



CHILDREN IN UKRAINE: ALMOST A YEAR OF THE WAR

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— INTRODUCTION

For almost a year, we have been documenting the war crimes of the Russian army in Ukraine. Most of them are directed against the civilians. The occupiers are shelling residential areas, shopping centers, places where humanitarian aid is distributed, hospitals, schools and play-grounds. They kill and terrorize the residents of the temporarily occupied territories, create a humanitarian crisis and prevent the evacuation of people. They kidnap, deport and militarize children, involve them in gathering intelligence and spreading propaganda.

Since the beginning of the full-scale invasion, the prosecutor's office has been conducting pre-trial investigations in 2,607 criminal proceedings about crimes related to the armed aggression of the Russian Federation against Ukraine, committed against children and in the field of childhood protection¹. As of February 10, 461 children have already died, 922 children have received injuries of various degrees of severity².

But the consequences of the war are much greater. Children become orphans, lose their home and family, have health problems, are forced to live with disabilities and overcome the psychological trauma of war and stress. Every month we issue situational reports describing the situation, problems and needs of Ukrainian children in the country and abroad. You can get acquainted with the monthly reports by following the [link](#).

In this report, we present you a brief overview of war crimes committed by the Russian army against children in Ukraine throughout the full-scale war. The report was prepared by the Voices of Children Foundation in co-authorship with the Kharkiv Institute of Social Research.

¹ According to the answer No. 27/3-184 dated 09.02.2023 of the Office of the Prosecutor General of Ukraine to the request of the NGO "Kharkiv Institute of Social Research".

² <https://www.gp.gov.ua/ua/posts/yuvenalni-prokurori-461-ditina-zaginula-v-ukrayini-vnaslidok-zbroinoyi-agresiyi-rf>

THE MAIN INTERNATIONAL LEGAL NORMS THAT REGULATE THE PROTECTION OF WAR VICTIMS, AS WELL AS RESTRICT THE METHODS AND MEANS OF WAR, ARE SET FORTH IN THE HAGUE CONVENTIONS AND DECLARATIONS OF 1899 AND 1907, THE GENEVA CONVENTIONS ON THE PROTECTION OF WAR VICTIMS OF 1949. IN ADDITION, THE RIGHTS OF CHILDREN IN ARMED CONFLICTS ARE REGULATED BY THE CONVENTION ON THE RIGHTS OF THE CHILD, THE OPTIONAL PROTOCOL ON THE PARTICIPATION OF CHILDREN IN ARMED CONFLICTS, AND THE AFRICAN CHARTER ON THE RIGHTS AND WELFARE OF THE CHILD. BELOW ARE THE EXAMPLES OF WAR CRIMES COMMITTED BY RUSSIA ON THE TERRITORY OF UKRAINE, WHICH DIRECTLY AFFECT UKRAINIAN CHILDREN.

— USAGE OF ILLICIT MEANS OF WARFARE

The Hague Convention of 1907

Article 23. It is especially forbidden to: use poison or poisoned weapons; to declare that there will be no mercy; use weapons, projectiles or substances capable of causing unnecessary suffering.

Russia actively uses illicit weapons on the territory of Ukraine against the civilian population. Such weapons cause more severe injuries and damage than other ammunition. **Cluster munitions pose a particular danger.** They can be launched from ground guns, launchers, mortars or dropped from the air. They are activated

mainly in the air, scattering many small bombs over a large area, which often do not explode immediately and can kill and maim people even many years after the war. Also, from time to time, the occupiers **use phosphorous and thermobaric weapons, butterfly mines,** etc.

Thus, on April 4, the occupiers shelled the city of Mykolaiv with cluster munitions. In addition to residential buildings, two hospitals, a preventive disease center, an orphanage, 11 kindergartens, 12 schools, a vocational school, and 2 branches of extracurricular education institutions were damaged. 10 persons died, including a child. 61 people were injured³.

