad-5-tysyach-vypadkiv-katuvan-ogp/>

⁴¹ <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=SBvpg7Mt9V8>

As of December 14, the Prosecutor General's Office has identified 154 cases of war-related sexual violence, ten of which were against children⁴². Six servicemen of the Russian Federation were notified of the suspicion. Indictments against two persons were sent to the court, one person was convicted. At the same time, 64 such cases were recorded in Kherson region, which is more than in other de-occupied regions of Ukraine⁴³.

Also, since the beginning of the war, **a significant number of burials of civilians, including children, have been discovered**. Some of the bodies have traces of torture and cruel treatment.

Thus, as of December 24, the police of the Donetsk region discovered 168 burials. 302 dead civilians were found in the burials. Of them, 162 men, 115 women and six children. The sex and identity of the others have not yet been established⁴⁴.

On December 22, the Ministry of Internal Affairs of Ukraine also provided detailed results of the exhumation of bodies in Izyum, the Kharkiv Region. More than 450 bodies were removed from the burial sites - about 200 bodies of men, slightly more bodies of women, more than 20 bodies of soldiers, seven children and the remains of 12 people whose sex, age and identity cannot be determined. It has been preliminarily established that among these persons there were those who died of violent death: gunshot wounds, explosive injuries. Signs of torture were determined in at least 40 bodies⁴⁵.

10 As of the end of November, 50 locations of probable burials have been investigated in the de-occupied territories of the Mykolaiv region and the Kherson region, where experts have already searched for and identified the bodies of about 200 victims⁴⁶. In total, during the period of occupation of the Kherson region, as of December 22, morgues received about 700 bodies, of which approximately 100 were with physical injuries received as a result of military operations, the identities of 12 of them have not yet been established⁴⁷.

One of such burials was described in an article by *The New York Times*. According to journalists, in the village of Pravdyne in the Kherson region, the burial of people killed by the Russian invaders was discovered. Six men and a teenage girl were among the dead. Some of them had their hands tied and were blindfolded, and the girl looked as if she had been strangled⁴⁸.

⁴² <https://zmina.info/news/na-deokupovanyh-terytoriyah-vidnajdeno-54-kativni-zafiksovano-ponad-5-tysyach-vypadkiv-katuvan-ogp/>

⁴³ <https://www.gp.gov.ua/ua/posts/mobilna-grupa-zafiksuvala-fakti-seksualnogo-nasilstva-okupantiv-na-xersonshhini>

⁴⁴ <https://suspilne.media/345628-skilki-eksgumovali-zagiblih-ta-vbitih-pid-cas-okupacii-doneccini-novi-dani/>

⁴⁵ <https://www.kmu.gov.ua/news/yevhenii-ienin-na-podviri-pryvatnoho-budynku-u-seli-pravdyno-na-khersonshchyni-vyjavleno-pokhovannia-z-ostankamy-shistokh-osib-zi-slidamy-tortur>

⁴⁶ https://t.me/minre_ua/2081

⁴⁷ <https://www.kmu.gov.ua/news/yevhenii-ienin-na-podviri-pryvatnoho-budynku-u-seli-pravdyno-na-khersonshchyni-vyjavleno-pokhovannia-z-ostankamy-shistokh-osib-zi-slidamy-tortur>

⁴⁸ <https://www.nytimes.com/2022/11/29/world/europe/ukraine-russia-pravdyne-grave.html>

Kidnapping and forced deportation of children

According to official statistics, **as of December 23, 331 children were found missing, 13,613 were deported to the territory of the Russian Federation.** The exact number of the affected children cannot be established due to active hostilities and the temporary occupation of the territory of Ukraine. According to open source data provided by Russia, the number of deported children is much higher – 728 thousand⁴⁹.

Various attempts of Russians to prepare Ukrainian children for deportation to Russia are recorded. Yes, the Russian occupation administration in the temporarily occupied territory of the Luhansk Region came up with a reason for the deportation of another 10,500 children to the Russian Federation. For this, 15,000 Ukrainian children aged 2 to 17 underwent an in-depth medical examination. Doctors imported from Russia noted in the examination documents that 70% of these children "need special medical care" that can be provided on the territory of the Russian Federation. First, they are placed in specialized health facilities, then, given the contrived reasons of supporting the children's return home, to encourage their parents to come to them. Then, families are prohibited from returning to the territory of Ukraine. For example, more than 1,500 people from the temporarily occupied territories of the Kherson region are already staying in the boarding house "Feya-3" in the city of Anapa, the Krasnodar region. Citizens of Ukraine are encouraged to apply for Russian passports and open accounts in Russian banks as if for the payment of social assistance⁵⁰.

11

Another possible preparation for deportation is the collection of personal data of children in the Kherson region by offering New Year gifts. To do this, you need to register on the Russian website by attaching copies of documents. Children aged 3 to 17 who are registered in the territory of the Kherson region are invited to take part in this⁵¹.

On November 27, the Kherson Ministry of Education reported the search for children who were taken by the occupiers from the Kherson educational institutions during the autumn holidays "for health improvement" to the left bank of the Dnipro river, and all children from orphanages were also taken out. It is impossible to establish the exact number of children, but it is estimated that up to a thousand children were taken away. The fact that before leaving, the occupying authorities demanded that the parents provide their children with the originals of their birth certificates shows the intentions to deport citizens⁵².

⁴⁹ <https://childrenofwar.gov.ua>.

