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NOTE VERBALE

The OSCE Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights (ODIHR) presents its compliments to the Delegations of the OSCE participating States and, in accordance with paragraph 7 of the 1991 Moscow Document, has the honour to herewith transmit the observations of the mission of experts established under the Moscow Mechanism, invoked by 41 OSCE participating States following bilateral consultations with Ukraine, together with a description of the actions that Ukraine has taken or intends to take in response.

ODIHR avails itself of this opportunity to renew to the Delegations of the OSCE participating States the assurances of its highest consideration.



Warsaw, 6 July 2026

To the
Delegations of the OSCE participating States
Vienna

Corr.1*) Corrigendum due to change of distribution status, text remains unchanged

Report on Violations and Abuses of International Humanitarian,
Human Rights and Criminal Law related to Militarization and
Indoctrination of Ukrainian Children by the Russian Federation

by Prof. Hervé Ascensio, Dr. Elīna Šteinerte, and Prof. Stefan Wolff

Table of Contents

- Executive Summary 4
 - A. Context and Mandate..... 4
 - B. Forcible Transfers and Deportations of Ukrainian Children and Their Adoption..... 4
 - C. A System of Purposeful Design: Legislative Architecture and its Implementation 4
 - D. Indoctrination, Militarization, and Conscription 5
 - E. Coercion: Pressure on Parents, Teachers, and Children 5
 - F. Legal Assessment 5
 - G. Recommendations 6
- I. Introduction and Mandate 7
 - A. Invocation of the Moscow Mechanism 7
 - B. Mandate 8
 - C. Applicable International Law 10
 - D. Methodology 12
- II. Facts..... 14
 - A. Forcible Transfer and Deportation of Ukrainian Children: Developments since 2023..... 14
 - B. International Response: Return Mechanisms and Support for Affected Children..... 21
 - C. Indoctrination and Militarization of Ukrainian Children in Occupied Territories and Russia 26
 - D. Escalation and Institutionalization: Patterns of Russian Policy 53
- III. Legislative Architecture of Indoctrination, Militarization and Re-education of Ukrainian Children..... 59
 - A. General Architecture of the System..... 59
 - B. Education as an Instrument of Identity Transformation 62
 - C. Citizenship and Administrative Coercion Through Education 68
 - D. Militarization Through Youth Policy and Military-Patriotic Structures..... 70
 - E. Ideological Security Framework and Anti-Extremism Legislation 73
- IV. Coercion and Other Forms of Violence Against Children..... 76
 - A. Coercive Environment..... 76
 - B. Pressure to Enter the Russian Education System and Within It 77
 - C. Pressure to Attend Extracurricular Activities 78
 - D. Coercion in Everyday Life 79
 - E. Coercion to Acquire Russian Citizenship 80

V. Legal Assessment under International Law	81
A. Under International Humanitarian Law.....	81
B. Under International Human Rights Law	88
C. Under International Criminal Law	103
VI. Accountability	108
A. State’s Responsibility	108
B. Criminal Responsibility of Perpetrators	113
C. Remedies and Reparations for Victims.....	117
VII. General Conclusions	120
A. Facts.....	120
B. Legislative Architecture of Indoctrination, Militarization and Re-education of Ukrainian Children.....	120
C. Coercion and Other Forms of Violence against Children.....	121
D. Legal Assessment under International Law.....	121
E. Accountability	123
Recommendations	125
A. To All Stakeholders	125
B. To the Russian Federation	125
C. To Ukraine	127
D. To Other States and International Organizations.....	128
Annex 1: Letter to the Permanent Representative of Ukraine to the International Organizations in Vienna.....	130
Annex 2: Letter to the Permanent Representative of the Russian Federation to the OSCE.....	131
Annex 3: Response from the Permanent Mission of Ukraine to the International Organizations in Vienna.....	132

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

A. CONTEXT AND MANDATE

On 14 May 2026, 41 OSCE participating States invoked the Moscow Mechanism, mandating an expert mission to investigate the **militarization** and **indoctrination** of Ukrainian children by the Russian Federation. The three appointed experts — Prof. Hervé Ascensio, Dr. Elīna Šteinerte, and Prof. Stefan Wolff — were to establish facts, assess compliance with OSCE commitments, international humanitarian law (IHL), international human rights law (IHRL), and international criminal law (ICL), and to propose accountability measures as well as recommendations. This is the sixth expert mission under the Moscow Mechanism related to Ukraine since 2022. Thanks to Ukraine's cooperation, the Mission had access to relevant information and was able to visit Ukraine; the Russian Federation did not cooperate.

B. FORCIBLE TRANSFERS AND DEPORTATIONS OF UKRAINIAN CHILDREN AND THEIR ADOPTION

Forcible transfers and deportations of Ukrainian children remain among the gravest violations documented. Ukrainian official records identify 20,610 deported or forcibly transferred children as of June 2026. Children deported to the Russian Federation have frequently been placed in foster families or subjected to adoption under Russian law, in violation of Article 50 of the Fourth Geneva Convention and Articles 8, 9, 10, and 21 of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC). The Russian Federation has systematically obstructed family reunification while failing to establish any **mechanism for restoration of identity**, as required by Article 8(2) of the UNCRC and as recommended by the 2023 Moscow Mechanism Mission.

C. A SYSTEM OF PURPOSEFUL DESIGN: LEGISLATIVE ARCHITECTURE AND ITS IMPLEMENTATION

The Mission finds that the Russian **legislative architecture** governing Ukrainian children in occupied territories constitutes a **system of purposeful design**. First implemented in Crimea since 2014, it was expanded to all occupied territory since February 2022, with further strengthening and reinforcement. This architecture intertwines education law, youth policy, family law, citizenship regulations, and **legislation on terrorism and extremism** to produce a coordinated mechanism of indoctrination and militarisation, as well as of suppression of any dissent.

Four features define this system. First, Russian federal law treats education as an instrument of State security and identity transformation: federal educational standards prescribe the formation of Russian civic identity and loyalty as core objectives. Second, **passportization** — the acquisition of Russian **citizenship** — has been rendered *de facto* compulsory, as access to education, healthcare, employment, and basic services is conditioned on holding Russian documents. Third, the boundary between civilian education and military service has been systematically dismantled: mandatory subjects such as “Fundamentals of Security and Defence of the Homeland,” introduced in grades 8–11 from September 2024, incorporate weapons handling, Unmanned Aerial Vehicle (UAV) operation, and tactical medicine into the standard school curriculum. Fourth, legislation on terrorism and extremism — principally Federal Law No. 114-FZ and associated strategic instruments — creates a framework under which expressions of Ukrainian identity, language, and/or historical memory are treated as security

threats, supported through the introduction of vague offences of “discrediting” the armed forces and “rehabilitation of Nazism”.

Key implementing actors include the Ministries of Education and Defence, the law enforcement authorities, Rosgvardiya, State-sponsored **military-patriotic youth organizations**, such as DOSAAF, “Dvizheniye Pervykh” (Movement of the First), “Yunarmiya,” and the “Voin” centres, and the Russian Orthodox Church.

D. INDOCTRINATION, MILITARIZATION, AND CONSCRIPTION

Indoctrination operates across every level of the school system in the occupied territories. Russian curricula have replaced Ukrainian educational content entirely; Ukrainian-language instruction was formally eliminated by Ministry of Education Order No. 729 (signed 8 October 2025, in force 15 December 2025). History textbooks promote Russian civilisational supremacy and erase Ukrainian national identity. The weekly compulsory “Razgovory o Vazhnom” (“Conversations about Important Things”) programme, starting from kindergarten age, embeds pro-war narratives in ordinary school life, while cadet classes and military-patriotic youth organizations extend pre-military preparation.

Militarization extends beyond the classroom through State-sponsored military-patriotic youth organizations and re-education camps. Membership of “Yunarmiya” generates admissions advantages at military universities; the “Voin” centres provide structured training in weapons and UAV operation for children aged 14–18. **Conscription** completes this pipeline: Ukrainian boys in the occupied territories, in particular, receive pre-conscription notices as young as 16, and conscription is imposed upon reaching 18, in direct violation of the prohibition on compelling protected persons to serve in the armed or auxiliary forces of the occupying State.

E. COERCION: PRESSURE ON PARENTS, TEACHERS, AND CHILDREN

The system is enforced through pervasive **coercion**. **Pressure on parents, teachers, and children** is both structural and individualized. Parents who refuse to enrol their children in Russian schools are threatened with deprivation of parental rights; law enforcement agents accompany school officials on house-to-house visits to compel compliance. Teachers who decline to implement the Russian curriculum face dismissal, harassment, house searches, and detention. Children are forbidden to speak Ukrainian in schools or public spaces; those who express pro-Ukrainian views — including on social media — face searches, interrogation, and even prosecution.

Coercion to acquire Russian citizenship is exercised by denying access to care and social services, to education, to daily matters such as banking services, and restricting freedom of movement to those without Russian documents.

F. LEGAL ASSESSMENT

Under IHL, the Mission concludes that the Russian Federation has committed multiple violations, including: the unlawful transformation of the education system in breach of Article 43 of the Hague Regulations and Article 50 of the Fourth Geneva Convention; compulsion of children to participate in formations subordinate to the occupying power; alteration of the personal status and identity of children through passportization and adoption; and prohibited pressure to swear allegiance to the occupying power.

Under IHRL, the Mission finds systematic and overlapping violations of the UNCRC, including the rights to identity, family, education, information, freedom of thought and

conscience, health, and right to liberty and security of person. The best interests of the child — the paramount obligation under Article 3 UNCRC — were disregarded in every dimension of Russia’s policy.

Under ICL, the Mission concludes that the practices of systemic indoctrination and militarisation may also amount to a crime against humanity in the form of **persecution**, directed against Ukrainian children on discriminatory grounds as part of a widespread and systematic attack. In addition, the Mission endorses the determination of the UN Independent International Commission of Inquiry that the forcible transfer and deportation of Ukrainian children may also amount to a crime against humanity in the form of deportation and forcible transfer of population, and highlights that the delays and obstacles to their return are an aggravating factor. Moreover, the Mission identifies probable **war crimes related to the subject of this Mission**, including torture and inhuman treatments, causing great suffering to children, and unlawful deportation and transfer of children.

G. RECOMMENDATIONS

The *principal recommendation* of the present Mission addressed to all stakeholders is to immediately, effectively, and meaningfully recognize the centrality of the plight of Ukrainian children for their safety, identity and family life in the ongoing war and in all cease-fire and peace negotiations. The Mission further calls on the Russian Federation to halt all practices of indoctrination and militarization, to cease all coercion against children, parents, and teachers, to immediately facilitate the return of all deported children, and to establish a mechanism for restoration of identity. It calls on Ukraine to continue strengthening its systems for the documentation, return, reintegration, and rehabilitation of affected children, and to sustain support for the families of those still held. OSCE participating States and the wider international community are called upon to support accountability mechanisms, child-protection and return efforts, and international cooperation to end impunity for crimes against Ukrainian children.

I. INTRODUCTION AND MANDATE

A. INVOCATION OF THE MOSCOW MECHANISM

The procedure known as the “Moscow Mechanism” was established in 1991 by the participating States of the then CSCE, now OSCE, by the “Document of the Moscow Meeting of the Conference on the Human Dimension of the CSCE” (hereinafter “Moscow Document”). It provides for the setting up of missions concerning questions relating to the human dimension of the OSCE on the territory of a participating State, either at its invitation, *proprio motu* (paragraph 4), after a request by one or more participating States (paragraph 8), or at the request of another participating State with the support of a least nine other participating States (paragraph 12). In all cases, the State whose territory is affected by the relevant issues raised must “co-operate fully with the mission of experts and facilitate its work” (paragraph 6).

On 14 May 2026, 41 OSCE participating States triggered the Moscow Mechanism, under paragraph 8, calling on Ukraine to invite a mission to investigate the militarization and indoctrination of Ukrainian children by the Russian Federation.¹ The list of the invoking States is as follows: Albania, Andorra, Austria, Belgium, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Bulgaria, Canada, Croatia, Cyprus, Czechia, Denmark, Estonia, Finland, France, Georgia, Germany, Greece, Hungary, Iceland, Ireland, Italy, Latvia, Liechtenstein, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Malta, Moldova, Monaco, Montenegro, The Netherlands, North Macedonia, Norway, Poland, Portugal, Romania, San Marino, Slovakia, Slovenia, Spain, Sweden, and the United Kingdom.

Ukraine agreed to invite a mission, and, in accordance with paragraph 4 of the Moscow Document, selected three persons from the resource list of experts to be part of it: Mr Hervé Ascensio (France), Ms Elīna Šteinerte (Latvia), and Mr Stefan Wolff (United Kingdom). The mission of experts was officially established on 1 June 2026. Under paragraph 7 of the Moscow Document, the mission had to submit its report “preferably within three weeks”. The present report was thus delivered on 22 June 2026.

This is the sixth expert mission under the Moscow Mechanism related to the situation in Ukraine, all of them set up under paragraph 8 of the Moscow Document. The previous missions dealt with violations of international law committed in Ukraine by the Russian Federation between 24 February and 1 April 2022 (MM I), committed in Ukraine by the Russian Federation between 1 April and 25 June 2022 (MM II), related to the Forcible Transfer and/or Deportation of Ukrainian Children to the Russian Federation (MM III), related to Arbitrary Deprivation of Liberty of Ukrainian Civilians by the Russian Federation (MM IV), and related to the treatment of Ukrainian prisoners of war (MM V).² This Mission built on their reports (hereinafter “MM Report I”, “MM Report II”, “MM Report III”, “MM Report IV”, “MM Report V”)³ to the extent that they already contained relevant information about Ukrainian children.

¹ See OSCE website: available at: <https://odhr.osce.org/news/odhr/664984>. This and all other links to online sources were live and accessible as of 21 June 2026.

² Available at: <https://www.osce.org/odhr/human-dimension-mechanisms>.

³ Wolfgang Benedek, Veronika Bílková, Marco Sassòli, *Report on Violations of International Humanitarian And Human Rights Law, War Crimes And Crimes Against Humanity Committed In Ukraine Since 24 February 2022*, OSCE, Vienna, 13 April 2022 (MM Report I); Veronika Bílková, Laura Guercio, Vasilka Sancin, *Report on Violations of International Humanitarian and Human Rights Law, War Crimes And Crimes Against Humanity Committed In Ukraine (1 April – 25 June 2022)*, OSCE, Vienna, 14 July 2022 (MM Report II); Veronika Bílková, Cecilie Hellestveit, Elīna Šteinerte, *Report on Violations and Abuses of International Humanitarian and Human Rights Law, War Crimes and Crimes Against Humanity, related to the Forcible Transfer and/or Deportation of Ukrainian Children to the Russian Federation*, OSCE, Vienna, 4 May 2023 (MM Report III); Veronika Bílková, Cecilie Hellestveit, Elīna Šteinerte, *Report on Violations and Abuses of International Humanitarian and Human*

Considering that the Mission was established at the invitation of Ukraine but also involves the Russian Federation because of its subject matter, the experts addressed, on 2 June 2026, a similar letter to the Representative of Ukraine to the OSCE and to the Representative of the Russian Federation to the OSCE in order to request their cooperation (respectively Annex 1 and Annex 2 of this report). The Government of Ukraine answered on 5 June 2026 (Annex 3). The Government of the Russian Federation did not answer.

B. MANDATE

According to the invocation letter, the Mission is tasked “*to build upon previous findings*”, and

“1) Establish the facts and circumstances surrounding possible contraventions of relevant OSCE commitments, and violations and abuses of IHRL and IHL, related to the militarization and indoctrination of Ukrainian children by the Russian Federation, including in temporarily occupied territories of Ukraine and including in the context of forcible transfer and/or unlawful deportation;

2) Collect, consolidate, and analyse information on these practices, including patterns of coercion, intimidation, repression, unlawful deprivation of liberty, illegal adoptions, ill-treatment, and other forms of violence affecting children;

3) Further, collect, consolidate, and analyse information on the legislative framework adopted by Russia for this purpose, and the school curricula imposed on Ukrainian children in the temporarily occupied territories;

4) Assess whether such practices indicate a coordinated and systematic policy aimed, inter alia, at erasing Ukrainian identity of children, including through their illegal adoptions as well as alteration of their nationality, and conditioning children for service to the occupying power;

5) Assess the impact of these practices on the rights of Ukrainian children, including the rights to life and development, health, education, family life, equality and non-discrimination, and protection from all forms of violence, and provide recommendations on urgent protective measures, prevention, and accountability pathways;

6) Offer recommendations on relevant accountability mechanisms, including how OSCE participating States and OSCE institutions can support documentation, child protection, return and reintegration efforts, and international co-operation to end impunity for crimes against children.”

These terms of reference define the scope of the Mission and of this report, in accordance with the Moscow document.

Ratione materiae, the mandate mentions “*militarization and indoctrination*” as “*practices*”, and it connects to them possible patterns of violence affecting children, such as “*coercion, intimidation, unlawful deprivation of liberty, illegal adoptions, ill-treatment*”. It also refers to the “*legislative framework adopted by Russia*” and the “*school curricula imposed on Ukrainian children*” as contributing to these practices and forms of violence. The terms “*militarization and indoctrination*” may be understood in this context as the imposition by the Russian Federation

Rights Law, War Crimes and Crimes Against Humanity, related to the Arbitrary Deprivation of Liberty of Ukrainian Civilians by the Russian Federation, OSCE, Vienna, 25 April 2024 (MM Report IV); Hervé Ascensio, Veronika Bílková, Mark Klamberg, *Report on Violations and Abuses of International Humanitarian and Human Rights Law, War Crimes and Crimes Against Humanity, related to the Treatment of Ukrainian POWs by the Russian Federation*, OSCE, Vienna, 8 September 2025 (MM Report V).

of a military-patriotic education on the Ukrainian children under its jurisdiction, through the regular school curriculum and through a range of extracurricular activities delivered by State and State-aligned actors, in pursuit of its political objectives.

Ratione personae, the letter of invocation refers to “Ukrainian children”, on the one hand, and to the behaviour of “the Russian Federation” towards them, on the other hand. This shows that the Mission must focus on the treatment of Ukrainian children as protected persons under the law of armed conflicts, *i.e.*, those who live in the Ukrainian territories occupied by the Russian Federation or who were transferred from these territories to the territory of the Russian Federation during the conflict. This is consistent with the references made in the mandate to the “temporarily occupied territories of Ukraine” and to the “context of forcible transfer and/or unlawful deportation”. In accordance with the definition commonly used in international law, the term “children” will be understood to mean all human beings under the age of 18.⁴ The reference to the Russian Federation includes all persons or entities who may be considered as its organs or over whom it exercises control.

Ratione temporis, the mandate does not contain an express indication as to when the period under consideration begins. However, it should be noted that the motives of the letter of invocation refer to the “full-scale war of aggression” launched by the Russian Federation against Ukraine on 24 February 2022, as well as to the twelve years of occupation of the Autonomous Republic of Crimea, the city of Sevastopol, and parts of the Donetsk and Luhansk regions, *i.e.*, to events which began on 20 February 2014. In addition, reference is made to recent reports concerning the treatment of Ukrainian children, to legislation introduced by the Russian Federation and currently in force, as well as to a “distinct and urgent human dimension question”. This prompted the Mission to examine the developments that have taken place since that date of 20 February 2014, which have led to the current situation in the occupied territories. It is also worth recalling that the previous missions launched under the Moscow Mechanism have addressed some aspects of the treatment of these children until 2023, notably the MM Report III. As for the end of the period under review, and since the mandate does not specify an end date, this Mission took into consideration all the relevant facts brought to its attention and occurring up to 20 June 2026.

Ratione loci, and in accordance with paragraph 8 of the Moscow Document, the present expert mission was invited by Ukraine to analyse a “question on its territory relating to the human dimension of the CSCE”, namely militarization and indoctrination of Ukrainian children who are in the hands of the Russian Federation. Consequently, the events examined in this report took place or originated in areas which are part of the sovereign territory of Ukraine, within its internationally recognized borders.⁵ They concern possible violations of a status, that of civilian persons, which was acquired or should have been acquired at a time when the children were on Ukrainian territory. The fact that some of these territories were occupied by the Russian Federation, or ruled by supposedly autonomous entities that in reality were under the control of

⁴ Convention on the Right of the Child (1989), Article 1 (“a child means every human being below the age of eighteen years unless under the law applicable to the child, majority is attained earlier”); the same age limit of 18 is enshrined in the Family code of Ukraine, Article 6. See also, in the context of the international humanitarian law, ICRC Commentary of Article 50 of GC IV (2025), para. 3252.

⁵ In accordance with UN Doc. A/RES/68/262 (“Territorial integrity of Ukraine”), 1 April 2014, and UN Doc. A/RES/ES-11/4 (“Territorial integrity of Ukraine: defending the principles of the Charter of the United Nations”), 13 October 2022, the Autonomous Republic of Crimea, the City of Sevastopol, the Donetsk, Luhansk, Kherson and Zaporizhzhia regions are still considered as part of the sovereign territory of Ukraine. The same holds true concerning all parts of Ukraine that were temporarily occupied by the Russian Federation. See MM Report II, p. 7; MM report III, p. 5-6; MM Report IV, p. 5-6, MM Report V, p. 5.

the Russian Federation,⁶ or later considered by the Russian Federation as integrated into its own territory does not alter the international status of such areas as Ukrainian territory.⁷ These territories will be referred to in this report as “occupied territories” or “occupied Ukrainian territories”, without specifying “temporarily”, as, under applicable international law, the occupation of these territories by the Russian Federation is necessarily temporary.

Similarly, the fact that some of the children were transferred to places located on what the international community considers to be the sovereign territory of the Russian Federation does not alter their original connection with the Ukrainian territory. Such events raise questions that have occurred “on [the Ukrainian] territory” within the meaning of the Moscow Document.

Furthermore, for the purposes of its analysis, this expert mission is not limited by the origin of the information: in accordance with the Moscow Document, it is empowered to use all information relevant to fulfil its task.⁸ This may include information relating to forms of violence suffered by Ukrainian children on the territory of the Russian Federation, notably if such acts contribute to establishing the existence of a “coordinated and systematic policy” of the Russian Federation, as requested in point 4 of the mandate. It should also be added that, in some of the cases, the children are difficult to locate precisely, which makes it necessary to take all the information into account for the purposes of the analysis.

C. APPLICABLE INTERNATIONAL LAW

The letter invoking the Moscow Mechanism refers to several sets of rules of international law that are intended to protect children: OSCE commitments, international humanitarian law (IHL), international human rights law (IHRL), and international criminal law (ICL). As explained in previous MM reports, these sets of rules apply simultaneously in the context of the armed conflict occurring between the Russian Federation and Ukraine.⁹ They are consequently applicable to the practices, the legal framework and the forms of violence used by the Russian Federation for the militarization and indoctrination of Ukrainian children. This paragraph will present the applicable law in general terms, while the rules specifically applicable to the facts under consideration will be set out in Section V of this report.

As participating States of the OSCE, both the Russian Federation and Ukraine have committed to respect human rights and the rule of law, which includes observance of IHL and IHRL in the context of armed conflicts. Adherence to OSCE standards is rooted in the 1975 Final Act of the CSCE, and the implications for IHL and IHRL have been highlighted throughout the CSCE/OSCE process.¹⁰ In particular, the Third CSCE Council of Ministers (Stockholm, 14-15 December 1992) recalled in its Decision 2 (“The CSCE as a community of values”) that “all Governments are accountable to each other for their behaviour towards their citizens and towards their neighbours”, and that “individuals are to be held personally accountable for war crimes and acts in violation of international humanitarian law”.¹¹ In view of the topic of the present report, it must also be stressed that the participating States have specifically committed

⁶ On the so-called “republics” of Luhansk and Donetsk, before their annexation by the Russian Federation, see MM Report I, p. 5.

⁷ See the Geneva Convention relative to the Protection of Civilian Persons in Time of War of 12 August 1949 (GCIV), Article 47 (“Inviolability of Rights”).

⁸ Moscow Document, par. 5: “Such mission may gather the information necessary for carrying out its tasks”.

⁹ MM Report I, p. 53; MM Report II, p. 11; MM Report III, p. 46-47; MM Report IV, p. 8; MM Report V, p. 7-9.

¹⁰ See OSCE/ODIHR, *OSCE Human Dimension Commitments, Vol. 2, Chronological Compilation*, 4th ed., 2023, Available at: <https://www.osce.org/odihr/human-dimension-commitments>.

¹¹ Stockholm Decision 2 (1992), p. 11.

themselves to respecting the rights of the child,¹² and to promote children's rights and interests in conflict and post-conflict situations.¹³

International humanitarian law (IHL), as a branch of international law applying specifically in times of armed conflict, is applicable to the situation covered by the mandate. In line with the previous reports under the Moscow Mechanism, this Mission considers that the conflict between the Russian Federation and Ukraine, which began in February 2014 and turned into a full-scale war of aggression on 24 February 2022, is an international armed conflict.¹⁴ Both the Russian Federation and Ukraine are parties to the main IHL treaties, i.e., the Convention (IV) respecting the Laws and Customs of War on Land and its annex of 18 October 1907 (Hague Regulations); the four Geneva Conventions of 12 August 1949; and the two Additional Protocols to the Geneva Conventions of 8 June 1977. These treaties set out rules governing the occupation of the territory of one party to the conflict by the other party as well as rules specifically designed to protect children in armed conflict which are relevant to this report. Moreover, these rules have for the most part become part of customary international law.¹⁵

International human rights law, as a branch of international law laying down obligations for States to respect, protect and fulfil human rights to all individuals within their territory or under their jurisdiction, is part of the law applicable to the treatment of Ukrainian children by the Russian Federation. Ukraine and the Russian Federation are both parties to the main universal treaties and are parties to some regional human rights treaties. In the context of the present Mission, it must be pointed out that, at the universal level, both are bound by the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (1989, CRC) and its optional Protocol on the Involvement of Children in Armed Conflicts (2000, CRC-OP), the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (1966, ICCPR) and its first Optional Protocol (1966, ICCPR-OP), the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (1966, ICESCR), the Convention against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment (1984, CAT), the International Convention for the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination (1965, CERD), and the Convention against Discrimination in Education (1960, CDE). In addition, Ukraine — but not the Russian Federation — is a party to the International Convention for the Protection of All Persons from Forced Disappearance (2006, CFD). At the regional level, the Russian Federation is a party to the CIS Convention on Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms (1995, CHRFF) and was bound by the European Convention on Human Rights (1950, ECHR) until 16 September 2022; Ukraine is a party to the ECHR. The most fundamental rules of IHRL also form part of customary international law and are peremptory in nature, and thus non-derogable.

International criminal law, as a branch of international law criminalizing serious violations of IHL and IHRL and giving rise to individual criminal responsibility for the perpetrators, also applies to the situation covered by the mandate. In this respect, this Mission considers that the definition of the four crimes under international law entailed in the Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court (ICC) of 17 July 1998, as amended in 2010 and 2017 (aggression, genocide, crimes against humanity, and war crimes), reflect international customary law.

¹² See OSCE/ODIHR, *OSCE Human Dimension Commitments, Vol. I, Thematic Compilation*, 4th ed., 2023, p. 219-226, Available at: <https://www.osce.org/odihr/human-dimension-commitments>. See also MM Report III, p. 8.

¹³ Istanbul Summit Declaration (1999), paras 24 and 28.

¹⁴ MM Report I, p. 5; MM Report II, p. 9; MM Report IV, p. 9; MM Report V, p. 7. See also ECtHR, *Ukraine and the Netherlands v. Russia*, Applications nos. 8019/16, 43800/14, 28525/20 and 11055/22, Decision (GC), 30 November 2022, paras 652, 695 and 697.

¹⁵ Jean-Marie Henckaerts, Louise Doswald-Beck (eds.), *Customary International Humanitarian Law*, Volume I: Rules, Volume II: Practice, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 2005 (ICRC Study on Customary IHL).

However, this report will not seek to identify individual responsibilities, because this would require a thorough investigation, notably about the subjective element of the crime, *i.e.*, individual criminal intent, which is beyond the scope of this short-term fact-finding mission. The report will limit itself to the collection and analysis of information that may reveal the existence of the objective elements of international crimes. It will also address the possible consequences of any international crime which may have been committed in relation to the indoctrination and militarization of Ukrainian children by the Russian Federation in Section VI on accountability.

The experts, in interpreting the relevant treaties, relied on the rules of interpretation set out in Articles 31 to 33 of the Vienna Convention of the Law of Treaties (VCLT). They paid particular attention, under Article 32 VCLT, to the *Commentaries* by the ICRC on the Geneva Conventions and their Additional Protocols. They also drew on the case law of the International Court of Justice, of international criminal courts and of international human rights courts and bodies, as subsidiary means for the determination of rules of law.¹⁶ Relevant recommendations and general observations of international organizations and human rights bodies have also been taken into account as authoritative interpretations of international law.

D. METHODOLOGY

The Mission followed the same methodology as the previous missions of experts established under the OSCE Moscow Mechanism in relation to Ukraine in 2022, 2023, 2024, and 2025. It also based its approach upon the Manual on Human Rights Monitoring, issued by the Office of the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR),¹⁷ and the Ukraine Monitoring Initiative Methodology, developed by the OSCE Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights (ODIHR).¹⁸ The Mission used several methods of fact-finding, including desk research, open-source research techniques, online and in-person interviews, and on-site visits.

First, the Mission collected and analysed various written materials. These include the reports of the previous missions under the Moscow Mechanism, and written reports, comments, and statements produced by international organizations (e.g., UN, OSCE, Council of Europe, EU), States, non-governmental organizations, and media. The Mission also received information through a special email channel established by ODIHR.

Secondly, the Mission collected testimonies, both online and in person, from young adults who had experienced indoctrination and militarization as children, and from teachers who experienced practices or forms of violence within this Mission's mandate. It was also able to access several written testimonies from witnesses, with the consent of those involved, among the large number of testimonies collected by NGOs using professional methods. The Mission refrained from collecting testimonies from minors itself, which requires special precautions; however, it considered the methodology put in place by the Ukrainian authorities for interviewing children within the Child Rights Protection Centre in Kyiv. When collecting testimonies from victims and witnesses or any other persons of interest, the Mission adopted a trauma-informed approach, guided by the principles of no-harm and informed consent. All encounters with victims and witnesses took place in safe spaces or over secure online platforms

¹⁶ Article 38(1)(d) of the Statute of the International Court of Justice.

¹⁷ OHCHR, *Training Manual on Human Rights Monitoring*, 2001, and *Manual on Human Rights Monitoring (Revised edition)*, 2011, available at Available at: <https://www.ohchr.org/en/publications/policy-and-methodological-publications/manual-human-rights-monitoring-revised-edition>.

¹⁸ *Ukraine Monitoring Initiative Methodology*, 17 July 2023, available at Available at: <https://www.osce.org/odihr/548611>.

and the notes from these interviews were not made accessible to any external actors. For security reasons, the names of such persons are not disclosed. The notes, including the interview transcripts, will be destroyed after the completion of the mandate. The experts would like to express their gratitude to all the interlocutors who took time to talk to them, share with them relevant information and provide them with evidence.

Thirdly, on 6-11 June 2026, the experts undertook a visit to Ukraine during which they conducted a series of interviews and meetings. During the preparations for the Mission and during the Mission itself, they were able to meet representatives of the following Ukrainian institutions: the Bring Kids Back Ukraine Initiative of the President of Ukraine, the Presidential Commissioner for Children's Rights and Child Rehabilitation, the Mission of the President of Ukraine in the Autonomous Republic of Crimea, the Kyiv Regional Administration, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the Office of the Prosecutor General of Ukraine, the Commissioner for Human Rights of the Ukrainian Parliament (Ombudsman), the Ministry of Education and Science of Ukraine, the Ministry of Social Policy, Family and Unity of Ukraine, and the Ukrainian Security Service (SSU). They also met representatives of civil society organizations, from whom they received highly valuable information about the situation in the various regions within their mandate. The experts would like to thank the Ukrainian authorities and organisations, as well as ODIHR for the assistance in the organization of the visit, and every person they met for their contribution to this report.

Through all the different methods of fact-finding, the Mission was able to get access to a large amount and variety of evidence and to gain a good oversight of the situation in general and of particular issues under scrutiny. During the preparation of the report, the Mission enjoyed administrative and logistical support from ODIHR. The experts wish to stress that, in line with the rules of the Moscow Mechanism, the OSCE did not in any way interfere with the substantive work of the Mission, which operated in a fully independent and impartial way.

The experts regret the lack of cooperation of the Russian Federation, despite the letter sent at the outset of their Mission. The Mission was nevertheless able to access a certain number of publicly available statements and positions of the Russian Federation. The Mission took note of them when drafting its report.

The Mission applied the “reasonable grounds to believe” standard of proof in its assessment of evidence.¹⁹ This standard was considered to be met when at least two credible primary sources, independently of each other, confirmed the veracity of certain facts or pieces of information. The Mission paid close attention to the phenomenon of disinformation and the spread of fake news in the public sphere and adopted a very careful approach to verifying the available information. When different reliable sources provided different data, this is indicated in the report. The references to the relevant sources of information are provided, within the limits stated above, in the report.

¹⁹ This standard is lower than the “beyond reasonable doubt” standard of proof, which applies for criminal conviction. It is commonly used for the opening of an investigation into specific cases. See for instance: ICC Statute, Art. 58; CAT, Art. 12.

II. FACTS

A. FORCIBLE TRANSFER AND DEPORTATION OF UKRAINIAN CHILDREN: DEVELOPMENTS SINCE 2023

The “Report on Violations and Abuses of International Humanitarian and Human Rights Law, War Crimes and Crimes Against Humanity, Related to the Forcible Transfer and/or Deportation of Ukrainian Children to the Russian Federation” (hereafter 2023 Moscow Mechanism Report) explicitly notes that “the information about the number of Ukrainian children who have been subject to forcible transfer and/or deportation varies considerably from one source to another.”²⁰

This fundamental challenge of identifying and locating deported children remains unresolved.²¹ Ukraine’s official Children of War / Bring Kids Back UA platform is the primary public-facing data hub and currently has 20,610 “records of possible deportation and forced transfer of children by Russia.”²² The platform aggregates data from multiple sources with different methodological standards, and is the most widely cited, used and stable figure in official estimates.²³ A similar figure of “more than 19,546 Ukrainian children ... identified as stolen” is reported by Save Ukraine.²⁴

Ukrainian government data provided to the Mission indicate a similar scale. The Ministry of Justice which “maintains the official Register of deported/forcibly displaced children” notes 20,610 deported/forcibly displaced children as of 15 June 2026.²⁵ The Register of the Office of

²⁰ Veronika Bilkova, Cecilie Hellestveit and Elina Šteinerte, Report on Violations and Abuses of International Humanitarian and Human Rights Law, War Crimes and Crimes Against Humanity, Related to the Forcible Transfer and/or Deportation of Ukrainian Children to the Russian Federation (Warsaw and Vienna: Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights of the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe, 2023), p. 12. Available at: <https://odhr.osce.org/odhr/542751>.

²¹ A significant recent development in identifying and locating deported Ukrainian children is the Europol “hackathon” of 16–17 April 2026, in which 40 investigators from 18 countries, the ICC, and NGO partners conducted a coordinated OSINT investigation which successfully identified and located 45 forcibly transferred Ukrainian children. If scalable, the methodology, which combines open-source intelligence with institutional case management, could significantly improve the current data infrastructure problem. See Europol, “Europol and Partners Track Down 45 Forcibly Transferred Ukrainian Children”, Europol, 20 April 2026. Available at: <https://www.europol.europa.eu/media-press/newsroom/news/europol-and-partners-track-down-45-forcibly-transferred-ukrainian-children>. Similarly, the Eurojust Joint Investigation Team, under its recently extended mandate, is now additionally focused “on the illegal transfer of Ukrainian children and their deportation to Russia and Belarus” and coordinates ongoing national investigations across seven participating countries (Lithuania, Estonia, Latvia, Poland, Romania, Slovakia, and Ukraine). See Eurojust, “Joint Investigation Team Continues Work with Added Focus on Illegal Transfer of Ukrainian Children”, Eurojust, 20 March 2026. Available at: <https://www.eurojust.europa.eu/news/joint-investigation-team-continues-work-added-focus-illegal-transfer-ukrainian-children>.

²² Bring Kids Back UA / Children of War Platform, official figures as of 20 June 2026. Available at: <https://www.bringkidsback.org.ua/en/>.

²³ For example, the European Commission uses a figure of “more than 20,500 Ukrainian children”. See European Commission, Bringing Ukrainian children back home. Available at: https://commission.europa.eu/topics/eu-solidarity-ukraine/bringing-ukrainian-children-back-home_en. The Co-Chairs Summary Document of the International Coalition for the Return of Ukrainian Children similarly notes “thousands of Ukrainian children remain in Russia and in the temporarily occupied territories, forcibly separated from their loved ones and communities.” See Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Ukraine, Co-Chairs Summary Document of the International Coalition for the Return of Ukrainian Children, 13 May 2026. Available at: <https://mfa.gov.ua/en/news/pidsumkovij-dokument-spivgoliv-mizhnarodnoyi-koaliciyi-za-povernennya-ukrayinskih-ditej>.

²⁴ Data from <https://www.saveukraineua.org/projects/rescue-ukraines-stolen-children/> as of 20 June 2026.

²⁵ Ministry of Justice of Ukraine, “Submission to the Moscow Mechanism 2026”, 15 June 2026 (on file with the Mission).

the Prosecutor General of Ukraine records 20,570 confirmed cases of deported/forcibly displaced children as of 12 June 2026.²⁶ According to the Security Service of Ukraine, “investigators and operational units of the SSU and the National Police of Ukraine are verifying information concerning the alleged forcible displacement and deportation of more than 20,000 children”, noting that “this figure is not fixed, as the pre-trial investigation is ongoing”.²⁷

The UN Human Rights Council’s Independent International Commission of Inquiry on Ukraine (IICIU), in a report of 9 March 2026, notes “compelling evidence concerning the deportation and transfer of a total of 1,205 children from five oblasts in Ukraine”,²⁸ up from only 200 such cases in a report one year earlier.²⁹ This is a substantially lower figure compared to official Ukrainian estimates due to the Commission reporting only cases fully documented and verified under a strict evidentiary standard. The gap between these two figures reflects both the difficulty of verification under conditions of Russian obstruction³⁰ and the fact that only a fraction of cases have been subjected to strict evidentiary scrutiny.³¹

On the upper end of estimates, the Humanitarian Research Lab at the Yale School of Public Health, reports that “Russia is operating a potentially unprecedented system of large-scale re-education, military training, and dormitory facilities capable of holding tens of thousands of children from Ukraine for long periods of time.”³² This is a research-based analytical estimate derived from geospatial and open source intelligence (OSINT) analysis of the deportation system that identified 210 facilities, including 54 that had been identified in two earlier reports

²⁶ Office of the Prosecutor General of Ukraine, “Submission to the Moscow Mechanism 2026”, 12 June 2026 (on file with the Mission).

²⁷ Security Service of Ukraine, “Submission to the Moscow Mechanism 2026”, 11 June 2026 (on file with the Mission).

²⁸ Human Rights Council, “Report of the Independent International Commission of Inquiry on Ukraine”, 9 March 2026, para. 8. Available at: <https://www.ohchr.org/sites/default/files/documents/hrbodies/hrcouncil/coiukraine/a-hrc-61-61-auv.pdf>.

²⁹ Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR), “The Impact of the Armed Conflict and Occupation on Children’s Rights in Ukraine: 24 February 2022–31 December 2024”, 21 March 2025, para. 3. Available at: <https://www.ohchr.org/sites/default/files/documents/form/2025-03-21-ohchr-report-children-s-rights-in-ukraine.pdf>. See also Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR), “Human Rights Situation during the Russian Occupation of Territory of Ukraine and Its Aftermath, 24 February 2022 – 31 December 2023”, 19 March 2024. Available at: <https://www.ohchr.org/en/documents/country-reports/human-rights-situation-during-russian-occupation-territory-ukraine-and>. In this report, OHCHR notes (para. 148) that it “has collected information about some 200 children from occupied territory who were transferred individually or in groups to other regions in Russian-occupied territory, to the Russian Federation, or to Belarus” and that “many of these children were in institutionalized care, for instance in institutions for children with physical or intellectual disabilities. Some children were also orphaned or deprived of parental care, rendering the process of tracing them more difficult. These transfers, some of which may amount to forced transfers or deportations, resulted in families being separated and in children being apart from their parents for long periods of time.”

³⁰ The dual challenge of lack of access to the Russian-occupied territories of Ukraine for international organizations like the UN and the simultaneous non-cooperation by the Russian Federation has also affected the Central Tracing Agency of the International Committee of the Red Cross. See International Committee of the Red Cross, “Central Tracing Agency Bureau for the International Armed Conflict between the Russian Federation and Ukraine: Providing Answers to Families”, 2 June 2022. Available at: <https://www.icrc.org/en/document/central-tracing-agency-missing-persons-ukraine>.

³¹ Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR), “The Impact of the Armed Conflict and Occupation on Children’s Rights in Ukraine: 24 February 2022–31 December 2024”, 21 March 2025, p. 26 (n. 86). Available at: <https://www.ohchr.org/sites/default/files/documents/form/2025-03-21-ohchr-report-children-s-rights-in-ukraine.pdf>.

³² Paige Farrenkopf, Caitlin N. Howarth, and Nathaniel A. Raymond et al., “Ukraine’s Stolen Children: Inside Russia’s Network of Re-Education and Militarisation.” (New Haven, CT: Humanitarian Research Lab at Yale School of Public Health, 2025), p. 1. Available online at: <https://ysph.yale.edu/download-file/56121661-9ac4-4e8b-a5e0-cb907c74fbc3/>.

in 2023 and 2024.³³ The documented expansion of the deportation system does not confirm the higher estimate of 35,000 deported children that has been widely cited in media reports,³⁴ but it indicates an upscaling of capacity on the part of the Russian Federation in the course of 2025. This is significant inasmuch as it underpins the assumption that the Russian Federation has upscaled its indoctrination efforts: the fact that more than two-thirds of the facilities identified (143) are camps and sanatoria that also “regularly host Russian children, usually at the same time as children from Ukraine, where they participate in many of the same activities together”³⁵ makes it plausible to assume that Russian efforts to alter the identity of Ukrainian children have intensified. These efforts are likely to target a wider range of children than merely those deported and forcibly transferred, including children now residing in the occupied territories.³⁶

Academic and expert assessments place the plausible range at 19,000 to 728,000.³⁷ The number of children officially registered as missing has grown from 2,015 in mid-2024 to 2,231 as of December 2025; the number of missing persons overall (including adults) reached 49,206 in the same period.³⁸ Among those deported, approximately 4,390 are orphans and children deprived of parental care — the category most systematically targeted and most difficult to identify and return.³⁹

The number of children returned, according to Bring Kids Back Ukraine data, stands at 2,274.⁴⁰ This is nearly double the first official estimate of 1,183 returned children in 2024⁴¹ and broadly

³³ Paige Farrenkopf, Caitlin N. Howarth, and Nathaniel A. Raymond et al., “Ukraine’s Stolen Children: Inside Russia’s Network of Re-Education and Militarisation.” (New Haven, CT: Humanitarian Research Lab at Yale School of Public Health, 2025), p. 12. Available online at: <https://ysph.yale.edu/download-file/56121661-9ac4-4e8b-a5e0-cb907c74fbc3/>.

³⁴ See, for example, <https://www.independent.co.uk/news/world/europe/ukraine-russia-children-belarus-military-b2827308.html>; <https://www.europeaninterest.eu/russia-deported-ukrainian-children-in-210-locations-report-finds/>; <https://www.kyivpost.com/post/60337>; <https://www.reuters.com/world/europe/russia-expands-forced-re-education-deported-ukrainian-children-us-research-shows-2025-09-16/>.

³⁵ Paige Farrenkopf, Caitlin N. Howarth, and Nathaniel A. Raymond et al., “Ukraine’s Stolen Children: Inside Russia’s Network of Re-Education and Militarisation.” (New Haven, CT: Humanitarian Research Lab at Yale School of Public Health, 2025), p. 5. Available online at: <https://ysph.yale.edu/download-file/56121661-9ac4-4e8b-a5e0-cb907c74fbc3/>.

³⁶ Interview with a Ukrainian NGO, 4 June 2026 (on file with the Mission).

³⁷ Ostapenko, O.G. et al., ‘The Problem of Identifying and Determining the Real Number of Ukrainian Children Who Were Deported from the Occupied Territories of Ukraine,’ World Scientific and Technical Trends (December 2025), pp. 180–188, here 182. Similarly high numbers are noted by the Bring Kids Back UA initiative (BKB UA), who estimate over 700,000 deported persons, including children. The Russian president’s Commissioner for Children’s Rights, Maria Lvova-Belova, in a 2023 report (subsequently deleted from the official website) referenced 700,000 Ukrainian children who had crossed the border with Russia. Information from an interview with a Ukrainian NGO, 4 June 2026 (on file with the Mission).

³⁸ O.G. Ostapenko, O.P. Sushch, and O.G. Rohova, “The Problem of Identifying and Determining the Real Number of Ukrainian Children Who Were Deported from the Occupied Territories of Ukraine”, SWorld-Ger Conference Proceedings, 1(gec42-00), pp. 180–188, here. p. 182. <https://doi.org/10.30890/2709-1783.2025-42-00-025>.

³⁹ O.G. Ostapenko, O.P. Sushch, and O.G. Rohova, “The Problem of Identifying and Determining the Real Number of Ukrainian Children Who Were Deported from the Occupied Territories of Ukraine”, SWorld-Ger Conference Proceedings, 1(gec42-00), pp. 180–188, here. p. 182. <https://doi.org/10.30890/2709-1783.2025-42-00-025>.

⁴⁰ Data from <https://www.bringkidsback.org.ua/en> as of 20 June 2026. See also: “More Than 2,100 Ukrainian Children Abducted by Russia Have Been Returned Home: President Received a Report on the Results of the Bring Kids Back UA Initiative”. Office of the President of Ukraine. 22 April 2026. Available online at: <https://www.president.gov.ua/en/news/ponad-2100-ukrayinskih-ditej-yakih-vikrala-rosiya-vdalosya-p-104033>.

⁴¹ Ombudsman of Ukraine, Phenomenon of Power (Kyiv, 2025), p. 6. Available at <https://ombudsman.gov.ua/storage/app/media/uploaded-files/1-eng-web.pdf>.

in line with increases in 2025 (cumulative total of 1859)⁴² and as reported for the first quarter of 2026 (150 children returned).⁴³

Ukrainian government data provided to the Mission indicate a similar scale of confirmed returns. The Office of the Prosecutor General of Ukraine communicated 2,261 cases of return, citing data from Bring Kids Back Ukraine as of 12 June 2026.⁴⁴ According to the Security Service of Ukraine, “through joint efforts, 2,264 children who were subjected to forcible displacement/deportation or were at risk thereof have been returned” as of 11 June 2026.⁴⁵ The Ministry of Justice, however, reports a significant lower number of 1,150 children for whom it has “information indicating their return from deportation or forced displacement” as of 15 June 2026.⁴⁶

While the growing number of returns indicates an overall positive trend, the available data demonstrate that the overwhelming majority of children recorded as deported or forcibly transferred have not been returned. This is, at the very least, a solid indication that the Russian Federation is not genuinely engaged in, or committed to, a process of returning Ukrainian children to their families. Given that the war against Ukraine is now in its fifth year and that Ukraine’s National Information Bureau reported a figure of 19,393 deported children as early as April 2023,⁴⁷ it is reasonable to consider that the low number of returns is the result of a deliberate policy by the Russian Federation to actively and permanently prevent deported Ukrainian children from reuniting with their families and that this is part of a broader effort to indoctrinate and alter the identity of Ukrainian children in Russian hands.⁴⁸

The investigations by the IICIU document a significant pre-invasion deportation wave: between 16 and 18 February 2022, 995 children were deported from 11 institutional facilities in the so-called Donetsk and Luhansk People’s Republics (DPR and LPR) to transit centres in Kursk, Rostov, and Voronezh oblasts of the Russian Federation.⁴⁹ Local officials, such as the nominal leaders of the two so-called people’s republics, Denis Pushilin and Leonid Pasechnik, their education ministers, and local authorities ordered mass evacuations of the population in the days preceding Russia’s full-scale invasion, which included “the ‘evacuation’ of all institutions holding children without parental care” on 18 February 2022, leading to the removal of “hundreds of children from both oblasts across the border into the Russian Federation.”⁵⁰

⁴² “Ukraine has brought back 1,859 Russia-abducted children, Zelenska says in Paris”, Kyiv Independent. 2 December 2025. Available online at: <https://kyivindependent.com/ukraine-says-1-859-abducted-children-have-been-returned-zelenska-tells-paris-summit/>.

⁴³ “More Than 2,100 Ukrainian Children Abducted by Russia Have Been Returned Home”. Available online at: <https://www.president.gov.ua/en/news/ponad-2100-ukrayinskih-ditej-yakih-vikrala-rosiya-vdalosya-p-104033>.

⁴⁴ Office of the Prosecutor General of Ukraine, “Submission to the Moscow Mechanism 2026”, 12 June 2026 (on file with the Mission).

⁴⁵ Security Service of Ukraine, “Submission to the Moscow Mechanism 2026”, 11 June 2026 (on file with the Mission).

⁴⁶ Ministry of Justice of Ukraine, “Submission to the Moscow Mechanism 2026”, 15 June 2026 (on file with the Mission).

⁴⁷ See Bilkova, Hellestveit and Šteinerte, op. cit, p. 13.

⁴⁸ This was confirmed to the Mission in several Interviews, for example interview with a Ukrainian NGO, 4 June 2026 (on file with the Mission),

⁴⁹ Human Rights Council, “‘I am still looking for my daughter’: crimes against humanity committed by Russian authorities against children from Ukraine”, 9 March 2026, A/HRC/61/CRP.8, paras. 8–9. Available at: <https://www.ohchr.org/sites/default/files/documents/hrbodies/hrcouncil/sessions-regular/session61/a-hrc-61-crp-8.pdf>.

⁵⁰ Human Rights Council, “‘I am still looking for my daughter’: crimes against humanity committed by Russian authorities against children from Ukraine”, 9 March 2026, A/HRC/61/CRP.8, para. 18. Available at: <https://www.ohchr.org/sites/default/files/documents/hrbodies/hrcouncil/sessions-regular/session61/a-hrc-61-crp-8.pdf>.

The seven institutions in Donetsk from which children were deported include: Donetsk Comprehensive Boarding School No. 1; Amvrosiivka Boarding School No. 4; Dokuchaevskaya Special Comprehensive Boarding School No. 27; Vuhlehirsk Special Boarding School No. 6; Donetsk Pre-school Children's Home No. 1 'Teremok'; Children's Social Centre of Horlivka City; and Children's Social Centre of Yenakiieve City. The four Luhansk institutions were: Luhansk Children's Home; Luhansk Republican Mother and Child Home; Lutuhyne Special Boarding School; and Perevalsk Special Boarding School.⁵¹

According to an OHCHR report on the human rights situation in Ukraine of March 2023, information from Russian authorities confirms that "after 24 February, during different time periods, between 1500 and 2500 children from Ukraine were residing in temporary accommodation centres; some stayed there, while others were resettled to social institutions or given to Russian foster families."⁵² The same report notes that "according to the Ukrainian authorities, as of mid-November 2022, 11,225 children were deported to the Russian Federation or forcibly transferred to Russian occupied territory of Ukraine. Of them, 7,644 were reported as transferred from Donetsk region, and 116 were orphaned or deprived of parental care."⁵³ In four separately documented incidents from October and November 2022, the UN Human Rights Monitoring Mission in Ukraine (HRMMU) found that "at least 294 residents, including 28 children, were transferred from long-term care facilities located in the occupied areas of Kherson region to other parts of Russian-occupied territory or deported to the Russian Federation."⁵⁴

From the very beginning of the full-scale invasion of Ukraine, Russian authorities declared adoption the preferred option for the 'family placement' of deported children, with senior officials including President Vladimir Putin publicly encouraging Russian families to adopt children from eastern Ukraine. Two weeks into the full-scale invasion, Putin and his Commissioner for Children's Rights, Maria Lvova-Belova, discussed the legislative obstacles to adoption of children from Ukraine: Putin responded to Lvova-Belova's identification of "legislative caveats" by saying, 'Just tell me what they are, and we will work to remove these barriers.'⁵⁵ In May 2022, Putin approved a decree expediting the acquisition of Russian citizenship for children without parental care from Ukraine.⁵⁶ In an official bulletin of April

[8.pdf](#). See also: Луганский Информационный Центр, "Минобразования заявило об эвакуации интернатов и детских домов в РФ", 18 February 2022. Available at: <https://lug-info.ru/news/minobrazovaniya-zayavilo-ob-evakuacii-internatov-i-detskih-domov-v-rf/>.