On June 21, the Russians struck the beach at Zolota Rybka lake in the town of Chasiv Yar, the Donetsk region, with cluster shells. One person died as a result of the shelling. Another 11 were injured, including 6 children⁴.

On August 11, Russian troops covered the village of Pisky in the Donetsk region with the TOS-1A Solntsepek heavy flamethrower system, using thermobaric ammunition⁵.

³ <https://t.me/senkevichonline/728>

⁴ https://t.me/pavlokyrylenko_donoda/3740

⁵ <https://t.me/insiderUKR/38678>.



The village of Pisky, the Donetsk region, was almost completely destroyed after the occupiers struck, on August 11⁶

On September 3, the occupiers bombarded the village of Bezruky, the Kharkiv region, with phosphorus bombs. 16 houses were destroyed⁷.

On December 7, the occupiers used cluster munitions in the city of Yampil in Donetsk region. The central square of the city and the administration building came under fire. During the shelling, local residents received humanitarian aid. Three people were injured⁸.

— ATTACKING, BOMBING AND MINING OF CIVILIAN OBJECTS

Russia has already fired 5,000 missiles at Ukraine⁹. 62% of them were targeted at civilian objects¹⁰.

As a result of targeted attacks, as well as indiscriminate attacks, the Russian military destroys both residential buildings and schools, hospitals, sports grounds, historical and cultural objects. Even after the end of the war, it will be impossible to return to a significant number of cities and villages, because the infrastructure there is practically destroyed.

As of the end of 2022, Russian troops **damaged or destroyed 150,000 residential buildings**¹¹.

6 https://t.me/TCH_channel/45893?single.

7 <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=7cSwc0AB6d0>.

8 https://t.me/tymoshenko_kyrylo/2990

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.kmu.gov.ua/news/denys-shmyhal-enerhetyka-ta-zhytlo-sered-priorytetnykh-napriamkiv-finansuvannia-shvydkoi-vidbudovy>

As of February 8, the armed forces of the Russian Federation **damaged 3,126 educational institutions** due to bombing and shelling. 337 of them were completely destroyed¹². **About 1,500 objects of cultural heritage and cultural infrastructure were damaged** as a result of Russian aggression¹³. As of January 25, **171 objects of medical infrastructure were destroyed and another 1,035 were damaged** as a result of Russian attacks¹⁴.



A destroyed school in Kramatorsk, the Donetsk region, July 21¹⁵



Children play in a ditch at the playground in Kyiv, where a Russian missile hit on October 10¹⁶

Thus, on June 27, the armed forces of the Russian Federation launched a missile attack on Kremenchuk, the Poltava region, as a result of which a civilian facility - the Amstor shopping center - was completely destroyed. 22 people died, 64 were injured, including a nine-year-old child¹⁷.

On July 14, the Russian army attacked Vinnytsia with cruise missiles. 26 people died, including three children¹⁸. 80 wounded civilians, including four children, went to the hospital¹⁹.

On the night of September 16, the occupiers launched a rocket attack on the Slobid district of Kharkiv. The rocket hit a yard near a two-story residential building. As a result, one of the apartments and a car parked in the yard caught fire. Four people were injured, among them boys aged 5 and 17²⁰.

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

13 <https://www.ukrinform.ua/rubric-culture/3667256-cerez-vijnu-v-ukraini-poskodzeni-ci-zrujnovani-blizko-15-tisaci-obektiv-kulturnoi-spadsini.html>

14 <https://moz.gov.ua/article/news/za-11-misjaciv-vijni-rosijani-zrujnuvali-171-ob%ca%bcekt-medzakladiv-ta-sche-1035--poshkodili>

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

16 Фото М. Барчук <https://glavcom.ua/kyiv/news/diti-hrajutsja-u-vorontsi-vid-snarjadu-shokujuče-foto-z-kijeva-882515.html>.

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

18 https://zaxid.net/kilkist_zhertv_raketnogo_udaru_rosijan_po_vinnitsi_zrosla_do_26_n1546618.