⁵⁰ <https://sprotiv.mod.gov.ua/2022/11/26/rosiyany-pidgotuvaly-105-tys-ditej-do-vyvezennya-v-rosiyu/>

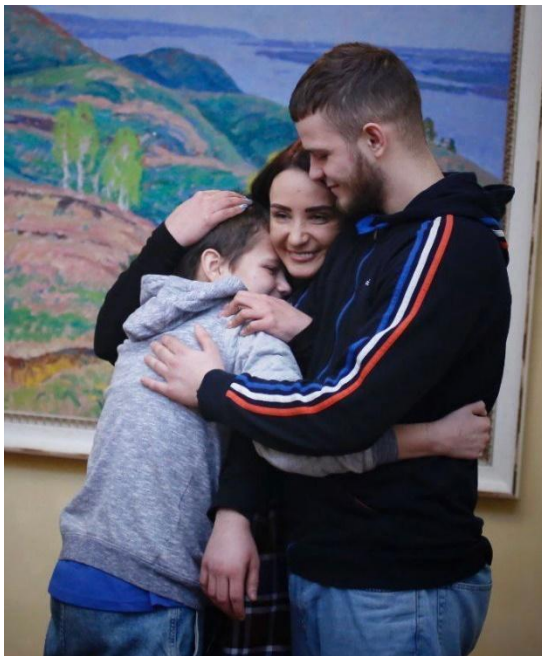
⁵¹ <https://zmina.info/news/okupanty-proponuyut-dityam-hersonshhyny-podarunky-v-obmin-na-personalni-dani-pravozahysnyky-kazhut-pro-ryzyk-novyh-deportaczij/>

⁵² https://t.me/kherson_miskrada/9634

On December 15, it became known that the Russians took another 40 children from Lysychansk and Severodonetsk to the Stavropol region of the Russian Federation for "health improvement"⁵³.

In addition to deporting and imposing propaganda narratives on Ukrainian children in Russia, **Russian officials also illegally adopt deported children** — primarily orphans and children deprived of parental care.

In total, as of December 24, **only 125 deported children have been returned to Ukraine**⁵⁴. Thus, in the tenth month of the war, only six children came home. The return process is extremely complicated, as it only happens for some directly participating parents who have to go to Russia through a third country. This path is often dangerous and requires the participation of state authorities, international and national public organizations, and charitable foundations that can provide financial, legal, social and other support to parents.



Thus, on December 17, the Ministry of Reintegration announced the return of two children to Ukraine, who were kept by the occupiers in the temporarily occupied territories and in the Russian Federation for more than two months⁵⁵.

On December 19, the Human Rights Commissioner of the Verkhovna Rada of Ukraine noted that it was possible to return another child who was deported from the district near the city of Mariupol and placed with the adopting family in Russia⁵⁶.

Returned after deportation, 11-year-old Mark and 18-year-old Danylo with their mother.

On December 20, it became known that with the assistance of the Human Rights Commissioner of the Verkhovna Rada of Ukraine and with the help of the Caritas of Ukraine Charitable Foundation, three children who were separated from their parents and taken to the Vedmedyk children's camp in August 2022 under the pretext of "health improvement" were able to return from Gelendzhik, the Russian Federation. Everything happened during the temporary occupation of the Kharkiv region⁵⁷.

⁵³ <https://sprotyv.mod.gov.ua/2022/12/15/okupanty-vyvezly-40-ditej-z-lynychansku-ta-syevyeronieczka-do-rf/>

⁵⁴ <https://childrenofwar.gov.ua>.

⁵⁵ https://t.me/minre_ua/2227

⁵⁶ <https://www.facebook.com/dmytro.lubinets/posts/2963113677329739>

⁵⁷ https://t.me/dmytro_lubinets/1457

Depriving access to humanitarian aid

In many temporarily occupied settlements of Ukraine, **the communal infrastructure has been destroyed**. People struggle to survive without heating and with regular problems with electricity and water supply. Repairing utility networks is extremely difficult, there is a lack of appropriate equipment, which was taken away by the Russian military, and specialists on the ground. In the most shelled areas, **families with children are forced to live in adapted rooms, often basements. They prepare food and warm themselves by lighting a fire.**

Due to the lack of work, the inability to receive social benefits, and the artificial increase in the price of goods and services, **the people experience a constant shortage of food and basic necessities**. The occupying authorities are not at all or fairly concerned with the situation of the local residents. Very little humanitarian aid is given: either to the most vulnerable parts of the population (families with small children, the elderly) or in exchange for passport data, obtaining Russian citizenship — as an excuse to hand out summonses to men, etc.

We spend every day in search of food. There are always kilometer-long queues for humanitarian aid, and they can give out a bag of porridge or rancid oil. Relatives help us, they bring canned food and potatoes from the garden. I also make bread myself. The children don't seem to be hungry, but they constantly ask for something sweet, we really don't have any candies and cookies.

From an interview with parents

Looting of temporarily occupied territories is also ongoing. The occupiers are taking away grain, other food products, machinery from industrial and agricultural enterprises, medical institutions, educational institutions, etc., as well as looting private houses of local residents.

So, on November 28, it became known that the enemy looted Starobilsky Elevator LLC, from where they took almost 900 tons of grain (harvest of 2021). Also, more than 600 tons of wheat grain and 275 tons of sunflower grain were stolen⁵⁸.

On December 2, the Russians ransacked farms in the village of Bilokurakyne (the Svativ district, the Luhansk region). In particular, the occupiers took grain and agricultural machinery to the Russian Federation⁵⁹.

Obtaining medical care is also a significant problem in the temporarily occupied territories. **Many medical facilities have been destroyed, there is a shortage of medical staff and medicines.** Those hospitals that are functioning are mostly engaged in the service of the Russian military, some of them actually work in the format of military hospitals.