⁵¹ Human Rights Council, "I am still looking for my daughter": crimes against humanity committed by Russian authorities against children from Ukraine", 9 March 2026, A/HRC/61/CRP.8, paras. 18–19. Available at: <https://www.ohchr.org/sites/default/files/documents/hrbodies/hrcouncil/sessions-regular/session61/a-hrc-61-crp-8.pdf>.

⁵² OHCHR, "Report on the Human Rights Situation in Ukraine, 1 August 2022 – 31 January 2023", 24 March 2023, para. 70 (n. 40). Available at: <https://www.ohchr.org/sites/default/files/documents/countries/ukraine/2023/23-03-24-Ukraine-35th-periodic-report-ENG.pdf>.

⁵³ OHCHR, "Report on the Human Rights Situation in Ukraine, 1 August 2022 – 31 January 2023", 24 March 2023, para. 70 (n. 40). Available at: <https://www.ohchr.org/sites/default/files/documents/countries/ukraine/2023/23-03-24-Ukraine-35th-periodic-report-ENG.pdf>.

⁵⁴ OHCHR, "Update on the Human Rights Situation in Ukraine 1 February – 30 April 2023", 13 June 2023, p. 3. Available at: https://www.ohchr.org/sites/default/files/2023-06/23-06-UkraineHRMMU-three-months-update-ENG_0.pdf.

⁵⁵ President of Russia, 'Meeting with Commissioner for Children's Rights Maria Lvova-Belova', 9 March 2022. Available at: <http://www.en.kremlin.ru/events/president/news/67949>.

⁵⁶ Human Rights Council, "I am still looking for my daughter": crimes against humanity committed by Russian authorities against children from Ukraine", 9 March 2026, A/HRC/61/CRP.8, para. 27. Available at:

2023, Lvova-Belova stated that by that time “a total of 380 orphans from the DPR and LPR were placed in Russian foster care families”, up from “the first group of 27 children ... placed under foster care in families in Moscow Region by the DPR’s guardianship authorities” in April 2022.⁵⁷

Data from the Russian Ministry of Internal Affairs confirm that between 1 April 2022 and 30 June 2023, 46,886 Ukrainian children were granted Russian citizenship.⁵⁸ Adoption profiles of deported children were uploaded to Russian online adoption databases in 14 regions of the Russian Federation, “indicating that they can be adopted or placed in foster families”.⁵⁹

Among the documented cases of individual placements, the IICIU cites the cases of an 11-month-old girl and a 2-year-old boy who were deported from the Kherson Children’s Home in September 2022. The Commission obtained an electronic registration of an act of adoption for the infant girl, with her original name and place of birth in Kherson Oblast replaced with a changed name and place of birth in Moscow Oblast, listing as her adoptive parents 72-year-old Sergei Mironov — parliamentary leader of the State Duma and a close ally of Putin — and his wife, 57-year-old Inna Varlamova. The girl has two older siblings, a legal guardian, and a biological mother in Ukraine; as of the report’s writing, she had not been returned.⁶⁰ Lvova-Belova publicly declared that she personally ‘adopted’ a child from Mariupol who “did not want to go to Russia” but was then re-educated by her in her family in Moscow.⁶¹

One of the most severe documented individual cases concerns a 17-year-old boy who had been deported and placed with a foster family in Krasnodar Krai, separated from his 13-year-old sister placed in an institution. Having reached the age of majority, the boy maintained contact with his biological mother in Ukraine and expressed his intention to return but committed suicide in January 2024.⁶²

<https://www.ohchr.org/sites/default/files/documents/hrbodies/hrcouncil/sessions-regular/session61/a-hrc-61-crp-8.pdf>. The decree was No. 330 of 30 May 2022.

⁵⁷ Presidential Commissioner for Children’s Rights of the Russian Federation, “Activities of the Russian Federation Presidential Commissioner for Children’s Rights Maria Lvova-Belova to protect children during a special military operation”, The Bulletin, Issue 1, 4 April 2023, pp. 3, 7. Available at: <https://deti.gov.ru/uploads/magic/ru-RU/Document-0-225-src-1685015177.9334.pdf>.

⁵⁸ Human Rights Council, “‘I am still looking for my daughter’: crimes against humanity committed by Russian authorities against children from Ukraine”, 9 March 2026, A/HRC/61/CRP.8, para. 28. Available at: <https://www.ohchr.org/sites/default/files/documents/hrbodies/hrcouncil/sessions-regular/session61/a-hrc-61-crp-8.pdf>; Committee on the Rights of the Child, “Replies of the Russian Federation to the list of issues in relation to its combined sixth and seventh periodic reports”, 1 November 2023, CRC/C/RUS/RQ/6-7, para. 94. Available at: https://digitallibrary.un.org/record/4031180/files/CRC_C_RUS_RQ_6-7-EN.pdf. Note that both these sources incorrectly refer to “the period from 1 April 2022 to 31 June 2023”, which we correct here to take account of the fact that June has only thirty calendar days.

⁵⁹ Human Rights Council, “‘I am still looking for my daughter’: crimes against humanity committed by Russian authorities against children from Ukraine”, 9 March 2026, A/HRC/61/CRP.8, para. 34. Available at: <https://www.ohchr.org/sites/default/files/documents/hrbodies/hrcouncil/sessions-regular/session61/a-hrc-61-crp-8.pdf>.

⁶⁰ Human Rights Council, “‘I am still looking for my daughter’: crimes against humanity committed by Russian authorities against children from Ukraine”, 9 March 2026, A/HRC/61/CRP.8, para. 41. Available at: <https://www.ohchr.org/sites/default/files/documents/hrbodies/hrcouncil/sessions-regular/session61/a-hrc-61-crp-8.pdf>.

⁶¹ Tania Myronyshena, “Russia’s children’s commissioner shamelessly describes kidnapping a Ukrainian child”, Kyiv Independent, October 21, 2025. Available at: <https://kyivindependent.com/without-shame-russias-childrens-commissioner-casually-discusses-kidnapping-a-ukrainian-child/>. The contents of Lvova-Belova’s interview with were also corroborated in a submission of evidence by the Institute for the Study of War (on file with the Mission).

⁶² Human Rights Council, “‘I am still looking for my daughter’: crimes against humanity committed by Russian authorities against children from Ukraine”, 9 March 2026, A/HRC/61/CRP.8, para. 42. Available at:

According to its March 2023 report on the human rights situation in Ukraine, OHCHR also “documented the enforced disappearances of five boys between 14 and 17 years old by Russian armed forces”, who all suffered ill-treatment or torture.⁶³ There is also evidence that the Russian Federation used so-called summer camps as a mechanism for deportations. According to an OHCHR report of October 2023, “Ukrainian children from Russian-occupied territory in Kharkiv and Kherson regions were taken to summer camps in Crimea and the Russian Federation, with the purported consent of their parents, in the summer and autumn of 2022, but were not returned home at the end of the originally agreed period of two or three weeks, with “some of them still remain[ing] in the Russian Federation” at the time of the report’s publication.⁶⁴

The findings of the IICIU establish that the Russian Federation’s deportation and placement programme was conceived and executed at the highest level of the Russian Federation state apparatus, not as ad hoc local initiative. Putin’s direct involvement is documented from the outset: he exercises direct authority over the institutional structures, including the Presidential Commissioner for Children’s Rights, which steered and executed the policy; he personally approved the May 2022 citizenship decree; and on 7 October 2022, an airplane traced to the Russian presidential fleet was used to transfer 53 deported children to Moscow Oblast.⁶⁵

Lvova-Belova played a leading coordination role, working in close coordination with other Russian bodies including ministries, State Duma members, regional governors, and regional commissioners for children’s rights. Anna Kuznetsova (Deputy Chair of the State Duma) prepared agreements with the so-called republics on adoption legislation and coordinated placements with Russian families.⁶⁶ The Ministry of Defence provided transport — including Russian Aerospace Forces aircraft — for the transfer of groups of children within the Russian Federation. The Investigative Committee of the Russian Federation visited transit centres holding Ukrainian children and offered them places at its own educational institutions.⁶⁷

<https://www.ohchr.org/sites/default/files/documents/hrbodies/hrcouncil/sessions-regular/session61/a-hrc-61-crp-8.pdf>.

⁶³ OHCHR, “Report on the Human Rights Situation in Ukraine, 1 August 2022 – 31 January 2023”, 24 March 2023, para. 51. <https://www.ohchr.org/sites/default/files/documents/countries/ukraine/2023/23-03-24-Ukraine-35th-periodic-report-ENG.pdf>.

⁶⁴ OHCHR, “Report on the Human Rights Situation in Ukraine, 1 February to 31 July 2023”, 4 October 2023, para. 93. Available at: <https://www.ohchr.org/en/documents/country-reports/report-human-rights-situation-ukraine-1-february-31-july-2023>. See also, United Nations General Assembly, “Situation of human rights in the temporarily occupied Autonomous Republic of Crimea and the city of Sevastopol, Ukraine. Report of the Secretary-General”, A/78/340, 1 September 2023, para. 43. Available at: <https://docs.un.org/en/A/78/340>. Similar findings are reported by ODIHR noting witness reports about “children having been taken, with the permission of their parents, by the occupying authorities to camps in Crimea for safety reasons and to enjoy recreational activities, but were then never returned to their home or parents’ care as promised.” See OSCE/ODIHR, “Third Interim Report on reported violations of international humanitarian law and international human rights law in Ukraine”, 17 July 2023, para. 81. Available at: <https://odihr.osce.org/odihr/548629>.

⁶⁵ Human Rights Council, “‘I am still looking for my daughter’: crimes against humanity committed by Russian authorities against children from Ukraine”, 9 March 2026, A/HRC/61/CRP.8, para. 46. Available at: <https://www.ohchr.org/sites/default/files/documents/hrbodies/hrcouncil/sessions-regular/session61/a-hrc-61-crp-8.pdf>.

⁶⁶ Human Rights Council, “‘I am still looking for my daughter’: crimes against humanity committed by Russian authorities against children from Ukraine”, 9 March 2026, A/HRC/61/CRP.8, paras. 47-48. Available at: <https://www.ohchr.org/sites/default/files/documents/hrbodies/hrcouncil/sessions-regular/session61/a-hrc-61-crp-8.pdf>.

⁶⁷ Human Rights Council, “‘I am still looking for my daughter’: crimes against humanity committed by Russian authorities against children from Ukraine”, 9 March 2026, A/HRC/61/CRP.8, paras. 50-51. Available at:

In Russian-occupied territories of Ukraine, Eleonora Fedorenko (former Children’s Rights Commissioner of the so-called Donetsk People’s Republic) and Yulia Nazarenko (her counterpart in the Luhansk People’s Republic) played key implementation roles, accompanying children during transfers and facilitating legislative changes to enable placements in Russian families.⁶⁸ According to Lvova-Belova, she “approved a commissioner for children’s rights in the Kherson Region, so we now have it covered in full: we have advisers on children and commissioners in the regions. We are addressing social orphanhood, helping restore institutions and staff, raising the level of specialists, and improving the legal and regulatory framework.”⁶⁹

Russian authorities also systematically failed to inform parents, legal guardians, and relatives of the deportation of children or their subsequent whereabouts. In cases of children deported from institutional care, parents and relatives often discovered the deportation only upon attempting to visit the institutions and finding them empty.⁷⁰

Even when families established the whereabouts of a deported child, return has been extremely difficult. Russian authorities required official documents that took months to obtain; travel to the Russian Federation or Russian-occupied territory requires crossing multiple international borders under security risk and at prohibitive cost; in documented cases, Russian authorities refused parents entry on the grounds that they “did not pass filtration”, or accused grandmothers of “cooperating with Ukrainian authorities,” while foster families and Russian officials actively sought to prevent children from returning.⁷¹

B. INTERNATIONAL RESPONSE: RETURN MECHANISMS AND SUPPORT FOR AFFECTED CHILDREN

Existing international support mechanisms fall principally into two categories — those that support the return of children and those that support returned children.

1. Diplomatic and Operational Mechanisms for the Return of Ukrainian Children

On 3 December 2025, the UN General Assembly adopted Resolution ES-11/9, its first resolution specifically dedicated to child returns in the context of the Russian war against Ukraine.⁷² The resolution, entitled “Return of Ukrainian Children”, passed by 91 votes in favour, 12 against, and 57 abstentions.⁷³ It demands that the Russian Federation “ensure the

<https://www.ohchr.org/sites/default/files/documents/hrbodies/hrcouncil/sessions-regular/session61/a-hrc-61-crp-8.pdf>.

⁶⁸ Human Rights Council, “‘I am still looking for my daughter’: crimes against humanity committed by Russian authorities against children from Ukraine”, 9 March 2026, A/HRC/61/CRP.8, paras. 50-51. Available at: <https://www.ohchr.org/sites/default/files/documents/hrbodies/hrcouncil/sessions-regular/session61/a-hrc-61-crp-8.pdf>.

⁶⁹ President of Russia, ‘Meeting with Commissioner for Children’s Rights Maria Lvova-Belova’, 31 May 2024. Available at: <http://www.en.kremlin.ru/events/president/news/74189>.

⁷⁰ See, for example, Human Rights Council, “‘I am still looking for my daughter’: crimes against humanity committed by Russian authorities against children from Ukraine”, 9 March 2026, A/HRC/61/CRP.8, paras. 52-54. Available at: <https://www.ohchr.org/sites/default/files/documents/hrbodies/hrcouncil/sessions-regular/session61/a-hrc-61-crp-8.pdf>.

⁷¹ Human Rights Council, “‘I am still looking for my daughter’: crimes against humanity committed by Russian authorities against children from Ukraine”, 9 March 2026, A/HRC/61/CRP.8, paras. 55-59. Available at: <https://www.ohchr.org/sites/default/files/documents/hrbodies/hrcouncil/sessions-regular/session61/a-hrc-61-crp-8.pdf>.

⁷² United Nations General Assembly Resolution ES-11/9, ‘Return of Ukrainian Children’, 3 December 2025. Available at: <https://docs.un.org/en/A/ES-11/L.16/Rev.1>.

⁷³ UN News, ‘General Assembly Demands Return of Ukrainian Children by Russia’, 3 December 2025. Available at: <https://news.un.org/en/story/2025/12/1166507>.

immediate, safe and unconditional return of all Ukrainian children who have been forcibly transferred or deported”; urges the Russian Federation “to cease, without delay, any further practice of forcible transfer, deportation, separation from families and legal guardians, change of personal status, including through citizenship, adoption or placement in foster families, and indoctrination of Ukrainian children”; and formally notes “the efforts of the International Coalition for the Return of Ukrainian Children” (see further below).

Returns have been achieved through two complementary tracks: diplomatic mediation involving third-party States, and organized rescue missions conducted in cooperation with non-governmental partners. Both tracks operate within a single Ukrainian-led strategy, guided by the consistent objective of returning every child home and ensuring their placement in a family environment in line with Ukraine's Better Care reform.

Qatar has emerged as the most operationally significant diplomatic actor on child returns. It launched a dedicated mediation mechanism in October 2023, and by May 2025 had facilitated the return of 68 children, rising to 83 by August 2025.⁷⁴ As of May 2026, the mechanism had facilitated returns for 87 children to Ukraine and reunited 28 children with relatives inside the Russian Federation.⁷⁵ On 22 January 2025, President Volodymyr Zelenskyy met the Qatari Prime Minister, with the return of deported children as a central agenda item.⁷⁶ In July 2025, Qatar announced a “new stage” of its mediation mission, reuniting 14 children (11 Ukrainian, 3 Russian) with their families.⁷⁷

Qatar’s assistance for the return of Ukrainian children operates through direct bilateral communication with Russia. Qatar does not take an official position on the illegality of Russian actions — a pragmatic approach that prioritizes the safe return of deported and forcibly transferred children, enables continued communication with Russian officials, and explains Qatar’s abstention from the vote on General Assembly Resolution ES-11/9.⁷⁸ Qatari efforts have

⁷⁴Ukrinform, ‘Qatar Helps Return 68 Ukrainian Children Home – Lubinets’, 26 May 2025. Available at: <https://www.ukrinform.net/rubric-society/3997295-qatar-helps-return-68-ukrainian-children-home-lubinets.html>; Ukrinform, ‘Qatar Mediates Return of 83 Ukrainian Children Taken to Russia’ (2025). Available at: <https://www.ukrinform.net/rubric-society/4028803-qatar-mediates-return-of-83-ukrainian-children-taken-to-russia.html>.

⁷⁵ Qatar Ministry of Foreign Affairs, ‘Qatar Participates in High-Level Meeting of Int. Coalition for Return of Ukrainian Children’, 11 May 2026. Available at: <https://mofa.gov.qa/en/qatar/latest-articles/latest-news/details/2026/05/11/qatar-participates-in-high-level-meeting-of-int.-coalition-for-return-of-ukrainian-children>.

⁷⁶Official Website of the President of Ukraine, ‘Return of Ukrainian Children Deported by Russia and Food Security: Volodymyr Zelenskyy Met with Prime Minister of Qatar’, 22 January 2025. Available at: <https://www.president.gov.ua/en/news/povernennya-deportovanih-rosiyeyu-ukrayinskih-ditej-i-prodov-95617>.

⁷⁷Qatar Ministry of Foreign Affairs, ‘Qatar Announces the Success of a New Stage of Its Mediation Mission to Reunite Children with Their Families in Ukraine and Russia’, 17 July 2025. Available at: <https://mofa.gov.qa/en/qatar/latest-articles/latest-news/details/2025/07/17/qatar-announces-the-success-of-a-new-stage-of-its-mediation-mission-to-reunite-children-with-their-families-in-ukraine-and-russia>.

⁷⁸ As noted by representative of Bahrain, speaking for the members of the Gulf Cooperation Council during the General Assembly debate on the draft resolution “Return of Ukrainian children Resolution” on 3 December 2025, the Council’s members abstained from a vote on the resolution because of “ongoing political and humanitarian efforts made by several [Council States] to mediate between the Ukrainian and Russian sides”. See: United Nations General Assembly, “General Assembly Demands Immediate Return of Ukrainian Children, Adopting Resolution amid Sharp Divides in Resumed Emergency Special Session”, 3 December 2025. Available at: <https://press.un.org/en/2025/ga12738.doc.htm>.

been by far the most effective diplomatic route to facilitating the return of deported and forcibly transferred Ukrainian children.⁷⁹

A separate initiative by the US, led by First Lady Melania Trump, resulted in four rounds of child reunifications between October 2025 and April 2026.⁸⁰ According to official Russian sources, the total number of Ukrainian children returned through this channel now stands at 26.⁸¹

The Vatican, under Pope Francis and subsequently Pope Leo XIV, has also assisted with specific child return cases. Its engagement was referenced in Zelenskyy's meeting with Pope Leo XIV in July 2025, where the Vatican was proposed as a potential site for peace talks, with children's returns as a specific agenda item.⁸² The scale of facilitated returns is not separately documented, but the Vatican is outspoken on its work for the return of Ukrainian children.⁸³

These efforts are, in terms of simple numbers, dwarfed by the work of Save Ukraine, which is the single most operationally significant actor for actual return operations: between February 2022 and August 2025, Save Ukraine conducted covert cross-border rescue missions and returned nearly 800 children,⁸⁴ rising to 1,387 children as of 20 June 2026.⁸⁵ Save Ukraine operates through field teams including psychologists, social workers, legal experts, and case managers, and has built over 20 rehabilitation and support centres, simultaneously serving as the principal hub for rehabilitation, evidence collection, and family reunification.⁸⁶

Ukrainian national efforts aimed at the identification, return, provision of accompaniment and reintegration of children are implemented through coordinated action of relevant state

⁷⁹ Interview with a Ukrainian NGO, 4 June 2026 (on file with the Mission). According to the Russian Presidential Commissioner for Children's Rights, Maria Lvova-Belova, Qatari efforts have contributed to reuniting "101 children from 81 families – with relatives in Ukraine and third countries". President of Russia, 'Maria Lvova-Belova continues to reunite children with their families', 19 May 2025. Available at: <http://en.kremlin.ru/events/administration/77027>.

⁸⁰ See Office of the First Lady, "First Lady Melania Trump Advances Efforts in Fourth Ukraine – Russia Child Reunification", The White House, 2 April 2026. Available at: <https://www.whitehouse.gov/briefings-statements/2026/04/first-lady-melania-trump-advances-efforts-in-fourth-ukraine-russia-child-reunification/>; Office of the First Lady, "First Lady Melania Trump Secures Another Russian – Ukrainian Child Reunification", The White House, 12 February 2026. Available at: <https://www.whitehouse.gov/briefings-statements/2026/02/first-lady-melania-trump-secures-another-russian-ukrainian-child-reunification/>; Office of the First Lady, "U.S. First Lady Melania Trump Welcomes Progress in Russia – Ukraine Children's Reunification Initiative", The White House, 4 December 2025. Available at: <https://www.whitehouse.gov/briefings-statements/2025/12/u-s-first-lady-melania-trump-welcomes-progress-in-russia-ukraine-childrens-reunification-initiative/>. See also Institute for the Study of War, "Russia Is Turning Deported Ukrainian Children Into Bargaining Chips", 5 November 2025. Available at: <https://understandingwar.org/research/russia-ukraine/russia-is-turning-deported-ukrainian-children-into-bargaining-chips/>.

⁸¹ Presidential Commissioner for Children's Rights of the Russian Federation, "Activities of the Russian Federation Presidential Commissioner for Children's Rights Maria Lvova-Belova to protect children during a special military operation", The Bulletin, Issue 4, 7 May 2026, p. 22. Available at: <https://deti.gov.ru/uploads/magic/ru-RU/Document-0-437-src-1778137244.2277.pdf>.

⁸² Borgia, Gregorio, 'Ukraine's Zelenskyy Meets with Pope Leo XIV', Associated Press, 9 July 2025. Available at: <https://apnews.com/article/vatican-pope-leo-zelenskyy-children-taken-ukraine-cb1437b87d9970d0642648152979fcd0>.

⁸³ Permanent Observer Mission of the Holy See to the United Nations, 'The Permanent Observer Mission of the Holy See delivered statement during the General Assembly Eleventh Emergency Special Session', 3 December 2025. Available at: <https://holyseemission.org/contents/statements/6930c6e2ca3e9.php>.

⁸⁴ War Child UK, Save Ukraine, and Human Security Centre, "Return Every Child", 12 September 2025, p. 5. Available at: https://www.warchild.org.uk/sites/default/files/2025-09/Return_Every_Child_Digital_WCUK.pdf.

⁸⁵ Data from <https://www.saveukraineua.org/projects/rescue-ukraines-stolen-children/> as of 20 June 2026.

⁸⁶ War Child UK, Save Ukraine, and Human Security Centre, "Return Every Child", 12 September 2025, p. 5. Available at: https://www.warchild.org.uk/sites/default/files/2025-09/Return_Every_Child_Report_WCUK.pdf.

authorities and institutions, including the Ukrainian Parliament Commissioner for Human Rights, the Ministry of Social Policy, Family and Unity of Ukraine, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Ukraine, the Ministry of Justice of Ukraine, the Office of the Prosecutor General of Ukraine, the Security Service of Ukraine, the National Police of Ukraine, the State Service of Ukraine for Children’s Affairs, the State Migration Service of Ukraine, the State Border Guard Service of Ukraine, the Joint Centre for Coordination of the Search and Liberation of Prisoners of War and Persons Unlawfully Deprived of Liberty as a Result of the Aggression against Ukraine under the Security Service of Ukraine, the Coordination Centre for the Development of Family Upbringing and Child Care, the Child Rights Protection Centre, other central and local executive authorities, local self-government bodies, public associations and charitable organizations.

These cross-government and society-wide Ukrainian national efforts are supported by a variety of bilateral and multilateral efforts that provide funding, expertise, and diplomatic support. Among them, the International Coalition for the Return of Ukrainian Children is the central multilateral support mechanism. Established in February 2024 and co-chaired by Ukraine and Canada, the Coalition had 50 members as of 20 June 2026, including the Council of Europe, the EU, and the OSCE Parliamentary Assembly.⁸⁷

The most recent high-level meeting took place in Brussels on 11 May 2026, co-hosted by the EU, Ukraine, and Canada, and opened by Commission President von der Leyen and President Zelenskyy. Among the key outcomes of the meeting, the co-chairs noted that the return of “thousands of Ukrainian children remain in Russia and in the temporarily occupied territories, forcibly separated from their loved ones and communities” is “a central element to achieving a just and sustainable peace in Ukraine.”⁸⁸

In order to support this objective, the EU announced an additional €50 million to strengthen Ukraine’s child protection system⁸⁹ and the introduction of EU restrictive measures against 23 individuals and entities involved in the deportation, forced assimilation, indoctrination, militarized education, and unlawful adoption of Ukrainian children.⁹⁰ Similarly, Canada committed a further CAD 3.4 million in support to the HRMMU until the end of 2027, bringing the total Canadian contribution to CAD 4.8 million.⁹¹ As part of the same announcement, Canada also signed the Convention establishing an International Claims Commission for Ukraine as the first non-European country to do so.

⁸⁷ See International Coalition for the Return of Ukrainian Children. Available at: <https://www.bringkidsback.org.ua/en/international-coalition>.

⁸⁸Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Ukraine, Co-Chairs Summary Document of the International Coalition for the Return of Ukrainian Children, 13 May 2026. Available at: <https://mfa.gov.ua/en/news/pidsumkovij-dokument-spivgoliv-mizhnarodnoyi-koalitsiyi-za-povernennya-ukrayinskih-ditej>.

⁸⁹European Commission, ‘EU, Ukraine, Canada and partners join efforts to return forcibly transferred and unlawfully deported Ukrainian children’, 11 May 2026. Available at: https://enlargement.ec.europa.eu/news/eu-ukraine-canada-and-partners-join-efforts-return-forcibly-transferred-and-unlawfully-deported-2026-05-11_en.

⁹⁰Council of the European Union, ‘Ukrainian Children Unlawfully Deported and Forcibly Transferred to Russia: EU Sanctions 16 Individuals and Seven Entities’, press release, 11 May 2026. Available at: <https://www.consilium.europa.eu/en/press/press-releases/2026/05/11/ukrainian-children-unlawfully-deported-and-forcibly-transferred-to-russia-eu-sanctions-16-individuals-and-seven-entities/>.

⁹¹Government of Canada, ‘Minister Anand Concludes Participation in the High-level Meeting of the International Coalition for the Return of Ukrainian Children’, May 2026. Available at: <https://www.canada.ca/en/global-affairs/news/2026/05/minister-anand-concludes-participation-in-the-high-level-meeting-of-the-international-coalition-for-the-return-of-ukrainian-children.html>.

2. Reintegration and Rehabilitation of Returned Children

The needs of returned children are currently met primarily through existing donor support, including through the multilateral framework of the International Coalition for the Return of Ukrainian Children. International financial assistance is primarily channelled through existing Ukrainian government programmes, civil society initiatives like Save Ukraine, and implementing organizations like United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF).

Many Ukrainian government programmes can currently only be implemented with bilateral and multilateral donor support, either at the programme level or through mechanisms like the EU's macro-financial assistance budget support.⁹² The Cabinet of Ministers established a procedure for individualized support to children formally classified as deported or at risk of deportation and/or forced displacement because they live in the temporarily occupied territory of Ukraine, covering essential goods, housing, financial assistance, education, psychological support, and rehabilitation.⁹³ Importantly, Ukraine, under its Better Care strategy (implemented jointly with UNICEF and co-funded by the EU), has committed to placing every returned child with a family rather than in an institution.⁹⁴

International support also contributes to enabling organizations like Save Ukraine to provide a comprehensive range of services for returned children, “from emergency shelter and trauma counselling to long-term family reunification and reintegration.”⁹⁵ With the assistance of international donors, War Child Ukraine has, since March 2022, “supported over 13,500 children through child protection, over 20,000 through mental health and psychosocial support, and over 275,000 through catch-up learning via the Can't Wait to Learn platform.”⁹⁶ Specifically aimed at the needs of deported and forcibly transferred children returned, a multidisciplinary team together with the Coordination Centre for Family Upbringing and Child Care Development within the Bring Kids Back UA initiative carries out comprehensive initial needs assessments for each rescued child and then implements short-, mid- and long-term reintegration plans for each of them, including ensuring that they are placed with families rather than in institutions.⁹⁷

UNICEF's 2026 Humanitarian Action for Children strategy, which is entirely dependent on donor contribution, outlines “multisectoral response for children returning from abroad (from the Russian Federation and European Union) and in territories of Ukraine occupied by the

⁹² According to the Ukraine Support Tracker, total budget support for Ukraine from February 2022 to February 2026 in the form of loans, grants, and guarantees was just short of €126 billion. Humanitarian aid was worth just over €32 billion. See Kiel Institute for the World Economy, Ukraine Support Tracker Data. Available at: <https://www.kielinstitut.de/publications/ukraine-support-tracker-data-6453/>.

⁹³ Кабінет Міністрів України, “Постанова від 14 травня 2024 р. № 551 Про затвердження Порядку виявлення, повернення, забезпечення супроводу та реінтеграції дітей, які депортовані або примусово переміщені, або перебували під ризиком депортації та/або примусового переміщення внаслідок збройної агресії Російської Федерації проти України, або осіб з числа дітей”, 14 May 2024. Available at: <https://zakon.rada.gov.ua/laws/show/551-2024-%D0%BF#Text>. This text includes amendments through to May 2026.

⁹⁴ Interview with a Ukrainian NGO, 4 June 2026 (on file with the Mission). See also: UNICEF, Overview of the National Strategy for Ensuring the Right of Every Child to Grow Up in a Family Environment and Approaches to its Implementation (15 September 2025). Available at: <https://knowledge.unicef.org/resource/overview-national-strategy-ensuring-right-every-child-grow-family-environment-and>.

⁹⁵ War Child UK, Save Ukraine, and Human Security Centre, “Return Every Child”, 12 September 2025, p. 5. Available at: https://www.warchild.org.uk/sites/default/files/2025-09/Return_Every_Child_Report_WCUK.pdf.

⁹⁶ War Child UK, Save Ukraine, and Human Security Centre, “Return Every Child”, 12 September 2025, p. 5. Available at: https://www.warchild.org.uk/sites/default/files/2025-09/Return_Every_Child_Report_WCUK.pdf.

⁹⁷ Interview with a Ukrainian NGO, 4 June 2026 (on file with the Mission).

Russian Federation, including those in alternative care and affected by the war” as part of its humanitarian strategy in Ukraine.⁹⁸ UNICEF is also the key international implementation partner for Ukraine’s Better Care reform agenda that aims at preventing the placement of returned children in institutions.⁹⁹

C. INDOCTRINATION AND MILITARIZATION OF UKRAINIAN CHILDREN IN OCCUPIED TERRITORIES AND RUSSIA

Up to approximately 1.6 million school-age children in the occupied territories of Ukraine are subject to a comprehensive system of Russian state indoctrination and militarization.¹⁰⁰ Human Rights Watch further estimates 458,000 of these children in Crimea alone.¹⁰¹ The Almenda Centre for Civic Education assesses that, according to publicly available Russian data, at least 582,000 school-age children are currently educated under State standards of the Russian Federation across all occupied territories.¹⁰²

The War Child UK / Save Ukraine / Human Security Centre report *Return Every Child*, based on structured interviews with 200 returned children, characterizes Russia’s treatment of Ukrainian children as “the largest, most organised campaign of grave child rights violations in Europe since the end of the Yugoslav wars” and identifies a system that “in some respects — because of the scale of indoctrination and militarisation — represents a new dimension of child exploitation in armed conflict”, with 55% of interviewed returned children reporting to have been subjected to pro-Russian indoctrination, 41% claiming militarization through school-based training or paramilitary organization membership; and 30% mentioning being placed in camps where they were exposed to further indoctrination or military training.¹⁰³

The pattern of gradually erasing Ukrainian children’s Ukrainian identity and/or imposing a Russian one on them follows a trajectory first developed in Crimea after 2014 — what the Almenda Centre for Civic Education has called the “Crimean scenario” — and subsequently extended to the occupied territories on the Ukrainian mainland from 2015 and then, at scale and speed, to all four annexed oblasts from September 2022.¹⁰⁴ This included the use of both

⁹⁸UNICEF, Humanitarian Action for Children: Ukraine and Refugee Response 2026 (2026). Available at: <https://www.unicef.org/media/177141/file/2026-HAC-Ukraine-and-Refugee-Response.pdf>.

⁹⁹ Interview with a Ukrainian NGO, 4 June 2026 (on file with the Mission).

¹⁰⁰ Interview with a Ukrainian NGO, 4 June 2026 (on file with the Mission).

¹⁰¹Human Rights Watch (HRW), “Education Under Occupation: Forced Russification of the School System in Occupied Ukrainian Territories” (June 2024). Available at: <https://www.hrw.org/report/2024/06/20/education-under-occupation/forced-russification-school-system-occupied-ukrainian>.

¹⁰² Tetiana Lychko, Olha Shapoval and Mariia Sulialina, “Russia’s Policy of Eradicating the Identity of Children in the TOT of Ukraine: Results for 2025”, Kyiv: Almenda Centre for Civic Education, 2026, p.11. Available at: https://almenda.org/wp-content/uploads/2026/02/Zvit_politics_web_Eng.pdf; see also Ukrainska Pravda, “Russian Textbooks, Cadet Classes and Youth Militia,” 23 February 2026. Available at: <https://www.pravda.com.ua/eng/news/2026/02/23/8022368/>.

¹⁰³ War Child UK, Save Ukraine, and Human Security Centre, “Return Every Child”, 12 September 2025, pp. 1–2. Available at: https://www.warchild.org.uk/sites/default/files/2025-09/Return_Every_Child_Digital_WCUK.pdf.

¹⁰⁴Anastasiia Vorobiova and Mariia Sulialina, “The ‘Crimea scenario’: how the Russian Federation is destroying the Ukrainian identity of children in the occupied territories”, Kyiv: Almenda Centre for Civic Education, 2023. Available at: <https://almenda.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/02/Analytical-report-The-%E2%80%98Crimea-scenario-how-the-Russian-Federation-is-destroying-the-Ukrainian-identity-of-children-in-the-occupied-territories.pdf>; Almenda Centre for Civic Education, “Occupied Education in Crimea: Who Controls the Indoctrination and Militarisation of Schools” (June 2025). Available at: <https://almenda.org/en/okupovana-osvita-krimu-xto-keruye-indoktrinaciyeyu-ta-militarizaciyeyu-shkil/>. This was also confirmed to the Mission in several interviews: Interview with representatives of a Ukrainian NGO, 8 June 2026 (on file with the Mission); Interview with representatives of a Ukrainian NGO, 9 June 2026 (on file with the Mission).

textbooks and teachers from Crimea in the occupied territories after the full-scale invasion of 2022.¹⁰⁵ Research by Barbieri similarly indicates that there are clear precedents in the way in which patriotic education programmes in the so-called Donetsk and Luhansk Peoples' Republics were implemented since 2014. She finds that these programmes “operate[d] as instruments of mass indoctrination”, “serve[d] as an important source of self-legitimation for the de facto authorities”, and “provide[d] an efficient recruitment tool for the self-proclaimed republics' military and security apparatus (but also the Russian armed forces) as they are heavily centred on the militarisation of youth through military patriotic youth clubs and paramilitary movements.”¹⁰⁶

The Stiftung Wissenschaft und Politik (SWP) notes that the full-scale invasion acted as a “further catalyst” for programmes that had already been substantially expanded following the Russian Federation's 2014 actions, with the paramilitary component “significantly strengthened” since 2022.¹⁰⁷

Over time, Russian efforts have become more systematic in the way in which they simultaneously intensify children's indoctrination and militarization across the entire Russian education system by combining both curricular and extracurricular efforts and double down on these efforts in the occupied territories where these methods serve the additional purpose of erasing Ukrainian children's Ukrainian identity.¹⁰⁸ As an OHCHR report of March 2026 notes, “amendments to Russian federal educational programmes removed Ukrainian language and literature from primary and basic general education”, while “occupying authorities removed Ukrainian textbooks and literature from schools and libraries, blocked Ukrainian educational websites and digital platforms, and required ‘foreign’ educational institutions (including Ukrainian) to close by 1 June 2023.”¹⁰⁹

Senior Russian officials are on the record justifying these practices. For example, with specific reference to Ukrainian children in the occupied territories of Ukraine, Yana Lantratova, the First Deputy Chairman of the State Duma Committee on Education of the Russian Federation in

¹⁰⁵ Interview with the Permanent Representative of the President of Ukraine in the Autonomous Republic of Crimea, 8 June 2026 (on file with the Mission).

¹⁰⁶ Jaroslava Barbieri, “Raising Citizen-Soldiers in Donbas: Russia's Role in Promoting Patriotic Education Programmes in the Donetsk and Luhansk Peoples' Republics”, *Ethnopolitics*, Vol. 23, No. 5, pp. 515-536, here pp. 525-526. Available at: <https://doi.org/10.1080/17449057.2023.2220097>.

¹⁰⁷ Margarete Klein and Susan Stewart, “Military-Patriotic Education in Russia: How the Next Generation Is Being Brought into Line with the Regime,” SWP Comment No. 46, 10 November 2025, p. 1. Available at: <https://www.swp-berlin.org/en/publication/military-patriotic-education-in-russia>.

¹⁰⁸ Margarete Klein and Susan Stewart, “Military-Patriotic Education in Russia: How the Next Generation Is Being Brought into Line with the Regime,” SWP Comment No. 46, 10 November 2025, pp. 1-4. Available at: <https://www.swp-berlin.org/en/publication/military-patriotic-education-in-russia>; Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR), “The Impact of the Armed Conflict and Occupation on Children's Rights in Ukraine: 24 February 2022–31 December 2024”, 21 March 2025, paras. 86-110. Available at: <https://www.ohchr.org/sites/default/files/documents/form/2025-03-21-ohchr-report-children-s-rights-in-ukraine.pdf>. Alava notes the same pattern more broadly in the Russian Federation: Jonna Alava, “From Patriotic Education to Militarist Indoctrination,” *Problems of Post-Communism*, Vol. 72, No. 5 (2025), p. 428-432. Available at: <https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/full/10.1080/10758216.2024.2444600>.

¹⁰⁹ OHCHR, “Forced Displacement from Territory of Ukraine Occupied by the Russian Federation: Forcible Transfer and Deportation, Barriers to Return, and the Rights of Internally Displaced Persons, 24 February 2022 – 31 December 2025”, 20 March 2026, para. 43. Available at: <https://www.ohchr.org/en/documents/country-reports/forced-displacement-territory-ukraine-occupied-russian-federation>.

2022 and now Russia’s Human Rights Commissioner,¹¹⁰ noted that the Russian Federation “must first of all take care of the main thing - our children. To develop and enlighten them, to instil in them a sense of the Motherland.”¹¹¹

The UN Secretary General’s August 2025 Report to the General Assembly also notes the comprehensive and systematic legal underpinning of these policies. According to this report, Russia’s September 2024 cultural policy strategy decrees the integration of “the new constituent entities of the Russian Federation [...] into the Russian cultural-humanitarian space” as its “most important task”, while a law on children’s rights now “require[s] all educational activities during school holidays, including summer camps, to ‘develop a sense of patriotism in children’”.¹¹²

These occupation practices have been widely condemned, including at debates in the UN General Assembly. For example, during the 22nd meeting of the Eleventh Emergency Special Session on Russia’s aggression against Ukraine, several delegates voiced their concerns about Russian policies that have led to “thousands of children [being] separated from their families, deprived of their identity, denied access to their native language and culture and subjected to indoctrination,” with the Georgian representative specifically noting “such actions amount to an attempt to erase their very sense of belonging and nationhood”.¹¹³ Several UN General Assembly Resolutions called for the return of all “civilians forcibly transferred or deported, including children”.¹¹⁴

1. Systematic Restructuring of Education in Occupied Territories

Imposition of the Russian Curriculum

Within months of the beginning of the full-scale invasion, Russian authorities imposed the Russian state curriculum on all schools in newly occupied territories, replacing the Ukrainian curriculum in violation of the occupying power’s obligation under IHL to facilitate the work of educational institutions without interfering in their usual activities.¹¹⁵ This process involved a significant level of coercion. For example, OHCHR noted in a report of June 2022 that four teachers from the Zaporizhzhia region “were taken from their homes and detained in an unknown place for four days with the aim of compelling them to teach using the Russian Federation curricula.”¹¹⁶ Evidence documented by ODIHR similarly indicates certain levels of

¹¹⁰ Государственная Дума Федерального Собрания Российской Федерации, “Государственная Дума назначила Яну Лантратову Уполномоченным по правам человека в РФ”, 14 May 2026. Available at: <http://duma.gov.ru/news/63549/>.

¹¹¹ Yana Lantratova, “Existing history lessons are not enough”, Rossiyskaya Gazeta, 28 December 2022. Available at: <https://rg.ru/2022/12/28/iana-lantratova-ob-izuch-istorii-svoej-strany.html>.

¹¹² United Nations General Assembly, “Situation of human rights in the temporarily occupied territories of Ukraine, including the Autonomous Republic of Crimea and the city of Sevastopol. Report of the Secretary-General”, A/80/315, 6 August 2025, para. 48. Available at: <https://docs.un.org/en/A/80/315>.

¹¹³ United Nations General Assembly, “General Assembly Demands Immediate Return of Ukrainian Children, Adopting Resolution amid Sharp Divides in Resumed Emergency Special Session”, 3 December 2025. Available at: <https://press.un.org/en/2025/ga12738.doc.htm>.

¹¹⁴ See, for example, United Nations General Assembly, “Resolution adopted by the General Assembly on 24 February 2026: Support for lasting peace in Ukraine”, 25 February 2026, para. 3. Available at: <https://docs.un.org/en/A/ES-11/L.17>.

¹¹⁵ OHCHR, “The Impact of the Armed Conflict and Occupation on Children’s Rights in Ukraine: 24 February 2022–31 December 2024”, 21 March 2025, para. 86. Available at: <https://www.ohchr.org/sites/default/files/documents/form/2025-03-21-ohchr-report-children-s-rights-in-ukraine.pdf>.

¹¹⁶ OHCHR, “Situation of Human Rights in Ukraine in the Context of the Armed Attack by the Russian Federation, 24 February — 15 May 2022”, 29 June 2022, para. 84. Available at:

coercion for teachers, with witnesses stating that teaching staff “faced backlash for refusing to teach the Russian Federation curriculum or if they were suspected of teaching the Ukrainian curriculum online”, “were told they would be fired or forced to resign if they refused to teach the Russian curriculum”, “threatened, detained and questioned for refusing to cooperate”, and “interrogated by the FSB”.¹¹⁷

The mission also learned from a direct witness that Russian occupation forces applied direct pressure on teachers to work within the Russian education system and apply its curricula, threatening arrest, and worse, in cases of refusal.¹¹⁸ This individual testimony is more broadly corroborated also by OHCHR who “documented 13 cases in which school administrators and teachers (concerning 11 women and 2 men) who refused to teach the Russian curriculum were arbitrarily detained, tortured, ill-treated, and/or threatened with violence.”¹¹⁹ In a separate report of March 2024, OHCHR reiterates that “Ukrainian teachers were pressured into implementing the Russian curriculum and holding classes in Russian language, sometimes with physical violence, or were terminated from their positions”.¹²⁰ The same report also notes that “teachers who no longer worked in school but taught online classes following the Ukrainian curriculum were sought out and threatened.”¹²¹ This fact was also confirmed in testimony obtained by the Mission from two direct witnesses, confirming that after initially allowing Ukrainian educators in the newly occupied territories to teach out the 2021–22 school year following the Ukrainian curriculum, Russian occupiers “soon started going after Ukrainian patriots” in an attempt to break their resistance to the imposition of the Russian curriculum.¹²²

OHCHR also documented an emblematic case of an enforced disappearance of a teacher who “was kept overnight in at least eight different locations often with inhumane conditions”, with “inhumane treatment ... also applied during transfers between locations”, and who “faced eight sessions of torture, including beatings, electrocution, mock executions, digging a grave for himself, sexual violence and being held in a metal sweatbox.”¹²³

Taken together, both the content of the education system imposed and the coercive nature of the imposition process have created an environment in which any expression of Ukrainian

<https://www.ohchr.org/sites/default/files/documents/countries/ua/2022-06-29/2022-06-UkraineArmedAttack-EN.pdf>.

¹¹⁷ OSCE/ODIHR, “Fifth Interim Report on reported violations of international humanitarian law and international human rights law in Ukraine”, 23 July 2024, paras. 90-91. Available at: <https://odhr.osce.org/odhr/573346>.

¹¹⁸ Testimony 1 (on file with the Mission).

¹¹⁹ OHCHR, “Human Rights Situation during the Russian Occupation of Territory of Ukraine and Its Aftermath, 24 February 2022 – 31 December 2023”, 20 March 2024, para. 94. Available at: <https://www.ohchr.org/sites/default/files/documents/countries/ukraine/2023/2024-03-20-OHCHR-Report-Occupation-Aftermath-en.pdf>.

¹²⁰ OHCHR, “Human Rights Situation during the Russian Occupation of Territory of Ukraine and Its Aftermath, 24 February 2022 – 31 December 2023”, 20 March 2024, para. 130. Available at: <https://www.ohchr.org/sites/default/files/documents/countries/ukraine/2023/2024-03-20-OHCHR-Report-Occupation-Aftermath-en.pdf>.

¹²¹ OHCHR, “Human Rights Situation during the Russian Occupation of Territory of Ukraine and Its Aftermath, 24 February 2022 – 31 December 2023”, 20 March 2024, para. 133. Available at: <https://www.ohchr.org/sites/default/files/documents/countries/ukraine/2023/2024-03-20-OHCHR-Report-Occupation-Aftermath-en.pdf>.

¹²² Testimony 1 and Testimony 2 (on file with the Mission).

¹²³ OHCHR, “Situation of Human Rights in Ukraine in the Context of the Armed Attack by the Russian Federation, 24 February — 15 May 2022”, 29 June 2022, para. 86. Available at: <https://www.ohchr.org/sites/default/files/documents/countries/ua/2022-06-29/2022-06-UkraineArmedAttack-EN.pdf>. The same report also cites (para. 89) the case of “a local activist school teacher from a village in the Mykolaiv region [being] found with gunshots and signs of torture on 17 March, a day after his abduction by Russian armed forces.”

identity carries severe risks. In the case of Ukrainian children, this does not only involve them as individuals but also their families, creating additional pressure points for occupation authorities to deny children their right to identity, and effectively amounting to a systematic policy of erasing their Ukrainian identity and replacing it with a Russian one through indoctrination in the education system and the range of extracurricular military-patriotic education programmes provided through a variety of mechanisms, including paramilitary youth organizations and re-education camps and facilities as detailed below.

The systematicity of these efforts can also be documented with reference to official Russian sources. On 29 October 2022, TASS reported that the Ministry of Education of the Russian Federation was preparing “a comprehensive programme for the development of education in the DPR, LPR, Kherson and Zaporozhye regions ... by December 15” and that “the board of the Ministry of Education of Russia will include four new participants - the ministers of education of the Lugansk and Donetsk People’s Republics, Kherson and Zaporozhye regions.”¹²⁴

In February 2023, a Russian law established a formal transition framework: temporary accreditation was granted to educational institutions in occupied territory; deadlines were set for compliance with Russian national legislation; and Ukrainian educational institutions were required to close by 1 June 2023.¹²⁵ The same process had been implemented in Crimea from September 2014 under legislation signed by Putin in May of that year.¹²⁶ The explicit stated goal of these policies was to “completely integrate occupied territory into the Russian educational and cultural spheres.”¹²⁷

By the 2024–25 academic year, 282,900 children in the occupied territories of the Autonomous Republic of Crimea and Sevastopol were being educated under Russian State standards in 608 schools.¹²⁸ Given that the occupation of Crimea began in 2014, there is now an entire cohort of students who have completed their whole schooling under the Russian system. As a report by the Almenda Centre for Civic Education notes, “these children have spent 11 years under conditions of systematic eradication of Ukrainian identity, ideological pressure, and pro-Russian patriotic indoctrination.”¹²⁹

¹²⁴ Редакция сайта ТАСС, “Программу развития образования в новых регионах подготовят до 15 декабря”, 29 October 2022. Available at: <https://tass.ru/obschestvo/16192291>.

¹²⁵ OHCHR, “The Impact of the Armed Conflict and Occupation on Children’s Rights in Ukraine: 24 February 2022–31 December 2024”, 21 March 2025, para. 86. Available at: <https://www.ohchr.org/sites/default/files/documents/form/2025-03-21-ohchr-report-children-s-rights-in-ukraine.pdf>.

¹²⁶ Almenda Centre for Civic Education, “Occupied Education in Crimea: Who Controls the Indoctrination and Militarisation of Schools”, 4 June 2025. Available at: <https://almenda.org/en/okupovana-osvita-krimu-xto-keruye-indoktrinaciyeyu-ta-militarizaciyeyu-shkil/>. Alla Hurska, “Russia Converts Ukrainian Children Into Enemies,” The Jamestown Foundation Eurasia Daily Monitor (3 July 2024). Available at: <https://jamestown.org/russia-converts-ukrainian-children-into-enemies/>.

¹²⁷ OHCHR, “The Impact of the Armed Conflict and Occupation on Children’s Rights in Ukraine: 24 February 2022–31 December 2024”, 21 March 2025, para. 86. Available at: <https://www.ohchr.org/sites/default/files/documents/form/2025-03-21-ohchr-report-children-s-rights-in-ukraine.pdf>.

¹²⁸ Almenda Centre for Civic Education, “Occupied Education in Crimea: Who Controls the Indoctrination and Militarisation of Schools”, 4 June 2025. Available at: <https://almenda.org/en/okupovana-osvita-krimu-xto-keruye-indoktrinaciyeyu-ta-militarizaciyeyu-shkil/>.

¹²⁹ Almenda Centre for Civic Education, “Occupied Education in Crimea: Who Controls the Indoctrination and Militarisation of Schools”, 4 June 2025. Available at: <https://almenda.org/en/okupovana-osvita-krimu-xto-keruye-indoktrinaciyeyu-ta-militarizaciyeyu-shkil/>.

The imposition of the Russian education system in Crimea was not a smooth and frictionless process with some initial resistance from teachers, parents, and students complicating Russian efforts. However, this was merely a transitional stage: by June 2014, over 20,000 members of teaching staff in Crimean schools were enrolled in “training programmes” and 276 teachers of Ukrainian language and literature were subsequently specifically requalified as Russian language and literature teachers.¹³⁰

The Crimean experience also provided important learning opportunities for Russia. Following the 2022 invasion, a refined operational template was implemented, significantly speeding up the transition to a fully Russian education system. For example, in the Zaporizhzhia and Kherson regions, Russian federal textbooks were distributed within weeks of their military occupation, even before the formal annexation of the territories in September 2022.¹³¹

¹³⁰ Olha Pashkova, “Children of the Occupied Territories of Ukraine: Russian Strategies of Mind Colonisation,” *Croatian Political Science Review*, Vol. 61, No. 4 (2024), pp. 50-68, here p. 53. Available at: <https://hrcak.srce.hr/file/474277>.