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

20 <https://www.gp.gov.ua/ua/posts/vnoci-rosiiski-viiskovi-obstrilyali-dva-raioni-xarkova-sered-poranenix-diti-rozpocato-provadžennya>.

The Hague Convention of 1907

Article 25. It is forbidden to attack or bomb unprotected cities, towns, residential buildings or structures in any way.

Protocol 1 to the Geneva Convention

Article 51. Indiscriminate attacks are prohibited. An indiscriminate attack includes attacks that are not directed at specific military objects.

On October 9, the occupiers fired 12 rockets at Zaporizhzhia. More than 50 high-rise buildings and 20 private houses were damaged²¹. 13 people died, including one child. 89 people were injured, including 11 children²².

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 result of an enemy rocket hitting a residential building. Four more children aged from 3 to 10 years were injured²³.

On January 14, Russian troops targeted a residential building in the city of Dnipro. 44 people died, including five children. 79 people were injured²⁴.

At the same time, **the Russian army continues to shell Ukraine's energy infrastructure.** Since the fall, energy enterprises of the DTEK Energo have already suffered 27 terrorist attacks from Russia²⁵. As a result, the civilian population is forced to live without electricity

for hours or even days, and often without water and heating. It is especially difficult for families with young children and children who need medical and/or rehabilitation care.



A child with her mother in the Point of Invincibility. They came from home to use a mains-powered inhaler²⁶.

21 <https://t.me/SBUkr/5326>.

22 https://t.me/tymoshenko_kyrylo/2225.

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

24 <https://t.me/dnipropetrovskaODA/3067>

25 https://t.me/dtek_ua/268

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



A 4-year-old boy received a severe mine-explosive laceration on his back. He was returning home with his father when enemy shelling began in one of the districts of Kyiv. The projectile hit the yard - the father and son received shrapnel wounds²⁷.



On June 26, a residential building in Kyiv was destroyed as a result of a Russian missile attack. A seven-year-old girl with mine-explosive injuries of moderate severity was taken out from under the rubble. Okhmatdyt's professionals diagnosed the child with numerous wounds, bruises and abrasions. The girl was operated on, now her condition is stable²⁸.

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 those who return to the de-occupied territories of Ukraine. As of February 10, since the beginning of the war, units of the State Emergency Service have carried out 80,256 trips to eliminate the consequences of shelling²⁹ and demined more than 320,000 explosive devices³⁰. **About 30% of the country's territory still needs demining³¹.**

On May 26, a 12-year-old boy died as a result of the detonation of an unexploded Russian Grad projectile on the territory of school No. 30 in Mariupol, the Donetsk region³².

On June 3, two people were killed by a mine explosion on the Pishchany beach in Mariupol, the Donetsk region. One of the dead is an 8-year-old boy³³.

On October 6, two children, five and ten years old, died from their injuries when a landmine blew up in the village of Pidhirne, the Vasylyvsky District, the Zaporizhzhia Region³⁴.

27 <https://www.facebook.com/1923262167984511/posts/3037697449874305/>

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

29 <https://dsns.gov.ua/news/nadzvicaini-podiyi/operativna-informacia-dsns-shhodo-naslidkiv-vedennia-boiovix-dii-rosiiskoiu-federacijeu-62>

30 <https://dsns.gov.ua/map-demining>

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

32 <https://t.me/andriyshTime/1091>

33 <https://t.me/andriyshTime/1293>

34 https://t.me/pgo_gov_ua/6513

On October 17, near the village of Dibrova, the Izyum district, the Kharkiv region, a 16-year-old boy stepped on an explosive device and was critically injured³⁵.

On November 14, three children aged 5 months, 5 and 10 years were injured of varying degrees of severity when a civilian car hit an explosive object near the village of Novoraysk, the Kherson region³⁶.

On December 7, the parents of eight minor children were blown up by a mine in Zhytomyr Oblast. The couple was driving a car³⁷.

It is also worth noting that there are numerous testimonies regarding the **use of civilian objects by the occupiers as military headquarters and/or warehouses of military equipment and ammunition**. In the conditions of forcing children to go to schools and kindergartens in the temporarily occupied territories and, if necessary, to visit medical institutions, this means using the civilian population as a human cover during military operations.