⁵⁸ <https://sprotyv.mod.gov.ua/2022/11/28/rosiyany-prodovzhuyut-krasty-ukrayinske-zerno/>

⁵⁹ <https://sprotyv.mod.gov.ua/2022/12/02/rosiyany-grabuyut-fermerski-gospodarstva-na-luganshyni/>

Thus, Luhansk City Multidisciplinary Hospital No. 3 has already accommodated about 100 Russian soldiers. The hospital in Kreminna was also completely transferred to the service of the occupiers. Luhansk City Multidisciplinary Hospital No. 15 also refuses to serve civilians⁶⁰.

The situation is similar in Horlivka, the Donetsk region. Thus, the Russian army uses four local hospitals to treat their wounded. On average, up to 70 operations are performed there per day, most of the personnel were brought by Russians. At the same time, operations are almost not provided to civilians, because of the lack of specialists⁶¹.

Recommendations

- Constantly maintain contact with the temporarily occupied territories by all possible ways and means. Local authorities, state institutions and institutions must know their work regime, powers and procedures in various situations. This is to ensure the preservation of peace and trust of the population in the decisions of the state.
- Inform the residents about the temporarily occupied territories with safety rules, the observance of which will help prevent abuse and murder, mobilization to the army of the occupiers, as well as mine safety rules. Constantly remind about the importance of observing the rules of safe behavior during air raids in bomb shelters and at home. Parents should limit as much as possible the stay of children in places where there is a risk of injury or traumatizing. This also applies to the ban on visiting forest strips, beaches and rivers, which can be mined.
- To assist in organizing the humanitarian corridors and the delivery of humanitarian aid to the temporarily occupied territories of Ukraine, active combat areas and areas suffering from a humanitarian disaster, to form stocks of food, water and medicine in territories where there is a significant risk of the Russian occupation.
- Contribute to the recording of all crimes committed by the Russian military: murders, maimings and cruel treatment. An integral part of this process is building trust and conveying to citizens the need to contact law enforcement agencies with statements and evidence of committed crimes, in particular via the Internet and telephone.
- Increase efforts to record crimes of a sexual nature, particularly against children. Most of them remain latent and are rarely recorded by law enforcement agencies.

⁶⁰ <https://sprotyv.mod.gov.ua/2022/12/16/okupanty-perevodyat-usi-likarni-luganshhyny-na-obslugovuvannya-vijskovyh-rf/>

⁶¹ <https://sprotyv.mod.gov.ua/2022/12/20/v-gorlivczi-rosiyany-obladnaly-morg-na-bazi-odnogo-z-promyslovyh-pidpryyemstv/>

- Maximize use of international channels to monitor the condition of children who were deported to Russia, to document the crimes committed against them. Promote greater involvement of international organizations and volunteer communities in the process of returning Ukrainian children home.
- Conduct information campaigns on the prevention of epidemics of infectious diseases throughout Ukraine, especially where it is difficult to provide the appropriate level of medical care.

Displacement of children in Ukraine and abroad

As of December 5 the total **number of internally displaced people, based on the international evaluation, reached 5.9 million**⁶², the majority of them are women and children. There has been a slight decrease in the number of IDPs compared to the 6.5 million people in the last reporting period. Despite the cold snap and shelling that has disrupted electricity and heating systems, IOM's data show that only 7 % nationwide are currently considering leaving their place of residence. Even in the event of a prolonged shutdown of all essential infrastructure and without knowing the timeframe for repairs, the majority (two out of three Ukrainians) say they would not leave their homes⁶³.

At the same time, **the Russian army regularly shells the electric power infrastructure** of Ukraine. Since the beginning of the fall, the DTEK Energy's power facilities have already been hit in 21 terrorist attacks by Russia⁶⁴.

On December 10, 2022, two power infrastructure facilities in the Odesa region were attacked by the Russian armed forces with Shahed-136 kamikaze drones. As a result of the Russian attack, more than half a million consumers were left without electricity and heat⁶⁵.

On December 16, Russia hit Ukraine with missiles. About 9 power plants and substations were damaged. The Ukrenergo declared a state of emergency, and emergency blackouts were introduced throughout Ukraine.

On December 23, the occupiers intensively shelled one of DTEK Energy's power plants, damaging its facilities and causing the plant to stop producing electricity⁶⁶.

The number of Points of Invincibility is constantly growing in Ukraine to provide basic support to people under the conditions of power and heating outages. As of December 20, 5,521 Points have been set up where people can recharge their mobile devices, make calls, get warm, drink water, use the Internet, etc.

⁶² <https://reliefweb.int/report/ukraine/ukraine-situation-report-19-dec-2022-enruuk>

⁶³ <https://displacement.iom.int/reports/ukraina-zvit-pro-vnutrishne-peremischennya-v-ukraini-opituvannya-zagalnogo-naselennya-raund>

⁶⁴ <https://energo.dtek.com/media-center/press/vnaslidok-vorozhogo-obstrilu-odnogo-z-energetichnikh-obektiv-dtek-energo-e-postrazhdali-pidpriemstvo-pripinilo-generatsiyu-elektroenergi/>

⁶⁵ <https://www.gp.gov.ua/ua/posts/obstril-energeticnoyi-infrastrukturi-na-odeshhini-rozpocato-rozsliduvannya>

⁶⁶ <https://energo.dtek.com/media-center/press/vnaslidok-vorozhogo-obstrilu-odnogo-z-energetichnikh-obektiv-dtek-energo-e-postrazhdali-pidpriemstvo-pripinilo-generatsiyu-elektroenergi/>



A child and her mother at the Point of Invincibility. They left their home to use an inhaler powered by the electricity⁶⁷.

It is also noteworthy that due to long-term power outages, people use fuel generators, gas canisters, and

homemade power supplies for heating, cooking, and recharging phones and laptops. The improper use of such devices or the purchase/manufacturing of devices of inadequate quality also poses a threat to the lives and health of both adults and children.