¹³¹ OHCHR, “The Impact of the Armed Conflict and Occupation on Children’s Rights in Ukraine: 24 February 2022–31 December 2024”, 21 March 2025, para. 89. Available at: <https://www.ohchr.org/sites/default/files/documents/form/2025-03-21-ohchr-report-children-s-rights-in-ukraine.pdf>. The Almenda Centre for Civic Education characterizes the system applied post-2022 as the “Crimean scenario” deliberately extended to the four oblasts occupied in 2022: Almenda Centre for Civic Education, “Occupied Education in Crimea: Who Controls the Indoctrination and Militarisation of Schools”, 4 June 2025. Available at: <https://almenda.org/en/okupovana-osvita-krimu-xto-keruye-indoktrinaciyeyu-ta-militarizaciyeyu-shkil/>. See also Olha Pashkova, “Children of the Occupied Territories of Ukraine: Russian Strategies of Mind Colonisation,” *Croatian Political Science Review*, Vol. 61, No. 4 (2024), pp. 50-68, here pp. 52-53. Available at: <https://hrcak.srce.hr/file/474277>.

Suppression of the Ukrainian Language

The elimination of the Ukrainian language from education is a central feature of Russian occupation policy and has been consistently implemented across all occupied territories.¹³² This was repeatedly confirmed to the Mission in testimonies¹³³ and interviews.¹³⁴

In Crimea, the trajectory is the most fully documented. According to OHCHR and the HRMMU, “in the 2013–14 academic year, 12,694 students received education in the Ukrainian language; by the 2022–23 academic year, only 197 (0.1% of all students) were fully instructed in Ukrainian, while only 3,486 learned Ukrainian as a subject, elective, or extracurricular activity.”¹³⁵ By 2024, only one Ukrainian-language school remained in Crimea.¹³⁶ The International Court of Justice, in its judgement of January 2024 in *Ukraine v. Russia*, concluded “that the Russian Federation has violated its obligations under Article 2, paragraph 1 (a), and Article 5 (e) (v) of CERD by the way in which it has implemented its educational system in Crimea after 2014 with regard to school education in the Ukrainian language.”¹³⁷

In the four regions of Ukraine that the Russian Federation has partially occupied since 2022, this timeline has been compressed, partly also because of higher levels of coercion accompanying the imposition of a Russia-only educational environment. Occupying authorities barred children from speaking Ukrainian in school: OHCHR documented a case in which a child who refused to speak Russian was escorted by an armed guard for a “talk.”¹³⁸ Ukrainian-

¹³² Michael Moser, “The Ukrainian Language in the Temporarily Occupied Territories (2014–October 2022),” *Kyiv-Mohyla Humanities Journal*, 10 (2023), p. 2 (noting that Russian language policy in Crimea and the Donbas “became role models for the territories that Russian military forces temporarily annexed after 24 February 2022”); Ukraine State Language Protection Commissioner, *Review on the Restriction of the Functioning of the Ukrainian Language in the Temporarily Occupied Territories of Ukraine* (2025); OHCHR, “The Impact of the Armed Conflict and Occupation on Children’s Rights in Ukraine: 24 February 2022–31 December 2024”, 21 March 2025, paras. 88-91. Available at: <https://www.ohchr.org/sites/default/files/documents/form/2025-03-21-ohchr-report-children-s-rights-in-ukraine.pdf>.

¹³³ For example, Testimony 1 (on file with the Mission); Testimony 3 (on file with the Mission); Testimony 4 (on file with the Mission); Testimony 6 (on file with the Mission).

¹³⁴ For example, interview with the Permanent Representative of the President of Ukraine in the Autonomous Republic of Crimea, 8 June 2026 (on file with the Mission); Interview with representatives of the Ministry of Education and Science of Ukraine, 9 June 2026 (on file with the Mission); Interview with representatives of the Investigative Department of the Security Service of Ukraine, 9 June 2026 (on file with the Mission).

¹³⁵ OHCHR, “Ten Years of Occupation by the Russian Federation: Human Rights in the Autonomous Republic of Crimea and the City of Sevastopol, Ukraine” (February 2024), para. 35. Available at: <https://www.ohchr.org/sites/default/files/documents/form/2025-03-21-ohchr-report-children-s-rights-in-ukraine.pdf>.

¹³⁶ OHCHR, “Ten Years of Occupation by the Russian Federation: Human Rights in the Autonomous Republic of Crimea and the City of Sevastopol, Ukraine” (February 2024), para. 35. Available at: <https://www.ohchr.org/sites/default/files/documents/countries/ukraine/2024-02-28-OHCHR-Ten-Years-Occupation-Crimea.pdf>.

¹³⁷ International Court of Justice, *Ukraine v. Russian Federation* (Application of ICSFT and CERD), Judgement of 31 January 2024, para. 370. Available at: <https://www.icj-cij.org/case/166>. For the relevant articles of the International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination (CERD), see <https://www.ohchr.org/en/instruments-mechanisms/instruments/international-convention-elimination-all-forms-racial>. Under Article 2, paragraph 1 (a), “Each State Party undertakes to engage in no act or practice of racial discrimination against persons, groups of persons or institutions and to ensure that all public authorities and public institutions, national and local, shall act in conformity with this obligation” and under Article 5 “States Parties undertake to prohibit and to eliminate racial discrimination in all its forms and to guarantee the right of everyone, without distinction as to race, colour, or national or ethnic origin, to equality before the law, notably in the enjoyment of the following rights: (e) Economic, social and cultural rights, in particular: (v) The right to education and training”.

¹³⁸ OHCHR, “The Impact of the Armed Conflict and Occupation on Children’s Rights in Ukraine: 24 February 2022–31 December 2024”, 21 March 2025, para. 91. Available at:

language books were removed from schools and public libraries; Ukrainian internet providers, television, radio, and websites were blocked.¹³⁹ Simultaneously, “occupying authorities enforced attendance in Russian-run schools through threats and intimidation, searching children’s mobile phones, including for Ukrainian education apps.”¹⁴⁰ Parents who resisted were threatened with termination of parental rights and removal of their children¹⁴¹ and “warned of penalties, including fines”.¹⁴² In several cases documented by OHCHR, this led to Ukrainian families having no choice but to leave their homes in the occupied territories because their children could no longer express, maintain, or develop their Ukrainian identity inside or outside the Russian-imposed education system in the occupied territories.¹⁴³ Similar accounts of the intimidation of parents have been documented by ODIHR, including evidence that “the parents of children who were not attending Russian curriculum schools or who were suspected of following the Ukrainian curriculum online were ... subject to home visits ... [from] local authorities, police officers and armed military personnel [who] visited parents in order to coerce them into sending their children to Russian schools” and that “that children would be removed from their parents if they were not sent to a Russian curriculum school.”¹⁴⁴

This was further confirmed to the Mission in testimonies obtained from direct witnesses. For example, one young adult whose testimony was obtained by the Mission noted that he left the occupied territories because he could “no longer bear the ideological indoctrination”,¹⁴⁵ while another reported that children were told that they “have to love Russia” and that the way in

<https://www.ohchr.org/sites/default/files/documents/form/2025-03-21-ohchr-report-children-s-rights-in-ukraine.pdf>.

¹³⁹ OHCHR, “The Impact of the Armed Conflict and Occupation on Children’s Rights in Ukraine: 24 February 2022–31 December 2024”, 21 March 2025, para. 91. Available at: <https://www.ohchr.org/sites/default/files/documents/form/2025-03-21-ohchr-report-children-s-rights-in-ukraine.pdf>.

¹⁴⁰ OHCHR, “Forced Displacement from Territory of Ukraine Occupied by the Russian Federation: Forcible Transfer and Deportation, Barriers to Return, and the Rights of Internally Displaced Persons, 24 February 2022 – 31 December 2025”, 20 March 2026, para. 44. Available at: <https://www.ohchr.org/en/documents/country-reports/forced-displacement-territory-ukraine-occupied-russian-federation>.

¹⁴¹ OHCHR, “The Impact of the Armed Conflict and Occupation on Children’s Rights in Ukraine: 24 February 2022–31 December 2024”, 21 March 2025, para. 92. Available at: <https://www.ohchr.org/sites/default/files/documents/form/2025-03-21-ohchr-report-children-s-rights-in-ukraine.pdf>; HRW, op. cit.

¹⁴² OHCHR, “Forced Displacement from Territory of Ukraine Occupied by the Russian Federation: Forcible Transfer and Deportation, Barriers to Return, and the Rights of Internally Displaced Persons, 24 February 2022 – 31 December 2025”, 20 March 2026, para. 44. Available at: <https://www.ohchr.org/en/documents/country-reports/forced-displacement-territory-ukraine-occupied-russian-federation>.

¹⁴³ See testimonies from parents included in OHCHR, “Forced Displacement from Territory of Ukraine Occupied by the Russian Federation: Forcible Transfer and Deportation, Barriers to Return, and the Rights of Internally Displaced Persons, 24 February 2022 – 31 December 2025”, 20 March 2026, paras. 43-48. Available at: <https://www.ohchr.org/en/documents/country-reports/forced-displacement-territory-ukraine-occupied-russian-federation>.

¹⁴⁴ OSCE/ODIHR, “Fifth Interim Report on reported violations of international humanitarian law and international human rights law in Ukraine”, 23 July 2024, paras. 92-93. Available at: <https://odihr.osce.org/odihr/573346>. Similar cases are also documented in OSCE/ODIHR, “Sixth Interim Report on reported violations of international humanitarian law and international human rights law in Ukraine”, 13 December 2024, paras. 109-113. Available at: <https://odihr.osce.org/odihr/582835>, OSCE/ODIHR, “Seventh Interim Report on reported violations of international humanitarian law and international human rights law in Ukraine”, 15 July 2025, paras. 97-98. Available at: <https://odihr.osce.org/odihr/594634>, and OSCE/ODIHR, “Eighth Interim Report on reported violations of international humanitarian law and international human rights law in Ukraine”, 16 December 2025, para. 118. Available at: <https://odihr.osce.org/odihr/661354>.

¹⁴⁵ Testimony 6 (on file with the Mission).

which the entire system of curricular and extracurricular education was run meant that “when there were opportunities to brainwash us, they used them.”¹⁴⁶

As of 15 December 2025, Ukrainian language as a subject and a mode of instruction has been entirely removed from the curriculum under Russian federal educational standards applied to the occupied territories.¹⁴⁷

Falsification of History and Ideological Indoctrination

The Russian Federation introduced new mandatory history textbooks across the occupied territories in which Ukraine is not represented as an independent country, and in which the ‘special military operation’ is characterized as a pivotal and justified moment in Russian history.¹⁴⁸ The 2023 textbook co-authored by Vladimir Medinsky (a one-time minister of culture of the Russian Federation, current head of the Russian Military Historical Society, and an Aide to the President of the Russian Federation¹⁴⁹) and Vladimir Torkunov (co-chair of the Russian Historical Society and member of the presidium of the Russian Academy of Sciences¹⁵⁰) devotes 29 pages to the so-called ‘special military operation’ and frames it as a defensive response to Western aggression.¹⁵¹ Amnesty International assessed this textbook as “a blatant attempt to unlawfully indoctrinate school children in Russia and Russian-occupied Ukrainian territories”, noting that “Russia is bound by its obligations as a state party to the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights and the Convention on the Rights of the Child” which “includes the obligation to respect, protect and fulfil the right to education and not to violate this right by indoctrinating pupils with propaganda.”¹⁵² Versions of this textbook for lower grades, starting in grade 5, have been used across schools in the occupied territories since the beginning of academic year 2025-26, “confirming the comprehensive nature

¹⁴⁶ Testimony 5 (on file with the Mission).

¹⁴⁷ Tetiana Lychko, Olha Shapoval and Mariia Sulialina, “Russia’s Policy of Eradicating the Identity of Children in the TOT of Ukraine: Results for 2025”, Kyiv: Almenda Centre for Civic Education, 2026, p.10. Available at: https://almenda.org/wp-content/uploads/2026/02/Zvit_politics_web_Eng.pdf;

¹⁴⁸ OHCHR, “The Impact of the Armed Conflict and Occupation on Children’s Rights in Ukraine: 24 February 2022–31 December 2024”, 21 March 2025, para. 87. Available at: <https://www.ohchr.org/sites/default/files/documents/form/2025-03-21-ohchr-report-children-s-rights-in-ukraine.pdf>.

¹⁴⁹ See <http://www.en.kremlin.ru/catalog/persons/337/biography>.

¹⁵⁰ See <https://torkunov.mgimo.ru/>.

¹⁵¹ OHCHR, “The Impact of the Armed Conflict and Occupation on Children’s Rights in Ukraine: 24 February 2022–31 December 2024”, 21 March 2025, para. 87. Available at: <https://www.ohchr.org/sites/default/files/documents/form/2025-03-21-ohchr-report-children-s-rights-in-ukraine.pdf>; Jonna Alava, “From Patriotic Education to Militarist Indoctrination,” *Problems of Post-Communism*, Vol. 72, No. 5 (2025), p. 430. Available at: <https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/full/10.1080/10758216.2024.2444600>.

¹⁵² Amnesty International, “Ukraine/Russia: New History Textbook is a Blatant Attempt to Unlawfully Indoctrinate School Children in Russia and Russian-Occupied Ukrainian Territories” (7 September 2023). Available at: <https://www.amnesty.org/en/latest/news/2023/09/ukraine-russia-new-history-textbook-is-a-blatant-attempt-to-unlawfully-indoctrinate-school-children-in-russia-and-russian-occupied-ukrainian-territories/>. Article 29 of the Convention on the Rights of the Child states, *inter alia*, “1. States Parties agree that the education of the child shall be directed to: (c) The development of respect for the child's parents, his or her own cultural identity, language and values, for the national values of the country in which the child is living, the country from which he or she may originate, and for civilisations different from his or her own”. Also of relevance is Article 20 concerning a child “temporarily or permanently deprived of his or her family environment” which requires that when considering such situations “due regard shall be paid to the desirability of continuity in a child's upbringing and to the child's ethnic, religious, cultural and linguistic background.” See Convention on the Rights of the Child, available at: <https://www.ohchr.org/en/instruments-mechanisms/instruments/convention-rights-child>.

of the implemented changes”¹⁵³ to a key mechanism of the Russian indoctrination efforts in the occupied territories, namely the teaching of history.

According to media reports, a new social studies textbook will be introduced at the beginning of the 2026–27 academic year. Edited by former Russian president Dmitry Medvedev, the book prominently displays a map depicting all the territories illegally claimed by the Russian Federation in Ukraine as formally part of the Russian Federation.¹⁵⁴

Since the third quarter of the 2022–23 academic year, new mandatory lessons entitled “Conversations about Important Things” (Разговоры о важном, *Razgovory o vazhnom*) have been held on Monday mornings across all grades, preceded by a flag-raising ceremony and the playing of the Russian national anthem.¹⁵⁵ According to the Minister of Education of the Russian Federation, Sergey Kravtsov, these “Conversations” have the “goal to form spiritual and moral values in accordance with the Strategy of National Security.”¹⁵⁶ Prepared by Russia’s Ministry of Education, one lesson plan for 8th and 9th grade students instructs that residents of occupied territory are “Russian people” whose return to the Russian Federation is important and that “Russian soldiers are heroes.”¹⁵⁷ Since 2024, pre-schools and kindergartens have been legally required to display the Russian flag and “cultivate a patriotic mood.”¹⁵⁸

The fact that Ukrainian children are compelled to pledge allegiance to the occupying power is also documented in witness testimonies obtained by ODIHR, noting that “pupils ‘have patriotic classes at school every Monday and for every public holiday they have to line up and shout ‘I’m Russian’ while raising their fist in the air”, that “school administrators displayed Russian flags and pictures of the President of the Russian Federation and required pupils to learn the Russian national anthem and start lessons singing it”, and that “students were also required to make videos about how much they loved Russia”.¹⁵⁹ The Mission also obtained testimonies

¹⁵³ Tetiana Lychko, Olha Shapoval and Mariia Sulialina, “Russia’s Policy of Eradicating the Identity of Children in the TOT of Ukraine: Results for 2025”, Kyiv: Almenda Centre for Civic Education, 2026, p. 9. Available at: https://almenda.org/wp-content/uploads/2026/02/Zvit_politics_web_Eng.pdf

¹⁵⁴ Georgii Chentemirov, “Russia’s new social studies textbook tells schoolchildren: ‘Either a patriot or a scoundrel’”, The Barents Observer, 4 June 2026. Available at: <https://www.thebarentsobserver.com/news/russias-new-social-studies-textbook-tells-schoolchildren-either-a-patriot-or-a-scoundrel/451875>.

¹⁵⁵ OHCHR, “The Impact of the Armed Conflict and Occupation on Children’s Rights in Ukraine: 24 February 2022–31 December 2024”, 21 March 2025, para. 87. Available at: <https://www.ohchr.org/sites/default/files/documents/form/2025-03-21-ohchr-report-children-s-rights-in-ukraine.pdf>; Margarete Klein and Susan Stewart, “Military-Patriotic Education in Russia: How the Next Generation Is Being Brought into Line with the Regime,” SWP Comment No. 46, 10 November 2025, p. 2. Available at: <https://www.swp-berlin.org/en/publication/military-patriotic-education-in-russia>. See also Yana Lantratova, “Existing history lessons are not enough”, Rossiyskaya Gazeta, 28 December 2022. Available at: <https://rg.ru/2022/12/28/iana-lantratova-ob-izuch-istorii-svoej-strany.html>.

¹⁵⁶ Президент России, “Совещание с членами Правительства”, 31 August 2022. Available at: <http://kremlin.ru/events/president/news/69238>.

¹⁵⁷ OHCHR, “The Impact of the Armed Conflict and Occupation on Children’s Rights in Ukraine: 24 February 2022–31 December 2024”, 21 March 2025, para. 87. Available at: <https://www.ohchr.org/sites/default/files/documents/form/2025-03-21-ohchr-report-children-s-rights-in-ukraine.pdf>.

¹⁵⁸ OHCHR, “The Impact of the Armed Conflict and Occupation on Children’s Rights in Ukraine: 24 February 2022–31 December 2024”, 21 March 2025, para. 95. Available at: <https://www.ohchr.org/sites/default/files/documents/form/2025-03-21-ohchr-report-children-s-rights-in-ukraine.pdf>; Margarete Klein and Susan Stewart, “Military-Patriotic Education in Russia: How the Next Generation Is Being Brought into Line with the Regime,” SWP Comment No. 46, 10 November 2025, p. 3. Available at: <https://www.swp-berlin.org/en/publication/military-patriotic-education-in-russia>.

¹⁵⁹ OSCE/ODIHR, “Sixth Interim Report on reported violations of international humanitarian law and international human rights law in Ukraine”, 13 December 2024, para. 113. Available at: <https://odihr.osce.org/odihr/582835>.

from witnesses corroborating these facts, including from one young adult who had returned from the occupied territories and informed the Mission that “you have to love Russia” was a recurring theme across different lessons during his time in the Russian-imposed education system after 2022.¹⁶⁰

Apart from the introduction in Russian schools of new standardized history textbooks for grades 5 through 9 noted above, the 2025–26 academic year also introduced a new “History of Our Region” module, accompanied by an increase in the total hours that children are taught history from 340 to 476.¹⁶¹ As Mariia Sulialina of the Zmina Human Rights Centre notes, as early as from first grade onwards, children are taught that there is “no Ukraine”, that they “can only identify as Russian”, and that “patriotism means being ready to protect the Russian Federation and to die for it.”¹⁶² In another sign of the scaling up of Russian indoctrination and militarization efforts more widely, budgets for patriotic education in the Russian Federation rose from \$50 million in 2022 to \$459 million in 2024.¹⁶³

Testimonies obtained by the Mission confirm this broad picture of Ukrainian children being indoctrinated with a severely distorted Russian version of history. One witness, for example, reported that “general education, the sort that was there—patriotic, historical, cultural, and so on— it was interwoven with militaristic narratives and constant references to the Second World War, but in the Russian understanding of it, like, the Great Patriotic War, the one from [19]41 to [19]45. Not the Second World War.”¹⁶⁴ Another witness recalled that “the emphasis ... was on everything Russian ... all the symbols, the anthems, flags hanging everywhere and so on. Russian history has been rewritten according to Russian textbooks, where not a word is said about the fact that the Soviet Union occupied Poland there together with Germany in [19]39.”¹⁶⁵

2. Militarization within the School System

Eighteen months into the full-scale Russian invasion of Ukraine, at the beginning of the 2023–24 academic year, the course “Fundamentals of Security and Defence of the Motherland” became a compulsory subject in all schools in occupied territories,¹⁶⁶ which meant the “return

¹⁶⁰ Testimony 5 (on file with the Mission), see also Testimonies 3, 4, 6 (on file with the Mission).

¹⁶¹ Amira Barkhush, “Russia Expands School History Hours by 50%, Replacing “Western” Curriculum with State Version”, United24 Media, 9 June 2025. Available at: <https://united24media.com/latest-news/russia-expands-school-history-hours-by-50-replacing-western-curriculum-with-state-version-8981>. This report cites Виталий Крюков, “Новые учебники истории Мединского для 5–9-х классов применят в сентябре”, Ведомости, 2 September 2024. Available at: <https://www.vedomosti.ru/society/articles/2024/09/02/1059273-novie-uchebniki-istorii-medinskogo-dlya-5-9-h-klassov-primenyat-v-sentyabre>. And Виталий Крюков, “Новые учебники истории Мединского для 5–9-х классов применят в сентябре”, Ведомости, 2 September 2024. Available at: <https://www.vedomosti.ru/society/articles/2024/09/02/1059273-novie-uchebniki-istorii-medinskogo-dlya-5-9-h-klassov-primenyat-v-sentyabre>. See also: Zmina Human Rights Centre, “The Russian occupiers teach our children that Ukraine does not exist at all”, 20 May 2025. Available at: <https://zmina.info/en/news-en/the-russian-occupiers-teach-our-children-that-ukraine-does-not-exist-at-all-human-rights-advocate-maria-sulyalina/>.

¹⁶² Mariia Sulialina, “Not Just Ukraine — Russia is Preparing Ukrainian Children for Future Wars Elsewhere”, Zmina Human Rights Centre, 24 February 2026. Available at: <https://zmina.info/en/columns-en/not-just-ukraine-russia-is-preparing-ukrainian-children-for-future-wars-everywhere/>.

¹⁶³ War Child UK, Save Ukraine, and Human Security Centre, “Return Every Child”, 12 September 2025, p. 3. Available at: https://www.warchild.org.uk/sites/default/files/2025-09/Return_Every_Child_Digital_WCUK.pdf.

¹⁶⁴ Testimony 7 (on file with the Mission).

¹⁶⁵ Testimony 14 (on file with the Mission).

¹⁶⁶ Alla Hurska, “Russia Converts Ukrainian Children into Enemies,” The Jamestown Foundation Eurasia Daily Monitor, 3 July 2024. Available at: <https://jamestown.org/program/russia-converts-ukrainian-children-into-enemies/>; OHCHR, “The Impact of the Armed Conflict and Occupation on Children’s Rights in Ukraine: 24 February 2022–31 December 2024”, 21 March 2025, para. 100. Available at:

[of] initial military training as part of life safety lessons”,¹⁶⁷ including “170 hours of military training including on the main types of grenades, small arms, hand-held anti-tank grenade launchers, and sniper rifles.”¹⁶⁸

A year later, the course formally replaced the “Fundamentals of Life Safety” course across all of the Russian Federation and the occupied territories. It is targeted at 8th grade students of the ages of 13 and 14 years, who receive mandatory instruction in all kinds of weaponry and the use of drones,¹⁶⁹ with theory and practical classes delivered by experienced military personnel, including combat veterans.¹⁷⁰

Another feature of widespread indoctrination and militarization efforts by the Russian Federation are so-called cadet classes. These specialized pre-professional education courses to prepare students for a career in different branches of the security services, including in law enforcement and the military and were massively expanded in number after 2022, especially from ninth grade onwards and include training on handling weapons for the children participating in them.¹⁷¹

Participation in cadet classes is presented as honorific and carries additional privileges, such as stays in State-sponsored summer camps and trips to Moscow, as well as preferential admission to higher education institutions of the armed forces of the Russian Federation.¹⁷² The targeted use of these privileges by the occupation authorities was also confirmed to the Mission in Testimonies from direct witnesses, one of whom noted the additional peer pressure created through this system.¹⁷³

Former and currently serving soldiers are frequently involved in delivering lessons.¹⁷⁴ Russian service personnel more generally regularly visit schools in occupied territory to promote

<https://www.ohchr.org/sites/default/files/documents/form/2025-03-21-ohchr-report-children-s-rights-in-ukraine.pdf>.

¹⁶⁷ Yana Lantratova, “Existing history lessons are not enough”, Rossiyskaya Gazeta, 28 December 2022. Available at: <https://rg.ru/2022/12/28/iana-lantratova-ob-izuch-istorii-svoej-strany.html>.

¹⁶⁸ OHCHR, “Report on the Human Rights Situation in Ukraine, 1 September – 30 November 2024”, 31 December 2024, para. 79. Available at: <https://www.ohchr.org/sites/default/files/documents/countries/ukraine/2024-12-31-pr41-ukraine-en.pdf>.

¹⁶⁹ OHCHR, “The Impact of the Armed Conflict and Occupation on Children’s Rights in Ukraine: 24 February 2022–31 December 2024”, 21 March 2025, para. 100. Available at: <https://www.ohchr.org/sites/default/files/documents/form/2025-03-21-ohchr-report-children-s-rights-in-ukraine.pdf>; Margarete Klein and Susan Stewart, “Military-Patriotic Education in Russia: How the Next Generation Is Being Brought into Line with the Regime,” SWP Comment No. 46, 10 November 2025, p. 3. Available at: <https://www.swp-berlin.org/en/publication/military-patriotic-education-in-russia>.

¹⁷⁰ Alla Hurska, “Russia Converts Ukrainian Children into Enemies,” The Jamestown Foundation Eurasia Daily Monitor, 3 July 2024. Available at: <https://jamestown.org/program/russia-converts-ukrainian-children-into-enemies/>.

¹⁷¹ For example, Interview with the Permanent Representative of the President of Ukraine in the Autonomous Republic of Crimea, 8 June 2026 (on file with the Mission).

¹⁷² Tetiana Lychko, Olha Shapoval and Mariia Sulialina, “Russia’s Policy of Eradicating the Identity of Children in the TOT of Ukraine: Results for 2025”, Kyiv: Almenda Centre for Civic Education, 2026, p.14. Available at: https://almenda.org/wp-content/uploads/2026/02/Zvit_politics_web_Eng.pdf.

¹⁷³ Testimony 6 (on file with the Mission), also Testimony 2 (on file with the Mission), Testimony 3 (on file with the Mission), Testimony 5 (on file with the Mission).

¹⁷⁴ Testimony 1 and Testimony 2 (on file with the Mission).

Russian-oriented patriotism.¹⁷⁵ In many instances, their activities have replaced regular education, partly because of the lack of qualified teachers in the occupied territories.¹⁷⁶

The first three cadet classes were introduced in Crimea in 2015 and by 2023, their number had grown to 244 in 78 schools.¹⁷⁷ Further increases to 260 and 306 have been reported respectively for 2024 and 2025.¹⁷⁸

Across those parts of the occupied territories of Ukraine that the Russian Federation has illegally occupied since 2022, the system of cadet classes was rolled out as well. According to data from OHCHR, schools these regions had opened a limited number of such classes by December 2024: 11 in the Zaporizhzhia, three each in the Kherson and Luhansk regions, and two in the Donetsk region.¹⁷⁹

Across all occupied territories, at least 479 cadet classes have been established as of 2026.¹⁸⁰ Based on a small sample of available data, the programme has proven remarkably effective as a pipeline for recruiting Ukrainian children from the occupied territories into the Russian security services. For example, of 273 graduates of the “Crimean Cadet Corps” boarding school, 145 continued their education in educational institutions of the various Russian security agencies and 122 did so in military educational institutions.¹⁸¹

Ukrainian children in the occupied territories are also required to participate in so-called “Letter to a Soldier” activities, effectively forcing them to thank Russian soldiers for “their service and heroism”¹⁸² in fighting against these children’s own home country. Such exercises are

¹⁷⁵ OHCHR, “The Impact of the Armed Conflict and Occupation on Children’s Rights in Ukraine: 24 February 2022–31 December 2024”, 21 March 2025, para. 101. Available at: <https://www.ohchr.org/sites/default/files/documents/form/2025-03-21-ohchr-report-children-s-rights-in-ukraine.pdf>.

¹⁷⁶ Testimony 1 and Testimony 2 (on file with the Mission).

¹⁷⁷ OHCHR, “The Impact of the Armed Conflict and Occupation on Children’s Rights in Ukraine: 24 February 2022–31 December 2024”, 21 March 2025, para. 102. Available at: <https://www.ohchr.org/sites/default/files/documents/form/2025-03-21-ohchr-report-children-s-rights-in-ukraine.pdf>.

¹⁷⁸ Almenda Centre for Civic Education, “Occupied Education in Crimea: Who Controls the Indoctrination and Militarisation of Schools”, 4 June 2025. Available at: <https://almenda.org/en/okupovana-osvita-krimu-x-to-keruye-indoktrinaciyeyu-ta-militarizaciyeyu-shkil/>; Mariia Sulialina, “Not Just Ukraine — Russia is Preparing Ukrainian Children for Future Wars Elsewhere”, Zmina Human Rights Centre, 24 February 2026. Available at: <https://zmina.info/en/columns-en/not-just-ukraine-russia-is-preparing-ukrainian-children-for-future-wars-everywhere/>.

¹⁷⁹ OHCHR, “The Impact of the Armed Conflict and Occupation on Children’s Rights in Ukraine: 24 February 2022–31 December 2024”, 21 March 2025, para. 102. Available at: <https://www.ohchr.org/sites/default/files/documents/form/2025-03-21-ohchr-report-children-s-rights-in-ukraine.pdf>. This report also notes that “a specialized Naval Military School opened in Mariupol in September 2024, with a capacity of 560 students starting from 5th grade (ages 11-12).” See also, Human Rights Council, “Situation of human rights in the temporarily occupied territories of Ukraine, including the Autonomous Republic of Crimea and the city of Sevastopol”, A/HRC/59/67, 28 May 2025, para. 18. Available at: <https://www.ohchr.org/en/documents/thematic-reports/ahrc5967-situation-human-rights-temporarily-occupied-territories-ukraine>.

¹⁸⁰ Mariia Sulialina, “Not Just Ukraine — Russia is Preparing Ukrainian Children for Future Wars Elsewhere”, Zmina Human Rights Centre, 24 February 2026. Available at: <https://zmina.info/en/columns-en/not-just-ukraine-russia-is-preparing-ukrainian-children-for-future-wars-everywhere/>.

¹⁸¹ Olha Pashkova, “Children of the Occupied Territories of Ukraine: Russian Strategies of Mind Colonisation,” Croatian Political Science Review, Vol. 61, No. 4 (2024), pp. 50-68, here p. 54. Available at: <https://hrcak.srce.hr/file/474277>.

¹⁸² OHCHR, “The Impact of the Armed Conflict and Occupation on Children’s Rights in Ukraine: 24 February 2022–31 December 2024”, 21 March 2025, para. 101. Available at:

frequently coordinated by so-called Childhood Counsellors (Навигаторы детства), a programme run by the Russian Centre for Children and Youth (Российский детско-юношеский центр, Росдетцентр), which places a so-called “upbringing officer” in schools. Established through a decree of the Russian government in February 2022,¹⁸³ the programme is widespread in the occupied territories, and counsellors fulfil a coordinating function between, among others, military-patriotic youth organizations, other federal and regional ministries and agencies, and the school itself. In one illustrative social media post, a school in the Pervomaisky District in the occupied territory of Crimea posted that children “under the guidance of the adviser to the director for education and interaction with children’s public associations [i.e., a childhood counsellor] wrote letters of support to our defenders [i.e., soldiers fighting in Russia’s war of aggression against Ukraine]”. The post describes this “as an excellent opportunity to instil a sense of pride in one’s people, the army, and the Motherland, and to inspire a desire to emulate the brave and courageous soldiers of one’s country” and noted that “in their letters, the children express[ed] their sincere gratitude to the soldiers, offer[ed] words of support to those currently on the front lines, and wish[ed] them a speedy and victorious return home to their families and loved ones.”¹⁸⁴

This exercise is further personalized in so-called “Dialogues with Heroes” and “Lessons of Courage” that bring veterans of the so-called special military operation in direct contact with Ukrainian children to glorify the Russian war against Ukraine.¹⁸⁵ In one example of this widespread practice, a school in the occupied Ukrainian city of Melitopol posted about a meeting “between students of grades 8–10 and SVO veteran K.I. Babushkin on the topic ‘Building a World Without Nazism’, ahead of the 81st anniversary of the liberation of our city of Melitopol from the German-fascist invaders”, covering the “topics of modern Nazism and fascism and their destructive role in the development of society” and giving the children an opportunity to hand over “letters and handmade crafts ... to be sent to the front.”¹⁸⁶ In another example, a school in the Zaporizhzhia region posted about “a ‘lesson of courage’ ... conducted by ... servicemen [who] discussed the significance of the [Defender of the Fatherland Day] holiday, recalled the heroic deeds of our defenders, and spoke about the importance of patriotism”, claiming that “the lesson became a true school of courage and honour, allowing students to gain a deeper understanding of the bravery, valour, boldness, fearlessness, resilience, gallantry and dignity of our heroes” and noting that “a military paramedic also demonstrated the use of first-aid equipment in various situations” and that “the children repeated everything they were shown with great interest.”¹⁸⁷

<https://www.ohchr.org/sites/default/files/documents/form/2025-03-21-ohchr-report-children-s-rights-in-ukraine.pdf>.

¹⁸³ Официальный интернет-портал правовой информации, “Постановление Правительства Российской Федерации от 21.02.2022 № 225 ‘Об утверждении номенклатуры должностей педагогических работников организаций, осуществляющих образовательную деятельность, должностей руководителей образовательных организаций’”, Официальное опубликование правовых актов, 21 February 2022. Available at: <http://publication.pravo.gov.ru/Document/View/0001202202220042>.

¹⁸⁴ Навигаторы Детства | Первомайский район | КРЫМ, “Письмо солдату, МБОУ Степновская школа Первомайского района”, 16 June 2026. Available at: https://vk.com/club216120222?w=wall-216120222_22959.

¹⁸⁵ Alla Hurska, “Russia Converts Ukrainian Children into Enemies,” The Jamestown Foundation Eurasia Daily Monitor, 3 July 2024. Available at: <https://jamestown.org/program/russia-converts-ukrainian-children-into-enemies/>.

¹⁸⁶ Мелитопольская средняя школа № 13, “Social media post”, 21 October 2024. Available at: https://vk.com/wall-219871607_577?w=wall-219871607_577.

¹⁸⁷ Новоднепровская СОШ Васильевского района, “Social media post”, 17 February 2026. Available at: https://vk.com/wall-219987462_1640?w=wall-219987462_1640.

Children also manufacture equipment for the Russian frontline, such as camouflage nets and trench candles, including in lessons called “Essential Tasks”.¹⁸⁸ This is framed as a civic or patriotic activity,¹⁸⁹ but ultimately normalizes not only the Russian war against Ukraine but also the requirement to support it from a young age on. In the long term, this is likely to socialize children into accepting war in general as “normal” — a key dimension of militarization efforts in the occupied territories. This is complemented by a variety of surveillance and intimidation techniques aimed at enforcing the delivery of and participation in indoctrination and militarization programmes. For example, a State-funded online programme for teachers instructs them “to identify Ukrainian symbols and the expression of pro-Ukrainian sympathies among children as indicators that they may engage in illegal activity.”¹⁹⁰

3. Militarization beyond the Classroom: Camps, Organizations, and State Structures

Paramilitary Youth Organizations

The All-Russian Children’s and Youth Military-Patriotic Social Movement “Yunarmiya” (Всероссийское Детско-Юношеское Военно-Патриотическое Общественное Движение «Юнармия»), founded in 2016 by then-Defence Minister Sergei Shoigu, is closely intertwined with the Russian Federation’s Ministry of Defence, which finances the organization and appoints its commander. The current commander, Vladislav Golovin, was awarded the title “Hero of Russia” for participating in the capture of the Ukrainian city of Mariupol.¹⁹¹ The organization aims to strengthen Russian-oriented patriotism, motivate and prepare youth aged 8 to 18 for Russian military service, and ultimately to enlist at least 10% of members in the armed forces.¹⁹²

According to official data from the movement itself, its membership in the occupied territories on 30 September 2024 was just above 58,000 in Crimea and Sevastopol and just under 16,000 in the occupied territories of Donetsk, Luhansk, Kherson, and Zaporizhzhia, notably with fewer than 700 and 500 members, respectively, in the latter two regions.¹⁹³ Figures from Ukrainian and international sources are slightly lower. According to OHCHR, by December 2024,

¹⁸⁸ Alla Hurska, “Russia Converts Ukrainian Children into Enemies,” The Jamestown Foundation Eurasia Daily Monitor, 3 July 2024. Available at: <https://jamestown.org/program/russia-converts-ukrainian-children-into-enemies/>.

¹⁸⁹ OHCHR, “The Impact of the Armed Conflict and Occupation on Children’s Rights in Ukraine: 24 February 2022–31 December 2024”, 21 March 2025, para. 101. Available at: <https://www.ohchr.org/sites/default/files/documents/form/2025-03-21-ohchr-report-children-s-rights-in-ukraine.pdf>; Alla Hurska, “Russia Converts Ukrainian Children into Enemies,” The Jamestown Foundation Eurasia Daily Monitor, 3 July 2024. Available at: <https://jamestown.org/program/russia-converts-ukrainian-children-into-enemies/>.

¹⁹⁰ OHCHR, “The Impact of the Armed Conflict and Occupation on Children’s Rights in Ukraine: 24 February 2022–31 December 2024”, 21 March 2025, para. 110. Available at: <https://www.ohchr.org/sites/default/files/documents/form/2025-03-21-ohchr-report-children-s-rights-in-ukraine.pdf>.

¹⁹¹ Margarete Klein and Susan Stewart, “Military-Patriotic Education in Russia: How the Next Generation Is Being Brought into Line with the Regime,” SWP Comment No. 46, 10 November 2025, p. 4. Available at: <https://www.swp-berlin.org/en/publication/military-patriotic-education-in-russia>.

¹⁹² OHCHR, “The Impact of the Armed Conflict and Occupation on Children’s Rights in Ukraine: 24 February 2022–31 December 2024”, 21 March 2025, para. 104. Available at: <https://www.ohchr.org/sites/default/files/documents/form/2025-03-21-ohchr-report-children-s-rights-in-ukraine.pdf>.

¹⁹³ Regional Centre for Human Rights, “Submission to the OSCE Moscow Mechanism 2026”, 13 June 2026 (on file with the Mission).

Yunarmiya had 4,100 members in the Donetsk region and 6,000 in the Luhansk region,¹⁹⁴ while the Almenda Centre for Civic Education reports that 44,000 children aged 8–18 from the occupied territories were Yunarmiya members as of 2025.¹⁹⁵

More than 11,000 Yunarmiya alumni are reported to have volunteered for the war against Ukraine since 2022.¹⁹⁶ The tragic consequences of their choice are documented in specific cases:¹⁹⁷ Dmytro Kotov (born 3 May 1998 in Dzhankoy, Crimea), a Yunarmiya member, graduate from Gymnasium No. 6 in Dzhankoy, studied at Sevastopol State Technical University, and served on the large landing ship Novocherkassk; he was killed on 24 March 2022 while participating in the Russian Federation’s war against Ukraine; Ivan Shifman (born 22 September 2001), who joined Yunarmiya in 2019 after attending School No. 1 in Kalmiuske and subsequently enlisted in Russian-aligned forces, was killed on 14 April 2022 near Novobakhmutivka; Illia Moskvitin (born 16 June 2008), a Yunarmiya member in occupied Donetsk — aged 15 at the time of his death — was killed on 18 March 2024 after stepping on an anti-personnel mine. Individuals and entities linked to Yunarmiya activities in the occupied territories have been added to western government sanctions lists for their involvement in the “ideological indoctrination of minors”, such as, for example, Alina Sergeevna Nikishaeva, the leader of the Simferopol-based military-patriotic club Battalion Forpost which “participates in projects with Yunarmia..., further embedding Russian state-directed youth programs” and thus “supporting and implementing actions and policies that contribute to the forced assimilation, including indoctrination, or militarised education of Ukrainian minors”.¹⁹⁸

The “Movement of the First” (Движение Первых, Dvizheniye Pervykh),¹⁹⁹ founded on President Putin’s initiative on 19 May 2022 (the centenary of the founding of the Soviet-era Young Pioneers) is a youth organization for children aged 6 and above. Its programme was developed jointly by the Russian Federation’s Ministry of Education and Federal Agency for

¹⁹⁴ OHCHR, “The Impact of the Armed Conflict and Occupation on Children’s Rights in Ukraine: 24 February 2022–31 December 2024”, 21 March 2025, para. 104. Available at: <https://www.ohchr.org/sites/default/files/documents/form/2025-03-21-ohchr-report-children-s-rights-in-ukraine.pdf>.

¹⁹⁵ Tetiana Lychko, Olha Shapoval and Mariia Sulialina, “Russia’s Policy of Eradicating the Identity of Children in the TOT of Ukraine: Results for 2025”, Kyiv: Almenda Centre for Civic Education, 2026, p.14. Available at: https://almenda.org/wp-content/uploads/2026/02/Zvit_politics_web_Eng.pdf. See also, Mariia Sulialina, “Not Just Ukraine — Russia is Preparing Ukrainian Children for Future Wars Elsewhere”, Zmina Human Rights Centre, 24 February 2026. Available at: <https://zmina.info/en/columns-en/not-just-ukraine-russia-is-preparing-ukrainian-children-for-future-wars-everywhere/>; Margarete Klein and Susan Stewart, “Military-Patriotic Education in Russia: How the Next Generation Is Being Brought into Line with the Regime,” SWP Comment No. 46, 10 November 2025, p. 5. Available at: <https://www.swp-berlin.org/en/publication/military-patriotic-education-in-russia>.

¹⁹⁶ Margarete Klein and Susan Stewart, “Military-Patriotic Education in Russia: How the Next Generation Is Being Brought into Line with the Regime,” SWP Comment No. 46, 10 November 2025, p. 7. Available at: <https://www.swp-berlin.org/en/publication/military-patriotic-education-in-russia>.

¹⁹⁷ Centre for Countering Disinformation, “Militarisation of Ukrainian Children in Temporarily Occupied Territories of Ukraine”, 16 January 2025. Available at: <https://cpd.gov.ua/en/report/analytical-report-militarisation-of-ukrainian-children-in-temporarily-occupied-territories-of-ukraine/>.

¹⁹⁸ Council of the European Union, Council Decision (CFSP) 2026/1072 of 11 May 2026 amending Decision 2014/145/CFSP concerning restrictive measures in respect of actions undermining or threatening the territorial integrity, sovereignty and independence of Ukraine. OJ L, 2026/1072, 11.5.2026, entry 2037. Available at: <http://data.europa.eu/eli/dec/2026/1072/oj>.

¹⁹⁹ In the Russian name of this organisation, “Движение Первых” (transliterated Dvizheniye Pervykh), the meaning of ‘pervykh’ is plural rather than singular. The English ‘first’ can have both a singular and a plural meaning, and we use it in the plural meaning here to align with the more common translation of the organization’s name.

Youth Affairs.²⁰⁰ In the occupied territories, the Movement claims to have formed 2,108 groups at educational institutions; as of 2025, more than 344,600 children from the occupied territories are members.²⁰¹ This represents a significant increase in the organization’s membership since its establishment in 2022, when just over 60,000 children joined, with the most notable rises in membership figures reported for Crimea (from 12,000 to 158,000) and Luhansk (from 21,500 to 103,000).²⁰² Across the Russian Federation, the organization claims to have involved 13 million children in its activities during the first three years of its existence.²⁰³

The Movement’s flagship paramilitary activity is Zarnitsa 2.0, a revival of a Soviet-era military war game, which has been rolled out into the occupied territories “since the beginning of the school year in September 2024.”²⁰⁴ As part of the game’s simulated military activities, children are divided into “armies” and trained in assembling weapons, drone operation, acting as “storm troopers,” completing “military-tactical” obstacle courses, cyber warfare, and information operations.²⁰⁵ The Institute for the Study of War describes Zarnitsa 2.0 as part of “a wider Russian ecosystem operating throughout occupied Ukraine with the explicit purpose of militarizing Ukrainian children, indoctrinating them against their Ukrainian identities, and training them to fight for the Russian military.”²⁰⁶ Participation figures rose from 800,000 children across the Russian Federation in 2024 to 3.1 million in 2025, with the competition held in occupied territory in both years.²⁰⁷ Online courses have been introduced to prepare teenagers to participate in Zarnitsa 2.0 in digital format.²⁰⁸

²⁰⁰ Margarete Klein and Susan Stewart, “Military-Patriotic Education in Russia: How the Next Generation Is Being Brought into Line with the Regime,” SWP Comment No. 46, 10 November 2025, p. 4. Available at: <https://www.swp-berlin.org/en/publication/military-patriotic-education-in-russia>.

²⁰¹ OHCHR, “The Impact of the Armed Conflict and Occupation on Children’s Rights in Ukraine: 24 February 2022–31 December 2024”, 21 March 2025, para. 105. Available at: <https://www.ohchr.org/sites/default/files/documents/form/2025-03-21-ohchr-report-children-s-rights-in-ukraine.pdf>; Mariia Sulialina, “Not Just Ukraine — Russia is Preparing Ukrainian Children for Future Wars Elsewhere”, Zmina Human Rights Centre, 24 February 2026. Available at: <https://zmina.info/en/columns-en/not-just-ukraine-russia-is-preparing-ukrainian-children-for-future-wars-everywhere/>.

²⁰² Tetiana Lychko, Olha Shapoval and Mariia Sulialina, “Russia’s Policy of Eradicating the Identity of Children in the TOT of Ukraine: Results for 2025”, Kyiv: Almenda Centre for Civic Education, 2026, p.16. Available at: https://almenda.org/wp-content/uploads/2026/02/Zvit_politics_web_Eng.pdf;

²⁰³ Margarete Klein and Susan Stewart, “Military-Patriotic Education in Russia: How the Next Generation Is Being Brought into Line with the Regime,” SWP Comment No. 46, 10 November 2025, p. 7. Available at: <https://www.swp-berlin.org/en/publication/military-patriotic-education-in-russia>.

²⁰⁴ United Nations General Assembly, “Situation of human rights in the temporarily occupied territories of Ukraine, including the Autonomous Republic of Crimea and the city of Sevastopol. Report of the Secretary-General”, A/80/315, 6 August 2025, para. 17. Available at: <https://docs.un.org/en/A/80/315>.

²⁰⁵ OHCHR, “The Impact of the Armed Conflict and Occupation on Children’s Rights in Ukraine: 24 February 2022–31 December 2024”, 21 March 2025, para. 105. Available at: <https://www.ohchr.org/sites/default/files/documents/form/2025-03-21-ohchr-report-children-s-rights-in-ukraine.pdf>. See also “Zarnitsa 2.0. Rules of the Organisation, Implementation and Assessment of the Russian-Wide Competitions on Military-Patriotic Game “Zarnitsa 2.0” for Regional Rounds for children of middle age category and special category” Approved by the Protocol of the Meeting of Central Command of the Russian-Wide Military-Patriotic Game “Zarnitsa 2.0” of 29 May 2026 No. 4 (on file with the Mission).

²⁰⁶ Karolina Hird, “Russian Occupation Update, April 10, 2025”, Institute for the Study of War, 10 April 2025. Available at: <https://understandingwar.org/research/russia-ukraine/russian-occupation-update-april-10-2025/>.

²⁰⁷ Margarete Klein and Susan Stewart, “Military-Patriotic Education in Russia: How the Next Generation Is Being Brought into Line with the Regime,” SWP Comment No. 46, 10 November 2025, p. 4. Available at: <https://www.swp-berlin.org/en/publication/military-patriotic-education-in-russia>.

²⁰⁸ Mezha.net, “Russia Launches Online Courses to Train Teens for Militarized Game Zarnitsa 2.0.”. Available at: https://mezha.net/eng/bukvy/70bbcee6_russia_launches_online/. See also ЦЕНТР ПРОТИДІЇ ДЕЗІНФОРМАЦІЇ, Telegram post, 24 April 2026. Available at: <https://t.me/CenterCounteringDisinformation/17796>.

In a clear indication of private-sector involvement in Russia’s indoctrination and militarization efforts, including those aimed at Ukrainian children in the occupied territories, Gazprom Media Holding JSC signed a cooperation agreement with the Movement of the First in May 2023 to support “patriotic events and initiatives.”²⁰⁹ Documented activities at Gazprom-owned facilities include patriotic education initiatives, military drills, hand-to-hand combat, grenade throwing, and rifle shooting.²¹⁰

Founded in 2023 with the support of President Putin and funded by the government of the Russian Federation, the Voin (“Warrior”) programme “organises basic military training, drills, fire and tactical medicine exercises, and drone operation courses for boys and girls aged 14 years and older.”²¹¹ Between 2023 and 2025, the Voin programme expanded from 12 to 21 regions, including Donetsk, Luhansk, Zaporizhzhia, and Kherson oblasts, while construction on purpose-built Voin facilities in Donetsk and Zaporizhzhia oblasts commenced in 2024 and continued into early 2025.²¹² In July 2025, a group from Crimea taken to a Voin facility in Primorskiy Krai — over 6,000 kilometres away — underwent engineering training, fire and tactical training, first aid, and tactical medicine in a programme developed in collaboration with the Russian Combat Sniping Federation.²¹³ Children from the occupied territories also participated in “Time of Young Heroes” programme organized by Voin and were “instructed ... in tactical drone use and combat medicine.”²¹⁴

The head of the Voin facilities in the occupied parts of the Donetsk region, Alexander Kamyshov, told Rossiyskaya Gazeta in an interview in April 2024 that “the opening of Voin centres throughout Russia constitutes the revival of military-patriotic education and initial military training” aimed at “creating a new person ... who will be a [Russian] patriot for many years to come.”²¹⁵

The Centre for Military and Patriotic Education of Youth “Avangard” is one of four principal state-affiliated organizations identified by Yale HRL as implementing militarization

²⁰⁹ Nathaniel Bogardus, Paige Farrenkopf, Caitlin N. Howarth, and Nathaniel A. Raymond et al., “Willing Accomplices: Gazprom and Rosneft’s Role in the Transport and Indoctrination of Ukraine’s Children” (New Haven, CT: Humanitarian Research Lab at Yale School of Public Health, 2025), p. 3. Available at: <https://medicine.yale.edu/download-file/b9ac2577-9407-479c-a5da-05b98511b9db/>.

²¹⁰ Nathaniel Bogardus, Paige Farrenkopf, Caitlin N. Howarth, and Nathaniel A. Raymond et al., “Willing Accomplices: Gazprom and Rosneft’s Role in the Transport and Indoctrination of Ukraine’s Children” (New Haven, CT: Humanitarian Research Lab at Yale School of Public Health, 2025), pp. 7-8. Available at: <https://medicine.yale.edu/download-file/b9ac2577-9407-479c-a5da-05b98511b9db/>.

²¹¹ OHCHR, “Report on the Human Rights Situation in Ukraine, 1 September – 30 November 2024”, 31 December 2024, para. 78. Available at: <https://www.ohchr.org/sites/default/files/documents/countries/ukraine/2024-12-31-pr41-ukraine-en.pdf>.

²¹² Paige Farrenkopf, Caitlin N. Howarth, and Nathaniel A. Raymond et al., “Ukraine’s Stolen Children: Inside Russia’s Network of Re-Education and Militarisation.” (New Haven, CT: Humanitarian Research Lab at Yale School of Public Health, 2025), pp. 6-7. Available online at: <https://ysph.yale.edu/download-file/56121661-9ac4-4e8b-a5e0-cb907c74fbc3/>.

²¹³ Paige Farrenkopf, Caitlin N. Howarth, and Nathaniel A. Raymond et al., “Ukraine’s Stolen Children: Inside Russia’s Network of Re-Education and Militarisation.” (New Haven, CT: Humanitarian Research Lab at Yale School of Public Health, 2025), p. 7. Available online at: <https://ysph.yale.edu/download-file/56121661-9ac4-4e8b-a5e0-cb907c74fbc3/>.

