

1 | Scale of Abductions

The Ministry of Justice of Ukraine has verified **19,915** cases of unlawful deportations and forced transfers of children. As of March 3, 2026, **2,029** children have been returned from Russian abduction and occupation.

Russian Commissioner for Children Rights Maria Lvova-Belova claimed that 700,000 Ukrainian children crossed the Russian border. Ukrainian officials estimate that **200,000** of them have been abducted. The exact number of abducted children is currently unknown due to the lack of access to the occupied territories and no cooperation by Russia on the issue.

2 | Illegal Adoption

In May 2022, Russian President Vladimir Putin signed a decree providing for a simplified procedure to impose Russian citizenship on Ukrainian "children left without parental care and incapacitated persons," legalizing the abduction process. The Yale Human Research Laboratory (YHRL) identified **314** Ukrainian children placed in Russia's program of coerced adoption and fostering since February 2022 – **208** of which have already been placed in a Russian family. Real numbers are much higher: a website of Krasnodar region alone advertised the adoption of 1,000 children from Mariupol. High-ranking Russian officials, such as Maria Lvova-Belova and former Chairman of the Federation Council Sergei Mironov, have adopted abducted Ukrainian children from occupied Mariupol and Kherson, respectively.

The adoption process is often accompanied by **sibling separation, the change of personal information and erasure of the paper trail**, effectively destroying any chance for parents or Ukrainian authorities to search for a child.

3 | Classification as Genocide & International Response

Russia's forcible transfer and deportation of Ukrainian children is in **direct violation of the UN Genocide Convention** that includes "forcibly transferring children of the [national, ethnical, racial or religious] group to another group," as a marker of **genocide**.

Russia's systematic separation of children from parents and mistreatment of children **violates multiple articles of the Fourth Geneva Convention**.

In a UN Human Rights Council report dated March 15, 2023, the Commission concluded that "the transfer and deportation of children, within Ukraine and

to the Russian Federation respectively, violate international humanitarian law, and amount to a **war crime**."

On March 17th, 2023, **the International Criminal Court issued arrest warrants for Vladimir Putin and Maria Lvova-Belova** for their roles in the forcible transfer of Ukrainian children to Russia.

The International Federation of the Red Cross **expelled the Belarus Red Cross Society** as a result of their refusal to dismiss the Secretary General of the Belarus chapter, who publicly admitted his involvement in the abduction of Ukrainian children.

On July 14th 2025 the **European Court of Human Rights has found Russia guilty of a systematic practice of abduction**, forcible transfer, and indoctrination of Ukrainian children.

4 | In captivity

Russia presents abduction of Ukrainian children as a rescue mission, but children are taken to Russia under coercion and deception.

Ukrainian children are subject to heavy **indoctrination**: singing the Russian national anthem, studying history according to the Russian worldview that portrays the US as its nemesis.. They are stripped of their national identity and punished for speaking Ukrainian.

As of 2026 we know of, at least **388,000** Ukrainian children who have been enrolled to the Russian **paramilitary movements** and taught to pilot drones, dig trenches, assemble and shoot weapons and other skills required to join the armed forces.

Children do not receive appropriate medical treatment and are subjected to physical, sexual and psychological abuse as well as the **risk of being trafficked** and exploited.

YHRL has confirmed the existence of at least **210** facilities across Russia and Russian-occupied territories for deported Ukrainian children. Of these, **11** are located over 500 miles from Ukraine: two in Siberia and one in Russia's East.

The YHRL also confirmed that at least **2,442** Ukrainian children have been taken to **13 re-educational** facilities in Belarus.

1.6 million children who remain under Russian occupation are subject to aggressive indoctrination and constant risk of being abducted. At least **44,000** of them still secretly study in Ukrainian schools online.

Russia does not follow international law to return Ukrainian children. President Trump should make their return a non-negotiable condition of the peace deal with Putin.