Thus, on November 25, two families in the Kyiv region got poisoned by carbon monoxide. As a result, the condition of two children deteriorated, and a man died. People used a generator placed inside the house for lighting⁶⁸.

On December 9, seven children aged 5 to 15 from different families got poisoned by carbon monoxide in the Odesa region. The faulty stove harmed two of them, three more children got poisoned because they were using a gas burner for heating, and the rest of them got sick because they were using a wood-burning fireplace incorrectly. The children are currently in moderate condition in hospitals⁶⁹.

In November, a total of 368 people were affected by carbon monoxide poisoning, including 20 deaths. In the first week of December, 97 cases of carbon monoxide poisoning were recorded, 14 of which resulted in deaths⁷⁰.

As of December 20, more than 43,000 people left the dangerous areas of the Zaporizhzhia region. Around 34,000 people from the Kherson region, nearly 5,000 from the Donetsk and Luhansk regions, and over 5,000 citizens from the Kharkiv region. The evacuation from the de-occupied territories goes on. In addition, mandatory evacuation from the Donetsk region continues. Since its start, over 33 thousand people have left for the safer regions, including more than 5 thousand children and nearly 2 thousand people with limited mobility⁷¹.

⁶⁷ <https://tsn.ua/ato/z-kim-voyuyut-rosiyski-teroristi-kuleba-pokazav-chutlive-foto-materi-z-donkoyu-iz-punktu-nezlamnosti-2211253.html>

⁶⁸ https://t.me/andrii_nebytov/827

⁶⁹ <https://tsn.ua/ukrayina/na-odeschini-za-dobu-vchadilo-7-ditey-iz-riznih-simey-2219542.html>

⁷⁰ <https://t.me/UkraineMediaCenterKyiv/3795>

⁷¹ <https://minre.gov.ua/news/tryvaye-evakuaciya-z-nebezpechnyh-regioniv-ukrayiny>

At the same time, the **Russian troops are trying to prevent the evacuation of the elderly, women and children in particular**. Thus, the mayor of Melitopol, in the Zaporizhzhia region, said that as of the end of December, the occupiers were not letting residents of the temporarily occupied territories of the Zaporizhzhia, Kherson, Donetsk and Luhansk regions leave through Vasylivka towards Zaporizhzhia. A month ago, they stopped going out men fit for military service, and now they do not let out anyone. People who still try to pass are told to leave their cars and walk to Zaporizhzhia on foot. According to the occupiers themselves, the passage is closed until January 15⁷².

We are not even trying to leave since November, because the queues are huge and it is scary every time because they might tell you something or take you with them. You stand there - it's freezing, there's nowhere to go to the toilet in that line. But you could buy food, our medicines when you left. We left two times, because daughter has health issues, we needed to visit the doctor. But now all the assistance is by phone. What can I say - we are waiting for the Ukrainian Armed Forces, we believe that we will be liberated soon.

From an interview with parents

Another option to evacuate from the temporarily occupied territories for Ukrainians is to leave for Russia. However, such a trip is associated with many risks, the main one is passing through filtration camps. People's belongings, mobile devices, contacts are checked, and both adults and teenagers are interrogated. Since February 24, **the occupiers have already set up 27 filtration camps and prisons** in the TOT and in Russia⁷³.

Prolonged evacuation, in particular from the de-occupied territories, is gradually **reducing the resources of the host communities**. Thus, as of December 20, there are no longer any vacant places for IDPs to stay for a long time in the Chernivtsi, Cherkasy, Khmelnytsky, Ternopil, Rivne, Poltava, and Mykolaiv regions. At the same time, the Zakarpattia (11,813), Zhytomyr (5672), Odesa (5058) and Volyn (4493) regions can provide the most places⁷⁴. As of December 21, a total of 17.7 million people are in urgent need of humanitarian assistance and protection⁷⁵. **In total, more than 1.3 million places for internally displaced persons have been arranged**, 89% of which are already occupied⁷⁶.

In such circumstances, **international humanitarian organizations continue to provide ongoing support** to both internally displaced Ukrainians and those returning to the de-occupied territories. Thus, over the 10 months of the war, the UN World Food Program has delivered more than 137,000 tons of food and humanitarian aid, and has also provided financial assistance to 2.2 million

⁷² https://t.me/ivan_fedorov_melitopol/1095

⁷³ https://lb.ua/society/2022/12/09/538602_zlochyni_okupantiv_agresii_rf.html

⁷⁴ https://t.me/tymoshenko_kyrylo/3127

⁷⁵ <https://reliefweb.int/report/ukraine/ukraine-emergency-unhcr-operational-response-delivery-updates-21-december-2022enuk>

⁷⁶ <https://www.pravda.com.ua/news/2022/12/2/7379014/>

Ukrainians totaling more than \$370 million⁷⁷. The United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees has provided aid to over a million people in Ukraine⁷⁸. In total, 4.3 million Ukrainians have already received financial assistance from various UN agencies and other humanitarian organizations⁷⁹.

Ukrainian charitable foundations and public organizations (*Vostok SOS, Right to Protection CF, The Tenth of April NGO, etc.*) **also provide aid**. A number of organizations prefer to provide targeted support to citizens, when children and adults receive not universal assistance, but what they need most. This is the case, for example, with the Voices of Children Charitable Foundation. Since the beginning of the full-scale invasion, the Foundation has helped more than 42,000 people by purchasing household appliances for them, paying for medicines or medical supplies, providing psychological assistance, ensuring rehabilitation of children with disabilities, etc.⁸⁰.

Among the positive changes for IDPs, the option to change the actual place of residence and cancel the IDP certificate was added to the list of services for IDPs in the *Diia app* on December 13. This innovation greatly simplifies the collection and input of relevant data, and allows for more effective planning of state policy in the field of protection of internally displaced persons⁸¹.