²¹⁴ OHCHR, “Report on the Human Rights Situation in Ukraine, 1 June—30 November 2025”, 9 December 2025, para. 93. Available at: <https://ukraine.ohchr.org/en/Report-on-the-Human-Rights-Situation-in-Ukraine-1-June-30-November-2025>.

²¹⁵ Иван Петров, “Центр ‘Воин’ заработал в 10 новых регионах, в том числе на новых территориях”, Российская газета, 16 April 2024. Available at: <https://rg.ru/2024/04/16/centr-voyn-zarabotal-v-10-novyh-regionah-v-tom-chisle-na-novyh-territoriiah.html>.

programmes for children from Ukraine.²¹⁶ As documented in reports by the Institute for the Study of War, which has systematically tracked Avangard’s operational activity across the occupied territories and involving Ukrainian children from the occupied territories, Avangard camps provide part of the core infrastructure used for the delivery of Russian military-patriotic indoctrination programmes, such as “Time of Young Heroes” and Zarnitsa 2.0. For example, in June 2025, “30 teenagers from occupied Volnovakha Raion, Donetsk Oblast, arrived at the ‘Avangard’ military sports center in Noyabrsk to take part in the “Time of Young Heroes” summer patriotic training camp” where they “reportedly receive[d] training in physical fitness, tactical medicine, small arms fires, and drone operation.”²¹⁷ The same month, “the first cohort of youth cadets from occupied Ukraine completed their parachute jump at the ‘Avangard’ military-sports center in Volgograd Oblast”.²¹⁸ In July 2025, “50 teenagers from occupied Kherson Oblast [were] taking part in the third session of the “Time of Young Heroes” programme at the “Avangard” military-sports camp in Russia’s Vologograd Oblast”,²¹⁹ while Ukrainian children from the occupied areas of Ukraine’s Zaporizhzhia region “continue[d] to attend the Avangard military sports center in five two-week-long shifts of around 100-150 children per shift.”²²⁰ In September 2025, “a group of teenagers from occupied Chaplynka, Kherson Oblast, took part in the Zarnitsa 2.0 military-patriotic competition at the Avangard military sports camp in Russia’s Volgograd Oblast”.²²¹ In January 2026, “24 children aged 14 to 17 from occupied Kherson Oblast attended the “Pride of the Nation. The Way of Development” programme at the “Avangard” military sports camp in Volgograd Oblast.”²²² In May 2026, the Institute for the Study of War further reported that Alexey Lukin, the Director of the Voin military-patriotic programme in the occupied territory of Ukraine’s Zaporizhzhia region, announced that “VOIN is organizing trips for teenagers aged 14 to 17 ... to attend military sports sessions ... at the Avangard sports camp in Volgograd Oblast” where the participants would “learn tactical medicine and drone operation and will interact with Russian veterans and active servicemembers of the war in Ukraine.”²²³

Beyond Yunarmiya and the Movement of the First, the Centre for Countering Disinformation documents the presence and activity of additional paramilitary organizations in occupied territories, including: DOSAAF of Russia; Orlyata Rossii; Yug Molodoy; Molodaya Gvardiya; the Volunteer Squadron of the Boevoe Bratstvo; and the Yuliya Kirpichnikova Charitable

²¹⁶ Paige Farrenkopf, Caitlin N. Howarth, and Nathaniel A. Raymond et al., *Ukraine’s Stolen Children: Inside Russia’s Network of Re-Education and Militarisation*, Humanitarian Research Lab at Yale School of Public Health (16 September 2025), p. 8. Available at: <https://medicine.yale.edu/download-file/941a1242-092b-4a6f-8b8f-205812d499aa/>.

²¹⁷ Karolina Hird, “Russian Occupation Update, June 17, 2025”, Institute for the Study of War, 17 June 2025. Available at: <https://understandingwar.org/research/russia-ukraine/russian-occupation-update-june-17-2025/>.

²¹⁸ Karolina Hird, “Russian Occupation Update, June 26, 2025”, Institute for the Study of War, 26 June 2025. Available at: <https://understandingwar.org/research/russia-ukraine/russian-occupation-update-june-26-2025/>.

²¹⁹ Karolina Hird, “Russian Occupation Update, July 7, 2025”, Institute for the Study of War, 7 July 2025. Available at: <https://understandingwar.org/research/russia-ukraine/russian-occupation-update-july-7-2025/>.

²²⁰ Karolina Hird, “Russian Occupation Update, July 24, 2025”, Institute for the Study of War, 24 July 2025. Available at: <https://understandingwar.org/research/russia-ukraine/russian-occupation-update-july-24-2025/>.

²²¹ Karolina Hird, “Russian Occupation Update, September 19, 2025”, Institute for the Study of War, 19 September 2025. Available at: <https://understandingwar.org/research/russia-ukraine/russian-occupation-update-september-19-2025-2/>.

²²² Karolina Hird, “Russian Occupation Update, January 22, 2026”, Institute for the Study of War, 22 January 2026. Available at: <https://understandingwar.org/research/russia-ukraine/russian-occupation-update-january-22-2026/>.

²²³ Karolina Hird, “Russian Occupation Update, May 21, 2026”, Institute for the Study of War, 21 May 2026. Available at: <https://understandingwar.org/research/russia-ukraine/russian-occupation-update-may-21-2026/>.

Foundation.²²⁴ Participation in these organizations is documented as formally voluntary but conditioned by social pressure, with school administrations applying direct or indirect pressure on children to join and with non-participation resulting in social exclusion or disadvantage in school settings.²²⁵ This was also confirmed to the Mission in Testimonies,²²⁶ interviews,²²⁷ and other material submitted to the Mission.²²⁸

Re-education Camps and Facilities

The Humanitarian Research Lab at Yale School of Public Health, in its September 2025 report *Ukraine's Stolen Children: Inside Russia's Network of Re-education and Militarisation*, provides the most comprehensive account to date of 210 facilities across the Russian Federation and occupied territory to which children from Ukraine have been taken.²²⁹

Participation in these camps, including so-called summer and recreational camps, is not formally mandatory, but the cumulative effect of Russian occupation policies leaves Ukrainian children and their parents little choice. For example, the Mission learned from a young adult grew up in Crimea that “summer-time military training was required before a student could pass into the next grade at the beginning of the new school year.”²³⁰

Facility types include cadet schools, military bases, medical institutions, orphanages, family support centres, secondary schools, universities, religious sites, camps, and sanatoria. Notably, 143 of the 210 facilities (68%) are camps and sanatoria that also regularly host Russian children, usually simultaneously and in shared activities.²³¹

Re-education and militarization activities for children aged 8-17 were documented at 130 and 39 of the total of 210 facilities, respectively.²³² Militarization involved “development of ‘fire and naval training skills’”, “shooting competitions, grenade throwing competitions”, and “tactical medicine, drone control and tactics training”.²³³ The Russian Federation’s federal

²²⁴ Centre for Countering Disinformation, “Militarisation of Ukrainian Children in Temporarily Occupied Territories of Ukraine”, 16 January 2025. Available at: <https://cpd.gov.ua/en/report/analytical-report-militarisation-of-ukrainian-children-in-temporarily-occupied-territories-of-ukraine/>.

²²⁵ Centre for Countering Disinformation, “Militarisation of Ukrainian Children in Temporarily Occupied Territories of Ukraine”, 16 January 2025. Available at: <https://cpd.gov.ua/en/report/analytical-report-militarisation-of-ukrainian-children-in-temporarily-occupied-territories-of-ukraine/>.

²²⁶ Testimony 3 (on file with the Mission). Testimony 4 (on file with the Mission). Testimony 5 (on file with the Mission).

²²⁷ For example, Interview with the Presidential Commissioner for Children’s Rights and Child Rehabilitation, 8 June 2026.

²²⁸ Paige Farrenkopf (Yale Humanitarian Research Lab), “Submission to the OSCE Moscow Mechanism 2026”, 18 June 2026 (on file with the Mission).

²²⁹ Paige Farrenkopf, Caitlin N. Howarth, and Nathaniel A. Raymond et al., “Ukraine’s Stolen Children: Inside Russia’s Network of Re-Education and Militarisation.” (New Haven, CT: Humanitarian Research Lab at Yale School of Public Health, 2025), p. 1. Available online at: <https://ysph.yale.edu/download-file/56121661-9ac4-4e8b-a5e0-cb907c74fbc3/>.

²³⁰ Testimony 4 (on file with the Mission).

²³¹ Paige Farrenkopf, Caitlin N. Howarth, and Nathaniel A. Raymond et al., “Ukraine’s Stolen Children: Inside Russia’s Network of Re-Education and Militarisation.” (New Haven, CT: Humanitarian Research Lab at Yale School of Public Health, 2025), pp. 4-5. Available online at: <https://ysph.yale.edu/download-file/56121661-9ac4-4e8b-a5e0-cb907c74fbc3/>.

²³² Paige Farrenkopf, Caitlin N. Howarth, and Nathaniel A. Raymond et al., “Ukraine’s Stolen Children: Inside Russia’s Network of Re-Education and Militarisation.” (New Haven, CT: Humanitarian Research Lab at Yale School of Public Health, 2025), pp. 6-7. Available online at: <https://ysph.yale.edu/download-file/56121661-9ac4-4e8b-a5e0-cb907c74fbc3/>.

²³³ Paige Farrenkopf, Caitlin N. Howarth, and Nathaniel A. Raymond et al., “Ukraine’s Stolen Children: Inside Russia’s Network of Re-Education and Militarisation.” (New Haven, CT: Humanitarian Research Lab at Yale

government directly manages at least 106 of the 210 identified facilities. The government directly manages 55% of facilities where re-education activities were observed, and 58% of facilities where militarization was documented.²³⁴

Occupying authorities in Donetsk, Kherson, Luhansk, and Zaporizhzhia regions reported that 58,000 children attended camps in the four annexed oblasts in 2024 alone.²³⁵ A Russian official announced that 22,000 children from occupied territory underwent “social adaptation” to become “full-fledged citizens of our beautiful motherland” while staying at a resort owned by the Presidential Administration.²³⁶

In a March 2026 report, *Willing Accomplices: Gazprom and Rosneft’s Role in the Transport and Indoctrination of Ukraine’s Children*, Yale HRL concluded with high confidence that at least two Russian state-owned oil and gas companies — Gazprom and Rosneft, including their subsidiaries and trade unions — “underwrote and facilitated the transportation and/or re-education of approximately 2,158 children from Russia-occupied Ukraine between 2022–2025.”²³⁷ The fact that Gazprom and Rosneft are among the funders of such camps in Crimea — alongside the Special Presidential Cultural Fund and the regional government of Tatarstan — was also confirmed to the Mission by representatives of Ukrainian authorities.²³⁸

Gazprom subsidiaries and trade unions issued 1,072 vouchers for children from occupied territory between 2022 and 2023; a formal resolution of the Gazprom Trade Union Presidium of April 2024 acknowledges that Gazprom subsidiaries “initiated and coordinated a campaign” that provided 1,025 such vouchers in 2023 alone.²³⁹ Rosneft’s Interregional Trade Union “sponsored 100 children from Donetsk, Luhansk, and Zaporizhzhia oblasts” to attend camps in 2023.²⁴⁰ At a camp event organized by Gazprom Media in 2024, children from Donetsk met

School of Public Health, 2025), p. 6. Available online at: <https://ysph.yale.edu/download-file/56121661-9ac4-4e8b-a5e0-cb907c74fbc3/>.

²³⁴ Paige Farrenkopf, Caitlin N. Howarth, and Nathaniel A. Raymond et al., “Ukraine’s Stolen Children: Inside Russia’s Network of Re-Education and Militarisation.” (New Haven, CT: Humanitarian Research Lab at Yale School of Public Health, 2025), p. 7. Available online at: <https://ysph.yale.edu/download-file/56121661-9ac4-4e8b-a5e0-cb907c74fbc3/>.

²³⁵ OHCHR, “The Impact of the Armed Conflict and Occupation on Children’s Rights in Ukraine: 24 February 2022–31 December 2024”, 21 March 2025, para. 96. Available at: <https://www.ohchr.org/sites/default/files/documents/form/2025-03-21-ohchr-report-children-s-rights-in-ukraine.pdf>.

²³⁶ OHCHR, “The Impact of the Armed Conflict and Occupation on Children’s Rights in Ukraine: 24 February 2022–31 December 2024”, 21 March 2025, para. 96. Available at: <https://www.ohchr.org/sites/default/files/documents/form/2025-03-21-ohchr-report-children-s-rights-in-ukraine.pdf>.

²³⁷ Nathaniel Bogardus, Paige Farrenkopf, Caitlin N. Howarth, and Nathaniel A. Raymond et al., “Willing Accomplices: Gazprom and Rosneft’s Role in the Transport and Indoctrination of Ukraine’s Children” (New Haven, CT: Humanitarian Research Lab at Yale School of Public Health, 2025), pp. 1, 4. Available at: <https://medicine.yale.edu/download-file/b9ac2577-9407-479c-a5da-05b98511b9db/>.

²³⁸ For example, Interview with the Permanent Representative of the President of Ukraine in the Autonomous Republic of Crimea, 8 June 2026 (on file with the Mission).

²³⁹ Nathaniel Bogardus, Paige Farrenkopf, Caitlin N. Howarth, and Nathaniel A. Raymond et al., “Willing Accomplices: Gazprom and Rosneft’s Role in the Transport and Indoctrination of Ukraine’s Children” (New Haven, CT: Humanitarian Research Lab at Yale School of Public Health, 2025), p. 5. Available at: <https://medicine.yale.edu/download-file/b9ac2577-9407-479c-a5da-05b98511b9db/>.

²⁴⁰ Nathaniel Bogardus, Paige Farrenkopf, Caitlin N. Howarth, and Nathaniel A. Raymond et al., “Willing Accomplices: Gazprom and Rosneft’s Role in the Transport and Indoctrination of Ukraine’s Children” (New Haven, CT: Humanitarian Research Lab at Yale School of Public Health, 2025), p. 5. Available at: <https://medicine.yale.edu/download-file/b9ac2577-9407-479c-a5da-05b98511b9db/>.

with pro-Russia military bloggers Alexander Malkevich (sanctioned by the United States since 2018) and Yuriy Podolyaka.²⁴¹

According to Russian reports, so-called “Day After Tomorrow” shifts, which are “designed for intensive social and psychological rehabilitation of adolescents”, have been targeted at Ukrainian children from the occupied territories since August 2022, and by October 2023, “eleven such camps have taken place [involving] 1,980 children from Donetsk and Luhansk People’s Republics, Kherson, Zaporozhye, Belgorod, Bryansk, and Kursk regions.”²⁴² By June 2024, that number had increased to 2,700 children who did “attend trainings, master classes, sports sections, go on excursions, [and] get acquainted with the history and culture of Russia.”²⁴³ As of May 2026, “a total of 34 ‘The Day After Tomorrow’ camps have taken place [with] more than 4,800 teenagers and their relatives from border regions and from the families of those taking part in the special military operation” participating.²⁴⁴ The Institute for the Study of War notes that “the Day After Tomorrow program ... has played a significant role in the deportation of Ukrainian children to various re-education and rehabilitation programs since at least 2023” and that the “majority state-owned airline Aeroflot sponsored the most recent Day After Tomorrow shift and is therefore likely involved in directly facilitating the deportation of Ukrainian children to Moscow.”²⁴⁵

4. The Role of the Russian Orthodox Church

The Russian Orthodox Church (ROC) is one of the key pillars of the indoctrination and militarization efforts by the Russian Federation and openly supports the “sacred war” against Ukraine.²⁴⁶

The ROC has been directly involved in the displacement, Russification, and militarized re-education of Ukrainian children, leading one analyst to conclude that “the Russian Orthodox Church, unfortunately, is also an instrument of Russia’s occupation policy and is actively involved in the mass deportations of Ukrainians, especially the most vulnerable population: children.”²⁴⁷ In a report from June 2025, the Almenda Centre for Civic Education similarly

²⁴¹ Nathaniel Bogardus, Paige Farrenkopf, Caitlin N. Howarth, and Nathaniel A. Raymond et al., “Willing Accomplices: Gazprom and Rosneft’s Role in the Transport and Indoctrination of Ukraine’s Children” (New Haven, CT: Humanitarian Research Lab at Yale School of Public Health, 2025), p. 8. Available at: <https://medicine.yale.edu/download-file/b9ac2577-9407-479c-a5da-05b98511b9db/>.

²⁴² Presidential Commissioner for Children’s Rights of the Russian Federation, “Activities of the Russian Federation Presidential Commissioner for Children’s Rights Maria Lvova-Belova to protect children during a special military operation”, The Bulletin, Issue 2, 2 October 2023, p. 10. Available at: <https://deti.gov.ru/uploads/magic/ru-RU/Document-0-259-src-1697376467.3807.pdf>.

²⁴³ Presidential Commissioner for Children’s Rights of the Russian Federation, “Activities of the Russian Federation Presidential Commissioner for Children’s Rights Maria Lvova-Belova to protect children during a special military operation”, The Bulletin, Issue 3, 19 June 2024, p. 12. Available at: <https://deti.gov.ru/uploads/magic/ru-RU/Document-0-308-src-1718870725.6647.pdf>. This issue of the Bulletin also notes (p. 12) that “the program of the shifts does not include military training.”

²⁴⁴ Presidential Commissioner for Children’s Rights of the Russian Federation, “Activities of the Russian Federation Presidential Commissioner for Children’s Rights Maria Lvova-Belova to protect children during a special military operation”, The Bulletin, Issue 4, 7 May 2026, p. 13. Available at: <https://deti.gov.ru/uploads/magic/ru-RU/Document-0-437-src-1778137244.2277.pdf>.

²⁴⁵ Karolina Hird, “Russian Occupation Update, September 19, 2025”, Institute for the Study of War, 19 September 2025. Available at: <https://understandingwar.org/research/russia-ukraine/russian-occupation-update-september-19-2025-2/>.

²⁴⁶ Interview with the Permanent Representative of the President of Ukraine in the Autonomous Republic of Crimea, 8 June 2026 (on file with the Mission).

²⁴⁷ Vladyslav Havrylov, “The Role of the Russian Orthodox Church in the Forcible Deportation of Ukrainian Children”, The Collaborative Forum, 26 October 2023. Available at:

concluded that “the ROC plays a key role in shaping a pro-Russian identity, legitimizing the war, and supporting the occupation administrations.”²⁴⁸

Beyond the mere deportation of Ukrainian children, the ROC is also involved in their indoctrination. For example, the “St Sergius Orthodox Education Centre” in the Moscow region housed 164 Ukrainian children by summer 2022. At the time, the director of the centre, Natalia Leporskaya, noted, “we are trying to somehow rehabilitate them little by little”, while the governor of the Moscow region, Andrei Vorobyov, according to reports “instructed to provide refugees with maximum attention and support”.²⁴⁹

Based on local media reports from the occupied part of Ukraine’s Kherson region, the Institute for the Study of War documented the introduction of two new subjects in the region’s school curricula, including “Fundamentals of Orthodox Culture” aimed at elementary and kindergarten-aged children.²⁵⁰ The Donetsk Diocese of the ROC is running several teacher training programmes, including a strategic session “Fundamentals of Orthodox Culture in the Education System of the Donetsk People’s Republic” held on 27 May 2026 with the Deputy Minister of Education and Science of the DPR V. V. Pestretsov and Archbishop Varnava of Makeevka intended “to make sure that spiritual and moral values become not just words in a textbook, but a guide to the real actions of fourth-graders”.²⁵¹

According to the *Return Every Child* Report, “the Russian Orthodox Church contributes ideological programming, presenting militarisation as a moral and spiritual duty.”²⁵² An

<https://globalchildren.georgetown.edu/responses/the-role-of-the-russian-orthodox-church-in-the-forcible-deportation-of-ukrainian-children>. The involvement of the ROC in deportations of Ukrainians, including Ukrainian children, has been widely documented in other investigative reporting as well. See, for example, Яніна Корнієнко, “Депортуї ближнього свого: як Російська православна церква разом із силовиками примусово переселяють українців до Росії”, Слідство.Інфо, 28 April 2022. Available at: <https://www.slidstvo.info/articles/deportuj-blyzhnogo-svogo-yak-rosijska-pravoslavna-tserkva-razom-iz-sylovykamy-prymusovo-pereselyayut-ukrayintsiv-do-rosiyi/>; Vladyslav Havrylov, “How Russians deport Ukrainians and what the Russian Orthodox Church has to do with it”, PR Army, no date. Available at: <https://deportation.org.ua/how-russians-deport-ukrainians-and-what-the-russian-orthodox-church-has-to-do-with-it/>.

²⁴⁸ Almenda Centre for Civic Education, “Religion of War: Russian Orthodox Church as the Instrument for Militarisation and Indoctrination in the Temporarily Occupied Territories”, 5 June 2025. Available at: <https://almenda.org/en/religiya-vijni-rosijska-pravoslavna-cerkva-yak-instrument-militarizacii-ta-indoktrinacii-na-timchasovo-okupovanix-teritoriyax/>.

²⁴⁹ Подмосковье сегодня, “Праздничный концерт для детей из Донбасса провели в Сергиевом Посаде”, 29 May 2022. Available at: <https://mosregtoday.ru/news/soc/zhitel-sergieva-posada-povesil-obyavlenie-o-poiske-devushki-s-kotoroj-rasstalsya/>.

²⁵⁰ Karolina Hird, “Russian Occupation Update, September 19, 2025”, Institute for the Study of War, 19 September 2025. Available at: <https://understandingwar.org/research/russia-ukraine/russian-occupation-update-september-19-2025-2/>.

²⁵¹ Донецкая Епархия, “В Донецке прошла стратегическая сессия по Основам православной культуры”, Донбасс Православный, 29 May 2026. Available at: <https://eparhiadonetsk.ru/2026/05/29/v-donecke-proshla-strategicheskaja-sessija-po-osnovam-pravoslavnoj-kultury/>. For the diocese’s other recent teacher training activities, see, for example, Донецкая Епархия, “По благословению митрополита Владимира в Свято-Николаевском архиерейском подворье стартовал новый этап подготовки учителей по курсу ‘Основы православной культуры’”, Донбасс Православный, 4 June 2026. Available at: <https://eparhiadonetsk.ru/2026/06/04/po-blagosloveniju-mitropolita-vladimira-v-svjato-nikolaevskom-arhierejskom-podvorie-startoval-novyj-jetap-podgotovki-uchitelej-po-kursu-osnovy-pravoslavnoj-kultury/>; and Донецкая Епархия, “В Ясиноватском благочинии подвели итоги года преподавания основ православной культуры”, Донбасс Православный, 19 May 2026. Available at: <https://eparhiadonetsk.ru/2026/05/19/v-jasinovatskom-blagochinii-podveli-itogi-goda-prepodavaniya-osnov-pravoslavnoj-kultury/>.

²⁵² War Child UK, Save Ukraine, and Human Security Centre, “Return Every Child”, 12 September 2025, p. 23. Available at: https://www.warchild.org.uk/sites/default/files/2025-09/Return_Every_Child_Digital_WCUK.pdf.

example of this is the Missionary Department of the Yalta Diocese, which, together with teachers of the Arkhangelsk Sunday School, conducted thematic conversations in the Yalta Secondary School-Lyceum No. 9 as part of the regular “Conversations about Important Things”, hoping to have conveyed that “victory in the Great Patriotic War and the coming victory over modern nazism is impossible without faith.”²⁵³

The ROC is also directly involved in the delivery of history teaching to Ukrainian children in the occupied territories. The course “History of Russia through Great Saints” is often taught by local priests.²⁵⁴ On occasions like the commemoration of the end of the Second World War, the ROC freely mixes history lessons with militarization. For example, on 8 May 2026, “guests of honour” at a concert hosted at a school in Donetsk, included A.S. Bobrovsky, “a specialist in the education department of the ‘Warrior’ centre, veterans of the militia and the rector of the All Saints Church, Archpriest Alexander Migilev,” while a similar event the following day at another school included “the veteran G.N. Pirog and the rector of St. Nicholas Church at the railway station of the city of Donetsk, Priest Artemy Shevtsov” whose “presence gave the meeting a special touch and depth.”²⁵⁵ Similarly, clergy of the ROC frequently participate in events at youth centres, lending religious authority to militarization and indoctrination, including by endorsing “the exceptional importance of the work of the [“Defenders of the Fatherland”] foundation’s employees, their active participation in the moral and physical support of the soldiers participating in the special military operation”²⁵⁶ and supporting the training of “moderators and organisers of military-patriotic platforms from among the Cossack youth” to build their capacity to conduct “the organisation of training in military-applied skills” and “the holding of military sports Cossack games” on the basis of the “the inextricable link between military service and spiritual and moral education”.²⁵⁷

5. Forced Russification: Passportization, Citizenship, and Identity Alteration

Academic analysis by Malyarenko and Kormych (2026) situates Russia’s citizenship policy toward Ukrainian residents of occupied territories within a broader framework in which demographic and geopolitical objectives are deliberately fused.²⁵⁸

In Crimea, the 2014 annexation was followed immediately by automatic recognition of Russian citizenship for residents who did not formally opt out. The opt-out window ran only from 1 to 17 April 2014 and was available only at four offices, compared to 250 offices simultaneously

²⁵³ See <https://archive.ph/L6KzH>. The Russian original uses the abbreviation “ВОВ” for “Великая Отечественная война”.

²⁵⁴ For example, Донецкая Епархия, “‘История в святых’ и память о Победе: майские встречи духовенства со школьниками и воспитанниками детских садов”, Донбасс Православный, 8 May 2026. Available at: <https://eparhiadonetsk.ru/2026/05/08/istorija-v-svjatyh-i-pamjat-o-pobede-majskie-vstrechi-duhovenstva-so-shkolnikami-i-vospitannikami-detskih-sadov/>.

²⁵⁵ Донецкая Епархия, “Клирики Донецкой епархии провели майские встречи в школах и на приходах”, Донбасс Православный, 13 May 2026. Available at: <https://eparhiadonetsk.ru/2026/05/13/kliriki-doneckoj-eparhii-proveli-majskie-vstrechi-v-shkolah-i-na-prihodah/>.

²⁵⁶ Донецкая Епархия, “Протоиерей Димитрий Дылдин принял участие в торжествах по случаю трёхлетия филиала фонда ‘Защитники Отечества’”, Донбасс Православный, 1 June 2026. Available at: <https://eparhiadonetsk.ru/2026/06/01/protoierej-dimitrij-dyldin-prinjal-uchastie-v-torzhestvah-po-sluchaju-trjohletija-filiala-fonda-zashhitniki-otechestva/>.

²⁵⁷ Донецкая Епархия, “В Донецке состоялся семинар по развитию казачьих военно-патриотических центров”, Донбасс Православный, 29 May 2026. Available at: <https://eparhiadonetsk.ru/2026/05/29/v-donecke-sostojalsja-seminar-po-razvitiyu-kazachih-voenno-patrioticheskikh-centrov/>.

²⁵⁸ Tetyana Malyarenko and Borys Kormych, “New People for the Old Empire: Russian Policy of Citizenship in the Occupied Territories of Ukraine and Beyond,” *Ethnopolitics*, Vol. 25, No. 1 (2026), pp. 61–76. Available at: <https://doi.org/10.1080/17449057.2024.2386794>.

accepting applications for Russian passports. No clear instructions were provided on the renunciation procedure.²⁵⁹ The European Court of Human Rights, in *Ukraine v. Russia*, found that the renunciation “choice” was made against a backdrop of “intense intimidation, persecution and discrimination,” and that those who opted out were “treated as second-class citizens.”²⁶⁰

Children in orphanages and boarding schools, and individuals in custody, had no meaningful choice at all. Between 2014 and 2021, the Russian Federation additionally settled approximately 140,000 Russian citizens in Crimea, thereby fundamentally altering the demographic environment in which children grow up.²⁶¹

Following the full-scale invasion, the Russian Federation began issuing Russian passports in occupied territories as early as May 2022.²⁶² The existing simplified citizenship procedures were extended first to residents of the Zaporizhzhia and Kherson regions in May 2022²⁶³ and then to all residents of the occupied territories in July.²⁶⁴ For children specifically, OHCHR documents that Russian citizenship was systematically imposed on children in occupied territories, that birth certificates issued under Ukrainian law were rendered invalid for access to social services, education, and healthcare, compelling families to register with Russian authorities.²⁶⁵ This resembles practices earlier applied in Crimea where similarly “all-encompassing restrictions ultimately effectively compelled residents to assume Russian citizenship” leading to a situation in which “by 2024, only around 0.5% of the official residents of Crimea did not hold [Russian] citizenship.”²⁶⁶ Outside Crimea, “pressure to obtain Russian citizenship continued in territory occupied by the Russian Federation” in 2024, with OHCHR

²⁵⁹ Tetyana Malyarenko and Borys Kormych, “New People for the Old Empire: Russian Policy of Citizenship in the Occupied Territories of Ukraine and Beyond,” *Ethnopolitics*, Vol. 25, No. 1 (2026), pp. 61–76, here pp. 63–64. Available at: <https://doi.org/10.1080/17449057.2024.2386794>.

²⁶⁰ Tetyana Malyarenko and Borys Kormych, “New People for the Old Empire: Russian Policy of Citizenship in the Occupied Territories of Ukraine and Beyond,” *Ethnopolitics*, Vol. 25, No. 1 (2026), pp. 61–76, here p. 64. Available at: <https://doi.org/10.1080/17449057.2024.2386794>. See also: European Court of Human Rights. *Ukraine and the Netherlands v. Russia* (Applications nos. 8019/16, 43800/14, 28525/20 and 11055/22). Judgement. 9 July 2025. Available at: <https://hudoc.echr.coe.int/?i=001-244292>.

²⁶¹ Tetyana Malyarenko and Borys Kormych, “New People for the Old Empire: Russian Policy of Citizenship in the Occupied Territories of Ukraine and Beyond,” *Ethnopolitics*, Vol. 25, No. 1 (2026), pp. 61–76, here p. 65. Available at: <https://doi.org/10.1080/17449057.2024.2386794>.

²⁶² OSCE/ODIHR, “Interim Report on reported violations of international humanitarian law and international human rights law in Ukraine”, 20 July 2022, para. 80. Available at: <https://odhr.osce.org/odhr/523081>.

²⁶³ Официальный интернет-портал правовой информации, “Указ Президента Российской Федерации от 25.05.2022 № 304 “О внесении изменений в Указ Президента Российской Федерации от 24 апреля 2019 г. № 183 ‘Об определении в гуманитарных целях категорий лиц, имеющих право обратиться с заявлениями о приеме в гражданство Российской Федерации в упрощенном порядке’”, Официальное опубликование правовых актов, 25 May 2022. Available at: <http://publication.pravo.gov.ru/Document/View/0001202205250004>.

²⁶⁴ Tetyana Malyarenko and Borys Kormych, “New People for the Old Empire: Russian Policy of Citizenship in the Occupied Territories of Ukraine and Beyond,” *Ethnopolitics*, Vol. 25, No. 1 (2026), pp. 61–76, here p. 65. Available at: <https://doi.org/10.1080/17449057.2024.2386794>.

²⁶⁵ OHCHR, “The Impact of the Armed Conflict and Occupation on Children’s Rights in Ukraine: 24 February 2022–31 December 2024”, 21 March 2025, paras. 79-80. Available at: <https://www.ohchr.org/sites/default/files/documents/form/2025-03-21-ohchr-report-children-s-rights-in-ukraine.pdf>; OHCHR, “Report on the Human Rights Situation in Ukraine, 1 December 2024—31 May 2025”, 30 June 2025, paras. 61-62. Available at: <https://ukraine.ohchr.org/en/Report-on-the-Human-Rights-Situation-in-Ukraine-1-December-2024-31-May-2025>.

²⁶⁶ OHCHR, “Ten Years of Occupation by the Russian Federation: Human Rights in the Autonomous Republic of Crimea and the City of Sevastopol, Ukraine” (February 2024), para. 9. Available at: <https://www.ohchr.org/sites/default/files/documents/countries/ukraine/2024-02-28-OHCHR-Ten-Years-Occupation-Crimea.pdf>.

also reporting cases with witnesses stating that “pressure to obtain Russian passport had increased in 2024, citing increased frequency of random document checks on the street and intimidation from Russian armed forces.”²⁶⁷ Earlier reports from ODIHR similarly confirm a pattern of multiple forms of pressure exerted to compel residents of the occupied territories of Ukraine to apply for Russian passports, with witnesses noting that “they were openly pressured to do so, as it was necessary in order to get, or retain access to, employment in public institutions (or retain the same level of salary), social benefits, humanitarian aid, access to health, or education for children.”²⁶⁸

The passportization data presented by Malyarenko and Kormych illuminate the structural function of citizenship imposition as a tool of control rather than of genuine civic inclusion. The deliberate design of “defective” citizenship for DPR/LPR residents — providing military obligations without social rights — indicates that the policy was conceived specifically to create a mobilizable human resource pool, not a resident citizen community.²⁶⁹ This is further evidenced in cases documented by OHCHR who reported various instances in which teachers were forced to apply for Russian citizenship. For example, “in one case, all the educational workers were gathered in a room of their school and instructed to fill out the application for a Russian passport in the presence of armed men”, while in another one “four women who used to work in managerial positions in educational institutions in Crimea ... were presented with the ultimatum to either apply for Russian citizenship or lose their positions.”²⁷⁰

For children, who cannot consent to and cannot easily resist citizenship imposition, this has particularly serious implications: a child who grows up with only Russian legal identity, with altered personal documents, and who has attended only Russian schools, faces structural barriers to reintegration into Ukrainian civic life that will persist regardless of any future territorial settlement.

6. From Indoctrination to Conscription: The Path to Military Recruitment

The system of militarization and indoctrination in occupied territories constitutes a pipeline toward eventual service — conscripted or contracted — in the Russian armed forces.

Before children reach 18, teachers and school administrators are documented to have encouraged students to sign military contracts and enrol in cadet academies; with vulnerable children being specifically targeted.²⁷¹ In one documented case, teachers and administrators in

²⁶⁷ OHCHR, “Treatment of Prisoners of War and Update on the Human Rights Situation in Ukraine: 1 June 2024 – 31 August 2024”, 1 October 2024, para. 91. Available at: <https://www.ohchr.org/en/documents/country-reports/40th-periodic-report-human-rights-situation-ukraine-treatment-prisoners>.

²⁶⁸ OSCE/ODIHR, “Third Interim Report on reported violations of international humanitarian law and international human rights law in Ukraine”, 17 July 2023, para. 92. Available at: <https://odihr.osce.org/odihr/548629>.

²⁶⁹ Tetyana Malyarenko and Borys Kormych, “New People for the Old Empire: Russian Policy of Citizenship in the Occupied Territories of Ukraine and Beyond,” *Ethnopolitics*, Vol. 25, No. 1 (2026), pp. 61–76, here p. 66. Available at: <https://doi.org/10.1080/17449057.2024.2386794>.

²⁷⁰ United Nations General Assembly, “Situation of human rights in the temporarily occupied territories of Ukraine, including the Autonomous Republic of Crimea and the city of Sevastopol. Report of the Secretary-General”, A/79/258, 30 July 2024, para. 60. Available at: <https://www.ohchr.org/en/documents/country-reports/a79258-situation-human-rights-temporarily-occupied-territories-ukraine>.

²⁷¹ OHCHR, “The Impact of the Armed Conflict and Occupation on Children’s Rights in Ukraine: 24 February 2022–31 December 2024”, 21 March 2025, para. 107. Available at: <https://www.ohchr.org/sites/default/files/documents/form/2025-03-21-ohchr-report-children-s-rights-in-ukraine.pdf>.

Mariupol pressured grandparents to enrol a child in the new Naval Military School upon discovering the boy was in their care.²⁷²

The conscription pipeline is closely linked to the systematic passportization efforts of the Russian Federation. OHCHR documents that Ukrainian boys who turn 18 in occupied territory are subjected to conscription into the Russian armed forces on the basis of their imposed Russian citizenship.²⁷³ In November 2024, the first groups of conscripts from occupied territory reportedly travelled to the Russian Federation to serve in the Russian armed forces.²⁷⁴ In general, upon turning 18, young men who hold Russian citizenship are issued with a summons (now issued electronically and linked to an increasingly digitized Russian State surveillance system) to visit a military enlistment office where they are assessed for their capacity to serve in the Russian armed forces. If they are deemed capable, they can subsequently be conscripted. The militarization of Ukrainian children is thus not merely an issue of curricular and extracurricular activities conducted by a wide range of actors within the Russian education system that has been imposed on the occupied territories but it also “benefits” from other occupation practices of the Russian Federation, using both direct and indirect pressure points.

According to OHCHR, an additional tool used by Russian State and State-aligned actors in this context are “numerous posters, ads, billboards, and leaflets strongly urging men to join the Russian armed forces, as well as intense propaganda campaigns on popular social media platforms.”²⁷⁵ For example, schools in the occupied territories post recruitment videos and contact details for further information on how to become a contract soldier in the Russian armed forces on their social media channels, often simultaneously glorifying war and masculinity in slogans like “Contract service in the Russian Army is the way of real men!”²⁷⁶

The pre-invasion mobilization in the so-called DPR and LPR demonstrated the maturation of this pipeline. When the so-called people’s republics announced a general mobilization of men aged 18–55 on 19 February 2022, university administrators in these occupied territories held mass meetings at which military commissariat representatives distributed mobilization summonses; students were threatened with expulsion or criminal liability for non-compliance; 648 cadets and 35 officer staff of the Dzerzhynsky Academy of Internal Affairs in Donetsk alone were confirmed to have participated in combat by summer 2022.²⁷⁷ Young men who had attended primary and secondary schools in the occupied territories after 2014 and been exposed

²⁷² OHCHR, “The Impact of the Armed Conflict and Occupation on Children’s Rights in Ukraine: 24 February 2022–31 December 2024”, 21 March 2025, para. 107. Available at: <https://www.ohchr.org/sites/default/files/documents/form/2025-03-21-ohchr-report-children-s-rights-in-ukraine.pdf>.

²⁷³ OHCHR, “The Impact of the Armed Conflict and Occupation on Children’s Rights in Ukraine: 24 February 2022–31 December 2024”, 21 March 2025, para. 106. Available at: <https://www.ohchr.org/sites/default/files/documents/form/2025-03-21-ohchr-report-children-s-rights-in-ukraine.pdf>.

²⁷⁴ OHCHR, “The Impact of the Armed Conflict and Occupation on Children’s Rights in Ukraine: 24 February 2022–31 December 2024”, 21 March 2025, para. 106. Available at: <https://www.ohchr.org/sites/default/files/documents/form/2025-03-21-ohchr-report-children-s-rights-in-ukraine.pdf>.

²⁷⁵ OHCHR, “Report on the Human Rights Situation in Ukraine: 1 December 2023—29 February 2024”, 26 March 2024, para. 78. Available at: <https://ukraine.ohchr.org/en/38-periodic-report-EN>.

²⁷⁶ For illustrative purposes, see, for example: https://vk.com/wall-221318726_258, https://vk.com/wall-221337469_375, and https://vk.com/wall-221406757_531.

²⁷⁷ Olha Pashkova, “Forced Mobilisation of Student Youth in the Temporarily Occupied Territories of Donetsk and Luhansk Regions at the Beginning of the Russian Federation’s Invasion of Ukraine,” *New Perspectives*, Vol. 32, No. 2 (2024), pp. 199–208, here p. 201. Available at: <https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/abs/10.1177/2336825X241230937>.

to military-patriotic education in cadet classes or been among the early members of Yunarmiya after 2016 were among those mobilized. According to Ukraine’s Centre for Countering Disinformation several of them were killed in combat in 2022.²⁷⁸

The whole-system approach adopted by the Russian Federation demonstrates a comprehensive effort involving curricular and extracurricular activities tied to the Russian education system, delivered by teachers, priests, veterans, and active soldiers, funded by State institutions and private-sector organizations, and combined with different forms of direct and indirect pressure on Ukrainian children and their families in the occupied territories. As the *Return Every Child* report notes that the Russian Federation’s aim in this is “both demographic and strategic: to erase Ukrainian identity, assimilate the TOT, and prepare a new generation of military recruits,” and that “left unchecked countless thousands of these children will be turned upon their own people to fight in Russia’s armies.”²⁷⁹

D. ESCALATION AND INSTITUTIONALIZATION: PATTERNS OF RUSSIAN POLICY

1. Acceleration and Scaling

The single clearest pattern across the full 2014–2025 period is one of systematic learning and acceleration. The Russian Federation’s programme in Crimea developed over years and encountered friction: initial resistance from teachers, parents, and students; logistical challenges in replacing curricula; and the need to develop new institutional infrastructure. By the time of the 2022 full-scale invasion, a developed operational template existed. In post-2022 occupied territories, the same measures were implemented within months rather than years. Russian federal textbooks were distributed within weeks of military occupation; Yunarmiya groups were established in occupied territories within months; “forcible passportisation took about 4 years in territories occupied after 2014, and four months in territories occupied after 2022”,²⁸⁰ and the “Conversations about Important Things” programme, introduced across the Russian Federation in September 2022, was simultaneously extended to newly occupied territories.

Critically, the speed of educational transition reflected a lesson learned from Crimea: in Crimea, the partial survival of Ukrainian-language schooling for several years provided at least some continuing institutional infrastructure for the survival of a Ukrainian cultural identity. The more coercive approach in post-2022 territories, including the almost-immediate removal of Ukrainian-language education and the active coercion of teachers through dismissal, harassment, and similar practices of intimidation reflects the application of this lesson.

The systematic coverage of Russian occupation policies by the Institute for the Study of War over the period since April 2025 provides concrete evidence of the further systematization and acceleration of the indoctrination and militarization of Ukrainian children. By 2026, Russian authorities were operating this system at a scale and with an institutional coherence that was not present even three years earlier. This is particularly obvious in relation to the “summer camp” programme: according to Institute for the Study of War, Russian First Deputy Education Minister Alexander Bugayev stated in April 2025 that approximately 53,000 children from

²⁷⁸Farrenkopf et al. (September 2025), op. cit., p. 6.

²⁷⁹ War Child UK, Save Ukraine, and Human Security Centre, “Return Every Child”, 12 September 2025, p. 2. Available at: https://www.warchild.org.uk/sites/default/files/2025-09/Return_Every_Child_Digital_WCUK.pdf.

²⁸⁰ Interview with the Ukrainian Parliament’s Commissioner for Human Rights, 9 June 2026 (on file with the Mission).

occupied territories would attend re-education camps in summer 2025,²⁸¹ a figure that Russian Deputy Prime Minister Dmitry Chernyshenko confirmed would be maintained at approximately 50,000 for summer 2026.²⁸² Russian Minister of Education Sergei Kravtsov confirmed that over 32,000 children from occupied Donetsk Oblast alone attended Russian summer programmes in summer 2025.²⁸³

The human up-scaling evident from the large number of summer camp participants is further underpinned by increased organizational and infrastructural depth in the occupied territories and across the Russian Federation more generally. For example, the Movement of the First claims to have more than 344,600 children from the occupied territories as members as of 2025, a figure that represents a significant increase in the organization's membership since its establishment in 2022, when just over 60,000 children in the occupied territories joined, with the most notable rises in membership figures reported for Crimea (from 12,000 to 158,000) and Luhansk (from 21,500 to 103,000).²⁸⁴

The network of Voin military-patriotic training centres in the occupied parts of Ukraine's Donetsk, Luhansk, Kherson, and Zaporizhzhia regions now has a reported capacity over 9,000 cadets in two years of operation.²⁸⁵ At the same time, research from the Yale Human Rights Lab documents the expansion of a network of facilities, including cadet schools, military bases, medical institutions, orphanages, family support centres, secondary schools, universities, religious sites, camps, and sanatoria, where re-education and militarization activities for Ukrainian children aged 8-17 were documented that “comprise a program that aims to fold Ukraine's children into the Russian war machine, whether it be through its civilian arm or military wing.”²⁸⁶

What is also becoming increasingly clear is the officially stated ambition of the Russian Federation to ensure the comprehensiveness of their indoctrination and militarization efforts. For example, the Institute for the Study of War has documented the “widescale ‘Drone Operator Cadre of Crimea’ strategic project”. Initiated by the leader of the Crimean occupation authorities, Sergei Aksyonov, the programme has trained “2,000 students of technical and vocational colleges in occupied Crimea” and “selected 200 secondary-school students for further training, after which graduates can serve in the Russian military or various security agencies as certified drone operators” thereby utilizing a pipeline from school to vocational

²⁸¹ Jennie Olmsted and Karolina Hird, “Russian Occupation Update, April 28, 2025”, Institute for the Study of War, 28 April 2025. Available at: <https://understandingwar.org/research/russia-ukraine/russian-occupation-update-april-28-2025/>.

²⁸² Karolina Hird and Lauren Thacker, “Russian Occupation Update, May 7, 2026”, Institute for the Study of War, 7 May 2026. Available at: <https://understandingwar.org/research/russia-ukraine/russian-occupation-update-may-7-2026/>.

²⁸³ Karolina Hird, “Russian Occupation Update, September 11, 2025”, Institute for the Study of War, 11 September 2025. Available at: <https://understandingwar.org/research/russia-ukraine/russian-occupation-update-september-11-2025/>.

²⁸⁴ Tetiana Lychko, Olha Shapoval and Mariia Sulialina, “Russia's Policy of Eradicating the Identity of Children in the TOT of Ukraine: Results for 2025”, Kyiv: Almenda Centre for Civic Education, 2026, p.16. Available at: https://almenda.org/wp-content/uploads/2026/02/Zvit_politics_web_Eng.pdf.

²⁸⁵ Karolina Hird and Lauren Thacker, “Russian Occupation Update, April 30, 2026”, Institute for the Study of War, 30 April 2026. Available at: <https://understandingwar.org/research/russia-ukraine/russian-occupation-update-april-30-2026/>.

²⁸⁶ Paige Farrenkopf, Caitlin N. Howarth, and Nathaniel A. Raymond et al., “Ukraine's Stolen Children: Inside Russia's Network of Re-Education and Militarisation.” (New Haven, CT: Humanitarian Research Lab at Yale School of Public Health, 2025), p. 11. Available online at: <https://ysph.yale.edu/download-file/56121661-9ac4-4e8b-a5e0-cb907c74fbc3/>.

training to universities that creates a “strategic talent pool.”²⁸⁷ This indicates not only an acceleration of indoctrination and militarization efforts over the period from 2014 to the present but also an increasingly more sophisticated system design.

2. Institutional Elaboration

As already noted above, the period from 2016 to 2022 saw a deliberate increase in the organizational and infrastructural capacity that underpins the strategic ambition of comprehensive indoctrination and militarization of Ukrainian children. This went hand-in-hand with a significant institutional elaboration in Russia’s military-patriotic extracurricular education infrastructure: the establishment of Yunarmiya (2016), the creation of the Movement of the First in December 2022, the expansion of the Voin programme after 2023, and the roll-out of Zarnitsa 2.0 illustrate the systemic nature of Russian efforts to ensure the complementarity of extracurricular programming with the regular education system and their frictionless integration within the overall system of indoctrination and militarization of Ukrainian children.²⁸⁸

This institutional elaboration reflects three explicit Kremlin goals: creating loyalty among the wider population; identifying cadres suitable for future state and military service; and building a direct recruitment pipeline to the Russian Armed Forces.²⁸⁹ This was further confirmed to the Mission in Interviews, including from one interlocutor pointing out that “Russia’s overall goal in the occupied territories is to create a uniform population unwilling and unable to resist Russian occupation.”²⁹⁰

Since the beginning of the full-scale invasion, this institutional architecture has been extended further vertically and horizontally. Vertically, the “Eaglets of Russia” (Орлята России) programme extends the indoctrination effort to elementary schools and is “intended to prepare very young school children to eventually enter cadet-style programs like Yunarmia and the youth military-patriotic organisation Movement of the First.”²⁹¹ Another example is the Nakhimov Naval School, run by the Russian Ministry of Defence, which has created a dedicated drone training programme enrolling Ukrainian children in the occupied territories from the age of eight in branches in Sevastopol and Mariupol.²⁹² The involvement of an institution run by the Ministry of Defence in the direct military training of children of this age group represents a noticeable deepening of the Russian Federation’s direct military engagement with the school-age population compared to the period between 2014 and 2022 and the first years after the full-scale invasion of 2022.

²⁸⁷ Karolina Hird, “Russian Occupation Update, May 29, 2026”, Institute for the Study of War, 29 May 2026. Available at: <https://understandingwar.org/research/russia-ukraine/russian-occupation-update-may-29-2026/>.

²⁸⁸ It is important to note that this is by and large a system applied across the whole Russian Federation, and hence that the long-term strategic effects of such wide-spread indoctrination and militarization go well beyond children in the Occupied territories.

²⁸⁹ Margarete Klein and Susan Stewart, “Military-Patriotic Education in Russia: How the Next Generation Is Being Brought into Line with the Regime,” SWP Comment No. 46, 10 November 2025, p. 2. Available at: <https://www.swp-berlin.org/en/publication/military-patriotic-education-in-russia>.

²⁹⁰ Interview 9 with a Ukrainian NGO, 8 June 2026 (on file with the Mission).

²⁹¹ Karolina Hird, “Russian Occupation Update, October 9, 2025”, Institute for the Study of War, 9 October 2025. Available at: <https://understandingwar.org/research/russia-ukraine/russian-occupation-update-october-9-2025/>.

²⁹² Karolina Hird, “Russian Occupation Update, May 22, 2025”, Institute for the Study of War, 22 May 2025. Available at: <https://understandingwar.org/research/russia-ukraine/russian-occupation-update-may-22-2025/>. See also Karolina Hird, “Russian Occupation Update, March 26, 2026”, Institute for the Study of War, 26 March 2026. Available at: <https://understandingwar.org/research/russia-ukraine/russian-occupation-update-march-26-2026/>.

The horizontal extension of the institutional architecture of Russian efforts to indoctrinate and militarize Ukrainian children is evident in the increasing involvement of corporate actors. For example, Rosatom, Russia's State Atomic Energy Corporation, opened "AtomClasses" in schools in occupied Melitopol and Enerhodar in September 2025,²⁹³ while Rostec, the Russian Federation's State Corporation for the Promotion of the Development, Manufacture, and Export of High Tech Products (i.e., the Russian Federation's State-owned defence conglomerate), ran activities at the international Artek summer camp in Crimea in April 2026.²⁹⁴ These developments build on the documented involvement of Gazprom and Rosneft subsidiaries in the transport and indoctrination of Ukrainian children,²⁹⁵ as well as of other State-owned companies, such as Aeroflot.²⁹⁶ This indicates the widening of corporate participation in more dimensions of the Russian system of indoctrination and militarization of Ukrainian children.

A different aspect of the horizontal extension of the institutional architecture of the indoctrination and militarization of Ukrainian children is the expanding geographic reach of the network over the last few years. This is documented in written testimony submitted by the Regional Centre for Human Rights to the US Senate in December 2025, noting that two Ukrainian children from the occupied Donetsk region and from occupied Crimea "were sent to Songdown camp in North Korea" where they "were taught to 'destroy Japanese militarists' and met [North] Korean veterans".²⁹⁷ In addition, the use by the Russian Federation of so-called re-education camps in Belarus has been documented by several NGOs.²⁹⁸ The institutional network used by the Russian Federation for the indoctrination and militarization of Ukrainian children, is thus no longer solely a Russia-internal affair but has developed an international

²⁹³ Karolina Hird, "Russian Occupation Update, September 11, 2025", Institute for the Study of War, 11 September 2025. Available at: <https://understandingwar.org/research/russia-ukraine/russian-occupation-update-september-11-2025/>.

²⁹⁴ Karolina Hird, "Russian Occupation Update, April 23, 2026", Institute for the Study of War, 23 April 2026. Available at: <https://understandingwar.org/research/russia-ukraine/russian-occupation-update-april-23-2026/>.

²⁹⁵ See Nathaniel Bogardus, Paige Farrenkopf, Caitlin N. Howarth, and Nathaniel A. Raymond et al., "Willing Accomplices: Gazprom and Rosneft's Role in the Transport and Indoctrination of Ukraine's Children" (New Haven, CT: Humanitarian Research Lab at Yale School of Public Health, 2025). Available at: <https://medicine.yale.edu/download-file/b9ac2577-9407-479c-a5da-05b98511b9db/>.