— MURDER, WOUNDING, CRUEL TREATMENT AND SEXUAL ASSAULT OF CHILDREN

In addition to children killed and injured as a result of the shelling of civilian objects, **there are cases of children of all ages being directly killed or injured. Often, this is also associated with cruel treatment and sexual assault against children.**

On March 14, 2022, in the village of Mokhnatyn, the military of the aggressor country shot three young men. Two of the deceased were 17 years old, the other was 19³⁸.

On April 9, the tortured and burned bodies of three people, one of whom was a child, were found in the Izyum district of the Kharkiv region³⁹.

On April 16, in the Novovorontsovka district of the Kherson region, Russian occupiers fired on a group of teenagers. One boy died⁴⁰.

On May 1, it became known that in the Chernihiv region, the occupiers killed a young mother, tied up her live child and attached a mine between the child and the mother's body. When unwinding, the mine detonated, and the child died.⁴¹

35 <https://www.gp.gov.ua/ua/posts/yuvenalni-prokurori-425-ditei-zaginulo-vnaslidok-zbroinoyi-agresiyi-rf-v-ukrayini>.

36 <https://www.gp.gov.ua/ua/posts/yuvenalni-prokurori-431-ditina-zaginula-vnaslidok-zbroinoyi-agresiyi-rf-v-ukrayini-2>

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

38 <https://gp.gov.ua/ua/posts/viiskovi-rf-rozstrilyali-tryox-pidlitkiv-na-vernigivshhini-rozpocato-rozsliduvannya>

39 <https://www.gp.gov.ua/ua/posts/yuvenalni-prokurori-vnaslidok-zbroinoyi-agresiyi-rf-v-ukrayini-zaginuli-176-ditei>

40 <https://tsn.ua/ukrayina/u-hersonskiy-oblasti-okupanti-obstrilyali-ditey-odna-ditina-zaginula-2039245.html>

41 <https://zmina.info/news/rosiys%CA%B9ki-viys%CA%B9kovi-vbyly-zhinku-prymotaly-do-neyi-yiyi-zhyvu-dytynu-a-mizh-nymy-zaklaly-minu-zhurnalisty/>

On June 27, Russian troops fired into a crowd of people who had come to pick up technical water in Lysychansk, the Luhansk region, killing at least eight people and injuring 21. Among the casualties, one child was killed and one wounded⁴².

On July 15, in Kherson, Russian military killed a mother and her minor daughter⁴³.

On November 18, in the village of Komysh-Zorya, the Zaporizhzhia region, Russian servicemen shot dead a family together with two children aged 5 and 14 in their own residential house⁴⁴.



The torture cell of the occupiers in Kherson⁴⁷.

The UN Independent International Commission of Inquiry on Ukraine has confirmed that a number of war crimes have been committed in Ukraine, and that human rights and international humanitarian laws have been violated. The Commission reported **cases of extrajudicial executions, illegal imprisonment, torture and ill-treatment, rape and other sexual violence** in late February and March 2022 in Kyiv, Chernihiv, Kharkiv and Sumy⁴⁵. There were also cases of violations of the personal integrity of children. A 14-year-old boy was found dead along with his neighbor. Both had gunshot wounds to the head, suggesting that they had been executed. The Commission **also confirmed cases of sexual violence, including against children**⁴⁶.

Since the beginning of the full-scale war, **the prosecutor's office has discovered 54 torture cells and initiated 5,079 criminal proceedings on the facts of torture** and other inhuman treatment as a result of Russia's full-scale invasion of Ukraine⁴⁸. 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 phone⁴⁹.

42 <https://t.me/luhanskaVTSA/3828>

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

44 <https://www.gp.gov.ua/ua/posts/yuvenalni-prokurori-437-ditei-zagynulo-vnaslidok-zbroinoyi-agresiyi-rf-v-ukrayini>

45 https://www.ohchr.org/en/press-releases/2022/10/un-commission-has-found-array-war-crimes-violations-human-rights-and?utm_source=telegram.