People are slowly coming back home after the deliberation. As of December 7, **Ukrainian forces have liberated 1888 settlements from the Russian occupation**, and almost as many Ukrainian cities and villages remain under the occupation⁸². The restoration of civilian infrastructure and administrative services in the de-occupied territories of Ukraine goes on. At the same time, **a significant number of settlements are not yet ready for the return of local residents**. The de-occupied territories are close to the border with Russia and the front line, and therefore are regularly shelled. In addition, there are problems with the restoration of utilities, lack of resources to provide medical, social, administrative, and educational services to adults and children. Demining is also ongoing in the de-occupied territories. As of mid-December, the State Emergency Service units have surveyed and cleared 76 hectares of territory and removed more than 300,000 pieces of explosive ordnance. But **nearly 30% of the country's territory still require demining**⁸³.

On moving abroad, the number of Ukrainian refugees, based on the UNCHR estimates, accounted for around 7,863 million people as of December 20. **4,862,000 people were registered for Temporary Protection in Europe**. The most

⁷⁷ <https://minre.gov.ua/news/vsesvitnya-prodovolcha-programa-oon-v-ukrayini-137-tysyach-tonn-prodovolchoyi-dopomogy-ta-ponad>

⁷⁸ <https://reliefweb.int/report/ukraine/ukraine-situation-flash-update-37-16-december-2022-0>

⁷⁹ <https://minre.gov.ua/news/ponad-4-milyony-ukrayinciv-otrymaly-groshovu-dopomogu-vid-mizhnarodnyh-organizacij>

⁸⁰ <https://voices.org.ua/>

⁸¹ <https://bf.diia.gov.ua/categories/vpo>

⁸² <https://president.gov.ua/news/na-poli-boyu-v-ukrayini-virishuyetsya-dolya-miljoniv-lyudej-79697>

⁸³ <https://mvs.gov.ua/uk/news/prava-liudini-zaxishhaiut-nas-todi-koli-pro-nix-ne-lise-govoriat-a-koli-za-nix-boriatsia-katerina-pavlicenko>

Ukrainian refugees with Temporary Protection status are registered in Poland — 1,544,000 people. Germany and Czech Republic come next – 1,021,000 and 471,000 people correspondingly. A lot of Ukrainians got temporary protection in Italy (166,000), Spain (158,000), the UK (150,000), Bulgaria (148,000), France (118,000), Slovakia (103,000), Austria (90,000), the Netherlands (85,000), Lithuania (72,000), Switzerland (71,000), Ireland (68,000), Belgium (63,000). Turkey accommodated 145,000 our citizens but temporary protection is not provided there. More than 2,852,000 Ukrainians crossed the Russian border. The data about the status of these people is not available⁸⁴. The United States and Canada also accommodated around 200,000 refugees and developed their own refugee support programs.

The countries continue to support displaced Ukrainians, while some of the support programs are undergoing changes due to the significant burden on refugee social protection systems.

In Poland, starting from March 1, 2023, a payment will be introduced for those Ukrainian refugees who stay in collective accommodation facilities for more than 120 days. Initially, refugees from Ukraine will cover 50 percent of the cost of living, and in a few months - 75 percent. However, this obligation will not apply to people with disabilities, children, pregnant women, people of retirement age, and people taking care of at least three children⁸⁵.

20 In the UK, landlords who have sheltered Ukrainian refugees for more than a year under the Homes for Ukraine program will receive £500 per month instead of £350. This is to ensure that Ukrainians who are not yet able to provide themselves with housing can continue to be sponsored if British sponsors are willing to do so⁸⁶.

In Catalonia, from December 15 to January 31, Ukrainians with temporary protection status can apply for payments of €400 per month plus €100 for each dependent child for a period of up to six months⁸⁷.

Countries that host Ukrainian refugees are also preparing for the fact that some Ukrainian citizens will stay there for a longer period of time. First of all, these are families who have lost their homes and jobs because of the war, and the area of their residence is or was under the temporary occupation and has suffered significant destruction and mining. Another reason why Ukrainians will choose not to return home is successful integration abroad. First of all, it implies having a job, a stable income, a place to live, education for children, language proficiency, etc.

I haven't made a final decision yet, but we have fled from Bakhmut and we don't know where to go back. Now I cannot take my children back to Ukraine

⁸⁴ https://data.unhcr.org/en/situations/ukraine#_ga=2.228732760.514168680.1646989952-176134281.1646551413. Data on some countries are not updated

⁸⁵ <https://www.polskieradio.pl/398/7856/Artykul/3078816,3-березня-2023-року-за-проживання-у-закладах-розміщення-біженці-платитимуть>

⁸⁶ <https://www.euointegration.com.ua/news/2022/12/14/7152504/>

⁸⁷ <https://www.euointegration.com.ua/news/2022/12/14/7152518/>

because it is dangerous. Every day there is shelling, there are missiles that our air defense cannot track, and we don't know where they will come from. So I won't even have time to hide my children, to take them to a shelter. I'm also worried about electricity and heating. Even if you rent an apartment and work online, you won't be able to do it for long without electricity and heat. Not to mention washing the kids and cooking. But in Germany, I already have a job, a normal house, and my children go to school, and they learn German though it's hard. I am honestly happy about this. On weekends, we can go to the park with them, go to see a castle.