²⁹⁶ Karolina Hird, "Russian Occupation Update, September 19, 2025", Institute for the Study of War, 19 September 2025. Available at: <https://understandingwar.org/research/russia-ukraine/russian-occupation-update-september-19-2025-2/>.

²⁹⁷ Kateryna Rashevskaya, "No Justice for Children, No Peace for All", Written Testimony before the Subcommittee on State, Foreign Operations, and Related Programs Hearing: The Abduction of Ukrainian Children by the Russian Federation, 3 December 2025. Available at: https://www.appropriations.senate.gov/imo/media/doc/testimony_of_kateryna_rashevskaya.pdf. See also, Karolina Hird, Mariia Horodyska, Guillaume Rombaut-Enriquez, Jakub Kostka, and Sophie King, "Russian Occupation Update, December 11, 2025", Institute for the Study of War, 11 December 2025. Available at: <https://understandingwar.org/research/russia-ukraine/russian-occupation-update-december-11-2025/> and Karolina Hird, "Russian Occupation Update, January 8, 2026", Institute for the Study of War, 8 January 2026. Available at: <https://understandingwar.org/research/russia-ukraine/russian-occupation-update-january-8-2026/>.

²⁹⁸ Freedom House, Human Rights Centre ZMINA, Regional Centre for Human Rights, and Human Rights Centre Viasna, "Stolen Childhood: How the Belarusian Regime is Erasing Ukrainian Children's Identity through Displacement, Re-education, and Militarisation", Special Report, 2024. Available at: <https://freedomhouse.org/report/special-report/2024/stolen-childhood-how-belarusian-regime-erasing-ukrainian-childrens>; Olesya Lantsman, "Re-education under the guise of recovery: how Belarus helps Russia to take Ukrainian children from the occupied territories", Zmina Human Rights Centre, 10 April 2024. Available at: <https://zmina.info/en/articles-en/re-education-under-the-guise-of-recovery-how-belarus-helps-russia-to-take-ukrainian-children-from-the-occupied-territories/>; Liza Brovko, "Investigation: Ukrainian children are taken to camps in Belarus for re-education", Babel, 23 February 2024. Available at: <https://babel.ua/en/news/104206-investigation-ukrainian-children-are-taken-to-camps-in-belarus-for-re-education>.

dimension that implicates third states in the deportation, indoctrination, and militarization of Ukrainian children.

3. Legal Codification and Structural Permanence

The Russian Federation has progressively codified its practices in law, creating a self-reinforcing framework that is difficult to reverse. The extension of Russian citizenship to children in occupied territories, the requirement to register under Russian law to access education and healthcare, the classification of Ukrainian national symbols as extremist, and the formal incorporation of occupied territories into the Russian Federation's constitutional and administrative structure (formally enacted in September 2022) all create legal facts that complicate any future de-occupation process, particularly with respect to children who have grown up entirely under occupation. The International Court of Justice (ICJ) judgement of January 2024 found that the Russian Federation had violated two of its obligations under the International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination.²⁹⁹

Among the key measures taken by the Russian Federation are the March 2026 passportization decree which formally made permanent the simplified passportization procedure for residents of the occupied Donetsk, Luhansk, Zaporizhia, and Kherson oblasts initially adopted in 2022.³⁰⁰ What had been framed as a wartime administrative necessity³⁰¹ was thereby permanently embedded in Russian law, pre-empting any future argument that the citizenship measures were reversible upon a change in the conflict's status.

That passportization remains a critical instrument of coercion directed at Ukrainian children and their families in the occupied territories is evident from two further recent legal measures. A January 2026 requirement mandated that children under the age of 14 could only leave Russian-occupied territory with Russian documentation, effectively making it impossible for families without Russian documents to take children out of occupied areas.³⁰² A February 2026 law required that guardianship, trusteeship, and adoption documents for children issued before 30 September 2022 be re-registered with the occupation administration, requiring the presentation of a Russian passport, with non-compliance running the risk children being removed from their families and placed into Russian orphanages or boarding schools.³⁰³ Taken together, these measures operationalize structural permanence at the level of the individual child: they use the child's legal status and the family's access to their child as levers to compel compliance with the Russian administrative and legal order, thus creating pressure points that

²⁹⁹ International Court of Justice, *Ukraine v. Russian Federation (Application of ICSFT and CERD)*, Judgement of 31 January 2024, para. 370. Available at: <https://www.icj-cij.org/case/166>. For the relevant articles of the International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination (CERD), see <https://www.ohchr.org/en/instruments-mechanisms/instruments/international-convention-elimination-all-forms-racial>.

³⁰⁰ Karolina Hird, Alexander Misener, Anjou Kang-Stryker, Nikolai Sundstrom, and Jakub Kostka, "Russian Occupation Update, March 12, 2026", Institute for the Study of War, 12 March 2026. Available at: <https://understandingwar.org/research/russia-ukraine/russian-occupation-update-march-12-2026/>.

³⁰¹ Tetyana Malyarenko and Borys Kormych, "New People for the Old Empire: Russian Policy of Citizenship in the Occupied Territories of Ukraine and Beyond," *Ethnopolitics*, Vol. 25, No. 1 (2026), pp. 61–76. Available at: <https://doi.org/10.1080/17449057.2024.2386794>.

³⁰² Karolina Hird, "Russian Occupation Update, January 22, 2026", Institute for the Study of War, 22 January 2026. Available at: <https://understandingwar.org/research/russia-ukraine/russian-occupation-update-january-22-2026/>.

³⁰³ Karolina Hird and Veronica Iredale, "Russian Occupation Update, February 12, 2026", Institute for the Study of War, 12 February 2026. Available at: <https://understandingwar.org/research/russia-ukraine/russian-occupation-update-february-12-2026/>.

can be used to break down resistance to Russian indoctrination and militarization efforts of Ukrainian children.

Where such resistance is perceived to persist, the Russian State has also given itself refined tools of repression. For example, in November 2025, the minimum age for terrorism prosecution was lowered from 16 to 14 years, with minors now facing sentences of 10 to 20 years, enabling “Russian officials to criminalise any manifestation of Ukrainian identity or pro-Ukrainian sentiment among minors, which likely includes speaking the Ukrainian language, displaying Ukraine’s national symbols, or expressing support for the Ukrainian military, by labeling these actions as terrorism” and putting “pressure [on] parents, guardians and teachers to avoid expressing pro-Ukrainian views to their children, as this could be interpreted as involving minors in terrorist activities.”³⁰⁴ By extending the threat of criminal prosecution into the school environment and the home, the Russian State has effectively created a legal deterrent to the transmission of Ukrainian identity across generations that operates through the parent–child and teacher–pupil relationships that would otherwise sustain it and confirms the systematic nature of Russian efforts to indoctrinate and militarize Ukrainian children.

³⁰⁴Karolina Hird, Guillaume Rombaut-Enriquez, Sophie King, Mariia Horodyska, and Jakub Kostka, “Russian Occupation Update, November 20, 2025”, Institute for the Study of War, 20 November 2025. Available at: <https://understandingwar.org/research/russia-ukraine/russian-occupation-update-november-20-2025/>.

III. LEGISLATIVE ARCHITECTURE OF INDOCTRINATION, MILITARIZATION AND RE-EDUCATION OF UKRAINIAN CHILDREN

A. GENERAL ARCHITECTURE OF THE SYSTEM

The legislative, regulatory and institutional architecture governing Ukrainian children in the occupied territories as well as in the territory of the Russian Federation has been purposefully designed and refined over more than a decade and now constitutes a well-developed and well-coordinated system of indoctrination and militarization. This architecture intertwines education law, youth policy, religious education, anti-extremism legislation, military-patriotic programmes, family law, citizenship-related measures, historical-memory policy and security governance within a single normative and administrative framework, supported by a vertical institutional structure. Taken together, these measures indicate a coordinated system through which the political, cultural, religious and civic identity of Ukrainian children is being purposefully reshaped through legal, administrative, social and educational means. Notably this architecture is not newly designed but rather rests on the legislative and institutional basis developed decades ago which is being constantly reshaped and expanded, especially since the invasion of Ukraine by Russia. Conversely, this also makes the legislative framework very complex and difficult to navigate as a wide variety of legislative acts has been amended dozens of times with various sections losing force and being replaced.

Four features of this architecture are particularly significant. First, the legislative and policy framework on education clearly indicates that the Russian Federation treats education not as a politically neutral domain but as an instrument of state security, patriotic mobilization and identity formation. Federal educational standards and strategic documents explicitly designate the formation of Russian civic identity, traditional values, patriotism and loyalty to the State as core educational objectives.³⁰⁵

Second, the admission into Russian citizenship, while voluntary on the surface, has become compulsory as having Russian identification documents is a prerequisite for absolutely all daily actions, including access to education.³⁰⁶

Third, the boundaries between civilian education and military-patriotic indoctrination have been progressively dismantled. Educational institutions, youth organizations, and extracurricular programmes are increasingly integrated with military structures, law-enforcement agencies and security bodies.³⁰⁷

³⁰⁵Ministry of Education of the Russian Federation, Order No. 287 of 31 May 2021 "On Approval of the Federal State Educational Standard for Basic General Education", see, in particular, paras. 41(1), 42, 42.1.2 and 45.6.2. Available at: <http://publication.pravo.gov.ru/Document/View/0001202107050027>; President of the Russian Federation, Decree No. 809 of 9 November 2022 "On Approving the Foundations of State Policy for the Preservation and Strengthening of Traditional Russian Spiritual and Moral Values", see, in particular, para. 5, paras. 13–16 and Section IV. Available at: <http://www.kremlin.ru/acts/bank/48502>.

³⁰⁶ Ombudsman of Ukraine "Cross-Pollinated. Russia's Systemic Policy of Destroying Children's Ukrainian Identity." (2024) p. 17.

³⁰⁷ See, *inter alia*, Federal Law No. 53-FZ of 28 March 1998 "On Military Duty and Military Service", Art. 12-13. Available at: <http://www.kremlin.ru/acts/bank/12128/page/1>; Federal Law No. 273-FZ of 29 December 2012 "On Education in the Russian Federation", Art. 86. Available at: <http://www.kremlin.ru/acts/bank/36698>; Government of the Russian Federation, Resolution No. 194 of 30 March 2010 "On Issues of the Interdepartmental Commission for the Preparation of Citizens of the Russian Federation for Military Service and Military-Patriotic Education", see, in particular, para. 3. Available at: <http://pravo.gov.ru/proxy/ips/?docbody=&prevDoc=102354987&backlink=1&&nd=102137029>; Ministry of Education of the Russian Federation, Order No. 287 of 31 May 2021 "On Approval of the Federal State Educational

Fourth, anti-extremism and counter-terrorism legislation provides a flexible framework³⁰⁸ through which expressions of Ukrainian identity, independent historical narratives or refusal to participate in Russian State-mandated ideological activities may be treated as matters of national security concern with the harshest consequences.³⁰⁹

This system operates across multiple levels of governance. At the federal level, laws, presidential decrees, federal educational standards, government resolutions and ministerial acts establish the overarching normative and ideological framework with very clear guiding principles.³¹⁰ At the level of regional authorities and occupation administrations, in turn, these measures are translated into implementation plans applicable across the occupied territories and the Russian Federation.³¹¹

Further, at the municipal and school levels, teachers, school administrators, military-patriotic organizations, youth movements, veterans' associations and security structures give effect to these policies in daily educational practice. Cumulatively, these measures create an environment in which classroom instruction, extracurricular activities, commemorative practices and administrative procedures reinforce the same political and ideological narratives.

Standard for Basic General Education", para. 45.11.2.(5). Available at: <http://publication.pravo.gov.ru/Document/View/0001202107050027>.

³⁰⁸ See, *inter alia*, President of the Russian Federation, Decree No. 809 of 9 November 2022 "On Approving the Foundations of State Policy for the Preservation and Strengthening of Traditional Russian Spiritual and Moral Values", paras 13-16, 24. Available at: <http://www.kremlin.ru/acts/bank/48502>; President of the Russian Federation, Decree No. 400 of 2 July 2021 "On the National Security Strategy of the Russian Federation", paras. 84–93 Available at: <http://publication.pravo.gov.ru/document/view/0001202107030001>; Russian Federation, Criminal Code of the Russian Federation, Federal Law No. 63-FZ of 13 June 1996, Art. 280.1–280.4, 282.4, 284.2, 354.1 Available at: <http://pravo.gov.ru/proxy/ips/?docbody=&nd=102041891>; Russian Federation, Code of Administrative Offences, Federal Law No. 195-FZ of 30 December 2001, Art. 13.48. Available at: <http://pravo.gov.ru/proxy/ips/?docbody&nd=102074277>.

³⁰⁹ See also Situation of human rights in the Russian Federation. Report of the Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights in the Russian Federation, Mariana Katzarova; UN Doc A/HRC/60/59 (15 Sept 2025), in particular paras 88-90.

³¹⁰ See, *inter alia*, President of the Russian Federation, Decree No. 400 of 2 July 2021 "On the National Security Strategy of the Russian Federation", paras. 25–26 and 84–93. Available at: <http://publication.pravo.gov.ru/document/view/0001202107030001>.

; President of the Russian Federation, Decree No. 809 of 9 November 2022 "On Approving the Foundations of State Policy for the Preservation and Strengthening of Traditional Russian Spiritual and Moral Values", paras. 5, 14–16 and 24–25. Available at: <http://www.kremlin.ru/acts/bank/48502>; and Ministry of Education of the Russian Federation, Order No. 287 of 31 May 2021 "On Approval of the Federal State Educational Standard for Basic General Education", paras. 41(1), 42.1.1 and 42.1.2. Available at: <http://publication.pravo.gov.ru/Document/View/0001202107050027>.

³¹¹ See, *inter alia*, Government of the Russian Federation, Order No. 2233-r of 17 August 2024 "Strategy for the Implementation of Youth Policy in the Russian Federation until 2030", Sections III.1–III.2 and IV. Available at: <http://government.ru/docs/all/155067/>; De facto Council of Ministers of the Republic of Crimea, Order No. 15-r of 13 January 2025 implementing Presidential Decree No. 809. Available at: <https://rk.gov.ru/documents/66324703-0b19-4536-84b9-232a48f9ddbe>; De facto Ministry of Education and Science of Zaporizhzhia Region, Order No. 381 of 10 July 2025 "On the Approval of the Action Plan for Civic-Patriotic and Spiritual-Moral Education of Students for the 2025/2026 Academic Year". Available at: <https://mon.zo.gov.ru/docs/show/78>; De facto Government of Kherson Region, Resolution No. 118-pp of 16 September 2025 "On the Strategy for the Implementation of Youth Policy in Kherson Region until 2030". Available at: <https://gov.khogov.ru/wp-content/uploads/sites/4/2025/09/118-pp-25.pdf>; De facto Government of the Donetsk People's Republic, Resolution No. 130-5 of 24 December 2025 "Development of Education". Available at: <http://publication.pravo.gov.ru/document/8000202512260037?index=1>; and De facto Government of the Luhansk People's Republic, Resolution No. 213/25 of 14 October 2025 "Development of Education". Available at: https://sh32-irmino-r181.gosweb.gosuslugi.ru/netcat_files/174/3506/213_25.pdf.

As already noted, the current legislative landscape reflects both continuity and expansion. Rather than creating an entirely new system following the full-scale invasion of Ukraine, the Russian Federation has utilized and adapted the existing legal and administrative mechanisms while introducing new measures that strengthened and coordinated them, in part adapting experience gained in Crimea and the occupied areas of the Donetsk and Luhansk regions after 2014.

Several key instruments were adopted or significantly expanded post-February 2022, including Federal Law No. 19-FZ,³¹² Presidential Decrees No. 809,³¹³ No. 358³¹⁴ and No. 1124,³¹⁵ Order of the Ministry of Education No. 729,³¹⁶ Government Order No. 2970-r³¹⁷ and a range of military-patriotic programmes.³¹⁸ In parallel, pre-existing legal instruments — including extremism legislation, counter-terrorism measures, family-law provisions, educational standards, passport regulations and child-protection frameworks — have been used to advance objectives extending beyond their original regulatory purpose, including the promotion of political integration, the regulation of identity-related issues, and the suppression of different opinion and dissent.

Crimea provides the earliest and most extensively developed example of Russian policies relating to patriotic education, military-patriotic upbringing, counter-extremism and security governance in occupied Ukrainian territory.³¹⁹ Educational integration and reorientation to the Russian curricula, institutional restructuring, personnel-transfer mechanisms and the expansion of State-sponsored youth organizations introduced in Crimea following the 2014 occupation were subsequently replicated across the occupied Donetsk, Luhansk, Zaporizhzhia and Kherson

³¹² Russian Federation, Federal Law No. 19-FZ of 17 February 2023 “On the Specifics of the Legal Regulation of Relations in the Fields of Education and Science in Connection with the Admission of the Donetsk People's Republic, Luhansk People's Republic, Zaporizhzhia Region and Kherson Region to the Russian Federation”. Available at: <http://publication.pravo.gov.ru/Document/View/0001202302170006>.

³¹³ President of the Russian Federation, Decree No. 809 of 9 November 2022 “On the Approval of the Foundations of State Policy for the Preservation and Strengthening of Traditional Russian Spiritual and Moral Values”. Available at: <http://www.kremlin.ru/acts/bank/48502>.

³¹⁴ President of the Russian Federation, Decree No. 358 of 17 May 2023 “On the Strategy for the Comprehensive Security of Children in the Russian Federation until 2030”. Available at: <http://www.kremlin.ru/acts/bank/49230/page/1>.

³¹⁵ President of the Russian Federation, Decree No. 1124 of 28 December 2024 “On the Approval of the Strategy for Countering Extremism in the Russian Federation”. Available at: <https://mvd.consultant.ru/documents/1058768?items=1&page=1>.

³¹⁶ Ministry of Education of the Russian Federation, Order No. 729 of 8 October 2025 “On Amendments to Certain Orders of the Ministry of Education of the Russian Federation Concerning the Federal Educational Programs for Primary General Education, Basic General Education and Secondary General Education”, registered on 3 December 2025 under No. 84436 Available at: <http://publication.pravo.gov.ru/document/0001202512040010>.

³¹⁷ Government of the Russian Federation, Order No. 2970-r of 23 October 2025 “Comprehensive Measures for Patriotic and Spiritual-Moral Education of Youth in the Russian Federation until 2028”. Available at: <http://static.government.ru/media/acts/files/1202510240057.pdf>.

³¹⁸ Charter of the Autonomous Non-Profit Organisation of Additional Professional Education “Centre for the Development of Military-Sports Training and Patriotic Education of Youth” (“Warrior Centre”), approved by the Resolution of the Founding Assembly No. 1/2025 of 21 February 2025 (new edition). Available at: <https://archive.ph/cMIRa>.

³¹⁹ See also OHCHR, *The Impact of the Armed Conflict and Occupation on Children's Rights in Ukraine*, 24 February 2022–31 December 2024 (21 March 2025), para 89; Mission of the President of Ukraine in the Autonomous Republic of Crimea. Crimea Platform, “Crimea: A Transit Hub for the Transfer and Ideological Indoctrination of Children” (2026); Mission of the President of Ukraine in the Autonomous Republic of Crimea. Crimea Platform, “Crimea Under Occupation: Strategic Challenges and Emerging Threats. Analytical Summary of 2025” (2026).

regions.³²⁰ This implementation has continued to deepen: for example, Council of Ministers of the Republic of Crimea Order No. 248-r of 28 February 2025³²¹ provided for military-historical activities, defence-sports camps and meetings with participants in the armed conflict in Ukraine, and comparable measures were further adopted across other occupied territories.³²²

The principal implementing actors include the Ministry of Education, the Ministry of Defence, the Federal Security Service, the Ministry of Internal Affairs, Rosgvardiya (“Росгвардия”), Rosmolodyozh (“Росмолодёжь”), occupation administrations, regional education authorities, Russian Orthodox church, the Russian “Movement of Children and Youth Dvizhenie Pervykh” (“Movement of the First”, “Движение первых”), the All-Russian Military-Patriotic Movement for Children and Youth “Yunarmiya” (“Young Army”, “Юнармия”), the “Voin” (“Warrior”, “Воин”) centres, DOSAAF (Добровольное общество содействия армии, авиации и флоту России (ДОСААФ России), military-patriotic clubs, cadet programmes, veterans’ organizations and State-funded “NGOs”. Although these institutions and entities perform different functions, their activities are interconnected and contribute to the implementation of a common, well-orchestrated indoctrination and militarization policy.

B. EDUCATION AS AN INSTRUMENT OF IDENTITY TRANSFORMATION

The legal foundation for the integration of the occupied territories into the Russian Federation was first developed in Crimea following the 2014 occupation. In the field of education, Federal Law No. 84-FZ of 5 May 2014 established transitional arrangements governing educational relations in connection with the admission of Crimea into the Russian Federation.³²³ A similar legislative model was subsequently replicated and expanded through Federal Law No. 19-FZ of 17 February 2023 with respect to the occupied areas of Donetsk, Luhansk, Zaporizhzhia and Kherson regions.³²⁴ The law also established deadlines for the cessation of activities of Ukrainian educational institutions.

³²⁰ Human Rights Watch, *Ukraine: Forced Russified Education Under Occupation* (2024). Available at: <https://www.hrw.org/report/2024/06/20/education-under-occupation/forced-russification-school-system-occupied-ukrainian>.

³²¹ Council of Ministers of the Republic of Crimea, Order No. 248-r of 28 February 2025 “On the Preparation and Conduct of Activities to Promote the Development of the Yunarmiya Movement in the Republic of Crimea in 2025” Available at: <https://rk.gov.ru/documents/c85ad43b-2353-4995-978a-d40361852467>.

³²² De facto Ministry of Education and Science of Zaporizhzhia Region, Order No. 381 of 10 July 2025 “On the Approval of the Action Plan for Civic-Patriotic and Spiritual-Moral Education of Students for the 2025/2026 Academic Year”. Available at: <https://mon.zo.gov.ru/docs/show/78>; De facto Government of Kherson Region, Resolution No. 118-pp of 16 September 2025 “On the Strategy for the Implementation of Youth Policy in Kherson Region until 2030”. Available at: <https://gov.khogov.ru/wp-content/uploads/sites/4/2025/09/118-pp-25.pdf>; Humanitarian Research Lab, Yale School of Public Health, *Ukraine’s Stolen Children: Inside Russia’s Network of Re-Education and Militarization* (16 September 2025). Available at: <https://ysph.yale.edu/news-article/ukraines-stolen-children-inside-russias-network-of-re-education-and-militarization/>.

³²³ Russian Federation, Federal Law No. 84-FZ of 5 May 2014 “On the Specifics of the Legal Regulation of Relations in the Field of Education in Connection with the Admission of the Republic of Crimea to the Russian Federation and the Formation of New Subjects of the Russian Federation – the Republic of Crimea and the Federal City of Sevastopol, and on Amendments to the Federal Law ‘On Education in the Russian Federation’”. Available at: <http://publication.pravo.gov.ru/Document/View/0001201405050049>.

³²⁴ Russian Federation, Federal Law No. 19-FZ of 17 February 2023 “On the Specifics of the Legal Regulation of Relations in the Fields of Education and Science in Connection with the Admission of the Donetsk People’s Republic, Luhansk People’s Republic, Zaporizhzhia Region and Kherson Region to the Russian Federation and the Formation of New Subjects of the Russian Federation – the Donetsk People’s Republic, Luhansk People’s Republic, Zaporizhzhia Region and Kherson Region, and on Amendments to Certain Legislative Acts of the Russian Federation”. Available at: <http://publication.pravo.gov.ru/Document/View/0001202302170006>.

A comparable legislative approach was adopted in the field of physical culture and sports: Federal Law No. 211-FZ of 21 July 2014 extended Russian legal and institutional frameworks governing physical culture and sports to Crimea,³²⁵ while Federal Law No. 271-FZ of 24 June 2023 applied equivalent arrangements to the occupied Donetsk, Luhansk, Zaporizhzhia and Kherson regions.³²⁶

Although framed as a technical measure, these instruments facilitated the transition of educational and sports institutions into the Russian administrative system, including the introduction of Russian federal educational standards, curricula, textbooks and examination procedures, the retraining and certification of teaching and administrative personnel in accordance with Russian requirements, and the integration of schools and related institutions into Russian patriotic education, youth and sports policy programmes.

In turn, the ideological content of the educational system introduced in the occupied territories is defined by a hierarchy of Russian federal legislation, educational standards, curriculum frameworks and State-approved teaching materials. These instruments are significant not merely because they regulate educational content, but because they assign educational institutions a central role in the formation of civic identity, historical consciousness and value orientations. This framework serves as the principal mechanism through which children are socialized into the political, cultural and historical narratives promoted by the Russian State.

The basis of this system is Federal Law No. 273-FZ of 29 December 2012 “On Education in the Russian Federation”, as amended by Federal Law No. 304-FZ of 31 July 2020.³²⁷ The amendments made upbringing (“*vospitatelnaya rabota*”, “*Воспитательная работа*”) an integral component of all educational programmes and defined it as activity directed, *inter alia*, towards the development of patriotism, civic consciousness, “respect for the memory of defenders of the Fatherland” and “respect for historical memory”.

An additional layer of regulation was introduced by Presidential Decree No. 809 of 9 November 2022 “On Approving the Fundamentals of State Policy for the Preservation and Strengthening of Traditional Russian Spiritual and Moral Values”.³²⁸ The Decree identifies a State-defined catalogue of “traditional Russian spiritual and moral values”, including patriotism, service to the Fatherland, historical memory, continuity of generations and the unity of the peoples of Russia, and designates education and upbringing as principal means through which traditional values are to be preserved, transmitted and reinforced. It further characterizes as a threat the

³²⁵ Russian Federation, Federal Law No. 211-FZ of 21 July 2014 “On the Specifics of the Legal Regulation of Relations in the Field of Physical Culture and Sports in Connection with the Admission of the Republic of Crimea to the Russian Federation and the Formation of New Subjects of the Russian Federation – the Republic of Crimea and the Federal City of Sevastopol”. Available at: <http://publication.pravo.gov.ru/document/0001201407220007?index=9>.

³²⁶ Russian Federation, Federal Law No. 271-FZ of 24 June 2023 “On the Specifics of the Legal Regulation of Relations in the Field of Physical Culture and Sports in Connection with the Admission of the Donetsk People's Republic, Luhansk People's Republic, Zaporizhzhia Region and Kherson Region to the Russian Federation and the Formation of New Subjects of the Russian Federation – the Donetsk People's Republic, Luhansk People's Republic, Zaporizhzhia Region and Kherson Region”. Available at: <http://publication.pravo.gov.ru/document/0001202306240009>.

³²⁷ Russian Federation, Federal Law No. 273-FZ of 29 December 2012 On Education in the Russian Federation, Art. 2(2), (9), (10), as amended by Federal Law No. 304-FZ of 31 July 2020 On Amendments to the Federal Law “On Education in the Russian Federation” Regarding the Upbringing of Students. Available at: <http://www.kremlin.ru/acts/bank/36698>.

³²⁸ President of the Russian Federation, Decree No. 809 of 9 November 2022 “On the Approval of the Foundations of State Policy for the Preservation and Strengthening of Traditional Russian Spiritual and Moral Values”, paras. 5, 13–19, 24–26 Available at: <http://www.kremlin.ru/acts/bank/48502>.

dissemination of ideas and values regarded as alien to Russian society and inconsistent with these traditional values. Consequently, educational institutions are tasked not only with the transmission of knowledge but also with the formation of prescribed civic and moral attitudes. These normative objectives are subsequently reflected in educational standards, curricula, teaching materials and extracurricular activities.

For example, the Federal State Educational Standards (FSES) for Basic General Education identify the formation of Russian civic identity, patriotism, respect for the Fatherland and responsibility for its fate among the expected personal learning outcomes and requires these outcomes to be achieved through specified directions of upbringing, including civic education and civic-patriotic upbringing.³²⁹ The same normative orientation is reflected in the FSES for Primary³³⁰ and Secondary General Education,³³¹ which likewise require the cultivation of attachment to Russia, the development of Russian civic identity, and the internalization of values associated with belonging to the Russian State, its history and its future.

There are two compulsory subjects that directly carry the “values layer” into the classroom. First, the “Foundations of the spiritual-moral culture of the peoples of Russia” (ОДНКНР) for grades 5-9, which was made obligatory by Order No. 568 of 18 July 2022.³³² As of the start of the 2026/27 academic year, this subject will be reformed into the “Russian Spiritual-Moral Culture” (“Духовно- нравственная культура России”).³³³ The second subject is “Foundations of religious cultures and secular ethics” (ОПКСЭ).³³⁴ As noted above, the introduction of the so-called “childhood counsellors” (“Навигаторы детства”) in the classrooms by RosDetTsentr has introduced a widespread mentoring programme in schools across the occupied territories, with a strong emphasis on reinforcing the militarized content whereby the counsellor is the central coordination node between the school, youth organizations, and other ministries and agencies.

Turning to the content of the curriculum, the 2020 Concept for Teaching the History of Russia designates history education as a key instrument for the formation of Russian civic identity and patriotism and identifies the continuity of Russian history and statehood as a core organizing principle of instruction. The Historical-Cultural Standard appended to the Concept serves as the principal content framework for curriculum development, textbooks and assessment materials. Among its prescribed topics is a section entitled “*The State Coup in Ukraine in 2014 and Russia’s Position. The Reunification of Crimea and Sevastopol with Russia. The Minsk Agreements on Donbas and Humanitarian Support for the DNR and LNR*”,³³⁵ thereby

³²⁹ Ministry of Education of the Russian Federation, Order No. 287 of 31 May 2021 “On Approval of the Federal State Educational Standard for Basic General Education”, paras. 41(1), 42 and 42.1.2 Available at: https://edsoo.ru/wp-content/uploads/2023/08/Приказ-№-287-от-31.05.2021-ФГОС_ООО.pdf.

³³⁰ Ministry of Education of the Russian Federation, Order No. 286 of 31 May 2021 “On Approval of the Federal State Educational Standard for Primary General Education”, paras. 40(1), 41 and 41.1.1 Available at: <http://publication.pravo.gov.ru/Document/View/0001202107050028>.

³³¹ Ministry of Education and Science of the Russian Federation, Order No. 413 of 17 May 2012 “On Approval of the Federal State Educational Standard for Secondary General Education” (as amended on 12 February 2025), paras. 3, 6(1), 7 and 7.1 Available at: <https://fgosreestr.edsoo.ru/federal-standard/31>

³³² Ministry of Education of the Russian Federation, Order No. 808 of 10 November 2025 “On Amendments to certain Orders of the Ministry of Education of the Russian Federation concerning the federal educational programs of the pre-school, primary, and secondary general education”: <http://publication.pravo.gov.ru/document/0001202602120006>.

³³³ See <https://normativ.kontur.ru/document?moduleId=1&documentId=500550>.

³³⁴ Ministry of Education of the Russian Federation, Order No. 286 of 31 May 2021 “On Approving the Federal State Standard for foundation education” <http://publication.pravo.gov.ru/Document/View/0001202107050028>.

³³⁵ Ministry of Education of the Russian Federation, *Concept for Teaching the Course “History of Russia” in Educational Organisations of the Russian Federation Implementing Basic General Education Programmes*,

incorporating official Russian State narratives concerning Ukraine, Crimea and Donbas directly into school history instruction. The unified history textbook for grades 10–11, introduced throughout schools operating under Russian control from September 2023, presents the war against Ukraine within a broader narrative of confrontation with the West and the alleged need to combat Ukrainian neo-Nazism. It includes dedicated sections entitled “*Ukraine as an Ultranationalist State*” and “*The Revival of Nazism*”, framing the conflict through categories that mirror official Russian State narratives concerning Ukraine and the origins of the war and presenting them as a continuation of Russian heroism and sacrifice dating back to the Second World War and before, and effectively denying Ukrainians’ suffering and their contribution to the Soviet victory over Nazi Germany.³³⁶

Federal Law No. 371-FZ of 24 September 2022 further strengthened federal control over curriculum content by introducing mandatory Federal Basic General Education Programmes.³³⁷ These programmes establish mandatory federal curricula, federal work programmes and federal plans for educational and upbringing activities, thereby significantly reducing the scope for independent curriculum design by individual schools.³³⁸

Furthermore, the exclusion of Ukrainian-language education was formalized through Order No. 729 of the Ministry of Education of 8 October 2025,³³⁹ amending the federal educational programmes by removing Ukrainian as a native language and Ukrainian literature as subjects from the relevant legislation. The Order entered into force on 15 December 2025 and applies to all schools operating under Russian federal educational programmes, including those located in the occupied territories. This consequently means that since there are no alternative options for education, Ukrainian language has been completely eradicated from all official education institutions in the occupied territories and the Russian Federation.

This policy is further reinforced by the deployment of dedicated teaching staff which is achieved through measures aimed at ensuring the long-term staffing of educational institutions operating under the Russian educational system. The programme “*Zemsky Uchitel*” (“Земский учитель”) initially established to address teacher shortages in remote and served regions of the Russian Federation have been expanded to the occupied territories. Notably, for example, teachers relocating to the Donetsk, Luhansk, Zaporizhzhia and Kherson regions are entitled to

approved by the Collegium of the Ministry of Education of the Russian Federation, Protocol No. PK-1vn of 23 October 2020, page 82 Available at: https://бохан-обр.рф/wp-content/uploads/2024/11/Концепция_по_истории.pdf.

³³⁶ V.R. Medinskiy and A.V. Torkunov, *History of Russia. 1945 – Early Twenty-First Century. Grade 11. Basic Level* (Moscow: Prosveshcheniye, 2023), pages 396-415 Available at: [История. История России. 1945 год — начало XXI века. 11 класс. Базовый уровень - Мединский В.Р., Торкунов А.В.](#)

³³⁷ Federal Law No. 273-FZ of 29 December 2012 “On Education in the Russian Federation”, Art. 12(6.1–6.4), as amended by Federal Law No. 371-FZ of 24 September 2022 Available at: <http://pravo.gov.ru/proxy/ips/?docbody=&nd=102162745>.

³³⁸ Ministry of Education of the Russian Federation, Orders No. 370, 371 and 372 of 18 May 2023 approving the Federal Educational Programmes. Available at: <http://publication.pravo.gov.ru/document/0001202307140040?index=1>, Available at: <http://publication.pravo.gov.ru/document/0001202307130017?ysclid=lryot8agau841572729&index=1>, Available at: <http://publication.pravo.gov.ru/document/0001202307130044?ysclid>.

³³⁹ Ministry of Education Order No. 729 of 8 October 2025, Amendments, paras. 18–19 (repealing paras. 68 and 122 of the Federal Educational Programme for Basic General Education). Available at: <http://publication.pravo.gov.ru/document/0001202512040010>, Available at: https://sh49-sochi-r03.gosweb.gosuslugi.ru/svedeniya-ob-obrazovatelnoy-organizatsii/dokumenty/dokumenty-all_136.html.

compensation payments that exceed those available in most other regions of the Russian Federation.³⁴⁰

In parallel to the formal school system, the Russian Federation has created a network of State-sponsored youth organizations and extracurricular programmes that extend military-patriotic upbringing, civic identity formation and value-based education beyond the classroom. This system is supported by legislation on education³⁴¹ children's rights,³⁴² youth policy³⁴³ and implemented through federal strategies³⁴⁴ and programmes on patriotic education.³⁴⁵ Similar to the legislation governing formal education, the instruments focus *"on the upbringing and socialization of children on the basis of traditional Russian spiritual and moral values, the fostering in children of a sense of patriotism, respect for the memory of the defenders of the Fatherland and the deeds of the Heroes of the Fatherland"* — meaning Russian historical, ideological and political narratives. Organizations such as "Dvizheniye Pervykh", "Yunarmiya", the "Voin" Centres, and "Orlyata Rossii" constitute the principal institutional mechanisms through which these objectives are pursued.

The charter of the "Dvizheniye Pervykh" identifies the formation of members' worldview on the basis of traditional Russian spiritual and moral values as one of its principal objectives.³⁴⁶ Public statements by representatives of the organization in the occupied territories have explicitly characterized its activities as directed towards the "re-formation" or "return" of children to a Russian identity.³⁴⁷ Complementing these structures is the weekly programme

³⁴⁰ Government of the Russian Federation, Resolution No. 1642 of 26 December 2017 "On the State Program of the Russian Federation 'Development of Education'", Annex No. 23, para. 12 (as amended by Resolution No. 1700 of 30 November 2024), providing compensation payments of RUB 2 million for teachers relocating to the Donetsk People's Republic, Luhansk People's Republic, Zaporizhzhia Region and Kherson Region, compared with RUB 1 million in most other regions of the Russian Federation Available at: <https://zemteacher.apkpro.ru/conditions> See also Regional Centre for Human Rights "Submission to the OSCE Moscow Mechanism 2026" (8 June 2026) (on file with the Mission).

³⁴¹ Federal Law No. 273-FZ of 29 December 2012 "On Education in the Russian Federation", Art. 2(2) and (14), Art. 12.1, and Art. 75. Available at: <http://pravo.gov.ru/proxy/ips/?docbody=&nd=102162745>.

³⁴² Russian Federation, Federal Law No. 543-FZ of 28 December 2024, which amended paragraph 2.3 of Article 12 of Federal Law No. 124-FZ of 24 July 1998 "On Basic Guarantees of the Rights of the Child in the Russian Federation" Available at: <http://www.kremlin.ru/acts/bank/12706/page/3>.

³⁴³ Federal Law No. 489-FZ of 30 December 2020 "On Youth Policy in the Russian Federation", Arts. 2(4), 6 (1,2,5,16,17) and 7. Available at: <http://publication.pravo.gov.ru/document/view/0001202012300003?index=1>; Russian Federation, Federal Law No. 261-FZ of 14 July 2022 On the Russian Movement of Children and Youth (establishing the All-Russian public-state movement of children and youth "Movement of the First"). Available at: <http://publication.pravo.gov.ru/Document/View/0001202207140025>.

³⁴⁴ Russian Federation, Strategy for the Implementation of Youth Policy in the Russian Federation until 2030, approved by Government Directive No. 2233-r of 17 August 2024 Available at: <http://static.government.ru/media/files/jBrmuJi7WMLGBOFtXWWhrMizKFCgIggO7.pdf>.

³⁴⁵ Russian Federation, Government Directive No. 1620-r of 23 June 2025 On the Approval of the Action Plan for the Implementation of the Strategy for the Implementation of Youth Policy in the Russian Federation until 2030 Available at: <http://publication.pravo.gov.ru/document/0001202506240058>; Russian Federation, Package of Measures on Patriotic Education and Spiritual and Moral Education of Youth in the Russian Federation until 2028, approved by Government Directive No. 2970-r of 23 October 2025 Available at: <http://government.ru/docs/all/161566/>.

³⁴⁶ Russian Federation, All-Russian Public-State Movement of Children and Youth Movement of the First, Charter of the All-Russian Public-State Movement of Children and Youth "Movement of the First" (Version 5), approved by the Fifth Congress of the Movement of the First on 30 Sept 2025, para. 2.1.4. Available at: <https://будьвдвижении.пф/files/ustav-obshcherossiyskogo-obshchestvenno-gosudarstvennogo-dvizheniya-detey-i-molodezhi-dvizhenie-pervykh>.

³⁴⁷ Verstka, 29 Nov 2024 "Российских педагогов решили обучить, как уберечь школьников от «пропаганды украинского неонацизма и вербовки» У детей из Украины и оккупированных территорий будут «заново формировать идентичность» ("It was decided to reeducation Russian teachers on how to save schoolchildren

“Razgovory o Vazhnom” (“Conversations about Important Things”, “Разговоры о важном”), introduced across the Russian educational system in September 2022 and subsequently implemented in schools operating under Russian control in the occupied territories. Conducted every Monday as the first lesson and based on centrally prepared teaching materials, the programme provides regular instruction on patriotism, citizenship, historical memory and contemporary political developments, reinforcing the narratives and values promoted through the formal curriculum.³⁴⁸

Such nationwide normative acts and programmes are mirrored in the regulatory frameworks adopted by the occupation administrations, including education programmes in Zaporizhzhia,³⁴⁹ Kherson,³⁵⁰ Donetsk³⁵¹ and Luhansk³⁵² and the 2025 Implementation Plan for Decree No. 809 in Crimea.³⁵³ This framework translated federal policy objectives into concrete educational activities. For example, in Zaporizhzhia region, schools have been incorporated into a broader commemorative infrastructure dedicated to participants in the Russian Federation’s war against Ukraine: 77 “Hero Corners” and 29 “Hero Desks” honouring servicemen killed in the “special military operation” have been established in educational institutions; two museums dedicated to the operation have been opened; and nine schools have been named after Heroes of the Soviet Union or the Russian Federation. Regional authorities also reported the annual organization of more than 200 events of a “patriotic orientation” across the region’s educational institutions.³⁵⁴

from the “propaganda of Ukrainian neonazism and conscription. New identities will be formed for the children of Ukraine and occupied territories”. Available at: <https://verstka.media/znanie-ukrainskaya-propaganda-news> (last accessed 14 June 2026).

³⁴⁸ Ministry of Education of the Russian Federation, *Razgovory o Vazhnom* (“Conversations about Important Things”), official educational and methodological materials for extracurricular activities. Available at: <https://разговорыоважном.пф/>. See also Almenda “Russia’s Policy of Eradicating the Identity of Children in the TOT of Ukraine: Results for 2025” at p. 11; East SOS “Violations of International Humanitarian Law Affecting Education on Ukraine (February 2022- May 2025), para 32.

³⁴⁹De facto Government of the occupied part of Zaporizhzhia region, Resolution No. 848 of 11 December 2025 On the Approval of the State Program "Development of Education". Available at: <https://zo.gov.ru/docs/show/2261>; De facto Ministry of Education and Science of the occupied part of Zaporizhzhia region, Order No. 381 of 10 July 2025 On the Approval of the Action Plan on Civic-Patriotic and Spiritual-Moral Education of Students for the 2025/2026 Academic Year Available at: <https://mon.zo.gov.ru/docs/show/78>

³⁵⁰ De facto Government of the occupied part of Kherson region, Resolution No. 118-pp of 16 September 2025 On the Strategy for the Implementation of Youth Policy in Kherson Oblast until 2030 Available at: <https://gov.khogov.ru/wp-content/uploads/sites/4/2025/09/118-pp-25.pdf>; De facto Government of the occupied part of Kherson region, Resolution No. 186-pp of 15 December 2025 On the Approval of the State Programme "Development of Education" for 2026–2030 Available at: <https://archive.ph/eHJlq>.

³⁵¹ De facto Government of the occupied part of Donetsk region, Resolution No. 130-5 of 24 December 2025 On the Approval of the State Program of the Donetsk People's Republic "Development of Education" Available at: <http://publication.pravo.gov.ru/document/8000202512260037?index=1>

³⁵² De facto Government of the occupied part of Luhansk region, Resolution No. 213/25 of 14 October 2025 On the Approval of the State Program of the Luhansk People's Republic "Development of Education" Available at: https://sh32-irmino-r181.gosweb.gosuslugi.ru/glavnoe/shcola_minprosvesheniya/dokumenty_131.html.

³⁵³ De facto Council of Ministers of the occupied territory of the Autonomous Republic of Crimea, Directive No. 15-r of 13 January 2025 On the Approval of the Action Plan for the Implementation in the Republic of Crimea in 2025 of Presidential Decree No. 809 of 9 November 2022 "On the Approval of the Foundations of State Policy for the Preservation and Strengthening of Traditional Russian Spiritual and Moral Values "Available at: <https://rk.gov.ru/documents/66324703-0b19-4536-84b9-232a48f9ddb>.

³⁵⁴ De facto Government of the occupied part of Zaporizhzhia region, Resolution No. 848 of 11 December 2025 On the Approval of the State Program "Development of Education", Annex, page 4 Available at: <https://zo.gov.ru/docs/show/2261>.

When viewed in isolation, these measures may appear to have counterparts in the civic education frameworks of other states; however, their significance in the occupied territories derives from the cumulative operation of the system as a whole and the circumstances in which it is applied.

First, the system is directed at a population with a clear and distinct pre-existing national identity and educational tradition which differs from that promoted by the occupying power. The stated objectives of the institutions examined above extend beyond civic participation and expressly encompass the formation of a Russian civic and cultural identity. These objectives are implemented in an environment in which Ukrainian educational standards, curricula and teaching materials have been removed and simply replaced by Russian ones.

Second, the Russian educational framework has been introduced not alongside, but *instead* of the previously existing Ukrainian system. Ukrainian-language instruction, Ukrainian curricula and Ukrainian historical and cultural content have been progressively, systematically, and comprehensively eliminated from educational institutions operating under Russian control. Consequently, the transmission of Russian State-approved narratives occurs in the absence of institutional mechanisms through which Ukrainian historical, linguistic and cultural identity would ordinarily be maintained and reproduced.

Third, the implementation of this framework takes place under conditions in which participation in the educational system is effectively compulsory and educational institutions operate within the administrative structures established by the occupying authorities. Educators who declined to implement the Russian curriculum or cooperate with the transition to Russian educational standards were subjected to pressure, intimidation and other forms of coercion, and in some cases faced detention, threats, loss of employment opportunities or other reprisals.³⁵⁵

Cumulatively, these factors distinguish the system from ordinary civic education programmes. Rather than providing instruction within an existing national educational framework, it functions in the context of the replacement of one educational system by another and the substitution of one set of historical, cultural and civic reference points for another. This demonstrates the clear intent and purposeful implementation of policies aimed at erasing Ukrainian children's identity and replacing it with a Russian one. This is achieved through a purposefully instilled system in which the future development of any Ukrainian identity of children growing up in the occupied territories would be impossible, thereby eliminating any degree of free choice for Ukrainian children and their parents.

C. CITIZENSHIP AND ADMINISTRATIVE COERCION THROUGH EDUCATION

To ensure that the provision of the type of education favoured by the Russian Federation reaches everyone, there is a purposeful system of administrative pressure and even coercion exerted upon anyone who may not wish to take part in the education. Thus, access to education, educational credentials and, in some cases, family security and even the ability to maintain parental rights over one's own children are linked to compliance with requirements imposed by the occupying authorities. By drawing children, families and educators into Russian legal,

³⁵⁵ Situation of human rights in the Russian Federation. Report of the Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights in the Russian Federation, Mariana Katzarova; UN Doc A/HRC/60/59 (15 Sept 2025), in particular paras 64-68; OHCHR, Human Rights Situation during the Russian Occupation of Territory of Ukraine and its Aftermath (20 March 2024), para 5 Available at: https://ukraine.ohchr.org/sites/default/files/2024-04/2024-03-20%20OHCHR%20Report%20on%20Occupation%20and%20Aftermath_EN.pdf; Amnesty International, School Teacher: A High-Risk Job under Russian Occupation (4 October 2024). Available at: <https://www.amnesty.org/en/documents/eur50/8578/2024/en/>.

administrative and educational structures, these measures reinforce broader incorporation into institutions of the Russian State. This administrative integration, in turn, secures sustained exposure to the Russian curriculum, state narratives and programmes of patriotic upbringing, thereby creating the conditions for long-term ideological influence.

This dynamic operates within a broader legislation regulating the issuing of identity documents in the occupied territories. Under the Federal Constitutional Laws on the admission of the Donetsk, Luhansk, Zaporizhzhia and Kherson regions into the Russian Federation, residents were automatically recognized as Russian citizens unless they formally opted out.³⁵⁶ Subsequent presidential decrees established simplified procedures for the issuance of Russian passports, including for children, while residents who did not obtain Russian citizenship became subject to a distinct legal status under Russian law.³⁵⁷ Although formally voluntary, this is in fact a form of *de facto* forced passportization which increasingly shapes access to educational certification and further educational opportunities as Russian identity documents have reportedly been widely required for the issuance of educational credentials and for continued participation in the Russian educational system.³⁵⁸

The coercive nature of the system is reinforced through the provision of family law. Article 63 of the Family Code of the Russian Federation³⁵⁹ obliges parents to ensure that children receive general education, while Article 69 provides for deprivation of parental rights in case of failure to fulfil parental responsibilities. In the occupied territories, these provisions reportedly have been used to pressure families resisting integration into Russian educational structures. There are widespread reports of documented cases in which parents were threatened with fines, loss of parental rights and custody of their children and even detention if they did not enrol their children in schools operating under Russian control.³⁶⁰ Families seeking to preserve access to

³⁵⁶ Russian Federation, Federal Constitutional Law No. 7-FKZ of 4 October 2022 On the Admission of the Zaporizhzhia Region to the Russian Federation and the Formation of a New Constituent Entity within the Russian Federation, Article 5(1). Available at: <http://www.kremlin.ru/acts/bank/48355>; see also Federal Constitutional Laws No. 5-FKZ, 6-FKZ and 8-FKZ of 4 October 2022.

³⁵⁷ Russian Federation, Presidential Decree No. 440 of 11 July 2022 “On Determining, for Humanitarian Purposes, the Categories of Persons Eligible to Apply for Admission to Citizenship of the Russian Federation under a Simplified Procedure”, para. 1. Available at: <http://publication.pravo.gov.ru/Document/View/0001202207110002?index=1>; Russian Federation, Presidential Decree No. 951 of 26 December 2022 “On Certain Issues of Acquisition of Citizenship of the Russian Federation”. Available at: <http://www.kremlin.ru/acts/bank/48725/page/1>; Russian Federation, Presidential Decree No. 307 of 27 April 2023 “On the Peculiarities of the Legal Status of Certain Categories of Foreign Citizens and Stateless Persons in the Russian Federation”, paras. 1–2. Available at: <http://publication.pravo.gov.ru/Document/View/0001202304270013?index=1>; Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR), The Impact of the Armed Conflict and Occupation on Children's Rights in Ukraine, 24 February 2022–31 December 2024, 21 March 2025, Annex: “Russian Federation legislation targeting residents, including children, in occupied territory”, page 15. Available at: <https://www.ohchr.org/sites/default/files/documents/form/2025-03-21-ohchr-report-children-s-rights-in-ukraine.pdf>.

³⁵⁸ Yulia Kalaban, “Russia’s Forced Passport Scheme”, Institute for War and Peace Reporting (IWPR), (18 September 2025). Available at: <https://iwpr.net/global-voices/russias-forced-passport-scheme?>

³⁵⁹ Russian Federation, Family Code of the Russian Federation, Federal Law No. 223-FZ of 29 December 1995. Available at: <http://pravo.gov.ru/proxy/ips/?docbody=&nd=102038925>.

³⁶⁰ OHCHR, The Impact of the Armed Conflict and Occupation on Children's Rights in Ukraine, 24 February 2022 – 31 December 2024 (21 March 2025), para. 92. Available at: <https://www.ohchr.org/sites/default/files/documents/form/2025-03-21-ohchr-report-children-s-rights-in-ukraine.pdf>; Human Rights Watch, *Ukraine: Forced Russified Education Under Occupation* (2024). Available at: <https://www.hrw.org/report/2024/06/20/education-under-occupation/forced-russification-school-system-occupied-ukrainian>.

Ukrainian online education have faced administrative pressure and restrictions.³⁶¹ While all these legal provisions were not drafted specifically for occupation settings, their broad and vague formulation allows for their instrumentalization in this manner.

This coercive architecture extends beyond children and their families. Ukrainian educators were required to adapt to Russian educational standards and curricula and were strongly pressured to undergo retraining. Teachers who refused to cooperate with the Russian educational authorities faced dismissal, threats, harassment, house searches, detention and other forms of coercion,³⁶² and many left the occupied territories rather than work under the Russian curriculum.

D. MILITARIZATION THROUGH YOUTH POLICY AND MILITARY-PATRIOTIC STRUCTURES

Russian law provides the formal basis for integrating military preparation into the regular schooling and child policy. For instance, the Education Law permits the integration of general education programmes with programmes aimed at preparing children for military or other state service,³⁶³ while the Military Duty Law incorporates educational institutions into the system of compulsory preparation for military service.³⁶⁴ Subsequent ministerial guidance has further facilitated the widespread establishment of military cadet classes within ordinary schools.³⁶⁵ These provisions create an enabling legal architecture through which military-oriented training is positioned as one of the core components of regular schooling.