46 <https://www.ohchr.org/sites/default/files/2022-10/A-77-533-AUV-UA.pdf>.

47 https://www.facebook.com/watch/?v=681350976694189&extid=CL-UNK-UNK-UNK-AN_GKOT-GKIC&ref=sharing

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

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

Convention on the Rights of the Child

Article 37. States Parties shall ensure that no child shall be subjected to torture or other cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment.

Protocol 1 to the Geneva Convention

Article 77. 1. Children have special respect and are protected from any kind of indecent assault. The parties to the conflict shall guarantee the protection and assistance which they require in view of their age or for any other reason.

As of February 9, the Office of the Prosecutor General has identified more than **100 cases of war-related sexual violence, 12 of which were against children**⁵⁰. Prosecutors provide procedural guidance in eight criminal proceedings on the abduction of minors by representatives of the occupation authorities and the use of torture or inhuman treatment against them⁵¹.

Since the beginning of the war, **a significant number of burials of civilians, including children, have been discovered**. Some of the dead have traces of torture and ill-treatment.

Thus, as of the end of December, the police of the Donetsk region discovered 168 burials. The burials contained 302 dead bodies of civilians. Of these, 162 were males, 115 were females and six were children. The sex and identity of the others have not yet been identified⁵².

On December 22, the Ministry of Internal Affairs of Ukraine provided updated results of the exhumation of bodies in the town of Iziium in the Kharkiv region. More than 450 bodies were exhumed from the burial sites, including about 200 bodies of men, a few more bodies of women, more than 20 bodies of military personnel, seven children, and the remains of 12 people whose sex, age, and identity cannot be identified. It has been preliminarily established that among these people there are those who died of violent deaths: gunshot wounds, explosive injuries. Signs of torture were found in at least 40 people⁵³.

As of the end of November, 50 locations of suspected burials had been examined in the de-occupied territories of the Mykolaiv and Kherson regions, where experts have already found and identified the bodies of about 200 people⁵⁴. In total, as of December 22, morgues received about 700 bodies during the occupation of the Kherson region, of which about 100 had injuries sustained as a result of combat operations, and 12 of them have not yet been identified⁵⁵.

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

51 According to the answer № 27/3-184 dated 09.02.2023 of the Office of the Prosecutor General of Ukraine to the request of the NGO "Kharkiv Institute of Social Research"

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

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

54 https://t.me/minre_ua/2081

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

— KIDNAPPING AND FORCED DEPORTATION OF CHILDREN

Geneva Convention

Article 49. It is prohibited, regardless of the motives, to carry out forced individual or mass resettlement or deportation of persons under protection from the occupied territory to the territory of the occupying state or to the territory of any other state, regardless of whether it is occupied or not.

Protocol 1 to the Geneva Convention

Article 78. No party to the conflict shall take measures to evacuate children other than its own citizens to a foreign country, except in the case of temporary evacuation necessary for urgent reasons, related to the state of health or treatment of children or, if they are not in the occupied territory, with their safety.

According to official statistics, **as of February 23, 346 children were found missing, 16 206 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 – 733 thousand⁵⁶.

Various attempts of Russians to prepare Ukrainian children for deportation to Russia are recorded. Thus, the Russian occupation administration carries out medical examination. Doctors imported from Russia and sends children to Russia as if for “medical care”⁵⁷.

Also, the reason for the taking away children is “rehabilitation in children’s camps”, “patriotic education”, “visiting the Christmas tree and invitations to holidays in Russian cities”. Deportation of children brought up in the boarding institutions is also documented.



Deportation of residents of Mariupol to Russia⁵⁸

⁵⁶ <https://childrenofwar.gov.ua>.