From an interview with parents

Recommendations

- Carry on the awareness raising regarding the evacuation for families with children from the temporarily occupied territories, territories under continual shelling or those under the threat of active combat beginning. It is important to avoid criminal responsibility threatening for the actions, committed under the temporary occupation under duress (for obtaining Russian citizenship in particular).
- Constantly update the residents on the necessity of the daily energy efficient measures and accommodation readiness to the possible heating, power and water supply cuts. Regularly remind the population of the rules for using fuel generators, gas canisters, etc. to avoid poisoning or causing fires.
- Inform and increase the awareness of the residents of the possible ways of leaving the occupied territories, to the territories of the Russian Federation and Crimea in particular. It is important to coordinate the efforts with volunteering and public initiatives on these territories as well as with the organizations based on the territories neighboring with Russia in order to help Ukrainians leave for Europe.
- Develop state programs to support Ukrainians with children coming back from Europe, which would imply compensation payments and employment or entrepreneurship perspectives.
- Seek for new opportunities to employ the internally displaced people. In order to do that, it is necessary to evaluate the labor market and IDPs qualifications, intensify the retraining programs for citizens, create new workplaces and coordinate with employers in terms of IDPs employment.
- Analyze the needs of IDPs in accommodation and the availability of the municipal housing to extend the state and regional housing programs of IDPs accommodation.

- Create opportunities in the de-occupied territories to provide basic services and meet the urgent needs of the population in the shortest possible time, as well as to facilitate the evacuation of local residents whose homes are unfit for living in winter.
- Facilitate the reconstruction of power, water and gas supply in the de-occupied territories. Guarantee the heating in the cold season, in particular, provide private sector residents with alternative fuel for heating their homes.
- Carry out the regular assessment of the population's needs for humanitarian aid.
- Send clear signals to citizens prohibiting or allowing them to come back to the de-occupied territories and territories that have been heavily shelled. Such statements should be accompanied by the information about the security and infrastructure of the specific settlements.

Militarization of children and youth by Russia

One of the main war crimes is to drag children into the war. International humanitarian law explicitly prohibits the recruitment and use of children in combat and military operations. This is stated in the Convention on the Rights of the Child, the Optional Protocol on the involvement of children in armed conflict, the African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child, Additional Protocols 1 and 2 to the Geneva Conventions, etc. Children in any status have special respect and protection in times of war.

However, since 2014, Russia has been regularly violating international norms and committing crimes against children and in the field of child protection in Ukraine.

The basis of involvement in hostilities is the active engagement of children and youth in propaganda and military training. Various organizations and movements have been created and continue to be created for this purpose. The most popular and mass of them are the following:

- *The Yunarmiya (Youth Army)* is an all-Russian children's and youth military-patriotic public movement, created in 2016 on the initiative of the Minister of Defence of the Russian Federation Sergei Shoigu. The main task of the movement is to involve children in military training and propaganda of the ideology of the "Russian world". For this purpose, various clubs and sections are organized, where children learn to use weapons, undergo combat and tactical training, participate in military sports games and relays. The movement has already united more than 1,240,000 children and adolescents across the country. One can join the Youth Army from 8 to 18 years old⁸⁸.
- *The Russian movement of schoolchildren* is an all-Russian social-state children's and youth organization, established in 2015 by order of the President of the Russian Federation Putin. The movement has a direction called Military-Patriotic and implies promotion of war propaganda and development of militarized (cadet, cossack, etc.) classes in schools. Over seven years of its existence, the movement has about 4 million members, 102 thousand parents and 275 thousand teachers throughout Russia. One can join the organization in the age of 8 to 18⁸⁹.
- *The Bol'shaya Piereieniema ANO (the Big Change)* is an autonomous non-profit organization, one of the organizers of the All-Russian the Big Change contest, which is held annually with the support of the Ministry of Education of the Russian Federation and the Ministry of Science and Higher Education of the Russian Federation. The official goal of the competition is to provide opportunities for the development and implementation of the abilities of schoolchildren, starting from grade 5 and young people up to 25 years inclusive. At the same time, one of the areas of the competition is called "Serve the Motherland", the purpose of which is to present the distorted

⁸⁸ <https://yunarmy.ru/headquarters/about/>

⁸⁹ <https://xn--d1axz.xn--p1ai/news/11245>

history of Russia and propaganda among the younger generation an armed aggression against other countries. The community, formed by participation in annual competitions, has 2.5 million participants, 140 thousand teachers and 32 thousand educational institutions⁹⁰.

In addition to the above, there are many other military-patriotic clubs, organizations and movements that involve children and youth in their activities: the Young Guard, the Victory Volunteers, the Patriot, the Union of Pioneers, the Bastion, etc.

In 2022, the Russian authorities came up with the idea of uniting such organizations into one movement. The founders of the movement were 26 of the Russia's largest propaganda children's and youth organizations, including some mentioned above. On July 14, 2022, the **Russian President Vladimir Putin signed a federal law on the creation of a movement of children and youth in Russia**. On December 18, 2022, at the first congress, its participants chose the name for the organization as the Russian movement of children and youth "the Movement of the First" (Dvizheniye Piervykh)⁹¹. It is also worth emphasizing that the law is written so that the president **of the Russian Federation, heading the supervisory board, controls all the governing bodies of the movement**. After all, the position of the Chairman of the Supervisory Board provides for the appointment of the Chairmen of the Coordination Council and the Chairman of the Board, as well as all members of the Supervisory Board.

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Representatives of the UPR the Youth Guard - Yunarmy held master classes and competitions in shooting and dragging the rope for students of grades 5-6 in Mariupol, the Donetsk region, they wrote letters to the occupying troops ⁹².

Schoolchildren from the temporarily occupied territories of the Donetsk region at the first congress of the Russian movement of children and youth ⁹³.