The most direct expression of this policy in mandatory education is the subject “Fundamentals of Security and Defence of the Homeland” (OBZR (ОБЗР)), which became mandatory from September 2024 in grades 8–11 in schools under Russian control, including in the occupied territories.³⁶⁶ Its practical components include weapons handling, tactical medicine,

³⁶¹ OHCHR, The Impact of the Armed Conflict and Occupation on Children's Rights in Ukraine, 24 February 2022 – 31 December 2024 (21 March 2025), para. 4. Available at: <https://www.ohchr.org/sites/default/files/documents/form/2025-03-21-ohchr-report-children-s-rights-in-ukraine.pdf>.

³⁶² Situation of human rights in the Russian Federation. Report of the Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights in the Russian Federation, Mariana Katzarova; UN Doc A/HRC/60/59 (15 Sept 2025), in particular paras 64-68; OHCHR, Report on the Human Rights Situation during the Russian Occupation of Territory of Ukraine and its Aftermath, 24 February 2022 – 31 December 2023, 20 March 2024, paras. 92–94. Available at: https://ukraine.ohchr.org/sites/default/files/2024-04/2024-03-20%20OHCHR%20Report%20on%20Occupation%20and%20Aftermath_EN.pdf; Amnesty International, Ukraine/Russia: Teachers in Russian-occupied Territories Coerced to Teach Russian Curriculum through Threats and Violence, 4 October 2024. Available at: <https://www.amnesty.org/en/latest/news/2024/10/ukraine-russia-teachers-in-russian-occupied-territories-coerced-to-teach-russian-curriculum-through-threats-and-violence>.

³⁶³ Federal Law No. 273-FZ of 29 December 2012 On Education in the Russian Federation, Art. 86.1 Available at: <http://publication.pravo.gov.ru/document/0001201212300007>.

³⁶⁴ Federal Law No. 53-FZ of 28 March 1998 On Military Duty and Military Service, Art. 13. Available at: <http://www.kremlin.ru/acts/bank/12128/page/6>.

³⁶⁵ Russian Federation, Methodological Recommendations for the Constituent Entities of the Russian Federation on the Legal Regulation of the Activities of Cadet-Oriented Educational Organisations, annexed to Letter of the Ministry of Education and Science No. 08-986 of 19 May 2017. Available at: <https://sudact.ru/law/pismo-minobrnauki-rossii-ot-19052017-n-08-986/prilozhenie/>.

³⁶⁶ Ministry of Education of the Russian Federation, Order No. 62 of 1 February 2024, approving amendments to the federal educational programmes. Ministry of Education of the Russian Federation, Federal Working Programme for the Subject “Fundamentals of Security and Defense of the Homeland (for grades 8-9 of educational institutions)” (OBZR), including, *inter alia*, sections on tactical training, firearms training, engineering training, tactical medicine, UAV operation, and military-sports training. Available at: https://edsoo.ru/wp-content/uploads/2025/07/2025_ooo_frp_obzr-8-9.pdf; https://edsoo.ru/wp-content/uploads/2025/07/2025_soo_frp_obzr_10_11.pdf; A. Kukanchikov, Fundamentals of Security and Defence of the Homeland (OBZR), Grade 8, online educational materials. Available at: <http://куканчиков.рф/page22646062.html>.

engineering, UAV operation and military-sports activities. The introduction of OBZR moves this policy from patriotic messaging to incorporating structured pre-military conditioning into the compulsory school curriculum itself.

Beyond the formal curriculum, legislation has been expanded to govern all activities and youth associations. This is reflected in the introduction of new provisions supporting the activities of military-patriotic associations (clubs) as part of State youth policy,³⁶⁷ compulsory programmes such as “Razgovory o Vazhnom”³⁶⁸ and nominally voluntary activities including “Uroki Muzhestva” (“Lessons of Courage”, “Уроки мужества”).³⁶⁹

The method has been further reinforced by Presidential Decree No. 28 of 16 January 2025, which declared 2025 the Year of the Defender of the Fatherland in honour of participants in the so-called “special military operation”.³⁷⁰ Although formally commemorative, the decree contributes to embedding military narratives into everyday educational life through military-patriotic competitions, the production of camouflage nets, trench candles, meetings with military personnel, and the memorialization of combatants in the war against Ukraine.³⁷¹

The same approach continues through State-sponsored youth organizations, including “Dvizheniye Pervykh”, “Yunarmiya”, and the “Voin” Centres, with their normative basis substantially reinforced since 2022. The Charter of “Dvizheniye Pervykh”, a nationwide public-state organization established by Federal Law in 2022,³⁷² defines the Movement’s objectives in terms of love for and responsibility toward the Fatherland, and service to the Fatherland; and identifies patriotism and historical memory as a core area of activity.³⁷³ Its primary branches may be established in general and secondary schools as well as in other institutions working with children and youth.

“Yunarmiya” operates under a similar mandate. Its charter identifies the preparation of young people for service in the armed forces and the promotion of the prestige of military service

³⁶⁷ Federal Law No. 550-FZ of 28 December 2024, amending Article 7.2, p.2(1) of Federal Law No. 489-FZ On Youth Policy in the Russian Federation. Available at: <http://www.kremlin.ru/acts/bank/51552/page/1>.

³⁶⁸ Ministry of Education of the Russian Federation, Letter No. 03-1190, On the Transmission of Methodological Recommendations for the Implementation of the “Conversations about Important Things” Extracurricular Programme”, 15 August 2022. Available at: <https://normativ.kontur.ru/document?moduleId=8&documentId=430713>; Ministry of Education of the Russian Federation, *Razgovory o Vazhnom* (“Conversations about Important Things”), official educational and methodological materials for extracurricular activities. Available at: <https://разговорыоважном.рф/>.

³⁶⁹ Federal Service of the National Guard Troops of the Russian Federation (Rosgvardiya), Rosgvardiya Officers Conducted a “Lesson of Courage” for Schoolchildren in the Donetsk People’s Republic, 8 April 2024. Available at: <https://rosguard.gov.ru/News/Article/v-dnr-rosgvardejcy-proveli-urok-muzhestva-dlya-shkolnikov>.

³⁷⁰ Russian Federation, Presidential Decree No. 28 of 16 January 2025 “On Holding the Year of the Defender of the Fatherland in the Russian Federation”. Available at: <http://www.kremlin.ru/acts/bank/51589>.

³⁷¹ *Crimea News*, “Heroes Are Dedicated: How the Year of the Defender of the Fatherland Began in Kindergartens and Schools”, 21 February 2025, documenting school-based patriotic education activities, including assemblies, meetings with veterans and “SMO” participants, competitions and support activities for Russian servicemen. Available at: <https://crimea-news.com/other/2025/02/21/1598969.html>; *Kherson News Agency*, “Youth from Kherson Region Met with an SMO Veteran”, 29 November 2025, documenting the involvement of a veteran of the “special military operation” in youth outreach and patriotic education activities in occupied Kherson Region. Available at: <https://xonews.ru/news/molodezh-iz-hersonskoj-oblasti-vstretilas-s-veteranom-svo/>.

³⁷² Russian Federation, Federal Law No. 261-FZ, On the Russian Movement of Children and Youth, 14 July 2022, Chapter 3. Available at: <http://www.kremlin.ru/acts/bank/48153>.

³⁷³ All-Russian Public-State Movement of Children and Youth Movement of the First, Charter of the All-Russian Public-State Movement of Children and Youth “Movement of the First” (Version 5), approved by the Fifth Congress of the Movement of the First, Minutes of the Congress Meeting of 30 September 2025, para. 2.1.4. Available at: <https://будьдвигении.рф/files/ustav-obshcherossiyskogo-obshchestvenno-gosudarstvennogo-dvizheniya-detey-i-molodezhi-dvizhenie-pervykh>.

among the principal objectives.³⁷⁴ Membership in “Yunarmiya” is included among the individual achievements credited as additional points in the competitive admissions process at Russian Ministry of Defence universities, creating a direct and formal link between childhood participation in military-patriotic associations and higher military education.³⁷⁵ The typical activities of “Yunarmiya” include shooting with an air rifle, putting on gas masks, partial disassembly and assembly of an AK rifle mock up, and loading a magazine with training cartridges against the clock.³⁷⁶

The “Voin” centres (Воин) provide structured military-sports training for children aged 14–18, encompassing UAV operation, tactical medicine, engineering, fire training and military sports, together with meetings with veterans and participants in the war against Ukraine.³⁷⁷ Participation is promoted through promises of additional points towards the Unified State Examination and prospects of admission to Russian higher education institutions while the instruction is provided by combat participants.³⁷⁸

The direct work of DOSAAF (ДОСААФ России)³⁷⁹ with the schools also should be noted as it has branches in the occupied territories. Based on Government Resolution No. 973 of 28 November 2009,³⁸⁰ its role was significantly expanded and placed under further government control by Presidential Decree No. 59 of 03 February 2025.³⁸¹ It is funded from the federal budget and ascribed a specific role in the mobilization and preparation of conscripts and reservists.

In the context of military-patriotic youth organizations, it is also important to note the development of the video game Zarnitsa 2.0,³⁸² which is an outcome of collaboration between the principal State-supported youth organizations (Движение первых, Юнармия and the Воин centres), embedding pre-military skills into ordinary school life for children from age 7, reaching a majority of schools in the occupied territories.

³⁷⁴ Youth Military-Patriotic Public Movement "Yunarmiya", Charter of the All-Russian Children and Youth Military-Patriotic Public Movement "Yunarmiya", approved by the Founding Assembly of the Movement on 28 May 2016 (as last amended on 26 March 2025), Chapter 2. Available at: <https://yunarmy.ru/ustav.pdf>.

³⁷⁵ Russian Federation, Order No. 20 of the Minister of Defense of the Russian Federation, *On Amendments to Order No. 185 of the Minister of Defence of the Russian Federation of 7 April 2015 "On Approval of the Procedure and Conditions for Admission to Higher Military Educational Institutions under the Jurisdiction of the Ministry of Defense of the Russian Federation"*, 17 January 2019. Available at: https://lenino.rk.gov.ru/uploads/txteditor/lenino/attachments/d4/1d/8c/d98f00b204e9800998ecf8427e/phpMkPO_T7_Администрация%20Ленино%20по%20инд.достижениям.pdf.

³⁷⁶ Almenda “Monitoring Report. “UNIVERSAL SOLDIER” or The Activities of Russian Children’s and Youth Movements in the Temporarily Occupied Territories of Ukraine” (2025); at p. 24.

³⁷⁷ Autonomous Non-Commercial Organisation of Additional Professional Education Centre for the Development of Military-Sports Training and Patriotic Upbringing of Youth, Charter (New Edition), approved by the Founders’ Meeting, Minutes No. 1/2025 of 21 February 2025. Available at: <https://crvsp.ru/uploads/files/УСТАВ%20Центр%20ВОИН.pdf>; TASS, “More Than 1,000 Cadets Trained by the Voin Centre in Kherson Region During Its First Year of Operation”, 15 April 2025, (accessed 14 June 2026). Available at: <https://tass.ru/obschestvo/23688643>.

³⁷⁸ Almenda “Monitoring Report. “UNIVERSAL SOLDIER” or The Activities of Russian Children’s and Youth Movements in the Temporarily Occupied Territories of Ukraine” (2025); at p. 15.

³⁷⁹ <https://www.dosaaf.ru/about/regions/>.

³⁸⁰ Consolidated text at http://pravo.gov.ru/proxy/ips/?docbody=&link_id=11&nd=102134254.

³⁸¹ Вопросы ДОСААФ России": <http://publication.pravo.gov.ru/document/0001202502030021>.

³⁸² See, for example, “Zarnitsa 2.0. Rules of the Organization, Implementation and Assessment of the Russian-Wide Competitions on Military-Patriotic Game “Zarnitsa 2.0” for Regional Rounds for children of middle age category and special category” Approved by the Protocol of the Meeting of Central Command of the Russian-Wide Military-Patriotic Game “Zarnitsa 2.0” of 29 May 2026 No. 4 (on file with the Mission).

In 2025, the Russian Government adopted the Comprehensive Plan for Patriotic and Spiritual-Moral Education of Youth until 2028, further consolidating State policy in this area.³⁸³ The Plan designates the Ministry of Defence, the Ministry of Internal Affairs, the Federal Security Service, Rosgvardia and educational authorities as the implementing agencies for measures related to patriotic and military-patriotic education in both formal and extracurricular settings. The formal involvement of defence and security institutions in the implementation of youth education measures reflects the increasingly integrated character of educational, military and security policies.

In the occupied territories, such legislation aids the normalization of war and military service as central civic values. Over time, the repeated blending of school, camp, youth movement and military imagery creates an environment in which a Russian military-patriotic identity is presented as the most legitimate form of civic development.

E. IDEOLOGICAL SECURITY FRAMEWORK AND ANTI-EXTREMISM LEGISLATION

Since the full-scale invasion of Ukraine, the Russian Federation has progressively integrated ideological objectives into its security and anti-extremism legislative framework, producing a body of law in which the protection of State-defined values and the suppression of perceived security threats are formally unified.

The foundational instrument in this process is Presidential Decree No. 809 on the Fundamentals of State Policy for the Preservation and Strengthening of Traditional Russian Spiritual and Moral Values adopted in 2022, which defines patriotism, citizenship, service to the Fatherland and responsibility for the fate of Russia as values requiring State protection. It further treats the activities of extremist and terrorist organizations, unfriendly States, and the dissemination of ideas and values deemed alien to the Russian people as threats to those values.³⁸⁴

In subsequent years, the Strategies for Countering Extremism³⁸⁵ and State Nationality Policy³⁸⁶ further developed this approach by defining “Ukrainian radical nationalism and extremism”, Russophobia, the falsification of history, neo-Nazism and destructive ideology as core threats to State and social stability, while framing patriotic upbringing as a component of State cohesion and linking national unity to efforts to counter extremism and separatism.

These strategic documents serve as interpretative instruments guiding the implementation of the whole body of security and anti-extremism legislation. Their significance lies not in the values they formally articulate, but rather in the categories of conduct, expression and identity that they render susceptible to treatment as risks to national security, social stability or national unity.

³⁸³ Government of the Russian Federation, Order No. 2970-r of 23 October 2025 “Comprehensive Measures for Patriotic and Spiritual-Moral Education of Youth in the Russian Federation until 2028”. Available at: <http://static.government.ru/media/acts/files/1202510240057.pdf>.

³⁸⁴ Russian Federation, Presidential Decree No. 809, On the Approval of the Foundations of State Policy for the Preservation and Strengthening of Traditional Russian Spiritual and Moral Values, 9 November 2022, Section II. Available at: <http://www.kremlin.ru/acts/bank/48502>.

³⁸⁵ Russian Federation, Presidential Decree No. 1124, On the Approval of the Strategy for Countering Extremism in the Russian Federation, 28 December 2024, Section II. Available at: <http://www.kremlin.ru/acts/bank/51580/page/1>.

³⁸⁶ Russian Federation, Presidential Decree No. 858, On the Strategy of the State Nationality Policy of the Russian Federation until 2036, 25 November 2025, Sections II and III. Available at: <http://www.kremlin.ru/acts/bank/52615/page/1>.

The enforcement dimension of this instrument is anchored on the Federal Law No. 114-FZ on Countering Extremist Activity,³⁸⁷ which defines extremism in terms extending well beyond direct incitement to violence. The law operates in conjunction with the Criminal Code of the Russian Federation³⁸⁸ and the Code of Administrative Offences,³⁸⁹ thus creating an inter-linked system of criminal and administrative liability applicable to a very broad range of very vaguely defined conduct framed as threats to state security or social stability. For instance, the Criminal Code has been supplemented by several offences including “*rehabilitation of Nazism*” (Article 354.1) and “*public actions aimed at discrediting the use of the Armed Forces of the Russian Federation for the protection of the interests of the Russian Federation and its citizens*” (Article 280.3).³⁹⁰

Lack of legal certainty in defining the scope of these categories creates conditions under which Ukrainian historical narratives, language, memory, commemorative practices, symbols and other expressions of Ukrainian identity may be, and in fact are being, interpreted through the lens of extremism, separatism or destructive influence. Consequently, legislation leads to identity-based repression and persecution, removing the distinction between security policy and identity governance.

While these measures establish the coercive and punitive dimension, the system also incorporates a preventive component aimed at the early identification and management of perceived ideological and security risks. This preventive architecture is particularly pronounced in relation to children and educational institutions, which are assigned a central role in monitoring, prevention and value-transmission. The Action Plan for the Implementation of the Strategy for the Comprehensive Safety of Children in the Russian Federation until 2030 supports preventive measures aimed at perceived risks to children’s moral, civic and informational development.³⁹¹ The Comprehensive Plan for Countering the Ideology of Terrorism in the Russian Federation for 2024–2028, together with relevant education-based measures, requires schools and educational authorities to identify risk groups, conduct preventive work, remove “extremist” content and cooperate with security structures.³⁹²

The system operates across multiple, mutually reinforcing legislative levels: criminal law provides the threat of severe penalties; administrative law enables rapid sanctions at lower evidentiary thresholds; preventive frameworks require the identification and monitoring of perceived risks; education law facilitates intervention within schools; and regional implementation plans localize these mechanisms in the occupied territories. The implementation of all these and similar legislative acts, orders and regulations governing the

³⁸⁷ Russian Federation, Federal Law No. 114-FZ, On Countering Extremist Activity, 25 July 2002, Article 1(1). Available at: <http://www.kremlin.ru/acts/bank/18939/page/1>.

³⁸⁸ Russian Federation, Criminal Code of the Russian Federation No. 63-FZ, 13 June 1996, see, *inter alia*, Articles 280, 280.1, 280.2, 280.3, 280.4 and 354.1. Available at: <http://pravo.gov.ru/proxy/ips/?docbody&nd=102041891>.

³⁸⁹ Russian Federation, Code of Administrative Offences of the Russian Federation No. 195-FZ, 30 December 2001, Article 20.3. Available at: <http://pravo.gov.ru/proxy/ips/?docbody&nd=102074277>.

³⁹⁰ See also Situation of human rights in the Russian Federation. Report of the Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights in the Russian Federation, Mariana Katzarova; UN Doc A/HRC/60/59 (15 Sept 2025), in particular paras 88-90; Almenda “How Russia Erases Ukrainian Identity Under the Guise of Combating Extremism” (2026).

³⁹¹ Russian Federation, Government Directive No. 3233-r, Action Plan for the Implementation of the Strategy for the Comprehensive Safety of Children in the Russian Federation until 2030, 17 November 2023, para. 62. Available at: <http://government.ru/docs/all/150722/?page=2>.

³⁹² Russian Federation, Comprehensive Plan for Countering the Ideology of Terrorism in the Russian Federation for 2024–2028, approved by the President of the Russian Federation on 30 December 2023. Available at: https://sh1-gusev-r27.gosweb.gosuslugi.ru/svedeniya-ob-obrazovatelnoy-organizatsii/dokumenty/dokumenty-all_1363.html.

implementation of education policy in the occupied territories has consequently resulted in a system of surveillance of children and their families in the occupied territories that seeks to identify and stamp out any expressions of resistance or dissent. The close monitoring of children, including by teachers and so-called “childhood counsellors”, and the integration of this monitoring system with a range of other institutions, including social services, security services, and courts is used to pressure and coerce Ukrainian children and their families into compliance and conformity, making virtually impossible any free choice in relation to the development and expression of children’s identity.

IV. COERCION AND OTHER FORMS OF VIOLENCE AGAINST CHILDREN

The terms of the mandate call on the experts to gather information and analyse possible “patterns of coercion, intimidation, repression, unlawful deprivation of liberty, illegal adoptions, ill-treatment, and other forms of violence affecting children”. Numerous forms of violence against children have been documented and analysed in reports by international organizations and non-governmental organizations, as well as in reports issued by the Ukrainian authorities. Their findings were corroborated by the witnesses with whom the Mission members were able to talk, or by the testimonies to which they had access. These reveal recurring methods that support the notion of “patterns of violence”.

This section does not intend to repeat the legal framework for organizing such pressure (see above Section III), but will highlight the methods which, in practice, enable the authorities of the Russian Federation to exert pressure on children of Ukrainian nationality/ethnicity. It will draw in particular on the testimonies to which the Mission had access.

A. COERCIVE ENVIRONMENT

First, the issue of violence against children must be viewed within the general context of the international armed conflict and the establishment of an occupation administration. The OHCHR stated that, during the first months after the full-scale invasion of Ukraine in February 2022, Russian armed forces “routinely used violence and other acts of repression against the civilian population under their control”. It documented cases of 76 children killed and 50 injured during “close encounters” with the Russian armed forces, 12 cases of sexual violence against children, mostly occurring in residential areas, and 16 cases of arbitrary detention of boys, of whom 10 were ill-treated or tortured.³⁹³ According to Ukraine’s Office of the Prosecutor General, 220 children were killed and 406 children were injured as of 3 May 2022. Cases of death or injuries were also reported by NGOs on the basis of interviews with victims or witnesses.³⁹⁴

Moreover, children have also suffered, and continue to suffer, as a result of mass displacement, inadequate standard of living, deterioration of access to education and to health facilities due to strikes impacting buildings and infrastructures,³⁹⁵ and, for some of them, death of relatives or unlawful detention as civilians.³⁹⁶

This general context inevitably takes its weight on the population of the occupied territories, including children and their families, and their perception of the need to comply not only with orders, but also with recommendations and incentives of the occupying forces. As noted in the ICRC Commentary on Article 8 of the Fourth Geneva Convention (“Non-renunciation of rights”), “[c]onsidering the vulnerable and often desperate situation of persons in enemy hands during an armed conflict, it is in any case highly doubtful whether they can make decisions based on ‘free will’ in such circumstances.”³⁹⁷ This also explains why moral as well as physical

³⁹³ OHCHR, *The Impact of the Armed Conflict and Occupation on Children’s Rights in Ukraine – 24 February 2022 – 31 December 2024*, 21 March 2025, para. 71-73. Available at: <https://www.ohchr.org/en/documents/country-reports/impact-armed-conflict-and-occupation-childrens-rights-ukraine-24-february>.

³⁹⁴ East SOS, N.V. Lutsenko, *Violations of International Humanitarian Law Affecting Education in Ukraine (February 2022 – May 2025)*, East SOS, Kyiv, 2025, p. 11-15.

³⁹⁵ OHCHR, *The Impact of the Armed Conflict and Occupation on Children’s Rights in Ukraine – 24 February 2022 – 31 December 2024*, 21 March 2025, para. 45-68.

³⁹⁶ See MM Report IV, p. 44-46.

³⁹⁷ ICRC Commentary of Article 8 CG IV, para. 1229.

coercion must be taken into account, as provided for in Article 31 of the Fourth Geneva Convention under which “[n]o physical or moral coercion shall be exercised against protected persons (...)”.

B. PRESSURE TO ENTER THE RUSSIAN EDUCATION SYSTEM AND WITHIN IT

In implementing the new education framework, Russian authorities have exercised considerable pressure on those children and their parents who attempted to maintain ties with the former Ukrainian education system, including through online learning.

OHCHR recorded testimonies of parents and children finding it very difficult to attend the classes in Ukrainian, which were still open as an option at that time, because this would be considered as a sign of disloyalty towards the occupying authorities. This fear led them to refrain from making that choice.³⁹⁸ Parents who refused to send their children to Russian schools have been threatened by the occupation authorities to be deprived of their parental rights and to take away their children.³⁹⁹ The pressure also weighed heavily on teachers suspected of remaining loyal to the old system or of holding pro-Ukrainian sympathies. Testimonies showing this have been gathered by ODIHR and by NGOs: they mention home visits and searches, sometimes accompanied by acts of violence, threats or strong pressure to leave the occupied areas.⁴⁰⁰ This was further corroborated in testimonies collected by the Mission, with former teachers from the occupied territories stating that not complying with instructions from the occupation authorities to switch to the Russian curriculum and Russian language would have inevitably led to arrest.⁴⁰¹

Moreover, teachers interviewed by the Mission who had witnessed the first few months of the occupation following the full-scale invasion of Ukraine in February 2022 said that children were forced to enrol at Russian schools because their parents were threatened by FSB agents and, in some cases, beaten if they refused.⁴⁰² In addition, in one of the written testimonies available to this mission, the witness explains that the headteacher of the local Russian school, accompanied by soldiers, went from house to house to ensure that parents sent their children to this school — which was not yet the case for this witness — and submit an application to obtain Russian passports. That is what his parents finally did.⁴⁰³

Within the schools taken over by Russian occupation authorities in the occupied territories, children are usually forbidden to speak Ukrainian.⁴⁰⁴ This was confirmed to the experts by the testimonies they received. The young adults reported pressure and various forms of coercion or intimidation. Lessons were conducted exclusively in Russian, and none of them would have dared to use Ukrainian within school where they spent a large part of the day. They were all required, usually on Monday mornings, to attend the raising of the Russian flag and to sing the

³⁹⁸ OHCHR, *The Impact of the Armed Conflict and Occupation on Children’s Rights in Ukraine – 24 February 2022 – 31 December 2024*, 21 March 2025, para. 90.

³⁹⁹ OHCHR, *The Impact of the Armed Conflict and Occupation on Children’s Rights in Ukraine – 24 February 2022 – 31 December 2024*, 21 March 2025, para. 92; ODIHR, *Eighth Interim Report on reported violations of international humanitarian law and international human rights law in Ukraine*, 16 December 2025, para. 118-119.

⁴⁰⁰ ODIHR, *Seventh Interim Report on reported violations of international humanitarian law and international human rights law in Ukraine*, 15 July 2025, para. 101; East SOS, N.V. Lutsenko, *Violations of International Humanitarian Law Affecting Education in Ukraine (February 2022 – May 2025)*, East SOS, Kyiv, 2025, p. 28-32.

⁴⁰¹ Testimonies 1-2 (on file with the Mission).

⁴⁰² Testimonies 1-2 (on file with the Mission).

⁴⁰³ Testimony 10 (on file with the Mission).

⁴⁰⁴ OHCHR, *The Impact of the Armed Conflict and Occupation on Children’s Rights in Ukraine – 24 February 2022 – 31 December 2024*, 21 March 2025, para. 91.

Russian national anthem. They also report patriotic ceremonies, visits and gatherings designed to impress them.⁴⁰⁵ Guards in military uniform are stationed at the entrances to schools and check bags, officially to ensure security.⁴⁰⁶ Sometimes some of them harass young girls as they leave school and walk home.⁴⁰⁷

In most testimonies available to the Mission, witnesses expressed their feeling that they had been subjected to ideological pressure. In addition, the boys say they felt anxious about the prospect of conscription when they turned 18, which requires normally pre-registration from the age of 17, but it seems that Ukrainian boys from the occupied territories are, in practice, often required to do so from the age of 16.⁴⁰⁸ Pre-registration at the age of 16 was also confirmed to ODIHR by witnesses.⁴⁰⁹

C. PRESSURE TO ATTEND EXTRACURRICULAR ACTIVITIES

Reports by international organizations on the Russian education system in the occupied territories have found that there were strong incentives to participate in militarized youth associations and so-called recreation camps (see Section II.C.3). ODIHR, on the basis of witness testimonies, stated that children were encouraged to participate in summer camps “to improve grades at school”.⁴¹⁰

This was confirmed to the Mission by one of the interviewed young adults who explained that, as a child, he had been encouraged to take part in youth associations, with the possibility to miss lessons.⁴¹¹ Another said he was told at school, during the class called “conversation about important things”, that participation in the activities of military-patriotic youth associations would be advantageous when applying to university.⁴¹²

In one of the written testimonies reviewed by the Mission, the witness explains that teachers strongly encouraged him and his classmates to join organizations such as Yunarmiya, and that his form tutor specifically asked him to take part in an activity organized by the Movement of the First, which was held within the school itself and involved meeting a recently demobilized soldier who talked about the military operations.⁴¹³

Moreover, ODIHR has referred to the practice, introduced in January 2025, of FSB officers visiting parents to ensure that their children are taking part in militarized activities and youth organizations.⁴¹⁴

There are also incentives for joining cadet classes, often linked to the socio-economic circumstances of the children and their families (see Section II.C.2). School officials explain to them the benefits of joining the army afterwards, at the age of 18, as a prospect of a secure income and social recognition. According to OHCHR, “[v]ulnerable children, such as those from single-parent’s households, were often targeted”, with methods sometimes reaching the

⁴⁰⁵ Testimony 7, 8 (on file with the Mission).

⁴⁰⁶ Testimony 4.

⁴⁰⁷ Testimonies 1, 2, and 3.

⁴⁰⁸ Testimonies 4, 5, 6, 7, 9, 11, 12 (on file with the Mission).

⁴⁰⁹ ODIHR, *Seventh Interim Report on reported violations of international humanitarian law and international human rights law in Ukraine*, 15 July 2025, para. 107.

⁴¹⁰ ODIHR, *Eighth Interim Report on reported violations of international humanitarian law and international human rights law in Ukraine*, 16 December 2025, para. 115.

⁴¹¹ Testimony 5 (on file with the Mission).

⁴¹² Testimony 13 (on file with the Mission).

⁴¹³ Testimony 8 (on file with the Mission).

⁴¹⁴ ODIHR, *Seventh Interim Report on reported violations of international humanitarian law and international human rights law in Ukraine*, 15 July 2025, para. 98.

level of “pressure” by teachers and administrators on grand-parents.⁴¹⁵ In addition, children are encouraged to join the cadet classes by being offered free trips or free places at summer camps.⁴¹⁶

D. COERCION IN EVERYDAY LIFE

Forms of violence against Ukrainian children extend beyond the school system and extracurricular activities. Most of them would refrain from speaking Ukrainian in the streets, or to express pro-Ukrainian views in public, or wear colours or clothes associated with Ukraine.⁴¹⁷

One of the witnesses interviewed by the experts explained that his parents had asked him to stop speaking Ukrainian even when talking to neighbours, after one of their neighbour had been abducted by armed men, presumably for expressing pro-Ukrainian views.⁴¹⁸ A third one was arrested and questioned at length over a comment made during a conversation on a social media platform, and his parents were visited by the authorities afterwards.⁴¹⁹ Yet another one expressed fears that his parents, who had remained in the occupied territories, might be questioned by the security forces after he had left.⁴²⁰ Two witnesses referred to relatives or acquaintances who had been “taken to the basement”, which appears to refer to arbitrary interrogation and ill-treatment.⁴²¹

In one of the written testimonies received by the mission, the witness explains that, as a child, he shouted “Glory to Ukraine” from the window of his family home, after which a psychologist came to their house and spoke to him, asking why he had done so and telling him that this was what the Nazis used to shout in the Donbas during the Second World War.⁴²²

A specific type of coercion targets access to online content and discussions on social media via computers and mobile phones. OHCHR reported a documented case of searching messages in a child’s phone, after which he was beaten.⁴²³ Witnesses reported to ODIHR that their children, who were following the Ukrainian curriculum online, “had to constantly erase the data from their devices to avoid detection during searches”.⁴²⁴ One of the witnesses interviewed by the Mission explained the methods he used as a teenager to cover his tracks at certain websites or to conceal his participation in online conversations, in order to avoid any problems should his mobile phone or computer be searched.⁴²⁵ Many teenagers would do the same, but control over the internet and social media has become increasingly tight.

In one of the written testimonies on file with the Mission, one witness explains that, after exchanging messages in a chat group about conscription, he was arrested by the FSB on the

⁴¹⁵ OHCHR, *The Impact of the Armed Conflict and Occupation on Children’s Rights in Ukraine – 24 February 2022 – 31 December 2024*, 21 March 2025, para. 107.

⁴¹⁶ Testimonies 1-2 (on file with the Mission).

⁴¹⁷ OHCHR, *The Impact of the Armed Conflict and Occupation on Children’s Rights in Ukraine – 24 February 2022 – 31 December 2024*, 21 March 2025, para. 108-110.

⁴¹⁸ Testimony 6 (on file with the Mission).

⁴¹⁹ Testimony 4 (on file with the Mission).

⁴²⁰ Testimony 5 (on file with the Mission).

⁴²¹ Testimonies 5 and 6 (on file with the Mission).

⁴²² Testimony n°9 (on file with the Mission).

⁴²³ OHCHR, *The Impact of the Armed Conflict and Occupation on Children’s Rights in Ukraine – 24 February 2022 – 31 December 2024*, 21 March 2025, para. 77.

⁴²⁴ ODIHR, *Eighth Interim Report on reported violations of international humanitarian law and international human rights law in Ukraine*, 16 December 2025, para. 119.

⁴²⁵ Testimony n°5 (on file with the Mission).

pretext of theft, after which his phone and his computer were searched and seized. He spent two months in a detention centre; he was then charged with treason and urged to leave the occupied territories.⁴²⁶ A second witness says that FSB agents came to his home, questioned his parents and then took him away to question him about messages exchanged on Telegram; they searched his mobile phone and asked him about his views on Ukraine, threatened him, before letting him go.⁴²⁷

E. COERCION TO ACQUIRE RUSSIAN CITIZENSHIP

Considerable pressure is being exerted on parents to ensure that they and their children acquire Russian citizenship. In practice, it is necessary to have a Russian passport in the occupied territories in order to enrol children at school, to benefit from health care, to move from or within the occupied territories, and to access employment.⁴²⁸ In one of the written testimonies made available to the Mission, the witness explains he was told at the age of 16 that a Russian passport was required to graduate from school.⁴²⁹

Those tools have been confirmed and described as “significant pressure” by OHCHR.⁴³⁰ This may also be called *de facto* coercion, since a refusal to acquire Russian citizenship creates insurmountable obstacles to everyday life and to access the resources necessary for the family’s survival under the conditions prevailing in the occupied territories. ODIHR reached similar conclusion in its last Interim Report on Ukraine, where it stated, on the basis of its previous findings and on interviews with 25 witnesses, that residents of the occupied territories were “coerced into acquiring Russian citizenship”.⁴³¹

More direct intimidation and threats are also being used. One of the witnesses interviewed by the mission explained that he had acquired Russian nationality, at his parents’ instigation, in 2023, following a wave of mass house-to-house searches carried out by the occupying authorities in his region.⁴³²

Lastly, since 2024, the occupation authorities have embarked on a process of large-scale expropriation of supposedly abandoned private apartments and houses, following population displacement caused by the armed conflict. In practice only Russian nationals are able to register their property.⁴³³ Such registration is prohibited for foreign nationals of “unfriendly foreign states” — among them Ukraine — since decrees of March and December 2025.

All the methods described in this section are in addition to the risk of criminal or administrative penalties arising from the legislation enacted by the occupying power.

⁴²⁶ Testimony n°11 (on file with the Mission).

⁴²⁷ Testimony n°14 (on file with the Mission).

⁴²⁸ ODIHR, *Seventh Interim Report on reported violations of international humanitarian law and international human rights law in Ukraine*, 15 July 2025, para. 88-95; Ombudsman of Ukraine, *Cross-Pollinated – Russia’s Systemic Policy of Destroying Children’s Ukrainian Identity*, 2024, p. 18.

⁴²⁹ Testimony n°12 (on file with the Mission).

⁴³⁰ OHCHR, *The Impact of the Armed Conflict and Occupation on Children’s Rights in Ukraine – 24 February 2022 – 31 December 2024*, 21 March 2025, para. 80.

⁴³¹ ODIHR, *Eighth Interim Report on reported violations of international humanitarian law and international human rights law in Ukraine*, 16 December 2025, para. 96; see also para. 97.

⁴³² Testimony n°5 (on file with the Mission).

⁴³³ OHCHR, *Forced Displacement from Territory of Ukraine Occupied by the Russian Federation: Forcible Transfer and Deportations, Barriers to Return, and the Rights of Internally Displaced Persons*, 24 February – 31 December 2025, 20 March 2026, para. 62. Available at: <https://www.ohchr.org/en/documents/country-reports/forced-displacement-territory-ukraine-occupied-russian-federation>.

V. LEGAL ASSESSMENT UNDER INTERNATIONAL LAW

A. UNDER INTERNATIONAL HUMANITARIAN LAW

1. *Preliminary Remarks*

The territories occupied by the Russian Federation in the context of the international armed conflict with Ukraine remain governed by the law of occupation, which forms part of international humanitarian law.⁴³⁴ The change in the status of these territories, which the Russian Federation has implemented under its domestic law, has no legal effect under international law, other than constituting a clear violation of its rules.⁴³⁵ As the International Court of Justice recently pointed out in its advisory opinion on the occupied Palestinian territory, “the annexation of occupied territory by an occupying Power is unlawful”.⁴³⁶ The World Court also noted that occupation is “a temporary situation” during which the occupying Power “bears a duty to administer the territory for the benefit of the local population”.⁴³⁷ Protection and care of children should therefore be the guiding principle behind all measures taken by the occupying authorities, and not the desire to instil a particular culture or patriotism in them, nor to view their education through the prism of future enlistment in the armed forces.

Similarly, the acquisition of Russian citizenship by Ukrainian nationals, including Ukrainian children, living in the occupied territories, whether voluntary or obtained under coercion, cannot have the effect of restricting or removing the protection offered to them by international humanitarian law. This is expressly stated in Article 8 of the Fourth Geneva Convention, according to which a “protected person may in no circumstances renounce in part or in entirety the rights secured to them by the present convention”. As confirmed by the ICRC Commentary on this provision, a change in nationality during the conflict “would therefore not release the State concerned from its obligations towards these persons under the Conventions.”⁴³⁸ Furthermore, and for children specifically, this would contradict Article 50(2) of the Fourth Geneva Convention under which the Occupying Power “may not, in any case, change their personal status”.

The mandate of this Mission covers all Ukrainian children living in the Ukrainian territories occupied by the Russian Federation; it also covers children who were forcibly transferred to or within these territories and those who were deported to the Russian Federation. With regard to the latter, the third MM mission on Ukraine, on the forcible transfer and/or deportation of Ukrainian children, concluded that forcible transfer and deportation constituted serious violations of the Fourth Geneva Convention and that the Russian Federation was responsible for such violations, having failed to justify the displacements of children under international humanitarian law.⁴³⁹ This Mission fully endorses this conclusion and reiterates it.

However, and regrettably, this Mission must add that the number of returned children, recorded as numbering 2,274 — as of 21 June 2026 — by the Ukrainian multistakeholder initiative “Bring Kids Back Ukraine”,⁴⁴⁰ remains extremely low compared to the number of children who

⁴³⁴ See in particular Hague Regulations (1907), Section III (“Military Authority over the Territory of the Hostile State”), and GC IV, Part III, Section III (“Occupied Territories”).

⁴³⁵ MM Report III, p. 25-26.

⁴³⁶ ICJ, *Legal Consequences arising from the Policies and Practices of Israel in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including East Jerusalem*, Advisory Opinion, 19 July 2024, *ICJ Report 2024*, p. 818, para. 175.

⁴³⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 794, para. 105.

⁴³⁸ ICRC Commentary of Article 8 CG IV, para. 1229.

⁴³⁹ MM Report III, p. 31-46.

⁴⁴⁰ Bring Kids Back Initiative of the President of Ukraine. Available at: <https://www.bringkidsback.org.ua/en>.

were victims of such a violation, estimated at 20,610 — as of 21 June 2026.⁴⁴¹ The IICIU made a similar assessment in a report of March 2026, noting that “Four years on (...) 80% of the children have not yet been returned”.⁴⁴²

It must be strongly emphasized here that, pursuant to Article 74 of Additional Protocol I, “the Parties to the conflict shall facilitate in every possible way the reunion of families dispersed as a result of armed conflicts”, that pursuant to Article 49(2) of the Fourth Geneva Convention children evacuated “shall be transferred back to their homes as soon as hostilities in the area in question have ceased”, and that “unjustifiable delay in the repatriation of (...) civilians” is a grave breach of Additional Protocol I to the Geneva Conventions.⁴⁴³ In this respect, violation of IHL by the Russian Federation continues. Far from fulfilling its obligations towards these children, the Russian Federation is obstructing the efforts of the Ukrainian authorities, humanitarian organizations, the children’s families, international mediators and the wider international community by concealing information about their whereabouts, changing their personal status, creating administrative and practical obstacles to family reunification, and adopting an attitude of denial.⁴⁴⁴

Having borne this in mind, the following legal analysis will address the possible violations of international humanitarian law resulting from the practices of indoctrination and militarization of all Ukrainian children covered by the mandate of this mission, whose number can be estimated up to 1.6 million.⁴⁴⁵ These children are all protected persons under international humanitarian law as civilians,⁴⁴⁶ and “shall be treated with special respect” as stated in Additional Protocol I as well as under customary law.⁴⁴⁷

2. Respect for Laws in Force

A fundamental rule of the occupation regime is that the occupying power, here the Russian Federation, must respect the “laws in force in the country”, “unless absolutely prevented” (Hague Regulations, Article 43). Concerning more specifically criminal legislation, Article 64 of the Fourth Geneva Convention provides that “penal laws ... shall remain in force” unless they constitute a threat to security or obstacle to the application of IHL, and the Occupying Power shall introduce new provisions only if essential to maintain public order or ensure its security.⁴⁴⁸ However, as demonstrated in Section III on “Legislative Architecture”, the Russian Federation has adopted a considerable number of legal texts aimed at altering the existing education system throughout the occupied Ukrainian territories and at significantly tightening

⁴⁴¹ *Ibid.*

⁴⁴² UN Human Rights Council, “ ‘I am still looking for my daughter’: crimes against humanity committed by Russian authorities against children of Ukraine”, UN Doc. A/HRC/61/CRP.8, 9 March 2026, para. 12, and Report of the Independent International Commission of Inquiry on Ukraine, A/HRC/61/61, 9 March 2026, para. 11.

⁴⁴³ AP I, Article 85(4)(b). See also MM Report III, p. 43-45.

⁴⁴⁴ UN Human Rights Council, “ ‘I am still looking for my daughter’: crimes against humanity committed by Russian authorities against children of Ukraine”, UN Doc. A/HRC/61/CRP.8, 9 March 2026, para. 55-59. As for an example of denial, see Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Russian Federation, Foreign Ministry Spokeswoman Maria Zakharova’s comment on the Ukrainian crisis, 15 May 2026, No. 771-15-05-2026. Available at: https://mid.ru/en/foreign_policy/news/2109325/.

⁴⁴⁵ Bring Kids Back Initiative of the President of Ukraine. Available at: <https://www.bringkidsback.org.ua/en>. See also this report, Section II.

⁴⁴⁶ AP I, Article 50 (1) and (2). See MM Report III, p. 27-28.

⁴⁴⁷ AP I, Article 77(1) ; ICRC, Customary IHL, Volume II, Chapter 39, Section B, Rule 135.

⁴⁴⁸ See also MM Report III, p. 26.

criminal and administrative legislation in a way that goes far beyond the exceptions provided for.⁴⁴⁹ Both aspects have implications for Ukrainian children.

As regards the education system, the numerous measures adopted constitute a straightforward extension of Russian education law to the occupied territories, without any justification of absolute necessity. With regard specifically to the education of children, the occupying power's obligation to respect the legislation in force is reinforced by the terms of Article 50(1) of the fourth Geneva Convention, according to which "[t]he Occupying Power shall, with cooperation of the national and local authorities, facilitate the proper working of all institutions devoted to the care and education of children".

Far from cooperating with the Ukrainian authorities, the Russian Federation has extended the Russian education system to all the occupied territories and put pressure on all families to join it. The new regulatory framework has introduced educational programmes similar to those used in the Russian Federation and containing military-patriotic content that promotes the official Russian view on history, culture and the ongoing war. Furthermore, access to education in the Ukrainian language, initially limited to an optional subject, has declined significantly, before being completely suppressed.

In its judgment of 31 January 2024 in a dispute between Ukraine and Russia, the ICJ stated, in relation to the evolution of the education system in occupied Crimea since 2014, that "[t]he Russian Federation exercises full control over the public school system in Crimea, in particular over the language of instruction and the conditions for its use by parents and children", and that the Russian Federation "has not provided a convincing explanation for the sudden and radical changes in the use of Ukrainian as a language of instruction".⁴⁵⁰ The Court concluded that these changes resulting from "[t]he legislative and other practices of the Russian Federation" led to a "structural change in the educational system", which was in violation of the Convention on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination (CERD).⁴⁵¹ The European Court of Human Rights, on the basis of similar pronouncements on facts, reached a conclusion of violation of the right to education under Article 2 of Protocol 1 to the European Convention on Human Rights, after referring to and noting no conflict with Article 50 of the Fourth Geneva Convention.⁴⁵²

From the perspective of international humanitarian law, the transformation of an education system at a large scale may entail a violation of Article 43 of the Hague Regulations (1907) and of Article 50(1) of the Fourth Geneva Convention (1949). The ICRC Commentary (2025) on this latter provision explains that "[t]he Occupying Power must not replace the existing welfare and education systems with its own administrative structures" and "must also avoid impeding or interfering with the activities of the institutions concerned".⁴⁵³ The evidence gathered by this Mission and contained in this report shows that such replacement occurred firstly in Crimea before being replicated in all the territories occupied by the Russian Federation after the full-scale invasion of 2022. Furthermore, the Russian authorities have consistently interfered with

⁴⁴⁹ For a similar assessment: OHCHR, *The Impact of the Armed Conflict and Occupation on Children's Rights in Ukraine – 24 February 2022 – 31 December 2024*, 21 March 2025, para. 79; ODIHR, *Eighth Interim Report on reported violations of international humanitarian law and international human rights law in Ukraine*, 16 December 2025, para. 116.

⁴⁵⁰ ICJ, *Application of the International Convention for the Suppression of the Financing of Terrorism and of the International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination*, judgement, 31 January 2024, *ICJ Report 2024*, p. 202, para. 360.

⁴⁵¹ *Ibid.*, p. 204, para. 369.

⁴⁵² ECHR, Grand Chamber, *Case of Ukraine v. Russia (Re Crimea)*, Nos. 20958/14 and 38334/18, 25 June 2024, judgement, paras 1157-1165.

⁴⁵³ ICRC Commentary on Article 50 CG IV, para. 3261.

the Ukrainian education system in order to prevent it from continuing to operate in the occupied territories and from delivering distance learning. Such an overhaul of an education system in occupied territories violates the abovementioned provisions of international humanitarian law.

As regards criminal and administrative laws, the Russian Federation has extended its legal system to the occupied territories and has tightened provisions that may restrict the protection owed to the Ukrainian civilian population in the occupied territories, including children. Legal policy instruments entitled “strategies” and adopted to implement the legislation on extremism specifically define the “Ukrainian radical nationalism and extremism”, thus targeting specifically the Ukrainian national/ethnic group. Its implementation in schools, with the alleged aim of preventing extremism, is an official public policy of the Russian authorities, taking the form of a “Comprehensive Plan for Countering the Ideology of Terrorism in the Russian Federation for 2024–2028” (see Section III.E). Added to this are offences based on a vague definition that allows any form of criticism of the Russian authorities’ policies to be regarded as an act aimed at discrediting the Russian armed forces, or even to be equated with a form of Nazism (see Section III.E). The penalties associated with these offences, whether criminal or administrative, may result in deprivation of liberty. The occupying authorities regularly threaten to invoke these provisions, or use them to put pressure on families, intervene in schools, and search children’s mobile phones (see Section III.E and IV). Failing to demonstrate how these measures are essential to maintaining public order or ensuring public safety, the Russian Federation may be violating Article 64 of the Fourth Geneva Convention.

3. Content of School Curricula and Extracurricular Activities

The curricula implemented in Russian schools of the occupied territories contain elements that are in direct conflict with the idea that educational institution should be “devoted to the care and education of children” as provided for in Article 50(1) of the Fourth Geneva Convention. It is worth referring here to the ICRC Commentary of this provision which mentions with approval judicial precedents and authoritative reports according to which the Occupying Power “may not impose discriminatory measures or new curricula – including military education or propaganda – in educational institutions”. Generally speaking, the inclusion in the compulsory curriculum of subjects with a nationalist slant, such as the “Conversations about important things”, and ingredients of pre-military training is not in line with Article 50 of the Fourth Geneva Convention.

Moreover, the requirement imposed on children weekly to attend the raising of the Russian flag and to sing the Russian national anthem may be regarded as a violation of Article 45 of the Hague Regulations (1907), under which “it is forbidden to compel the inhabitants of occupied territories to swear allegiance to the hostile Power”.

The Mission was also informed of the existence and the increase in the number of so-called “cadet classes”, organized either in military schools or within ordinary schools, located in the Ukrainian territories occupied by the Russian Federation. Students who enter these classes receive an education that prepares them to join the army. Admission to such classes, with a view to later join the Russian armed forces, is presented in a positive light as an opportunity and an honour, is highly promoted, and is sometimes secured by pressure (see Section IV). This may appear as “pressure or propaganda which aims at securing voluntary enlistment” in the Russian armed forces, in contravention of Article 51(1) of the Fourth Geneva Convention.

Concerning the extracurricular activities widely promoted within the school system, *i.e.*, participation in youth movements and so-called recreation camps directly or indirectly established or controlled by the Russian Federation, they may contravene Article 50(2) of the Fourth Geneva Convention. This provision states that the occupying power “may not, in any

case, (...) enlist [children] in formations or organizations subordinate to it". Such prohibition applies to compulsory as well as voluntary enlistment, and may include "sport, cultural or social groups or associations".⁴⁵⁴ This prohibition, drawing on the experience of youth organizations in Nazi Germany, was introduced specifically in the Fourth Geneva Convention (1949) to prevent the indoctrination and militarization of children under the guise of extracurricular activities.

The evidence gathered by this Mission points to the exploitation of such extracurricular activities to provide paramilitary training for children and carry out propaganda efforts in favour of the political views of the Russian Federation throughout the Ukrainian occupied territories. One of the leading youth organizations, the "Movement of the First", was legally established by the Russian Federation and thus clearly falls within the scope of Article 50(2) of the Fourth Geneva Convention; so does DOSAAF (see Section II). Other organizations such as Yunarmiya, although formally independent from the State, are supported and funded by it; they are under the leadership of persons who hold or have held senior positions in the State apparatus; they operate in close coordination with the public Russian schools; and their activities are clearly intended to support the occupying authorities (see Section II.C).⁴⁵⁵ They consequently appear as "subordinate" to the Russian Federation as an occupying power in the meaning of Article 50(2) of the Fourth Geneva Convention. Given the most worrying activities carried out within all these youth organizations, enrolling children within them must be considered as a violation of this article.

A similar reasoning applies to the so-called "recreation camps" or "summer camps", which are established with the authorization of the local or national authorities, largely funded by the Russian Federation or State-owned companies, and whose activities raise similar concerns (see Section II.C).

4. Identification and Personal Status of Children

According to Article 50(2) of the Fourth Geneva Convention, "The Occupying Power shall take all necessary steps to facilitate the identification of children and the registration of their parentage. It may not, in any case, change their personal status". Changes in personal status include changes to a child's name, changing certificates of birth or identity documents, and the acquisition of the citizenship of the Occupying Power.⁴⁵⁶

As has been established by reports from international organizations, the occupying authorities have implemented a widespread practice of issuing birth certificates using the Russian spelling instead of the Ukrainian spelling for the same names and identifying the Russian Federation as the country of birth.⁴⁵⁷ Concerning specifically children forcibly transferred and/or deported to the Russian Federation, it has already been established in MM Report III and in various reports from international organizations that the Russian Federation has altered the names more significantly to prevent the Ukrainian authorities and any parents searching for these children

⁴⁵⁴ ICRC Commentary on Article 31 CG IV (2025), para. 3272.

⁴⁵⁵ See also Ombudsman of Ukraine, *Cross-Pollinated – Russia's Systemic Policy of Destroying Children's Ukrainian Identity*, 2024, p. 24-29.

⁴⁵⁶ ICRC Commentary on Article 50 CG IV (2025), para. 3270.

⁴⁵⁷ OHCHR, *The Impact of the Armed Conflict and Occupation on Children's Rights in Ukraine – 24 February 2022 – 31 December 2024*, 21 March 2025, para. 80.

from identifying them.⁴⁵⁸ All of these practices constitute breaches of Article 50(2) of the Fourth Geneva Convention.