⁵⁷ <https://sprotyv.mod.gov.ua/2022/11/26/rosiyany-pidgotuvaly-105-tys-ditej-do-vyvezennya-v-rosiyu/>

⁵⁸ <https://www.pravda.com.ua/rus/news/2022/04/23/7341577/>

On August 23, it became known about the illegal transfer of 30 children from Khartsyzk, Ilovaisk and Zugres to Nyzhnii Novgorod. The official goal is to participate in the educational and training meetings as part of the "Russian Center" program⁵⁹.

On October 21, the occupiers took 46 wards of the Kherson Regional Orphanage to the temporarily occupied Simferopol in ambulances⁶⁰.

On November 27, the Kherson City Council announced missing the children, who were taken by the occupiers from Kherson educational institutions during the autumn holidays "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 citizens⁶¹.

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"⁶².

In addition to deporting and imposing propaganda narratives on Ukrainian children in Russia, **Russian officials also resort to illegally adopt deported children** – primarily orphans and children deprived of parental care. Russia has issued and is actively implementing an order on a simplified regime for obtaining Russian citizenship for orphans and children deprived of parental care from Ukraine⁶³. In fact, this is an attempt to legalize the illegal transfer of Ukrainian children to the territory of the Russian Federation and the forced deprivation of their Ukrainian citizenship. It is worth noting that the **kidnapping and forcible deportation of children** deprived of parental care by the Russians have exclusively the **goal of terror and political pressure on Ukraine**. This is confirmed by a comparison of the number of adopted children in the Russian Federation and children who are candidates for adoption or who are awaiting adoption. Thus, according to statistics, at the beginning of 2021, there were about 41,000 children ready for adoption in Russia. At the same time, only 2.5 thousand children were adopted in 2020⁶⁴. That is, only every sixteenth (!) orphan in Russia has a chance to be adopted.

Deported Ukrainians are taken to the most remote and depressive regions of Russia – Siberia, the Far East, the North Caucasus, Chechnia, and Sakhalin. They are deprived of documents, personal belongings, means of communication. At the same time, documents are issued that prohibit leaving Russian regions for two years.

59 <https://gur.gov.ua/content/okupanty-pohrozhuut-shtrafamy-batkam-iaki-vidmovliaiutsia-viddavaty-ditei-v-rosiiski-shkoly-takozh-prodovzhuetsia-nezakonne-vyvezennia-ditei-na-terytoriiu-rf.html>.

60 <https://t.me/khersonskaODA/1350>.

61 https://t.me/kherson_miskrada/9634

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

63 https://t.me/rian_ru/165508

64 <https://www.google.com/amp/s/tass.ru/obschestvo/10773269/amp>

Filtration camps are an integral element of such displacement. Since February 24, the occupiers have already created **27 filtration camps and prisons** in the temporary occupied territories and in Russia⁶⁵. According to Dmytro Lubinets, the Ukrainian Parliament Commissioner for Human Rights, during the filtration the Russians keep men, women and children separately. Then, interrogations are conducted at the same time and the obtained information is compared. There is also a possibility of separating parents and children, when parents are detained for additional interrogations, and children are sent to the territory of the Russian Federation by themselves⁶⁶.

In addition to deportation, there are cases of **abduction of relatives of Ukrainian soldiers, including children**, in order to demand that they come to the occupied territories in exchange for the safety of their relatives. **Kidnapping of children** is also used as a **means to obtain weapons or to influence local authorities** during the occupation of Ukrainian territories.

In total, as of February 10, it was possible **to return to Ukraine only 307 deported children**⁶⁷. The return process is extremely complicated, because it usually requires the direct participation of parents, who have to go to Russia through third countries. Such trip is often dangerous and requires participation of state authorities, international and national public organizations, charitable foundations that can provide financial, legal, social and other types of support to parents.

Geneva Convention

Article 55. The occupying state is obliged to provide the population with food products and medical materials with the help of all available means; in particular, to supply the necessary food products, medical materials and other supplies, if the resources of the occupied territory are insufficient.