⁹⁰<https://bolshayaperemena.online>

⁹¹<http://xn--d1aayn.xn--plai/>

⁹²https://t.me/youngguard_youngarmy/611

⁹³https://t.me/rddm_dnr/22?single

For the purpose of “educating highly moral, socially successful citizens”, there is actually an education of obedient and loyal to the authorities citizens who are ready to go to war and pumped up with the propaganda of the “superpower”. Regional branches of the movement are planned to be created in each subject of the Russian Federation. **The primary branches of the movement will operate on the basis of schools, institutions of additional training, organizations in the field of culture and sports.** It is also possible to use institutions and facilities for orphans and children deprived of parental care. **The new movement provides for an even lower age threshold for children to enter — 6 years⁹⁴.**

In parallel, a draft law is being developed to introduce into the Criminal Code such a type of punishment — an educational measure for a child who has committed a crime — as the transfer of a minor to the support and care of a volunteer organization or the Russian movement of children and youth⁹⁵. Thus, **a platform is being prepared to draw not only adult criminals but also juvenile offenders into military operations and prepare them for military actions.**

With Russia's occupation of Ukrainian territories, the activities of Russian militarist organizations and movements were spread to Ukrainian children in the temporarily occupied territories. Thus, according to official data of the Russian Federation, as of 2021, 29,000 children entered the ranks of the Youth Army - Yunarmy in the Crimea, that is, every tenth student of the peninsula. According to the LPR/DPR militants, there were about 7,500 children in the Youth Army - Yunarmy at the end of 2021⁹⁶. With the beginning of the full-scale invasion, the representative offices of the Yunarmy, the Young Guard, and now the Movement of the First and other similar organizations began to open their branches in the temporarily occupied settlements of the Donetsk, Luhansk, Zaporizhzhia and Kherson regions.

⁹⁴<http://publication.pravo.gov.ru/Document/View/0001202207140025?index=0&rangeSize=1>

⁹⁵<https://www.gazeta.ru/social/news/2022/11/29/19150699.shtml>

⁹⁶<https://life.liga.net/poyasnennyya/article/yunarmiya-otdat-jizn-za-rossiyu-kak-v-ordlo-i-krymu-uchat-detey-nenavidet-ukrainu>



Presentation of the Yunarmy movement in one of the schools of the temporarily occupied part of the Kherson region⁹⁷

Thus, on December 20, the first branches of the Movement of the Firsts were opened in the temporarily occupied part of the Kherson region in Henichesk at school No.1 and at the Medical professional school ⁹⁸. Also, at the end of December, the first branch of the movement was opened in the Luhansk school No. 5 named after Volodymyr Dahl ⁹⁹.

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It is worth noting that even if children do not want to join the ranks of such organizations, they still do not avoid either propaganda or military training. After all, **in the temporarily occupied territories there are Russian school programs that provide for the teaching of distorted history** and an almost complete refusal to study the Ukrainian language and literature. From September 1, 2022, in schools, every week begins with the raising of the national flag of the invading country and the performance of its anthem¹⁰⁰. In addition, extracurricular classes "Conversations about the important" were introduced, which provide propaganda information about Russia's war against Ukraine¹⁰¹. There is also evidence that schools in the temporarily occupied territories of Ukraine **impose Soviet symbols and attributes**.

"Incredibly, fascism was revived in our days, on the territory of Ukraine, where this inhuman ideology received state approval and even support. The Russian people was chosen as an object of hatred. The United States, Great Britain

⁹⁷<https://yunarmy.ru/press-center/news/serafim-ivanov-rasskazal-shkolnikam-genicheska-o-yunarmii/>

⁹⁸<https://tass.ru/obschestvo/16644089>

⁹⁹<https://www.donetsk.kp.ru/daily/27454/4708605/>

¹⁰⁰<https://t.me/minprosr/811>.

¹⁰¹<https://sprotyv.mod.gov.ua/2022/12/12/rosiyany-aktyvno-vzvalys-za-propagandu-sered-ukrayinskyh-ditej/>

and their allies created an anti-Russia from Ukraine for the destruction and extermination not only of our country, but of the entire Slavic world".

A quotation from the methodological materials for the All-Russian open "Lesson of Courage"¹⁰²

Propaganda and **militarization of children also take place at extracurricular activities** — celebrations, patriotic relays, etc. Ukrainian schoolchildren have to take part in them using the Russian tricolor and symbols of the military invasion of the Russian Nazi totalitarian regime in Ukraine, dress in the military uniform of the occupying country, etc. From this, pro-Kremlin media make stories aimed at creating a picture of "caring for Ukrainian children" and imitating peaceful life in the occupied territories of Ukraine.

Schoolchildren are also involved in supporting the Russian military. In general, Russia launched the action #WEARETOGETHER (#МЫВМЕСТЕ). Children are asked to write works on the theme of pride of Russia, letters of support and gratitude to Russian soldiers according to the template. Some such letters of the same content and with different signatures have already been found in the de-occupied territories of Ukraine¹⁰³.



Pupils of the school in the Bakhchisarai district in the Crimea are holding letters written within the framework of the All-Russian action "Letter to the Soldier"¹⁰⁴.

At the same time, **more support is often required from children, using child labor through educational institutions**. Under the guidance of teachers and educators, children produce trench candles¹⁰⁵, make drones¹⁰⁶, can sew warm clothes for the military or cook food¹⁰⁷. Students are more specialized. For example, military products (balaclava caps, sleeping bags, backpacks, camouflage gowns, bags for first aid kits, etc.) are sewn by more than 14 thousand students from 301 institutions of special vocational education. More than 2 thousand

¹⁰² <https://www.пцпв.рф/методические-материалы/методические-материалы-для-проведения-всероссийского-открытого-урока-музhestva/>

¹⁰³ <https://www.facebook.com/police.kharkov/posts/pfbid0ZGFJs3QmT4MfMYpjvf7XzwTkF6go9whbBd9k5rBbzmL2eg1Q6CgybayG4TcLwWuPl>

¹⁰⁴ <https://oko-crimea.ru/news/pismo-soldatu-0>

¹⁰⁵ <https://мывместе.рф/tpost/bsxbhbt11-v-ramkah-aktsii-mivmeste-volontyori-mast>

¹⁰⁶ <https://мывместе.рф/tpost/jjop2ytue1-sahalinskie-shkolniki-sobirayut-bespilot>

¹⁰⁷ <https://мывместе.рф/tpost/7ss35d1d71-mivmestedeti-rebyata-vsei-strani-obediny>

students from 415 colleges work in the direction of welding production. The young people have already made 864 stoves¹⁰⁸.