Concerning the acquisition of the Russian citizenship, the Russian Federation has established a simplified process allowing parents — or legal guardians or heads of institutions for orphans or children left without parental care — to decide for them on such a modification of their civil status (see Section III.C).⁴⁵⁹ In addition, this implies renunciation to the Ukrainian citizenship according to Russian law.⁴⁶⁰ The argument that this is a voluntary choice on their part — which is formally in line with the provisions of Russian law on citizenship — cannot have the effect of bringing it into line with international humanitarian law, for two reasons. The first one is that no change of status is allowed “in any case”, including by choice, according to Article 50(2) of the Fourth Geneva Convention; the prohibition is absolute.⁴⁶¹ Secondly, the alleged freedom to choose is, for Ukrainian families, severely restricted in the occupied territories in view of the practical difficulties faced by those who refuse Russian citizenship for their children. These difficulties relate for instance to access to social and health services, access to education, ability to cross checkpoints between the occupied territories and Russian territory, and entry into third countries (see Section II.C.5 and III.C). As explained in the ICRC Commentary on Article 50(2), second sentence, “[i]ndirect measures designed to coerce changes to personal status – for example making health care, education or social security benefits contingent on a new personal status – are also prohibited”. Moreover, such coercion to acquire another citizenship would be contrary to Article 31 of the Fourth Geneva Convention, which prohibits all forms of physical or moral coercion against protected persons.⁴⁶²

In addition, the acquisition of the Russian citizenship may be considered as violating the prohibition to compel protected persons in occupied territories to swear allegiance to the occupying Power (Hague Regulations 1907, Article 45),⁴⁶³ including when it requires children aged 14 and above to swear an oath when they acquire Russian citizenship.⁴⁶⁴

Lastly, adoption is also a change in personal status of protected persons. The possibility under Russian law of adopting children from the occupied territories or who have been unlawfully transferred or deported to the Russian Federation is in violation of Article 50(2) of the Fourth Geneva Convention. Although it is difficult to determine their number, such adoptions have

⁴⁵⁸ See MM Report III, p. 55-56; Yale School of Public Management, *Intentional, Systematic & Widespread: Russia's Program of Coerced Adoption and Fostering of Ukraine's Children*, 3 December 2024, p. 19-20. Available at: <https://medicine.yale.edu/lab/khoshnood>.

⁴⁵⁹ See also MM Report III, p. 19-20.

⁴⁶⁰ Russian Federation, Federal Law No. 62-FZ of 31 May 2002 “On Citizenship of the Russian Federation”, Article 6 (“Dual Citizenship”), para. 1: “A citizen of the Russian Federation who also possesses another citizenship shall be regarded by the Russian Federation as a citizen of the Russian Federation only, except for the cases specified in an international treaty of the Russian Federation or federal law.”

⁴⁶¹ ICRC Commentary on Article 50 CG IV (2025), para. 3273. See also MM Report III, p. 26.

⁴⁶² See also ICRC Commentary of Article 31 CG IV (2025), para. 2444: “compelling protected persons in occupied territory to adopt the nationality of the Occupying Power – under threat, for instance, of denial or restriction of access to health care, education or other essential goods or services; deprivation of property or livelihoods; or expulsion from the territory – would also violate Article 31.”

⁴⁶³ ODIHR, *Eighth Interim Report on reported violations of international humanitarian law and international human rights law in Ukraine*, 16 December 2025, para. 98.

⁴⁶⁴ OHCHR, *The Impact of the Armed Conflict and Occupation on Children's Rights in Ukraine – 24 February 2022 – 31 December 2024*, 21 March 2025, para. 81.

indeed taken place, as has been confirmed by corroborating sources, including statements from the local occupying authorities and Russian officials.⁴⁶⁵

5. Prospects of Conscription and/or Voluntary Enlistment in Armed Forces

Under Article 52 of the Hague Regulations (1907), the occupying power shall “not involve the inhabitants in the obligation of taking part in military operations against their own country”. The scope of this provision is quite large since, according to case-law, taking part in military operations goes beyond direct participation in hostilities and may also include, for instance, manufacture or transportation of arms and munitions.⁴⁶⁶ Moreover, under Article 51(1) of the Fourth Geneva Convention, first sentence, the occupying power “may not compel protected persons to serve in its armed or auxiliary forces”.

In blatant disregard of these provisions, the Russian Federation applies conscription in the occupied territories to boys upon reaching the age of 18. Although, strictly speaking, this violation does not fall within the remit of this Mission’s mandate in terms of age, the prospect of future conscription — for boys — or future involvement in military operations — for anyone — permeate all military training activities in schools and youth organizations, as well as enrolment in cadet programmes. Taking part in this type of activity or training may offer in practice benefits such as better grades or a better academic record in order to enter university, and so defer conscription, or enable one to join the armed forces at a higher rank. These are alternatives to compulsory enlistment in the army through conscription, which weighs by anticipation on children’s free choice of these classes or extracurricular activities.

The prospect of voluntary enlistment in adulthood must also be taken into account during childhood due to another provision of IHL. According to Article 51(1) of the Fourth Geneva Convention, “[n]o pressure or propaganda which aims at securing voluntary enlistment is permitted”. Pressure may involve coercion, but also intimidation and persuasion, whereas propaganda refers to misleading information used to promote a political cause and the dissemination of this type of information.⁴⁶⁷ The conclusions reached by the Mission in this report on the indoctrination and militarization of Ukrainian children in the occupied territories fit within the concepts of pressure and coercion in the meaning of this provision, which may therefore have been breached by the Russian Federation, depending on the future circumstances of the children concerned.

6. Coercion and Intimidation

Lastly, it must be stressed that Ukrainian children, as well as their parents and their teachers who are protected persons under IHL, shall be protected in a general manner against coercion and intimidation according to Articles 27, 31 and 33 of the Fourth Geneva Convention.⁴⁶⁸ Despite these provisions, the experts have learned of various individual cases of coercion against children, their parents or their teachers (see Section IV). They have also identified a form of structural coercion against children through the Russian education system and through the extracurricular activities controlled by the Russian Federation. It involves not only social

⁴⁶⁵ OHCHR, *The Impact of the Armed Conflict and Occupation on Children’s Rights in Ukraine – 24 February 2022 – 31 December 2024*, 21 March 2025, para. 85.

⁴⁶⁶ In the context of World War II, see: *Erhard Milch*, case No. 39, *LRWTC*, vol. VII, 1948, p. 28; *The Krupp trial*, Case No. 50, *LRTWC*, vol. X, 1949, p. 74.

⁴⁶⁷ See ICRC Commentary on Article 50(1), para. 3308, and the references in footnotes to the *Concise Oxford English Dictionary*, Oxford University Press, 12th ed., 2011.

⁴⁶⁸ Article 31 GC IV states that “[n]o physical or moral coercion shall be exercised, against protected persons ...”. Article 33 GC IV () states that “all measures of intimidation ... are prohibited”.

and psychological pressure, persuasion and convincing but also institutional and administrative duress, direct threats, as well as physical force.

In the view of the experts, these constitute violations of the afore-mentioned provisions of international humanitarian law. The different forms of coercion identified in Section IV of this report must also be taken into account when assessing compliance with rules relating to the voluntary nature of certain activities or decisions, such as acquisition of Russian citizenship (see above). In the current circumstances of the Ukrainian territories occupied by the Russian Federation, the possibility to express “free will” is inevitably eroded by the prevailing coercive environment. This ultimately raises the question of a legal classification under international criminal law that takes into account the systemic nature of coercion affecting Ukrainian children and their families in the occupied territories and the Ukrainian children deported to the Russian Federation (see Section V.C).

B. UNDER INTERNATIONAL HUMAN RIGHTS LAW

This Mission reiterates that IHRL continues to apply in times of armed conflict as it applies *in parallel to IHL*. As declared by the ICJ, “*some rights may be exclusively matters of international humanitarian law; others may be exclusively matters of human rights law; yet others may be matters of both these branches of international law*”.⁴⁶⁹ It is largely accepted that when the latter scenario materializes, the standards of IHRL have to be interpreted in light of IHL, which in most instances constitutes the applicable *lex specialis*. At the same time, as stipulated by the UN Human Rights Committee, “*while, in respect of certain /.../ rights, more specific rules of international humanitarian law may be specially relevant for the purposes of the interpretation of /.../ rights, both spheres of law are complementary, not mutually exclusive*”.⁴⁷⁰ Thus, the two sets of legal standards — those of IHL and IHRL — both have to be taken into account in the legal evaluation of many incidents occurring in times of armed conflict. Consequently, the same set of facts can simultaneously give rise to violations of both IHL and IHRL.

It is possible for some human rights guarantees to be suspended by means of a *derogation* (Article 4 of the ICCPR, Article 15 of the ECHR) and the situation in this regard remains the same as described in previous Mission reports: the Russian Federation has not entered any derogation in the context of the current conflict whilst Ukraine maintains extensive derogations. Notably, for the present Mission report, it is noted that neither Ukraine nor the Russian Federation have entered any derogations in respect to the UNCRC.

Similarly to the previous Missions, also the present Mission recalls that States have the obligation to secure human rights of all individuals within their *jurisdiction* and that, as established under the case-law of international human rights bodies, jurisdiction is not limited to the territory of the State⁴⁷¹ but extends to the territories under the effective (*de facto*) control of the State, exercised directly or through non-State entities,⁴⁷² as well as to individuals under the specific control of the State (typically individuals in detention).⁴⁷³ Whereas the State

⁴⁶⁹ ICJ, *Legal Consequences*, *op. cit.*, para 106.

⁴⁷⁰ UN Doc CCPR/C/21/Rev.1/Add. 13, *General Comment No. 31. The Nature of the General Legal Obligation Imposed on States Parties to the Covenant*, 26 May 2004, para 11.

⁴⁷¹ ECtHR, *Al-Skeini and Others v. United Kingdom*, Application no. 55721/07, Judgement (GC), 7 July 2011, para 132.

⁴⁷² ECtHR, *Loizidou v. Turkey (preliminary objections)*, Application no. 15318/89, Judgement, 23 March 1995, para 62; *Cyprus v. Turkey*, Application no. 25781/94, Judgement (GC), 10 May 2001, para 76.

⁴⁷³ ECtHR, *Al-Skeini*, *op. cit.*, para 136. See also UN Doc. CCPR/C/CG/36, *General comment No. 36 (2018) on the right to life*, 30 October 2018, para 63.

exercising effective control over an area has the responsibility to secure to individuals within this area the full range of recognized human rights, the State exercising specific control over an individual has the obligation to secure to that individual those rights that are relevant to his/her particular situation.⁴⁷⁴

The present Mission reiterates the view expressed in the previous Mission reports that some parts of the Ukrainian territory are, or were for a certain period, under the effective control of the Russian Federation.

Consequently, while the effects of the ongoing armed conflict may pose an obstacle to the implementation of the obligations stemming from the UNCRC, the international human rights obligations are continuous and the rights under the UNCRC apply to all children at all times,⁴⁷⁵ including the current context in Ukraine. Therefore, the Russian Federation is bound by its obligations under the UNCRC in respect of any actions it undertakes in relation to the Ukrainian children both on the territory of Ukraine and on its own territory. These obligations shall be examined next.

1. The Best Interests of the Child: Scope and Application

The best interests of the child are to be the prime consideration for both Ukraine and the Russian Federation in all actions concerning children as required by Article 3(1) of the UNCRC. As the Committee on the Rights of the Child (CRC) has explained in its General Comment No. 14,⁴⁷⁶ the obligation to uphold the best interests of the child “in all actions” entails the requirement to take into account the best interests of the child as a primary consideration in every action relating to a child or children and the term “action” includes not only decisions, but also all acts, conduct, proposals, services, procedures and other measures as well as inaction and failure to act.⁴⁷⁷ Moreover, noting that a child is anyone under the age of 18 as per Article 1 of the UNCRC, the words “concerning children” in Article 3(1) of the UNCRC are to be understood to apply to all decisions and actions that directly or indirectly affect anyone under the age of 18, without discrimination.⁴⁷⁸ The term “concerning” also must be understood broadly to encompass not only the decisions and actions that have direct impact upon a child or group of children but also such affecting them despite the measure not being directed specifically at children.⁴⁷⁹

To give full effect to the principle of the best interest of the child, all provisions of the UNCRC are to be interpreted and implemented in the light of this principle and applied to a concrete case. Consequently, this principle “*should be adjusted and defined on an individual basis, according to the specific situation of the child or children concerned, taking into consideration their personal context, situation and needs*”.⁴⁸⁰ In practice, this requires that the authorities making decisions concerning children, directly or indirectly, engage in a process of assessing and weighing whether such decisions would meet the best interests of the child/children in the *particular circumstances of the child/children*.

Noting this complexity, the CRC has provided some guidance on the elements to be considered when assessing and determining the child’s best interests, as relevant to the individual situation.

⁴⁷⁴ ECtHR, *Al-Skeini*, *op. cit.*, para 137.

⁴⁷⁵ UN Doc. CRC/C/SYR/CO/5, para 4.

⁴⁷⁶ UN Doc CRC/C/GC/14, *op. cit.*, para 6.

⁴⁷⁷ *Ibidem*, paras 17-18.

⁴⁷⁸ *Ibidem*, paras 19 and 21.

⁴⁷⁹ *Ibidem*, para 20.

⁴⁸⁰ *Ibidem*, para 32.

These elements include child's views;⁴⁸¹ child's identity;⁴⁸² preservation of the family environment and maintaining relations;⁴⁸³ care, protection and safety of the child;⁴⁸⁴ situation of vulnerability;⁴⁸⁵ the child's right to health⁴⁸⁶ and the child's right to education.⁴⁸⁷ Consequently, considering all the above, it is perhaps not surprising that commentators describe the principle of the best interests of the child as having "*an important agenda-setting role which elevates children's interests to a primary and legitimate consideration in all decision-making which is about to or has impact on children*".⁴⁸⁸

The focus of the present Mission is directly impacted by the overarching obligation to have the best interests of the child as the prime consideration in all actions concerning the Ukrainian children. The Mission has seen no evidence, direct or indirect, that the changes introduced by the Russian authorities in the education system in the occupied territories and the education afforded to deported children, without any consideration to their national/ethnic culture and roots, took into consideration the best interests of the child. What is plainly evident is that Ukrainian children have been treated as if they were Russian rather than children of different ethnic, cultural, socio-political and/or linguistic roots. As reported by the HRMMU,⁴⁸⁹ the Russian Federation has imposed its legal and administrative systems, disregarding its obligations under IHL to maintain, as far as possible, the existing systems of the occupied territory, which affected children at every level, from birth registration through education and social and cultural development, to eligibility for military conscription.

In terms of registering births, obtaining Ukrainian birth certificates has become impossible and all new-borns are issued Russian birth certificates, using Russian spellings of their names and places of birth, with the Russian Federation also identified as place of birth.⁴⁹⁰ Moreover, access to basic rights, including health care, education, and social security benefits, was made contingent on Russian citizenship, thus compelling many parents to apply for the Russian citizenship to be able to merely continue working, receive social benefits and have children enrolled in schools; and noting the dependence of a child's citizenship to that of their parents, this has direct consequences for the Ukrainian children who are thus being compelled into Russian citizenship.⁴⁹¹

Turning to the provision of schooling, the legal framework for the imposition of Russian curricula across all schools in the occupied territories (see Section II.C), coupled with complete eradication of Ukrainian curricula, has been implemented through all levels of authority. Under the stated goal of complete integration of the occupied territories into the Russian educational and cultural spheres, Russia's federal state educational standard at all levels of school education provides for the spiritual and moral development and upbringing of children, adopting Russian

⁴⁸¹ *Ibidem*, paras 53-54.

⁴⁸² *Ibidem*, paras 55-57.

⁴⁸³ *Ibidem*, paras 58-70.

⁴⁸⁴ *Ibidem*, paras 71-74.

⁴⁸⁵ *Ibidem*, paras 75-76.

⁴⁸⁶ *Ibidem*, paras 77-78.

⁴⁸⁷ *Ibidem*, para 79.

⁴⁸⁸ John Eekelaar, John Tobin, J., Article 3. The Best Interests of the Child, in John Tobin (eds), *The UN Convention on the Rights of the Child. A Commentary*, Oxford University Press, 2019, p. 77.

⁴⁸⁹ OHCHR, *The Impact of the Armed Conflict and Occupation on Children's Rights in Ukraine*, 24 February 2022–31 December 2024, 21 March 2025, para 79.

⁴⁹⁰ OHCHR, *The Impact of the Armed Conflict and Occupation on Children's Rights in Ukraine*, 24 February 2022–31 December 2024, 21 March 2025, para 80.

⁴⁹¹ Ombudsman of Ukraine "Cross-Pollinated. Russia's Systemic Policy of Destroying Children's Ukrainian Identity." (2024) p. 18-19.

national values, form their Russian civic identity, instil love for Russia, and a sense of involvement in its fate.⁴⁹² The teaching materials in schools in the occupied territories have been entirely replaced by those from the Russian Federation. Thus, according to the Russian Federation’s Ministry of Education, between 2022 and 2025 more than 11 million school textbooks were delivered to schools in the occupied territories of Donetsk, Luhansk, Zaporizhzhia and Kherson Regions; these deliveries forming part of the so called “integration of re-united subjects into the educational space of the Russian Federation”.⁴⁹³ Notably, before the new teaching books from the Russian Federation, schools were still relying on Ukrainian school books, but these were heavily modified including by concealing any Ukrainian national symbols, which oftentimes pupils had to cover themselves.⁴⁹⁴

Turning to the content of the school curricula, significant changes were introduced in the 2025/2026 academic year: as from 1 September 2025, the transition began to unified textbooks on World History and the History of Russia for grades 5 to 9, which promote the concept of the “distinctiveness of Russian civilisation” and the “rejection of Eurocentrism”.⁴⁹⁵

The effects of this are further compounded by the cessation of the formal teaching of, and in, the Ukrainian language, as well as the de facto imposition of the Russian language as the sole medium for communication outside the classrooms. As of 2025, following the Order No. 729 of the Ministry of Education of the Russian Federation of 8 October 2025 “On Amendments to Certain Orders of the Ministry of Education of the Russian Federation Concerning Federal Educational Programmes of Primary General, Basic General and Secondary General Education”, the provision of Ukrainian language for primary, basic and secondary education has been removed. Thus, at the level of Russia’s federal educational standards, the Ukrainian language has been fully removed from the educational process (see detailed examination in Section II.C and D). Moreover, the undermining of Ukrainian language has become profound. For example, social media post of School No 10 of Torez (Donetsk region) on 6 June 2024 stated the following: “*Language is the verbal code of a people’s history — Denis Pushilin congratulated the residents of the Republic on Russian Language Day. The head of the region noted that over the past decade, Donbass has come to clearly understand that our native language is our great unifying force. That is precisely why the Kyiv regime fights so fiercely against the Russian language and harbours such hatred towards it. And that is precisely why we are compelled to defend it. "As long as our Russian language lives and remains free — so do we!" — Denis Pushilin emphasised.*”⁴⁹⁶

The Mission further recalls the findings of the 2023 Moscow Mechanism Mission concerning the forcible transfer and/or deportation of Ukrainian children to the Russian Federation as well as their placement in Russian families in fostering and adoption arrangements⁴⁹⁷ and notes little change both in the number of Ukrainian children subjected to this practice (see Section II) as well as its illegality under IHRL and the failure of the Russian Federation to bring to an end

⁴⁹² Regional Centre for Human Rights “Submission to the OSCE Moscow Mechanism 2026” (8 June 2026) (on file with the Mission).

⁴⁹³ Almenda “Russia’s Policy of Eradicating the Identity of Children in the TOT of Ukraine: Results for 2025” at p. 7.

⁴⁹⁴ East SOS “Violations of International Humanitarian Law Affecting Education on Ukraine (February 2022- May 2025), para 21.

⁴⁹⁵ Almenda “Russia’s Policy of Eradicating the Identity of Children in the TOT of Ukraine: Results for 2025” at p. 8.

⁴⁹⁶ ГБОУ “Школа № 10 г.о. Торез”: https://vk.com/wall-217473416_3636.

⁴⁹⁷ Veronika Bílková, Cecilie Hellestveit, Elina Šteinerte, Report on Violations and Abuses of International Humanitarian and Human Rights Law, War Crimes and Crimes Against Humanity, related to the Forcible Transfer and/or Deportation of Ukrainian Children to the Russian Federation, OSCE, Vienna, 4 May 2023 (MM Report III).

this illegal situation. In this regard, the Mission is mindful of the findings of the European Court of Human Rights (ECtHR) in 2025 that “*a continuous sequence of acts in a pattern between 2014 and 2022 aimed at removing Ukrainian children from occupied territory in Ukraine and integrating them potentially indefinitely in families or institutions in Russia has been demonstrated beyond reasonable doubt*”.⁴⁹⁸ Moreover, on 9 March 2026 the IICIU concluded that deportation and forcible transfer of Ukrainian children by Russian authorities, as well as enforced disappearances, amount to crimes against humanity.⁴⁹⁹ The present Mission shares these findings and further underscores that neither the practices of such transfer of Ukrainian children nor of their placement in fostering and adoption arrangements meets the Russian Federation’s obligations under the best interests of the child principle under Article 3 (1) of the UNCRC.

It is further important to note that Article 3(1) of the UNCRC obliges states to act in accordance with the best interests of the child not only in relation to public welfare organizations, courts of law, administrative authorities, or legislative bodies, but also private welfare institutions. The CRC has specifically emphasized that reference in Article 3(1) of the UNCRC to “public or private social welfare institutions” should not be narrowly construed or limited to social institutions *stricto sensu*. Rather, it is to encompass all institutions whose work and decisions impact on children and the realization of their rights which include not only those related to economic, social and cultural rights (e.g., care, health, environment, education, business, leisure and play, etc.), but also institutions dealing with civil rights and freedoms (e.g., birth registration, protection against violence in all settings, etc.).⁵⁰⁰ Conversely, in relation to the private social welfare institutions, these are to include “private sector organizations – either for-profit or non-profit – which play a role in the provision of services that are critical to children’s enjoyment of their rights, and which act on behalf of or alongside Government services as an alternative”.⁵⁰¹ Therefore, turning to the issue at the heart of the present Mission, it is clear that also those organizations running various youth military and patriotic organizations such as “Dvizheniye Pervykh”, “Yunarmiya”, the “Voin” Centres, and “Orlyata Rossii” are all duty-bound to consider whether their engagement with the Ukrainian children upholds the fundamental principle of the best interests of these Ukrainian children. The wide variety of activities in which these organizations engage Ukrainian children and their approaches as well as the level of compulsion they adopt in doing so has already been discussed in detail in Section II; it is further noted that the Mission saw no evidence of the best interests of the Ukrainian children being considered in the activities of these organizations.

The widespread practice of sending children to the so-called “summer camps” or “recreation camps” or “leisure camps” was already established by the 2023 OSCE Moscow Mechanism Mission,⁵⁰² and this practice has proliferated since (see also Section II). The Mission received

⁴⁹⁸ European Court of Human Rights, *Ukraine and the Netherlands v. Russia*, Applications nos. 8019/16, 43800/14, 28525/20 and 11055/22, Judgment, 9 July 2025, paras. 1588 and 1599.

⁴⁹⁹ Report of the Independent International Commission of Inquiry on Ukraine, UN Doc A/HRC/61/61 (9 March 2026).

⁵⁰⁰ UN Doc CRC/C/GC/14, *op. cit.*, para 26.

⁵⁰¹ *Ibidem*, para 26.

⁵⁰² Veronika Bílková, Cecilie Hellestveit, Elīna Šteinerte, Report on Violations and Abuses of International Humanitarian and Human Rights Law, War Crimes and Crimes Against Humanity, related to the Forcible Transfer and/or Deportation of Ukrainian Children to the Russian Federation, OSCE, Vienna, 4 May 2023 (MM Report III); OHCHR, Report on the Human Rights Situation in Ukraine (1 August 2022-31 January 2023), 24 March 2023, para 69; UN Doc. A/HRC/52/62, Report of the Independent International Commission of Inquiry on Ukraine, 15 March 2023 (IICIU Report), para 99. See also OSCE/ODIHR, *Second Interim Report on reported violations of international humanitarian law and international human rights law in Ukraine*, 14 December 2022, para 137; see

numerous testimonies of re-education taking place in these camps, with strong emphasis placed upon a pro-Russian ethos through such activities as daily compulsory raising of the Russian flag and singing of Russian national anthem, as well as the demand to speak the Russian language only.⁵⁰³ Alongside such practices, the children in these camps undergo military training which, depending on the camp, may include different military drills, sports conditioning with military elements, such as marching and use of trenches, assembly of weapons and engagement with veterans and/or active servicemen of the Russian armed forces. The camps also commonly involve “cultural visits” to local landmarks associated with WWII or the current war against Ukraine.

In all these situations, it is clear that the authorities and other actors acting on behalf of the Russian Federation, which were directed by the legislative acts and other directives issued by the relevant authorities at all levels of the Russian Federation, clearly qualify as “actions concerning children” within the meaning of Article 3 (1) of the UNCRC. It must be further recalled that the requirement encapsulated in Article 3 (1) of the UNCRC that the best interests of the child “shall be the primary consideration” eliminates the possibility of discretion as to whether children’s best interests are to be assessed.⁵⁰⁴ Therefore, the obligation to have the child’s best interests as prime consideration is not left to the discretion of a State party. This also means that the child’s best interests may not be placed on the same level as all other considerations, but stands above them as the sole primary consideration.⁵⁰⁵ This principle encompasses such elements as the child’s identity; the preservation of the family environment and maintaining relations, care, protection and safety of the child; and the child’s right to education.

Consequently the obligation to have the best interests of the child as primary consideration applies to each individual case of a child whether this concerns the issuance of a birth certificate, change of citizenship, education, prohibition of the Ukrainian language and expressions of Ukrainian identity and culture, subjecting children to membership in military youth organizations or participation in “leisure camps”, *inter alia*. Yet, the Mission did not find any evidence that assessments of what constitutes the best interests of the child are being carried out by the Russian authorities or other actors directed by them or acting on their behalf, as required by the UNCRC. Notwithstanding the peculiarities of each case, it appears that the same pattern was followed in the absolute majority of cases whereby no such assessment has been carried out. As such, the approach of the Russian authorities cannot be reconciled with the best interests of the child principle enshrined in the UNCRC. The Ukrainian children have been treated as if they were Russian and not children of different ethnic, cultural, socio-political or linguistic background, and this diametrically contravenes the Russian Federation’s obligations under Article 3 of the UNCRC.

2. Specific Rights of the Child

The Right to Identity

The right to identity in Article 8 of the UNCRC specifically includes the child’s right to preserve their own nationality, name and family relations. This is a complex right, comprised of

also Micaela Del Monte, Nefeli Barlaoura, Russia's war on Ukraine. Forcibly displaced Ukrainian children, *European Parliament Briefing*. European Parliamentary Research Service, April 2023.

⁵⁰³ See also Veronika Bílková, Cecilie Hellestveit, Elina Šteinerte, Report on Violations and Abuses of International Humanitarian and Human Rights Law, War Crimes and Crimes Against Humanity, related to the Forcible Transfer and/or Deportation of Ukrainian Children to the Russian Federation, OSCE, Vienna, 4 May 2023 (MM Report III)

⁵⁰⁴ UN Doc CCPR/C/21/Rev.1/Add. 13, *op. cit.*, para 36.

⁵⁰⁵ *Ibidem*, para 37.

numerous elements all aimed at the preservation of the characteristics unique to each child. These characteristics, in turn, collectively “provide children with an understanding of where they have come from, who they are, and the right to decide who they will become”,⁵⁰⁶ include both static elements such as child’s genetic/biological identity, family heritage or recording time spent in care as well as more dynamic attributes such as appearance, cultural, religious and political identity.⁵⁰⁷ The development of a child’s identity also is a continuous process and particularly complex for adolescents as they establish a pathway between minority and mainstream cultures.⁵⁰⁸ Therefore, undoubtedly, this is an inherently fluid concept, which evolves and develops over the time.

The obligation towards a child’s identity is two-fold: the States are to respect it (Article 8(1), UNCRC) and undertake to provide assistance and protection in instances when a child has been deprived of their identity or of its elements illegally “with a view to re-establishing speedily his or her identity” (Article 8(2), UNCRC). The latter obligation is triggered when there has been an interference with the child’s right to identity and involves a provision of an effective legal mechanism for the re-establishment of a child’s identity. Notably, Article 8 (2) of the UNCRC obliges a State to establish such a legal mechanism for the restoration of child’s identity speedily thus recognizing the special vulnerability of children, emphasizing that even the short-term denial of rights can have life-long consequences and, most importantly, that the denial of the child’s right to identity may lead to that child assuming the identity or culture into which that child has been placed illegally. Therefore, a sense of urgency is clearly justified and the onus rests with the State in question to show that it has implemented this obligation with the requisite degree of urgency.

The interference with the identity of the Ukrainian children by the Russian Federation has taken place in numerous different ways as has already been established above (see Section II and III). The Mission has received credible and consistent information of Ukrainian children becoming Russian citizens since their parents are de facto forced to adopt Russian citizenship given that all essential services, including job security, social benefits, the ability to have a bank account and even pay utility bills is linked to having Russian identification documents, which, in turn, rest upon having the Russian citizenship.⁵⁰⁹

Additional to this, the Mission recalls the findings of the 2023 Moscow Mechanism Mission regarding the simplified procedure for obtaining Russian citizenship for some categories of Ukrainian children,⁵¹⁰ which has continued and expanded to include other Ukrainian children (see also Section II.A).

All these legislative acts, combined with de facto pressure imposed upon the parents to obtain Russian citizenship which, in turn, affects the citizenship of the Ukrainian children too, not only run counter to Article 12 of the UNCRC obliging States to involve children in decision-making concerning the child or at least enable their participation and the fulfilment of a child’s right to

⁵⁰⁶ John Tobin, Jonathan Todres, Article 8. The Right to Preservation of a Child’s Identity, in John Tobin (eds), *The UN Convention on the Rights of the Child. A Commentary*, Oxford University Press, 2019, p.285.

⁵⁰⁷ *Ibidem*, p. 293.

⁵⁰⁸ UN Doc. CRC/C/GC/20, *General comment No. 20 (2016) on the implementation of the rights of the child during adolescence*, para 10.

⁵⁰⁹ See also OHCHR, Report on the Human Rights Situation in Ukraine (1 August 2022-31 January 2023), 24 March 2023, para 75; UN Doc. A/HRC/52/62, Report of the Independent International Commission of Inquiry on Ukraine, 15 March 2023 (IICIU Report), para 92.

⁵¹⁰ Veronika Bílková, Cecilie Hellestveit, Elina Steinerte, Report on Violations and Abuses of International Humanitarian and Human Rights Law, War Crimes and Crimes Against Humanity, related to the Forcible Transfer and/or Deportation of Ukrainian Children to the Russian Federation, OSCE, Vienna, 4 May 2023 (MM Report III).

be heard “*in any judicial or administrative proceedings affecting the child*”⁵¹¹ through a representative. Not doing so is also a profound violation of Article 8 of the UNCRC protecting child’s right to identity.⁵¹²

The Mission recalls the findings of the 2023 Mission⁵¹³ that the children who have been deported from Ukraine to the Russian Federation have had their right to identity seriously and repeatedly violated, with far reaching consequences for such children, by the Russian Federation which finds confirmation also in the reports of other international mechanisms.⁵¹⁴ As reiterated above (Section II.A), these deportations in took place without any consideration of the best interests of the children involved. Moreover, many such children were placed in fostering arrangements or even subjected to adoption contrary to IHRL, which have severely adverse impact on these children’s rights to identity. Notably, these children remain in these fostering and adoption arrangements and as such, their right to identity is continuously violated.

Ukrainian children’s right to identity is further constantly, consistently and systematically violated by the Russian Federation through regular schooling since these children are subject to full Russian school curricula and the exclusion of the Ukrainian language even from private communication.⁵¹⁵ The content of the school curricula (see Section II.C) has been severely altered with whole subjects that are core to the expression of Ukrainian identity, such as Ukrainian language and Ukrainian literature, completely eliminated while others, such as history, have been replaced by accounts rooted in the perception of history anchored in the official narrative of the Russian Federation, which, *inter alia*, portrays the Ukrainian language as non-existent.⁵¹⁶ Significantly, the underlying ethos of such lessons is the idea that Ukraine has always been a part of Russia and its rightful place is to be part of the Russian Federation.⁵¹⁷ Whole new subjects are introduced to which Ukrainian children are subjected, including such ones as “Spiritual and Moral Culture of Russia” (Основы духовно-нравственной культуры народов России (ОДНКНР)), which further strengthens the ideological component of education, as it shapes children’s worldview on the basis of so called “traditional values”, which in the Russian interpretation prioritizes ideological loyalty to the State.⁵¹⁸ Not only do these subjects at schools not recognize any Ukrainian component but they also actively promote allegiance to Russia and being Russian which is not compatible with the right to identity of the

⁵¹¹ See Article 12(1) of the UNCRC.

⁵¹² OHCHR, *The Impact of the Armed Conflict and Occupation on Children's Rights in Ukraine*, 24 February 2022–31 December 2024, 21 March 2025, para 80.

⁵¹³ Veronika Bílková, Cecilie Hellestveit, Elīna Šteinerte, *Report on Violations and Abuses of International Humanitarian and Human Rights Law, War Crimes and Crimes Against Humanity, related to the Forcible Transfer and/or Deportation of Ukrainian Children to the Russian Federation*, OSCE, Vienna, 4 May 2023 (MM Report III).

⁵¹⁴ Report of the Independent International Commission of Inquiry on Ukraine, UN Doc A/HRC/61/61 (9 March 2026) para 17. See further IICIU, Conference Room Paper ““I am still looking for my daughter”: crimes against humanity committed by Russian authorities against children from Ukraine” UN Doc A/HRC/61/CRP.8 (9 March 2026) paras 15, 25-35.

⁵¹⁵ OHCHR, *The Impact of the Armed Conflict and Occupation on Children's Rights in Ukraine*, 24 February 2022–31 December 2024, 21 March 2025, para 91.

⁵¹⁶ Almenda “Russia’s Policy of Eradicating the Identity of Children in the TOT of Ukraine: Results for 2025” at p. 20; Zmina, *Forcible Transfer And Deportation of Children From the Temporarily Occupied Territories of Ukraine to the Russian Federation (2023)* ; See also Regional Centre for Human Rights “Submission to the OSCE Moscow Mechanism 2026” (8 June 2026) (on file with the Mission).

⁵¹⁷ See, *inter alia*: EHRG/ISRS, *Ideological education of children in the temporarily occupied territory of Ukraine. Analytical report*, March 2023, p.15; Almenda, *The Russian System of Destroying the Identity of Children in the TOT*, 6 April 2023, pp. 3-4. Available at: <https://almenda.org/en/rosijska-sistema-znishhennya-identichnosti-ukrainskix-ditej-na-tot-sxema/>.

⁵¹⁸ See: <https://odnknr.ru/>. See further: Almenda “Russia’s Policy of Eradicating the Identity of Children in the TOT of Ukraine: Results for 2025” at p. 12.

Ukrainian children, especially their national and civic identity. Moreover, the glorification of the Russian Federation’s viewpoint on the war against Ukraine as “liberation of Ukraine” is significant. For example, a social media post by a Sports School No 11 of Donetsk region on 24 February 2026 stated that “*Four years ago, the special military operation began — for us, a liberation operation. If President of Russia Vladimir Vladimirovich Putin had not made such an important decision at that time, the Donbas that we know and love would no longer exist. The Kyiv regime, with the support of its Western “partners,” did everything to destroy us. Thanks to the support of a great country, we held on, became part of the family of Russian regions, and are now rebuilding Donbas. Our primary task is to raise the standard of living in the Donetsk People’s Republic to the all-Russian level by 2030.*”⁵¹⁹

Measures such as these are further exacerbated by the extracurricular activities by youth-military organizations (see Section II.C) and attendance of so-called “leisure camps”. There is credible evidence of military training, involving not only lessons about the military personalities of the Russian Federation but also drills and even learning how to assemble weapons, through the youth-military organizations.⁵²⁰ Similar activities further extend to the so-called “leisure camps” (see Section II.C).

The Mission considers that the measures undertaken by the Russian Federation in facilitating the granting of Russian citizenship to the Ukrainian children as well as de facto forcing their parents to obtain Russian citizenship, is *prima facie* a breach of Article 8 of the UNCRC. The profound and long-lasting effects that such de facto forced passportization is certain to have on the identities of the children are entirely incompatible with Russia’s obligations under the UNCRC.

The Mission also considers that multiple violations of this obligation have been perpetrated by the Russian authorities as Ukrainian children have been forced to accept revised school curricula, which eliminates any Ukrainian component and Ukrainian language, subjected to militarization through forced membership in variety of youth-military organizations and participation in so-called “leisure camps”.

Furthermore and finally, this Mission has found no evidence of any meaningful attempt by the Russian Federation to comply with its obligations under Article 8 (2) of the UNCRC, namely, to establish a legal mechanism for the reestablishment of the child’s identity⁵²¹ despite it being among one of the explicit recommendations of the 2023 Moscow Mechanism Mission.⁵²² Recalling that Article 8 (2) of the UNCRC requires such steps to be undertaken speedily, it is evident that it has been, and continues to be, violated by the Russian Federation.

⁵¹⁹ Спортивная школа № 11. Available at: https://vk.com/wall-189135603_15250.

⁵²⁰ See, *inter alia*: Almenda, The Russian System of Destroying the Identity of Children in the TOT, 6 April 2023, pp. 3-4. Available at: <https://almenda.org/en/rosijska-sistema-znishhennya-identichnosti-ukrainskix-ditej-na-tot-sxema/>; Yale School of Public Health, Russia’s systematic program for the re-education & adoption of Ukraine’s children, 14 February 2023. Available at: <https://hub.conflictobservatory.org/portal/sharing/rest/content/items/97f919ccfe524d31a241b53ca44076b8/data>; Tetiana Fedosiuk, The Stolen Children. How Russia Attempts to Kidnap Ukraine’s Future. *Analysis*, February 2023. Available at: https://icds.ee/wp-content/uploads/dlm_uploads/2023/02/ICDS_Analysis_The_Stolen_Children_Tetiana_Fedosiuk_February_2023.pdf.

⁵²¹ See also OHCHR, Report on the Human Rights Situation in Ukraine (1 August 2022-31 January 2023), 24 March 2023, para 70.

⁵²² Veronika Bílková, Cecilie Hellestveit, Elina Šteinerte, Report on Violations and Abuses of International Humanitarian and Human Rights Law, War Crimes and Crimes Against Humanity, related to the Forcible Transfer and/or Deportation of Ukrainian Children to the Russian Federation, OSCE, Vienna, 4 May 2023 (MM Report III).

The Right to Family

The child's right to family is closely linked to the child's right to identity and it broadly encompasses the right not to be separated from parents (Article 9 of the UNCRC), the right to family reunification (Article 10 of the UNCRC) as well as the right to family environment, including adoption (Articles 20 and 21 of the UNCRC). Cumulatively these provisions establish that a State can only separate a child from his/her parents if that is required by the best interests of the child. Thus, the UNCRC recognizes that the family is a "*fundamental group of society and the natural environment for the growth and well-being of its members and particularly children*"⁵²³ and the CRC clearly states that "*preventing family separation and preserving family unit are important components of the child protection system*".⁵²⁴ Consequently all authorities are required to act in a way that would preserve the unity of the family as much as possible since "*given the gravity of the impact on the child of separation from his or her parents, such separation should only occur as a last resort measure, as when the child is in danger of experiencing imminent harm or when otherwise necessary; separation should not take place if less intrusive measures could protect the child*".⁵²⁵

This is supported by the UN Guidelines for the Alternative Care⁵²⁶ which seek to ensure that children are not placed in alternative care unnecessarily, underlying that "*the family being the fundamental group of society and the natural environment for the growth, well-being and protection of children, efforts should primarily be directed to enabling the child to remain in or return to the care of his/her parents, or when appropriate, other close family members*".⁵²⁷ It is important to recall that these Guidelines continue to apply in situations of emergency arising from natural and man-made disasters, including international and non-international armed conflicts, as well as foreign occupation⁵²⁸ and therefore are of particular relevance to the Mission. Noting the exceptionality of separation of children from their families, the Guidelines underline that all decisions concerning alternative care must be made on a case-by-case basis and grounded in the best interests of the child,⁵²⁹ which echo the views of the UNCRC.⁵³⁰

To further the aims of Article 9 of the UNCRC, Article 10 of the UNCRC envisages the right to family reunification which requires States to facilitate the family reunification in a positive, humane, and expeditious manner.⁵³¹ Thus, the child's right to reunification with the family encapsulated in Article 10 of the UNCRC creates a presumption and expectation that States will act in good faith to facilitate the reunification of children with their parents and failure to do so carry a heavy burden to justify such a decision.⁵³²

Further, turning to the adoption, Article 21 of the UNCRC require that when adoption is being considered, the best interests of the child are not just a primary consideration but a paramount consideration, meaning that the best interests of the child is the determining factor when

⁵²³ UNCRC, Preamble.

⁵²⁴ UN Doc. CRC/C/GC/14, *op. cit.*, para 60.

⁵²⁵ UN Doc. CRC/C/GC/14, *op. cit.*, para 61.

⁵²⁶ UN Doc. A/RES/64/142, *Guidelines for the Alternative Care of Children*, 24 February 2010, annex.

⁵²⁷ *Ibidem*, annex., para 3.

⁵²⁸ *Ibidem*, annex., para 153.

⁵²⁹ *Ibidem*, annex., para 6.

⁵³⁰ UN Doc. CRC/C/GC/14, *op. cit.*, paras 60-65.

⁵³¹ See also the 1975 Final Act of the Conference on Security and Cooperation in Europe (Helsinki Accords) (1975) which requires States to deal with family reunification applications in a positive and humanitarian spirit and as expeditiously as possible.

⁵³² Jason Pobjoy, John Tobin, Article 10. The Right to Family Reunification, in John Tobin (eds), *The UN Convention on the Rights of the Child. A Commentary*, Oxford University Press, 2019, pp. 343-369; p. 369.

adoption is being considered.⁵³³ Moreover, subparagraphs (a) to (e) of Article 21 impose compulsory minimum procedural safeguards, including an obligation to ensure that the adoption is authorized only by competent authorities which in turn must determine this in accordance with applicable law and on the basis of all pertinent and reliable information, including ascertaining of the status of the child's parents, relatives and legal guardians and their consent,⁵³⁴ as well as in case of inter-country adoption, it is incumbent to ascertain that a child cannot be cared for in a suitable manner in the child's country of origin.⁵³⁵

The Mission reiterates the findings of the 2023 Moscow Mechanism Mission⁵³⁶ in respect to the large number of Ukrainian children who have been deported, separated from their parents at filtration points, as well as children not being returned from the so-called "leisure camps" and Russian authorities not only failing to assist with the family reunifications but in fact hindering them. As concluded by the IICIU on 9 March 2026 "*the relocation of children has generally not been temporary. In the majority of cases, Russian authorities have not facilitated the return of the children to their families or country. On the contrary, they have taken measures aimed at their long-term placement in the Russian Federation through foster placement or adoption.*"⁵³⁷

The Mission also reiterates the findings of the 2023 Moscow Mechanism Mission concerning the placement of Ukrainian children in foster families and being adopted. All these measures taken by the Russian authorities are serious violations of these children's right to family and now constitute an on-going violation by Russia. The Mission associates with the findings of the IICIU of 9 March 2026 that "*The coercive environment surrounding the deportations or transfers, the indefinite nature of the placements in the Russian Federation, as well as the considerable difficulties to find their family and travel back to Ukraine, make the situation of the children in the Russian Federation to amount to a deprivation of liberty. Moreover, adoption has far-reaching implications for a child and drastically diminishes the prospect for a child to return and reunite with their family. Russian authorities have thus committed enforced disappearances of the deported or transferred children, which have been widespread and systematic, perpetrated pursuant to policy, and amount to a crime against humanity. They also constitute human rights violations.*"⁵³⁸

The Mission concludes that multiple and overlapping violations of children's rights under Articles 9, 10 and 21 of the UNCRC pertaining to family unity of the child have taken place because of the Russian Federation's practice of deporting children from Ukraine as well as their placement in fostering arrangements and subjecting to adoption. Alongside the *prima facie* breach of the right to family unity arising in every case when a child is separated from their parents unnecessarily, the Russian Federation has done nothing to facilitate the reunification of

⁵³³ UN Doc. CRC/C/GC/14, *op. cit.*, para 38.

⁵³⁴ UNCRC, Article 21 (a).

⁵³⁵ UNCRC, Article 21 (b).

⁵³⁶ Veronika Bílková, Cecilie Hellestveit, Elīna Šteinerte, Report on Violations and Abuses of International Humanitarian and Human Rights Law, War Crimes and Crimes Against Humanity, related to the Forcible Transfer and/or Deportation of Ukrainian Children to the Russian Federation, OSCE, Vienna, 4 May 2023 (MM Report III).

⁵³⁷ IICIU, Conference Room Paper "'I am still looking for my daughter': crimes against humanity committed by Russian authorities against children from Ukraine" UN Doc A/HRC/61/CRP.8 (9 March 2026) paras 15.

⁵³⁸ Report of the Independent International Commission of Inquiry on Ukraine, UN Doc A/HRC/61/61 (9 March 2026) para 17; see further IICIU, Conference Room Paper "'I am still looking for my daughter': crimes against humanity committed by Russian authorities against children from Ukraine" UN Doc A/HRC/61/CRP.8 (9 March 2026) paras 15.

families and in fact actively interfered with such reunifications thus violating its obligations under Articles 9 and 10 of the UNCRC.

The Right to Education

Closely linked to the child's right to identity is the child's right to education, set out in Article 28 of the UNCRC, coupled with the stipulations concerning the aims of education as set out in Article 29 of the UNCRC. Particularly significant for the purposes of the present investigation is Article 29(1) (c) of the UNCRC which requires that the child's education is directed towards the "*development of respect for child's parents, his or her own cultural identity, language and values, for the national values of the country in which the child is living, the country from which he or she may originate, and for civilisations different from his or her own*". Therefore, the obligation of a State vis-à-vis a child's education does not stop at the provision of education *per se* but, by virtue of prescription in Article 29 of the UNCRC, extends to the quality and content of education which, in turn, has a profound impact upon the formation of child's identity.⁵³⁹

The Mission received consistent accounts that the Ukrainian children are subjected to the full unaltered standard Russian curriculum, which eliminate any elements of Ukrainian culture, language and national values of Ukraine (see Section II) thus clearly violating their right to education.⁵⁴⁰ It is particularly significant that parents of the Ukrainian children have de facto no possibility to refuse to send their children to these schools (see Sections II and IV).⁵⁴¹ This further extends to the wide variety of extracurricular activities and especially activities of the youth-military organizations and "leisure camps". It is therefore evident that the approach to education of the Ukrainian children by the Russian authorities violates these children's right to education as set out in Articles 28 and 29 of the UNCRC.

The Right to Information

Similarly to the obligation to ensure the right to education, a child's right to information set out in Article 17 of the UNCRC obliges States to "*ensure that the child has access to information and material from a diversity of national and international sources, especially those aimed at the promotion of his or her social, spiritual and moral well-being and physical and mental health*". This obligation also extends to digital forms of information, and the CRC has particularly requested States to ensure access to age-appropriate, diverse content for all children, including in a language a child can understand.⁵⁴²

The Mission received consistent reports concerning excessive interference by the Russian authorities with the Ukrainian children's right to information. This stems not only from the provision of the educational books which present the official narrative of the Russian Federation, especially as it concerns history and the place of Ukraine in the world, but also from the concerted efforts by the Russian authorities to eliminate Ukrainian books and literature from

⁵³⁹UN Doc. CRC/GC/2001/1, *General comment No.1 (2001). Article 29 (1): The Aims of Education*, Annex IX, para 2.

⁵⁴⁰ OHCHR, *The Impact of the Armed Conflict and Occupation on Children's Rights in Ukraine*, 24 February 2022–31 December 2024, 21 March 2025, paras 89-93; See further, *inter alia*, EHRG/ISRS, *Ideological education of children in the temporarily occupied territory of Ukraine. Analytical report*, March 2023.

⁵⁴¹ OHCHR, *The Impact of the Armed Conflict and Occupation on Children's Rights in Ukraine*, 24 February 2022–31 December 2024, 21 March 2025, paras 90-91.

⁵⁴² UN Doc. CRC/C/GC/25, *General comment No. 25 (2021) on children's rights in relation to the digital environment*, para 52; UN Doc. CRC/C/GC/20, *General comment No. 20 (2016) on the implementation of the rights of the child during adolescence*, paras 47-48.

public and private circulation.⁵⁴³ Further, the access to the digital environment is severely limited and children do not have access to diverse and good-quality information online, including content independent of commercial or political interests.⁵⁴⁴ The Mission therefore concludes that the right to information of Ukrainian children under Article 17 of the UNCRC is violated.

The Right to Rest, Leisure, Play, Recreation and Participation in Cultural Life and Arts

The child's right to rest, leisure, play, recreation and participation in cultural life and arts, set out in Article 31 of the UNCRC and its proper implementation also has a profound impact upon the child's identity. The CRC has particularly noted the importance of participation in cultural life emphasizing that children "*inherit and experience the cultural and artistic life of their family, community and society, and through that process, they discover and forge their own sense of identity and, in turn, contribute to the stimulation and sustainability of cultural life and traditional arts*".⁵⁴⁵ It is important to recall that these activities cannot be imposed upon a child. Indeed, as stressed by the CRC, "*compulsory or enforced games and sports or compulsory involvement in a youth organization, for example, do not constitute recreation*".⁵⁴⁶

The Mission has received several consistent reports concerning the allegations of violations of children's rights under Article 31 of the UNCRC which have been detailed above (see Section II.D). The educational system to which Ukrainian children are subjected is significantly militarized, which extends to their leisure time as part of the mainstream education and/or an after-school activity,⁵⁴⁷ bearing the hallmarks of "compulsory or enforced games" as stipulated by the CRC. Moreover, there is significant evidence that children are pressured to join military-patriotic youth organizations — through widespread and systematic use of a system of direct and indirect pressure and incentives — and that the activities in which children are involved by these youth organizations do not constitute recreation as stipulated by the CRC.

In terms of the provision for participation in cultural life, this is limited to the cultural life of the Russian Federation rather than "*cultural and artistic life of their family, community and society*" as required by Article 31 of the UNCRC.⁵⁴⁸ The Mission thus considers that the children's rights under Article 31 of the UNCRC have been violated.

⁵⁴³ OHCHR, *The Impact of the Armed Conflict and Occupation on Children's Rights in Ukraine*, 24 February 2022–31 December 2024, 21 March 2025, para 91; East SOS "Violations of International Humanitarian Law Affecting Education on Ukraine (February 2022- May 2025)", paras 37-40.

⁵⁴⁴ Committee on the Rights of the Child, Concluding observations on the combined sixth and seventh periodic reports of the Russian Federation, UN Doc CRC/C/RUS/CO/6-7 (1 March 2024), at para 22 (b).

⁵⁴⁵ UN Doc. CRC/C/GC/17, *General comment No. 17 (2013) on the right of the child to rest, leisure, play, recreational activities, cultural life and the arts (art. 31)*, para 11.

⁵⁴⁶ UN Doc. CRC/C/GC/17, *General comment No. 17 (2013) on the right of the child to rest, leisure, play, recreational activities, cultural life and the arts (art. 31)*, para 14 (d).

⁵⁴⁷ See, *inter alia*, EHRG/ISRS, *Ideological education of children in the temporarily occupied territory of Ukraine. Analytical report*, March 2023; Almenda, *The Russian System of Destroying the Identity of Children in the TOT*, 6 April 2023. Available at: <https://almenda.org/en/rosijska-sistema-znishhennya-identichnosti-ukrainskix-ditej-na-tot-sxema/>.

