



United States Mission to the OSCE

The Russian Federation's Ongoing Aggression Against Ukraine

As delivered by Chargé d'Affaires Katherine Brucker
to the Permanent Council, Vienna
July 11, 2024

Russia's July 8th missile strike that killed dozens of Ukrainian civilians at Kyiv's largest children's hospital was a horrific reminder of Russia's brutality and cruelty toward the children of Ukraine. This cruelty and brutality have been enduring features of Russia's war. As the June 16th Summit on Peace in Ukraine communique reaffirmed, "all deported and unlawfully displaced Ukrainian children, and all other Ukrainian civilians who were unlawfully detained, must be returned to Ukraine." This call echoed the May 2023 Moscow Mechanism report.

Sadly, Russia has not changed course. Russia continues to ignore its OSCE commitments and international law obligations, the recommendations of the international community, and pleas from the children's families. Ukraine estimates Russian authorities have forcibly relocated nearly 20,000 children from occupied territories in Ukraine since February 2022. Many thousands are still missing, their whereabouts unknown. Moreover, there is compelling evidence Russian authorities have changed the identity and citizenship of many children in an apparent effort to Russify them.

A June 12th *Financial Times* report confirmed Russian officials have put up for adoption Ukrainian children forcibly deported in 2022. Reporters used image recognition tools and public records to identify and locate four Ukrainian children on a Russian-government-linked website advertising them for adoption. There was no acknowledgement of their Ukrainian background. The adoption agency even gave one child a name and age different from those on the child's Ukrainian government-issued documents.

We have also learned more about Russia's efforts to indoctrinate Ukrainian children in its custody. This includes activities at the so-called Artek summer camp in Russia-occupied Crimea, which the United States and others have sanctioned. Children described how Russian authorities forced them to watch and recite Kremlin propaganda, and sometimes created new identities – including new birth certificates – for them. According to the head of Russia's pro-Kremlin youth group, Russia now plans to send children to DPRK camps similar to Artek as part of so-called youth exchanges.

Madam Chair, let's be clear: the Kremlin's claim that it is protecting Ukrainian children is a lie. It is an excuse for the Kremlin's systematic, forcible relocation of Ukrainian children. As the UN Independent International Commission of Inquiry on Ukraine concluded in March 2023, this is a war crime. The Kremlin's practice of changing a child's identity and listing the

child for adoption shows these forcible transfers and deportations are not about protecting children. According to Ukraine's Children of War portal, only 388 deported or unlawfully transferred children have returned home. That's 388 of over 20,000 - not even two percent. This number is tragically far too low.

We again call on Russia to implement the Moscow Mechanism report recommendations and immediately cease the forcible transfer or deportation of Ukrainian children; impose a moratorium on any further adoptions of children who have previously held or currently hold Ukrainian citizenship; and to return these children to Ukraine. We welcome OSCE assistance through the Support Program for Ukraine to document these cases to help reunite families.

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