— DEPRIVING ACCESS TO HUMANITARIAN AID

There is a humanitarian crisis in the temporarily occupied territories. The occupying authorities make no effort to provide the local residents with sufficient food and drinking water, to provide communal services, access to medicines and

medical or social services. Very little of humanitarian aid is provided: either to the most vulnerable groups of the population (families with young children, the elderly) or in exchange for passport data, obtaining Russian citizenship, as an excuse to issue summonses to men, etc. **Problems with access to food** are caused and increased by the actions of the Russian occupiers, who do not allow humanitarian cargo from the territory controlled by Ukraine, destroy or steal humanitarian aid, set fire to wheat fields and damage agricultural infrastructure, export themselves or prohibit the sale of grain, vegetables and fruits from temporarily occupied territories.

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

66 <https://tsn.ua/ato/vizhivayut-yak-mozhut-ombudsmen-pro-dolyu-deportovanih-do-rf-2124421.html>

67 <https://childrenofwar.gov.ua>

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. The repair of utility networks is extremely difficult, there is a lack of appropriate equipment, which was taken away by the Russian military, and a shortage of specialists on the sites. In the most shelled areas, families with children are forced to live in adapted premises, often basements. They prepare food and warm themselves with open fire. There is a separate problem with the accumulation of a significant amount of household waste and spontaneous burials of people, which leads to significant ecological and epidemiological problems in these territories, especially during the warm season.



Getting 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 mostly serve the Russian military, some of them actually work in the format of military hospitals.

People wash their clothes in the puddles.
Mariupol, the Donetsk region⁶⁸

At the same time, **the Russian military is trying to prevent the evacuation, including evacuation of the elderly, women and children.** Thus, the exit from the occupied

territories through Vasylivka of the Zaporizhzhia region has not been working for over a month⁶⁹. There are also no official humanitarian corridors, and the independent evacuation of families has a number of risks.

Firstly, there are repeated cases of shelling civilian and humanitarian transport, railway stations and transport stops. Secondly, there is mining of temporarily occupied territories, including evacuation routes.

On March 21, in the village of Malynivka in the Zaporizhzhia region, the occupiers shot with automatic weapons two cars with local residents who were moving along the humanitarian corridor. Two children, three women and a man were wounded as a result of the shooting at the cars⁷⁰.

68 <https://t.me/andriyshTime/1480>

69 <https://www.radiosvoboda.org/a/news-vyjzd-z-okupaciji-zakrytyj-vasylivka/32242673.html>

70 <https://interfax.com.ua/news/general/816603.html>



On April 8, the occupiers shelled with the "Tochka-U" missile a railway station in Kramatorsk, the Donetsk region, where more than four thousand people were waiting for evacuation. Seven children died⁷¹.



An 11-year-old girl was shot in the jaw at a Russian checkpoint as her family tried to leave Mariupol⁷².

On May 4, a convoy of private cars that left the town of Vovchansk, the Kharkiv region, was shot. As a result, a 6-month-old baby who was in one of the cars was injured, and a 13-year-old girl died⁷³.

On September 25, the Russians fired at a convoy of cars in the Kupyansk district of the Kharkiv region. 24 people died, including a pregnant woman and 13 children.

On September 30, 24 people, including 11 men and 13 women, died after Russia fired at a humanitarian convoy in Zaporizhzhia. 36 people were injured, including 24 men, 11 women and 1 child.

There are other risks. Ukrainians are taken for long-term filtration, they can be deported to the territory of Russia, families can be separated. Occupiers at checkpoints demand money for permission to leave, and can take away water and food, which are desperately needed during a several-day journey, especially in summer. Any of the described situations can be critical for children whose parents are trying to evacuate them. There are cases of death or deterioration of the health conditions of both adults and children during evacuation due to sunburns, heat strokes, heart problems, etc.