Staff of educational institutions in the temporarily occupied territories of Ukraine are also **actively trained**. For example, the Russian movement of schoolchildren implemented the project “Childhood Navigators”. These are the so-called advisers to the directors on patriotic education and interaction with children's public associations. In fact, these are the people who should be responsible for the implementation of propaganda narratives among students regarding the “special military operation”. In addition, such advisers should involve children in anti-Ukrainian activities in the temporary accommodation of the deported population of Ukraine. In 2022, within the framework of this project, school advisers were trained in the temporarily occupied territories of the Donetsk (842 people), Luhansk (391 people) and Kherson (28 people) regions¹⁰⁹.

The occupation authorities are constantly working to encourage Ukrainian teachers and school staff to cooperate and prepare them for teaching the Russian curriculum. Due to a significant part of refusals in such cooperation, the occupiers are forced to import Russian teachers to Ukraine.

In the new academic year, it is planned to introduce an initial military school training in schools of the Russian Federation. For this purpose, the Ministry of Education of Russia approved a corresponding program within the framework of studying the Fundamentals of Safety¹¹⁰. The program provides 2 options for teaching Fundamentals of Safety. The first one is about safety in everyday life, transport, public places, etc. The second one is militarized with the study of the basics of state defence, military and professional activities, counter-terrorism, etc. Children will undergo combat training, the basics of shooting from weapons, actions in combined arms combat, equipment of the soldier's position, first aid in battle, etc. It is noted that the choice of the program content will be up to the parents, but the Russian media is already actively spreading the information about the parents approving the second option of teaching Fundamentals of Safety. A similar module on the basics of military training is also designed to cover educational programs at universities¹¹¹. On December 23, the government of the Russian Federation issued an order to create 16 military training centers at universities¹¹².

Besides, there is evidence that “patriotic education” is also used as a pretext for the deportation of Ukrainian children to Russia. Thus, according to the head of the Luhansk Regional State Administration Serhiy Haydai, the invaders massively take children from the Luhansk region to Chechnya for “patriotic

¹⁰⁸ <https://mybveste.pcf/tpost/3031xg3tg1-v-ramkah-shveinoi-masterskoi-mi-ryadom-o>

¹⁰⁹ <https://xn--d1axz.xn--plai/news/11329>

¹¹⁰ <http://publication.pravo.gov.ru/Document/View/0001202212220051?index=197&rangeSize=1>

¹¹¹ <https://minobrnauki.gov.ru/press-center/news/obrazovanie/62542/>

¹¹² <http://publication.pravo.gov.ru/Document/View/0001202212270042?index=2&rangeSize=1>

education". There are already more than a hundred of such cases of deportation of adolescents to the territory of the Russian Federation have¹¹³.

In addition to the total militarization of the education system, Russia is dragging **children into the war by recruiting them as informants**. This happens both through direct contact with adolescents¹¹⁴ and through indirect collection of photos and data on military and critical infrastructure objects in mobile applications and games¹¹⁵.

Opportunities have also been created to mobilize the adolescents for the war against Ukraine. Thus, on March 15, the relevant order "On organization of the involvement of members of the military-patriotic public movement "Yunarmy" into a special operation on the territory of Ukraine" was signed by the Minister of Defense of the Russian Federation Shoigu. The order refers to the preparation of reports of a potential human reserve at the age of 17-18 years for involvement in military operations as part of the occupation army¹¹⁶.

It should also be noted that the **US State Department has included Russia in the list of countries where people are trafficked, where forced labor is used and child soldiers are recruited**. The invaders use children as human shields in their full-scale war against Ukraine. There are numerous facts of children's work at Russian checkpoints in Donbas since 2014¹¹⁷.

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Recommendations

- 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, participation in campaigning, etc.).
- Introduce an information campaign to warn parents and children in the temporarily occupied territories:
 - do not attend schools where the Russian education system is implemented;
 - do not join militaristic organizations, such as the Yunfarmy, the Young Guard, etc.;

¹¹³https://t.me/serhiy_hayday/8848

¹¹⁴<https://www.gp.gov.ua/ua/posts/zdavav-poziciyi-artileriiskix-pidrozdliv-zsu-pidozryujetsya-nepovnolitnii-meskanec-m-baxmut>.

¹¹⁵<https://t.me/SBUkr/4326>

¹¹⁶<https://gur.gov.ua/content/putin-i-shoihu-hotuiutsia-zadiaty-u-viini-proty-ukrainy-nepovnolitnikh-dokument.html>

¹¹⁷ <https://focus.ua/uk/world/522782-rossia-popala-v-spisok-stran-torguyushchih-lyudmi-i-verbuyushchih-detey-soldat>.

- do not participate in celebrations, competitions and other leisure and entertainment activities aimed at collecting personal data and documents of children;
- do not agree to take the child to the Russian Federation for rest, patriotic education, visiting a Christmas tree, receiving gifts, etc.
- Promote access to Ukrainian education for children in the temporarily occupied territories of Ukraine.
- Recognize the Yunamy, the Movement, the Big Change as movements and organizations of the Nazi totalitarian regime. Prohibit their activities and the use of their symbols on the territory of Ukraine.
- Prohibit access to the sites of the Movement of the First, the Yunarmy, the Big change on the territory of Ukraine.

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