— RECRUITMENT AND PARTICIPATION OF CHILDREN IN THE WAR

Since 2014, Russia has been regularly violating international humanitarian law to prevent the participation of children in war. **The basis of involvement in hostilities is the active engagement of children 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, the Russian movement of schoolchildren, the Bol'shaya Pieriemiena ANO (the Big Change), as well as the Young Guard, the Victory Volunteers, the Patriot, the Union of Pioneers, the Bastion, etc. From the end of 2022, a unifying all-Russian movement of children and youth "Dvizheniye Piervykh" ("The movement of the first") appeared⁷⁴. Actually, the goal of the movement "to educate highly moral, socially successful citizens" hides the education of citizens who are obedient and loyal to the authorities, ready to go to war and pumped up by the propaganda of the "superpower". **The new movement provides for the enrollment of children from the age of 6**⁷⁵.

71 <https://www.gp.gov.ua/ua/posts/yuvenalni-prokurori-cerez-zbroinu-agresiyu-rf-v-ukrayini-zaginuli-197-ditei>

72 <https://life.pravda.com.ua/society/2022/04/5/248114/>

73 <https://www.gp.gov.ua/ua/posts/yuvenalni-prokurori-223-ditini-zaginuli-v-ukrayini-cerez-zbroinu-agresiyu-rf-2>

74 <http://xn--d1aayn.xn--p1ai/>

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



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 troops⁷⁶.



Schoolchildren from the temporarily occupied territories of the Donetsk region at the first congress of the Russian movement of children and youth⁷⁷.

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 youth⁷⁸. 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 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 Yunarmy at the end of 2021⁷⁹. 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.

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 anthem⁸⁰. In addition, extracurricular classes "Conversations about the important" were introduced, which provide propaganda information about Russia's war against Ukraine⁸¹. There is also evidence that schools in the temporarily occupied territories of Ukraine **impose Soviet symbols and attributes.**

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

77 https://t.me/rddm_dnr/22?single

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

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

80 <https://t.me/minprosr/811>.

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

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 essays on such topics as 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 Ukraine⁸².

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 candles⁸³, make drones⁸⁴, can sew warm clothes for the military or cook food⁸⁵. 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 students from 415 colleges work in the direction of welding production. The young people have already made 864 stoves⁸⁶.

Staff of educational institutions in the temporarily occupied territories of Ukraine are also actively trained. The so-called advisers to the directors on patriotic education and interaction with children’s public associations should be responsible for the implementation of propaganda narratives among students regarding the “special military operation”. 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. 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, etc⁸⁷.

80 <https://t.me/minprosr/811>.

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

82 <https://www.facebook.com/police.kharkov/posts/pfbid0ZGFJs3QmT4MfMYpjvf7XzwTkF6go9whbBd9k5rBbzml2eg1Q6CgybayG4TcLwWuPl>

83 <https://myvmeste.pf/tpost/bsxbhvt11-v-ramkah-aktsii-mivmeste-volontyori-mast>

84 <https://myvmeste.pf/tpost/jjop2ytue1-sahalinskie-shkolniki-sobirayut-bespilot>

85 <https://myvmeste.pf/tpost/7ss35d1d71-mivmestedeti-rebyata-vsei-strani-obediny>

86 <https://myvmeste.pf/tpost/3031xg3tg1-v-ramkah-shveinoi-masterskoi-mi-ryadom-o>

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

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 adolescents and through indirect collection of photos and data on military and critical infrastructure objects in mobile applications and games⁸⁹.

Protocol 1 to the Geneva Conventions

Article 77. Parties to the conflict shall take all practicable measures to ensure that children under the age of fifteen do not take direct part in hostilities and, in particular, the parties shall refrain from recruiting them into their armed forces. In the recruitment of persons who have reached the age of fifteen but who have not yet attained the age of eighteen, the parties to the conflict shall seek to give preference to persons of an older age.

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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 2014⁹¹.

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

88 <https://www.gp.gov.ua/ua/posts/zdavav-poziciji-artileriiskix-pidrozdiliv-zsu-pidozryujetsya-nepovnolitnij-meskanec-m-baxmut>.

89 <https://t.me/SBUkr/4326>

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

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

— 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.
- 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.
- 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;
 - 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.



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

More information at www.voices.org.ua and www.khisr.kharkov.ua