⁵⁴⁸ See, *inter alia*, Yale School of Public Health, *Russia's systematic program for the re-education & adoption of Ukraine's children*, 14 February 2023. Available at: <https://hub.conflictobservatory.org/portal/sharing/rest/content/items/97f919ccfe524d31a241b53ca44076b8/data> (Yale Report I); Tetiana Fedosiuk, *The Stolen Children. How Russia Attempts to Kidnap Ukraine's Future. Analysis*, February 2023. Available at: https://icds.ee/wp-content/uploads/dlm_uploads/2023/02/ICDS_Analysis_The_Stolen_Children_Tetiana_Fedosiuk_February_2023.pdf.

The Right to Thought, Conscience and Religion

Article 14 of the UNCRC protects the child’s right to thought, conscience which also presumes the right of the child to choose own religion.⁵⁴⁹ Moreover, “States parties should ensure that children are not penalized for their religion or beliefs or have their future opportunities in any other way restricted. The exercise of children’s right to manifest their religion or beliefs in the digital environment may be subject only to limitations that are lawful, necessary and proportionate”.⁵⁵⁰

The Mission received numerous accounts of the violations of the right to thought, conscience and religion of the Ukrainian children in Russia.⁵⁵¹ These include Ukrainian children who have been placed in shelters run by the ROC being baptized without the consent of their legal guardians or being properly consulted.⁵⁵² Furthermore, when placed in such shelters or centres, the Ukrainian children are subjected to same educational programmes as mainstream schools (see Section II) with the addition of religious component which presents the ROC as the only “right” choice, diminishing the very existence of the Ukrainian Orthodox church.⁵⁵³ Noting the split of the Ukrainian Orthodox Church from Moscow Patriarchate in May 2022,⁵⁵⁴ it is clear that the two churches are separate identities. The Mission also received reports of priests attending regular schools and supporting activities of the youth military organizations, and thus being actively involved in the military-patriotic education and activities of Ukrainian children.⁵⁵⁵ All these cannot be reconciled with the freedom of thought and conscience protected by Article 14 of the UNCRC, and the Mission accordingly concludes that the right to freedom of thought, conscience and religion of the Ukrainian children under Russian jurisdiction as set out in Article 14 of the UNCRC has been violated.

The Right to Health

Article 24 of the UNCRC recognizes the right of every child to the highest attainable standard of health and to this end, it is crucial to underscore that this right also encompasses mental health provision as well.⁵⁵⁶ The obligation imposed by Article 24 of the UNCRC upon States is recognized to include an obligation to respect, protect and fulfil the child’s right to health⁵⁵⁷ and the CRC has recognized the particularly negative effects of armed conflict upon the health of

⁵⁴⁹ Sylvie Langlaude Done, John Tobin, Article 14. The Right to Freedom of Thought, Conscience, and Religion, in John Tobin (eds), *The UN Convention on the Rights of the Child. A Commentary*, OUP, 2019, p. 489.

⁵⁵⁰ UN Doc. CRC/C/GC/25, *General comment No. 25 (2021) on children’s rights in relation to the digital environment*, para 63.

⁵⁵¹ See, *inter alia*, Tetiana Fedosiuk, *The Stolen Children. How Russia Attempts to Kidnap Ukraine’s Future. Analysis*, February 2023 Available at: [ICDS Analysis The Stolen Children Tetiana Fedosiuk February 2023.pdf](#) p. 8; Human Rights Centre ZMINA, *Forced displacement and deportation of children from the temporarily occupied territories of Ukraine to the Russian Federation, Analytical note*, April 2023 pp. 24-25.

⁵⁵² Regional Centre for Human Rights “Submission to the OSCE Moscow Mechanism 2026” (8 June 2026) (on file with the Mission).

⁵⁵³ Regional Centre for Human Rights “Submission to the OSCE Moscow Mechanism 2026” (8 June 2026) (on file with the Mission).

⁵⁵⁴ *Постанова Собору Української Православної Церкви від 27 травня 2022 року*, published on the Facebook p. of the Ukrainian Orthodox Church. See also Moscow-led Ukrainian Orthodox Church breaks ties with Russia, *Reuters*, 28 May 2022.

⁵⁵⁵ See, for example, Human Rights Centre ZMINA, *Forced displacement and deportation of children from the temporarily occupied territories of Ukraine to the Russian Federation, Analytical note*, April 2023

⁵⁵⁶ UN Doc. CRC/C/GC/15, *General comment No. 15 (2013) on the right of the child to the enjoyment of the highest attainable standard of health (art. 24)*, para 7.

⁵⁵⁷ *Ibidem*, para 71.

children.⁵⁵⁸ The Mission has serious reservations about the profoundly negative effects that the practices of indoctrination and militarization by the Russian Federation have upon the physical and mental well-being of the Ukrainian children, and especially of the long-lasting effects of these measures. The Mission received reports of children being profoundly confused and upset by what they are taught as part of the regular school curricula delivered in the occupied territories and note the long-term rehabilitation needed by children who have returned to Ukraine to counter the effects of these measures.⁵⁵⁹ The Mission therefore concludes that violations of Russia's obligations under Article 24 of the UNCRC are very likely.

The Right Not to Be Recruited

The Russian Federation is also a State party to the Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child on the involvement of children in armed conflict⁵⁶⁰ since 2008 which, *inter alia*, obliges the Russian Federation to ensure that members of its armed forces who have not attained the age of 18 years do not take a direct part in hostilities (Article 1) and that such persons are not compulsorily recruited into its armed forces (Article 2).

While the Mission did not come across any reports of children under the age of 18 taking a direct part in hostilities, the Mission was informed of numerous instances which give rise to concerns with the compatibility of the Russian Federation's actions with its obligations under Article 1 of the Optional Protocol. The Mission received testimony from Ukrainian boys at the age of 16-17 being sent notices concerning compulsory conscription to take place at the age of 18.⁵⁶¹ While notices would generally be sent to all boys before their 18th birthday, a consistent pattern appears to indicate that the Ukrainian boys are particularly targeted with such "early" notices and the requirement to report to the conscription office, which has prompted many Ukrainian boys to flee from the occupied territories.⁵⁶²

Moreover, the Mission has serious concerns about the extensive network of so-called military-patriotic youth organizations across the occupied territories and the Russian Federation in which membership is effectively compulsory (see Section II).

Additionally, the regular schooling across the occupied territories and the Russian Federation now incorporates very strong militarization not only through formal curricula but also through various additional activities (see Section II). For example, on 20 February 2026, as part of the annual All-Russian information and advocacy campaign of the Ministry of Defence of the Russian Federation "There Is Such a Profession – to Defend the Motherland," and also in the lead-up to the celebration of "Defender of the Fatherland Day" on 23 February 2026, a school in Berdyansk, Zaporizhiye district, held a screening of informational video clips "*to form among senior pupils an understanding of the military profession and the pathways to obtaining a military education, and of fostering patriotism and respect for soldiers and officers*".⁵⁶³ Along similar lines, Secondary School No 18 of Luhansk region on 19 February 2026 reported that "*The Assistant to the Head of Preparation and Conscription of Citizens for Military Service of the Military Commissariat of Luhansk, K.K. Baranov, together with a representative of the 176th BRS, Junior Lieutenant S.A. Popov, and graduates of the Military Academy of*

⁵⁵⁸ *Ibidem*, para 5.

⁵⁵⁹ Testimonies 1 and 2; Interviews 2, 4, 5, 6 and 11 (on file with the Mission).

⁵⁶⁰ Adopted by GA Res A/RES/54/263 (25 May 2000).

⁵⁶¹ Interviews 2, 4, 9, 10 (on file with the Mission).

⁵⁶² Testimonies 5 and 6 (on file with the Mission).

⁵⁶³ Средняя школа №8 г. Бердянск: https://vk.com/wall-219986891_447.

*Communications (St. Petersburg), conducted a career guidance lecture for students in grades 10–11. The lecture covered the prospects of entering higher military educational institutions, study opportunities, and career advancement for military personnel”.*⁵⁶⁴ Another example of the social media post from Genitjeskaya school No 2 (Kherson region) about the lecture held for 11th-grade students “*delivered by instructor Junior Sergeant Gvozidkov Alexander Sergeyeovich from the Contract Military Service Selection Point. The event became an integral part of career guidance work and helped schoolchildren better understand the prospects and opportunities of serving in the Armed Forces of the Russian Federation. Sergeant Gvozidkov A.S. described in detail to the students what opportunities open up for young people who choose contract service in the Armed Forces. The lecture served not only as a source of valuable information, but also as an opportunity to reflect on the future and on professional”.*⁵⁶⁵

Moreover, the social media platforms of many schools contain posts advertising joining of armed forces as of age of 18, with detailed information on application procedures as well as “benefits” of joining such as salaries and social guarantees, including through professional video-adverts.⁵⁶⁶

The Mission therefore is seriously concerned that while perhaps children under the age of 18 are not taking part in active hostilities, the concerted efforts of their recruitment into armed forces not only start at school but are in fact an integral part of schooling.

C. UNDER INTERNATIONAL CRIMINAL LAW

1. Preliminary Remarks

The Mission recalls that, under its mandate, it is required to carry out a legal assessment also in the light of international criminal law. For the reasons set out in the introduction, this Mission is not able to take a position on the criminal responsibility of specific individuals, but is able to put forward certain conclusions regarding the so-called ‘objective’ elements of crimes under international law, which may have been committed in connection with the Russian Federation’s policy of indoctrination and militarization of Ukrainian children.

In this regard, it should be noted that international criminal law criminalizes only the most serious violations of international humanitarian law and international human rights law. This criminalization has expanded over time, and the Mission, in line with the previous MM Reports,⁵⁶⁷ considers that as of 20 February 2014, marking the start of the events under scrutiny, the list of crimes set out in the Statute of the International Criminal Court accurately reflects customary international law. The fact that the Russian Federation has not ratified the Statute is therefore irrelevant; but it may nevertheless be worth reminding that the drafters of the Statute also drew on the definitions of crimes set out in international conventions or resolutions of the UN Security Council binding on the Russian Federation.⁵⁶⁸

⁵⁶⁴ ГБОУ ЛНР "Луганская средняя школа № 18" : https://vk.com/wall-221352224_1000.

⁵⁶⁵ Геничская школа №2 Генического района (Kherson region) on 13 March 2024 : https://vk.com/wall-218888787_161.

⁵⁶⁶ See, for example, Vladimirovskaya school No 1 (ГБОУ "Владимировская школа №1 Волновахского м.о") (Donetsk region) on 22 Dec 2025: https://vk.com/wall-216706002_779; Demino-Aleksandrovsky Secondary School (ГБОУ ЛНР "Демино-Александровский УВК") (Luhansk region) on 26 March 2025: https://vk.com/wall-223089606_266; Antratsitovskaya School No 8 (ГБОУ ЛНР "Антрацитовская основная школа №8") (Luhansk region) on 25 November 2024: https://vk.com/wall-221318726_258.

⁵⁶⁷ MM Report II, p. 12; MM Report III, p. 10; MM Report IV, p. 13; MM Report V, p. 9.

⁵⁶⁸ Charter of the International Military Tribunal, annex to the Agreement for the prosecution and punishment of the major war criminals of the European Axis (“Nuremberg Tribunal”, 1945); Geneva Conventions (1949);

International law does not prohibit a State from criminalizing, under its domestic law, other violations of international humanitarian and human rights law, provided that such offences meet the conditions of foreseeability and non-retroactivity that are general principles of criminal law and are protected by international human rights instruments. The Mission, for its part, will identify possible legal classifications under customary international law only, and in the light of the definitions set out in the Statute of the International Criminal Court.

The mandate of this Mission covers all Ukrainian children living in the Ukrainian territories occupied by the Russian Federation; it also covers children who were forcibly transferred to or within these territories and those who were deported to the Russian Federation. With regard to the latter, the third MM Mission on Ukraine concluded that forcible transfer and/or deportation of Ukrainian children to the occupied territories and to the territory of the Russian Federation “may amount to a crime against humanity of ‘deportation or forcible transfer of population’”.⁵⁶⁹ Since then, the IICIU established by the UN Human Rights Council has affirmed “the existence of a pre-established policy conceived and executed under the leadership of the highest level of the Russian Federation state apparatus” for deportations and transfers of Ukrainian children from the occupied territories, and concluded that “Russian authorities have deported and forcibly transferred children as crime against humanity”.⁵⁷⁰ On the basis of the information compiled, this Mission endorses this conclusion.

2. Crime Against Humanity in the Form of Persecution

Information gathered in this report demonstrates that the Russian Federation has adopted a policy on school and extracurricular education in the occupied territories, which has been systematically organized within the framework of Russian education law and has been progressively implemented in the occupied regions in an increasingly strict manner over the years (see Section II.C. and D). Furthermore, the facts set out in the previous sections reveal a significant element of discrimination within this public policy towards the Ukrainian national or ethnic group, an element that is all the more pronounced when families attempt to maintain a connection with the Ukrainian language and culture, or express views contrary to the official line of the occupying authorities. This discriminatory element is underpinned by various forms of coercion directed at children, their parents, families and their teachers. Such an overarching policy relating to the education sector results in multiple violations of the fundamental rights of its members and now has widespread consequences, thus pointing the legal analysis towards a possible classification as persecution as a crime against humanity.

For certain acts to be classified as crimes against humanity, they must appear on the list of specified acts included in the definition (so-called underlying acts) and be committed as part of a “a widespread or systematic attack directed against any civilian population” (the so-called contextual element).⁵⁷¹ The terms “attack directed against any civilian population” is defined in the Rome Statute as “a course of conduct involving the multiple commission of acts referred to in paragraph 1 against any civilian population, pursuant to or in furtherance of a State or organizational policy to commit such attack”. Among the underlying acts, the one of

Convention on the Non-Applicability of Statutory Limitations to War Crimes and Crimes against Humanity (1968); Additional Protocol I and II to the Geneva Conventions (1977); UNSC Res. 808 and 827 (1993), UNSC Res. 955 (1994).

⁵⁶⁹ MM Report III, p. 67.

⁵⁷⁰ UN Human Rights Council, “‘I am still looking for my daughter’: crimes against humanity committed by Russian authorities against children of Ukraine”, UN Doc. A/HRC/61/CRP.8, 9 March 2026, para. 65, and Report of the Independent International Commission of Inquiry on Ukraine, A/HRC/61/61, 9 March 2026, para. 14.

⁵⁷¹ ICC Statute, Article 7(1).

persecution requires that it be directed “against any identifiable group or collectivity on political, racial, national, ethnic, cultural, religious, gender as defined in paragraph 3, or other grounds that are universally recognized as impermissible under international law”, and that it must be committed “in connection with any act referred to in this paragraph or any crime within the jurisdiction of the Court ”.⁵⁷² Lastly, the term “persecution” is defined as “the intentional and severe deprivation of fundamental rights contrary to international law by reason of the identity of the group or collectivity”.⁵⁷³

The practices covered by this report clearly form part of a “state policy” based on a specific legislative framework, the implementation of which is now in effect throughout the occupied territories, as confirmed by reports from international organizations, NGOs, and information provided to the experts by the Ukrainian authorities, and confirmed by interviews with witnesses (see Section II.D). Moreover, the systematic nature and widespread effects of this policy are guaranteed by the regulatory and administrative framework described (see Section III), and its effective implementation through the Russian public schools and the youth organizations whose provisions of extracurricular activities complements what is delivered as part of the regular education system. Together, both sets of activities form an integral part of a broader system aimed at the indoctrination and militarization of Ukrainian children by the Russian Federation, administered, delivered and funded by a multitude of State and State-affiliated actors controlled directly or indirectly by the Russian Federation.

As for the discriminatory aspect of such State policy, it is worth noting here that the ICJ, in its judgement of 31 January 2024, considered the changes of school education in Crimea as applying to “all children of Ukrainian ethnic origin whose parents wished them to be instructed in the Ukrainian language”, that they were intended to produce a “structural change”, and thus constituted a “pattern of racial discrimination”.⁵⁷⁴ These terms imply both a systematic element and a discriminatory element in the educational policies implemented by the Russian Federation in occupied Crimea. The information gathered by this mission shows that both aspects are now found throughout the occupied territories (see Section II.C and D).

This education policy, which promotes propaganda in support of the Russian authorities’ official political positions, a particular view of Russian culture and history, and military activities in support of Russian occupation, with a view to conscription or supposedly voluntary enlistment in the army, contravenes a number of provisions of international humanitarian law and international human rights law (see Section V.A and B). Given the considerable number of Ukrainian children integrated into the Russian school system in the occupied territories and those deported to the Russian Federation, this leads to a multitude of violations of fundamental rights of children which, in view of their age and the special protection owed to them under international law, may be regarded as “severe” (see Section V.B).

As for the “connection” element required under the Rome Statute with other underlying acts or other crimes within the ICC jurisdiction, it appears in several forms. Firstly, the system of education imposed on Ukrainian children in the occupied territories or on forcibly transferred and/or deported children is a consequence of the aggression committed by the Russian Federation against Ukraine, and therefore with the crime of aggression. Secondly, there is a connection with the war crimes and the crime against humanity of deportation and forcible

⁵⁷² ICC Statute, Article 7(1)(h).

⁵⁷³ ICC Statute, Article 7(2)(g).

⁵⁷⁴ ICJ, *Application of the International Convention for the Suppression of the Financing of Terrorism and of the International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination*, judgement, 31 January 2024, *ICJ Report 2024*, p. 204, para. 369.

transfer of children, since those children who have not yet returned have been integrated into this system. Thirdly, the imposition of the Russian education system and the identified pattern of discrimination were accompanied by other acts of violence, such as murder, torture, enforced disappearance, the deprivation of liberty of a number of civilians, including children, their parents and their teachers, and destruction of properties such as schools, libraries and books providing access to the Ukrainian language and culture (see Section IV).⁵⁷⁵ These acts will be discussed in more detail below, insofar as, taken individually, they may be classified as war crimes, while at the same time and for the most serious among them falling within the definition of a crime against humanity.

For these reasons the Mission concludes that the laws and practices implemented by the Russian Federation in the education sector in the occupied territories and in Russia, aimed at indoctrinating and militarizing children of Ukrainian nationality and/or ethnicity, may amount to a crime against humanity in the form of persecution.

3. War Crimes

It should be recalled at the outset of this subsection that the ongoing conflict between the Russian Federation and Ukraine is an international armed conflict and that the acquisition of Russian citizenship, when it occurred, could not and has not deprived Ukrainian civilians in the hands of the Russian Federation of their status as protected persons. Consequently, the war crimes that may be committed are those codified in Article 8(2)(a) and 8(2)(b) of the ICC Statute.

With regard to the group of Ukrainian children who are alleged to have been forcibly transferred or deported to the Russian Federation, the acts in question should be classified as the war crime of “unlawful deportation or transfer or unlawful confinement”, as defined in Article 8(2)(a)(vii) of the ICC Statute. In this respect, the third MM mission on Ukraine concluded that certain cases of “non-consensual evacuations, transfers and prolonged displacement of Ukrainian children” by the Russian Federation amount to war crimes.⁵⁷⁶ This Mission fully endorses this conclusion and reiterates it. It must however and regrettably also underline that, given that the periods of displacement have been considerably prolonged for a large number of missing children and without any justification, the likelihood that such crimes were committed is much higher now, and on a larger scale. It is also worth recalling that, on 17 March 2023, ICC Pre-Trial Chamber II issued two arrest warrants pertaining to the forcible transfer or deportation of Ukrainian children as war crimes, against the President Putin and the Commissioner Ms. Lvova-Belova.⁵⁷⁷

Furthermore, the information gathered by the experts on this mission points to a high number of incidents that occurred throughout the period under review, in various locations within the occupied territories, which are related to the coercion exercised against children, their families and their teachers (see Sections II.C.1. and IV). Subject to a more detailed examination of the circumstances of each case, these may be classified as the crimes of wilful killing (ICC Statute, Article 8(2)(a)(i)), torture or inhuman treatment (Article 8(2)(a)(ii)), wilfully causing great suffering or serious injury to body or health (Article 8(2)(a)(iii)), extensive destruction and

⁵⁷⁵ As for places, buildings and objects dedicated to Ukrainian culture, see Ombudsman of Ukraine, *Cross-Pollinated – Russia’s Systemic Policy of Destroying Children’s Ukrainian Identity*, 2024, p. 31-34.

⁵⁷⁶ MM Report III, p. 76.

⁵⁷⁷ See, ICC website. Available at: <https://www.icc-cpi.int/situations/ukraine> and “ICC judges issue arrest warrants against Vladimir Vladimirovich Putin and Maria Alekseyevna Lvova-Belova”, ICC Press Release”, 17 March 2023.

appropriation of property (Article 8(2)(a)(iv)), and compelled service in the forces of a hostile Power (Article 8(2)(a)(v)).

With regard to enforced service imposed on a protected person against his or her own country, the ICC Statute contains two offences: “Compelling a prisoner of war or other protected person to serve in the forces of a hostile Power” (Article 8(2)(a)(v)) and “Compelling the nationals of the hostile party to take part in the operations of war directed against their own country (...)” (Article 8(2)(b)(xv)). According to the Elements of crimes, the first constitutive element is, respectively, that “[t]he perpetrator coerced one or more persons, by act or threat, to take part in military operations against that person’s own country or forces or otherwise serve in the forces of a hostile power” and “[t]he perpetrator coerced one or more persons by act or threat to take part in military operations against that person’s own country or forces”.

This mission has not been made aware of any cases of Ukrainian children who have been conscripted into the Russian armed forces, whether the child is under the age of fifteen or under the age of eighteen. However, conscription is imposed on them upon reaching the age of 18 if they have Russian citizenship, which has become the most common situation under Russian law — and in violation of IHL. The circumstances under which these young adults acquired Russian nationality, generally during childhood, without their consent and/or by exercising intense pressure on them or their families, leads to the conclusion that the element of coercion is present and that their conscription at the age of 18 or later into the Russian armed forces may constitute a war crime.

Furthermore, the element of coercion may also be present in cases where young adults join the Russian armed forces on a contractual basis. The voluntary nature of signing such a contract must be assessed in the light of the circumstances prevailing in the occupied territories and in relation to the education imposed on Ukrainian children throughout their schooling. As noted in the ICRC Commentary on Article 51 GC IV (2025), the term “coerced” as used in the ICC Elements of crimes “would arguably also apply to pressure or propaganda to secure enlistment”⁵⁷⁸. It has been noted in legal literature that coercion may include psychological pressure.⁵⁷⁹ Propaganda and pre-military training, which are systematically implemented from a very young age and throughout the school years in all Russian schools in the occupied territories, and the control exercised, for the same purposes, over extracurricular activities within the framework of youth organizations and recreation camps, must therefore be taken into account. Economic and other pressures and intimidation towards Ukrainian children and their families may also play their part. Depending on individual circumstances, this could lead to considering a supposedly “voluntary” enlistment in armed forces or paramilitary units of young adults from the national/ethnic Ukrainian group as constituting the crime of compelled service as defined in Article 8(2)(a)(v) or 8(2)(b)(xv) of the ICC Statute.

⁵⁷⁸ ICRC Commentary of Article 51 GC IV (2025), para. 3308.

⁵⁷⁹ Thomas Cottier and Robert Kolb, “Article 8 Par. 2(b)(xv)”, in K. Ambos (ed.), *Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court – Article-by-Article Commentary*, Beck/Hart/Nomos, 4th ed., 2022, p. 506.

VI. ACCOUNTABILITY

In the previous sections of this report the Mission has established many instances of violations of international humanitarian law (IHL) and international human rights law (IHRL) resulting from the legislation and practices of the Russian Federation towards Ukrainian children in the occupied territories and those forcibly transferred and/or deported to Russia. It has also found credible evidence to argue that some of these violations could, if the individuals responsible are identified, amount to war crimes and crimes against humanity. In line with the Mission's task to "[o]ffer recommendations on relevant accountability mechanisms", the report examines what existing mechanisms for ensuring accountability are in place, and how they can be applied to address violations of international law arising from the indoctrination and militarization of Ukrainian children by the Russian Federation. This section is structured along three lines, focusing on States' responsibility, criminal responsibility of perpetrators, and the right of victims to remedies and reparation.

A. STATE'S RESPONSIBILITY

1. Preliminary Remarks

In IHL, all States have the obligation "to respect and to ensure respect for the present Convention in all circumstances" (Common Article 1 of the four Geneva Conventions). This obligation is not limited to the Parties to the conflict but it also, in its latter part, extends to other States. The obligation to respect means the obligation for the State to do everything that can realistically be done in the given circumstances to ensure that the rules of IHL are respected by its armed forces, its other organs, as well as other persons or groups acting in fact on its instructions or under its direction or control. The obligation to ensure respect means the obligation for the State, including those not Parties to the conflict, to take all possible measures, given the circumstances, to ensure that the rules of IHL are respected in the conflict. The obligation to respect and to ensure respect is considered a customary rule.⁵⁸⁰

In IHRL, there is no provision similar to the Common Article 1 of the Geneva Conventions imposing the obligation to "ensure respect" for IHRL on third States. Yet, human rights are of *erga omnes* (or, in case of treaty provisions, *erga omnes partes*) nature. As such, they are "the concern of all States. ... all States can be held to have a legal interest in their protection".⁵⁸¹ The most fundamental human rights, such as the right to life or the prohibition of torture, are moreover considered to belong to the imperative norms of international law (*jus cogens*).

Breaches of IHL and IHRL give rise to new obligations. First, the State responsible has the continued duty to perform the obligation breached. Second, it is obliged to cease the violation and to offer appropriate assurances and guarantees of non-repetition. Third, it has to provide full reparation for the injury caused by the internationally wrongful act, in the form of restitution, compensation or satisfaction.⁵⁸² In addition, where the breaches amount to serious breaches of peremptory norms of general international law (*jus cogens*), new obligations are

⁵⁸⁰ Jean-Marie Henckaerts, Louise Doswald-Beck (Eds.), *Customary International Humanitarian Law*, Volume I: Rules, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 2005, p. 495 (Rule 139) and p. 509 (Rule 144).

⁵⁸¹ ICJ, *Barcelona Traction, Light, and Power Company, Ltd (Belgium v Spain)*, Judgment, 5 February 1970, *ICJ Report 1970*, p. 3, para 33.

⁵⁸² International Law Commission, Draft articles on Responsibility of States for internationally wrongful acts, in UN Doc. A/56/10, Report of the International Law Commission on the work of its Fifty-third session, Official Records of the General Assembly, Fifty-sixth session, Supplement No. 10, November 2001, pp. 43-59, Articles 28 to 39.

incumbent on all States: they must cooperate to bring an end to these breaches, they shall not recognize as lawful the situation resulting from them, nor aid or assist maintaining it.⁵⁸³

2. Accountability of the Russian Federation

This Mission considers that the Russian Federation is responsible for a high number of violations of IHL and IHRL because it imposes on Ukrainian children in the occupied territories or forcibly transferred and/or deported to the Russian Federation an educational and extracurricular system aimed at indoctrination, militarization and the erasure of the Ukrainian language and culture. Consequently, the Russian Federation has the obligations:

- a) to respect the relevant rules of IHL and IHRL applicable to this area;
- b) to immediately cease all violations against Ukrainian children, their families, and their teachers, and to provide assurances and guarantees of non-repetition of such violations, in particular by carrying out a comprehensive review of the education policy pursued in the occupied territories and/or in relation to the children concerned. This also requires to urgently set up a mechanism for restoring the identity of Ukrainian children and facilitate family reunification.
- c) to provide reparation, involving *inter alia* the reunification of children displaced in violation of IHL with their families and their return to home areas or to other safe places, the provision of financial compensation to Ukraine and to individually affected children and families, and the provision of adequate satisfaction (acknowledgement, apology, criminal prosecution of individuals responsible for the violations of IHL).

Several international accountability mechanisms are in place, either at the universal or at the regional level, to ensure that the Russian Federation complies with these obligations, with unfortunately limited effectiveness until now.

First, the ICJ, the principal judicial organ of the United Nations, has jurisdiction to consider and decide legal disputes submitted to it by States. In 2024, the ICJ ruled in a case between Ukraine and the Russian Federation which dealt in part with discrimination against the Ukrainian and Tatar ethnic groups in occupied Crimea, on the basis of the International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination which contains a jurisdictional clause affording access to the ICJ.⁵⁸⁴ It concluded that the Russian Federation had breached that Convention. The Court is not currently seized of any case concerning the overall situation covered by this report, whether on the basis of that Convention or on any other grounds.

Second, at the universal level, United Nations bodies may take action regarding the violations of IHL and IHRL possibly committed by the Russian Federation in relation to the Ukrainian children in the occupied territories or those forcibly transferred and/or deported to Russia.

The UN Human Rights Council (HRC), composed by the representatives of 47 States,⁵⁸⁵ may address any human rights violations and make recommendations. There already have been numerous steps taken by the HRC in response to the act of aggression by the Russian Federation against Ukraine and the allegations of serious breaches of IHRL (and of IHL) committed in the

⁵⁸³ *Ibid.*, Articles 40 to 41.

⁵⁸⁴ ICJ, *Application of the International Convention for the Suppression of the Financing of Terrorism and of the International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination*, Judgement, 31 January 2024, *ICJ Report 2024*, p. 78.

⁵⁸⁵ The membership of the Russian Federation in the HRC was suspended by the UN General Assembly in April 2022, resulting in the withdrawal of the Russian Federation from the HRC. See UN Doc. A/RES/ES-11/3, *Suspension of the rights of membership of the Russian Federation in the Human Rights Council*, 8 April 2022.

ensuing conflict. Thus, in March 2022, it established the IICIU and its mandate has been subsequently extended, with the most recent extension taking place on 31 March 2026.⁵⁸⁶ To date, the IICIU has delivered eight reports and three conference room papers which together represent an extensive documentation of violations of IHRL and IHL in the context of conflict in Ukraine. Notably, in its latest report, published on 6 March 2026, the IICIU concluded that deportation and forcible transfer of Ukrainian children by Russian authorities, as well as enforced disappearances, amount to crimes against humanity.⁵⁸⁷

Furthermore, on 12 May 2022, the HRC held a special session on the deterioration of the human rights situation in Ukraine stemming from the Russian aggression. The resolution adopted during this session demanded that all parties to the conflict “*refrain from any human rights violations and abuses in Ukraine*”.⁵⁸⁸ Since then, in its subsequent regular sessions, the HRC has adopted further Resolutions on the situation of human rights in Ukraine stemming from the Russian aggression as well as on the human rights situation in Russia. Thus, on 4 April 2023, the HRC adopted Resolution 52/32, on the situation of human rights in Ukraine stemming from the Russian aggression. The Resolution explicitly refers to the “*unlawful forcible transfer and deportation of civilians and other protected persons within Ukraine or to the Russian Federation, as appropriate, including children*”,⁵⁸⁹ calling on the Russian Federation to cease this practice, provide humanitarian organizations with unimpeded, immediate, sustained and safe access to deported Ukrainians and provide reliable and comprehensive information about their numbers and whereabouts.

In October 2022, the HRC established the mandate of the *Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights in the Russian Federation*⁵⁹⁰ and, in April 2023 appointed Ms. Mariana Katarova (Bulgaria) as the first mandate holder. The mandate of the Special Rapporteur was extended again in October 2023, with the scope of the mandate extended to include also the issue of persons deported by the Russian Federation, especially children.⁵⁹¹

The HRC has also established a system of Special Procedures, which is currently comprised of 46 thematic and 13 country-specific mandates — Special Rapporteurs or Working Groups. The Special Procedures enjoy a universal coverage in that, by virtue of their mandates being established by the HRC and therefore being anchored in the UN Charter, they can engage with any State irrespective of its treaty obligations. This is a significant advantage when compared to UN treaty bodies as the latter can only engage with States parties to their respective treaties. The Special Procedures do not have strict enforcement powers; however, they can raise issues of concern with the State in question through the urgent communications procedure.

Thirdly, in addition to the HRC, the UN human rights system encompasses ten human rights treaty bodies, composed of individual experts, established in accordance with individual human rights treaties and their optional protocols. These bodies monitor the implementation of, and respect for, the relevant treaties predominantly through the consideration of national reports that States have to submit periodically. Some of them also consider individual or inter-State

⁵⁸⁶ UN Doc A/HRC/RES/61/29.

⁵⁸⁷ Report of the Independent International Commission of Inquiry on Ukraine, UN Doc A/HRC/61/61 (9 March 2026).

⁵⁸⁸ UN Doc. A/HRC/RES/S-34/1, *The deteriorating human rights situation in Ukraine stemming from the Russian aggression*, 16 May 2022, para 1.

⁵⁸⁹ UN Doc. A/HRC/52/L.41/Rev.1, *Situation of human rights in Ukraine stemming from the Russian aggression*, 4 April 2023.

⁵⁹⁰ UN Doc. A/HRC/RES/51/25, *Resolution adopted by the Human Rights Council on 7 October 2022 51/25. Situation of human rights in the Russian Federation*.

⁵⁹¹ UN Doc A/HRC/RES/54/23, *Resolution adopted by the Human Rights Council on 12 October 2023 54/23. Situation of human rights in the Russian Federation*, 12 October 2023, para 2.

complaints alleging violations of rights guaranteed by individual treaties, but this competence is usually granted by optional protocols or subject to an opt-in mechanism. The Russian Federation has not recognized the inter-State procedures under both the ICCPR and the CAT. However, it has recognized the competence of treaty bodies to consider individual complaints under the ICCPR and the CAT. Thus, victims or their relatives could submit applications to the HRC established under the Optional Protocol to the ICCPR, or the UN Committee against Torture, established under the CAT.⁵⁹²

In relation to the CAT, Russia has also accepted the enquiry procedure which can be initiated if the Committee “receives reliable information which appears to contain well-founded indication that torture is being systematically practised in the territory of that State Party”.⁵⁹³ While this procedure is initiated by the Committee itself, in practice all enquiry procedures have been based on information submitted to it by various non-governmental organizations.⁵⁹⁴ Therefore other States Parties and inter-governmental as well as non-governmental organizations could seek to report to the Committee, asking it to trigger the enquiry procedure. This is, however, likely to render limited results since the procedure rests on the cooperation of the State Party that is subjected to the procedure.

Finally, again in respect to the CAT, a dispute settlement mechanism is envisaged in its Article 30 in cases of “any dispute between two or more States Parties concerning the interpretation of application of this Convention which cannot be settled through negotiation”.⁵⁹⁵ In such cases, if agreement cannot be reached within 6 months from the date of the request for arbitration, any of those Parties may refer the dispute to the ICJ. While Article 30 (2) of the CAT allows States to opt-out of this provision, the Russian Federation is bound by it. Recalling that the CAT requires its States Parties to, *inter alia*, effectively investigate all allegations of torture and bring the perpetrators to justice, any State Party to the CAT might consider invoking the Article 30 procedure on the basis of an apparent failure of the Russian Federation to apply the provisions of the CAT effectively in relation to the arbitrary detention and subsequent treatment of Ukrainian civilians by its authorities.

Fourthly, at the *regional* level, the most robust human rights system exists within the Council of Europe, based on the European Convention on Human Rights (ECHR) and the case-law of the European Court of Human Rights (ECtHR). The Mission recalls that due to the exclusion of the Russian Federation from the Council of Europe, the country ceased to be bound by the ECHR on 16 September 2022, though the ECtHR continues to have the competence to consider cases related to events having occurred within the jurisdiction of the Russian Federation prior to that date.

As noted in the previous reports, since 2014, several inter-State applications have been submitted by Ukraine against the Russian Federation. Under the conditions set in Articles 34 and 35 of the ECHR, individuals considering themselves victims of violations of human rights enshrined in the ECHR can submit an individual application to the ECtHR. The Mission was not in a position to verify whether any such individual applications pertaining specifically to the topic under consideration in this report have been submitted. The Mission also recalls that on 11 June 2022, the Russian Federation adopted a law stipulating that the country “will not implement decisions of the European Court of Human Rights entering into force after 15 March

⁵⁹² Article 22 of the CAT.

⁵⁹³ Article 20(1) of the CAT.

⁵⁹⁴ Manfred Nowak, Elizabeth McArthur, *The United Nations Convention against Torture. A Commentary*, Oxford University Press, 2008, p. 661.

⁵⁹⁵ Article 30(1) of CAT.

2022”.⁵⁹⁶ The law does not exempt the Russian Federation from its obligation to respect the decisions of the ECtHR concerning acts that occurred prior to 16 September 2022.

3. Actions of Other States and International Organizations

In response to the violations of international law that have occurred in connection with this matter, Ukraine and States not parties to the conflict have sought to fulfil their obligations by offering their mediation services, organising a coalition to put pressure on the Russian Federation to facilitate the return the unlawfully transferred or deported Ukrainian children, providing financial support for efforts to return and reintegrate them, and to support the activities of intergovernmental organizations pursuing the same goals.

The principal framework for multilateral cooperation on returning unlawfully transferred or deported Ukrainian children from Russia is the International Coalition for the Return of Ukrainian Children. It operates across six strands: expanding tracing and data verification; scaling organized returns; strengthening the diplomatic track; reinforcing reintegration and rehabilitation; advancing accountability; and coordinating sanctions.⁵⁹⁷ It interfaces with aspects of the diplomatic track, including mediation efforts by third States, such as Qatar and the United States, and has been recognized in the December 2025 UN General Assembly Resolution on the “Return of Ukrainian Children”. On the Ukrainian side, the presidential initiative Bring Kids Back UA serves as the primary operational and data platform and as the public-facing hub for international partners. Save Ukraine and the Presidential Commissioner for Children’s Rights and Child Rehabilitation of Ukraine fulfil similar roles.

In addition, multilateral efforts support the monitoring and documentation carried out by the IICIU,⁵⁹⁸ the HRMMU , deployed since March 2014;⁵⁹⁹ the Interim reports on reported violations of international humanitarian law and international human rights law in Ukraine provided by the OSCE Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights,⁶⁰⁰ and the fact-finding missions conducted under the OSCE’s Moscow Mechanism. The EU’s sanctions architecture imposes restrictive measures against individuals and entities directly responsible for deportation, forced adoption, and indoctrination and militarization of Ukrainian children. Its measures are frequently mirrored by like-minded States, including the United Kingdom and Canada.

Within this overall framework of multilateral cooperation, three critical gaps stand out. First, and primarily because of the lack of consistent, sustained and meaningful cooperation from the Russian Federation, there is no unified, verified, interoperable database of deported children. A specific tracking mechanism for orphans and adopted children, who have no parents to advocate for them, whose identities have been altered and who may have been placed in Russian families,

⁵⁹⁶ Федеральный закон от 11 июня 2022 г. № 183-ФЗ “О внесении изменений в отдельные законодательные акты Российской Федерации и признании утратившими силу отдельных положений законодательных актов Российской Федерации”, пара 7(a).

⁵⁹⁷ Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Ukraine, Co-Chairs Summary Document of the International Coalition for the Return of Ukrainian Children, 13 May 2026. Available at: <https://mfa.gov.ua/en/news/pidsumkovij-dokument-spivgoliv-mizhnarodnoyi-koaliciyi-za-povernennya-ukrayinskih-ditej>.

⁵⁹⁸ United Nations Human Right’s Council, “Independent International Commission of Inquiry on Ukraine”. Available at: <https://www.ohchr.org/en/hr-bodies/hrc/iicshr-ukraine/index>.

⁵⁹⁹ Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR), “UN Human Rights Monitoring Mission in Ukraine”. Available at: <https://ukraine.ohchr.org/en>.

⁶⁰⁰ OSCE Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights, “Interim reports on reported violations of international humanitarian law and international human rights law in Ukraine”. Available at: <https://odihr.osce.org/odihr/537287>.

also is still missing, creating a material risk that these children are falling through the cracks of the existing system.

Second, the diplomatic track urgently needs to be strengthened. It is essential that the pool of third-party mediators be broadened, potentially through ICRC good offices, through an enhanced role of the UN as requested in the General Assembly Resolution on “Return of Ukrainian Children”, and through other states who have maintained channels of communication with the Russian Federation, such as India, Türkiye, and the UAE. At the same time, even a widened diplomatic track must remain steadfast in resisting attempts to include children in prisoner-of-war exchanges, which is illegal and would subordinate their individual best interests to military and political calculations. It is equally imperative to ensure that the return of Ukrainian children remains non-negotiable in any future cease-fire agreement or peace settlement rather than be treated as a separate humanitarian track that can be deferred or bargained away. At the same time, efforts need to be redoubled to establish humanitarian corridors to ensure restoration and safeguarding of meaningful family contact. Furthermore, broader and deeper sanctions extending beyond senior figures to mid- and lower-level officials involved in deportation logistics, in the administration of so-called recreational camps for children, and in adoption processing would strengthen both the existing accountability mechanisms and potentially enhance the effectiveness of existing diplomatic efforts.

Third, reintegration efforts remain poorly coordinated and underfunded. Returning children (as well as their families) need sustained support for reintegration in the broadest sense, including in schools which are not yet consistently equipped to receive and support children returning after prolonged indoctrination and militarization. At the same time, the Better Care reform — Ukraine's de-institutionalization programme to move children into family-like settings — is also still incomplete. Further strengthening the existing coordination infrastructure of international support for reintegration would make it possible to track funding flows, identify where duplication or shortfalls occur, and enable better long-term, systematic, and cross-government planning on the Ukrainian side for both individual returns prior to a cease-fire or peace agreement and in the event of mass returns and/or de-occupation of currently Russian-occupied Ukrainian territory.

B. CRIMINAL RESPONSIBILITY OF PERPETRATORS

International crimes that may have been committed in relation to the indoctrination and militarization of Ukrainian children in the occupied territories or those forcibly transferred and/or deported to the Russian Federation give rise to the individual criminal responsibility of their perpetrators. Criminal proceedings and judgement may be pursued at both international and national levels.

At the international level, the war crimes and crimes against humanity referred to in the previous section fall within the subject-matter jurisdiction of the International Criminal Court (ICC). The Russian Federation is not a party to the Rome Statute. Ukraine became a party after its notification of ratification on 25 October 2024, with entry into force on 1 January 2025.⁶⁰¹ In addition, on 9 April 2014 and 8 September 2015, respectively, Ukraine, by means of two declarations made under Article 12(3) of the Rome Statute, accepted the jurisdiction of the ICC with respect to crimes against humanity and war crimes committed on its territory from 21

⁶⁰¹ ICC welcomes Ukraine as a new State Party, ICC, 2 January 2025. Available at: <https://www.icc-cpi.int/news/icc-welcomesukraine-new-state-party>.

November 2013 to 22 February 2014 and from 20 February 2014 onwards, respectively.⁶⁰² It follows that the ICC may exercise its jurisdiction over international crimes committed on the territory of Ukraine, including those committed in areas that have been or are currently occupied by the Russian Federation, or where a part of the criminal conduct (*actus reus*) is located on the territory of Ukraine.⁶⁰³

In March and April 2022, 43 States parties to the ICC Statute referred the situation in Ukraine to the ICC, and the Prosecutor initiated an investigation on 2 March 2022 on the basis of these referrals. The scope of the situation under investigation covers “any past and present allegations of war crimes, crimes against humanity or genocide committed on any part of the territory of Ukraine by any person from 21 November 2013 onwards”. Six arrest warrants have been issued in the course of this investigation until now, among which, according to information made public by the Court, at least two relate specifically to war crimes committed against children, namely those against President Putin and his Commissioner for Children’s Rights, Maria Lvova-Belova, for unlawful transfer or deportation.⁶⁰⁴

The facts set out in this report concerning the education and extracurricular system established by the Russian Federation in the occupied territories and/or in relation to unlawfully transferred or deported children, which could be classified as war crimes or crimes against humanity, could therefore fall within the scope of the investigation opened by the ICC Prosecutor. This Mission would encourage the Office of the Prosecutor to pursue investigations into these violations, with the aim of securing arrest warrants, prosecutions and convictions, if the evidence is sufficient.

At the national level, it is worth recalling that the Geneva Conventions and Protocol I require States to enact legislation to punish grave breaches of their provisions, to search for persons who allegedly committed such crimes, and to bring them before their own courts or to extradite them to another State for prosecution.⁶⁰⁵ Moreover, under customary international law, all States have the obligation to prosecute and punish war crimes and crimes against humanity.⁶⁰⁶

This obviously applies first to the Russian Federation and Ukraine. Both Ukraine and the Russian Federation have provisions on war crimes in their criminal codes, which, in substance, cover all unlawful acts against children, their parents and their teachers that are criminalized under international law, although not with the same degree of precision.⁶⁰⁷ The Russian Federation has not included crimes against humanity as a specific category of crimes in its

⁶⁰² See the Declaration by Ukraine lodged under Article 12(3) of the ICC Statute, ICC, 8 September 2015. Available at: https://www.icc-cpi.int/iccdocs/other/Ukraine_Art_12-3_declaration_08092015.pdf.

⁶⁰³ ICC Statute, Article 12. See also ICC, Office of the Prosecutor, Situation in the Republic of Korea, Article 5 Report, June 2014, par. 8; ICC, Situation in the People’s Republic of Bangladesh/Republic of the Union of Myanmar, n°ICC-01/19, Decision Pursuant to Article 15 of the Rome Statute on the Authorization of an Investigation, 14 November 2019, para. 54-62.

⁶⁰⁴ See ICC website. Available at: <https://www.icc-cpi.int/situations/ukraine>, and “ICC judges issue arrest warrants against Vladimir Vladimirovich Putin and Maria Alekseyevna Lvova-Belova”, ICC Press Release, 17 March 2023.

⁶⁰⁵ Article 49 of GCI, Article 50 of GCII, Article 129 of GCIII, Article 146 of GCIV and Article 86 of API.

⁶⁰⁶ ILC, Draft Code of Crimes Against Peace and Security of Mankind, in UN Doc. A/51/10, Report of the International Law Commission on the work of its Forty-eighth session, Official Records of the General Assembly, Forty-eighth session, Supplement No. 10, July 1996, pp. 27-32, Articles 8 and 9; Draft articles on Prevention and Punishment of Crimes Against Humanity, in UN Doc. A/74/10, Report of the International Law Commission on the work of its Seventy-first session, Official Records of the General Assembly, Seventy-first session, Supplement No. 10, August 2019, p. 11-21; ICRC, *Customary International Humanitarian Law*, Rule 158. The preamble of the ICC Statute also recalls “the duty of every State to exercise its criminal jurisdiction over those responsible for international crimes”.

⁶⁰⁷ Article 356 of the Russian Criminal Code; Article 438 of the Ukrainian Criminal Code.

criminal code; Ukraine did so recently, through an amendment of 9 October 2024, to adapt its criminal code to the Rome Statute and facilitate cooperation with the ICC.

This Mission has not been informed of any legal proceedings brought by the Russian Federation in relation to the subject of this report. By contrast, it has received information from the Ukrainian authorities, including from the Office of the Prosecutor General of Ukraine and the Security Service of Ukraine, regarding such investigations. In this regard, it is important to examine the legal framework provided by Ukrainian criminal law and the current status of the proceedings.

Under the national law of Ukraine, violations of the laws and customs of war are criminalized under Article 438 of the Criminal Code of Ukraine (CCU). The provision refers expressly to several criminal acts such as “cruel treatment of (...) civilians”, but, for most war crimes, refers to the treaties of international humanitarian law without providing a comprehensive list of war crimes and their definitions.⁶⁰⁸ This criminalization by reference to treaty law makes it possible to regard acts of propaganda for the purposes of voluntary enlistment in the armed forces of the occupying power enshrined in Article 51(1) of GC IV as a war crime, even though this is not included in the — arguably incomplete — list of Article 8 of the ICC Statute. During its visit to Ukraine, the Mission was informed that legal proceedings had been initiated on this ground concerning the militarization of Ukrainian children in military-patriotic youth organizations (see below).⁶⁰⁹

While regretting that Ukraine has not yet introduced an extensive and precise list of war crimes and the penalties associated with them, this Mission welcomes the recent amendment of 17 June 2025 which introduces an express reference to the following war crimes: “the unlawful transfer or deportation of a child, the unjustified delay in the repatriation of a child, the recruitment or use of a child to take part in an armed conflict or military (combat) operations”.⁶¹⁰ The Mission emphasizes that there is no doubt that these offences were already part of the treaties ratified by Ukraine and criminalized under international law in 2014.⁶¹¹ An explicit inclusion in the Ukrainian criminal code nevertheless represents a positive evolution.

During its visit to Kyiv, the Mission was informed that the Office of the General Prosecutor of Ukraine has launched criminal proceedings on the basis of such offences and cooperates with investigators from the ICC on a regular and ongoing basis.⁶¹² According to the Ukrainian authorities, the currently verified number of forcibly transferred or deported Ukrainian children — and thus the number of children possibly covered by such investigation — is of 19,546. To date, the facts concerning 716 children have been established by the prosecuting authorities, leading to notices of suspicion addressed to 25 individuals, concerning seven episodes. Among them, three individuals are members of the constitutional bodies of the Russian Federation, two are members of the Armed Forces of the Russian Federation, and the remaining ones are members of the occupation authorities in the Kherson and Donetsk regions. These investigations complement the work of the ICC.⁶¹³

⁶⁰⁸ This results from the terms “any other violations of rules of the warfare stipulated by international treaties, ratified by the Verkhovna Rada of Ukraine”. See Mark Klamburg, “War Crimes before Domestic Courts in Ukraine – Making the Case for a Differentiated Approach to International Law”, *International Criminal Law Review*, vol. 26, 2026, p. 163-187.

⁶⁰⁹ Interview 11 and documents on file with the Mission.

⁶¹⁰ Article 438 as amended by Law No. 4499-IX of 17 June 2025.

⁶¹¹ See also MM Report III, p. 76.

⁶¹² Interview 11 and documents on file with the Mission.

⁶¹³ Document on file with the Mission.

The Mission also welcomes the amendments to the CCU which took place on 9 October 2024. These amendments introduced the category of crimes against humanity into the CCU (Article 442-1) and extended command responsibility beyond Ukrainian military commanders to all superiors, either military or civilian, regardless of their nationality or affiliation. Persons exercising authority may now be held responsible for omissions in preventing and sanctioning their subordinates for serious violations of IHL and IHRL (Article 31-1).⁶¹⁴

The definition of crimes against humanity, while not strictly identical to Article 7 of the ICC Statute, is closely inspired by it, including the criminal context of a systematic or widespread attack against a civilian population. The first of the underlying acts is “persecution”, meaning “the persecution of any identifiable group or community, that is to say, the restriction of human rights on political, racial, national, ethnic, cultural, religious, gender-based or other grounds (characteristics) of discrimination defined by international law as impermissible”.⁶¹⁵ This definition is broader than that set out in the Statute of the ICC, in particular where there is no requirement for a link to other offences — as is also the case in other national legislations. The underlying acts also include “deportation of the population”, “the forcible displacement of the population”, and “enforced disappearance”, which are of direct relevance to the mandate of the present Mission.

Furthermore, during their visit to Ukraine, the experts were informed that the Ukrainian authorities were also conducting investigations on the basis of charges rooted in national law only, but which are correlated with the conflict and may apply to the practices of indoctrination and militarization of Ukrainian children. These are the offences of “Aiding an aggressor State” (Article 111-2 CCU), “Justifying, legitimising or denying the armed aggression of the Russian Federation against Ukraine, and glorifying its participants” (Article 436-2 CCU), and “propaganda of war” as “public incitement to an aggressive war or an armed conflict” (Article 436 CCU). These criminal offences were added to the CCU or amended after the beginning of the full-scale war of aggression against Ukraine in February 2022.⁶¹⁶

A number of criminal proceedings have been initiated on the basis of these offences in relation to the practices of indoctrination and militarization covered by this report. In some cases, the prosecutions are based solely on these charges — described as relating to “collaboration”. In other cases, they are combined with charges of propaganda aimed at enlistment into the armed forces of the Occupying Power.⁶¹⁷ As of June 2026, and regarding indoctrination of Ukrainian children in the occupied territories and in Russia, the Ukrainian prosecution authorities have conducted at least 581 criminal proceedings, with 439 individuals notified of suspicion and 421 indictments transferred to court. Regarding militarization, 28 criminal proceedings have been conducted, 34 individuals have been notified of suspicion, 12 indictments were submitted to court, and 3 verdicts of conviction were delivered. Within this last category, 18 persons involved in the organization of military-patriotic youth organizations are the subject of two investigations. Most of these proceedings are conducted *in absentia*.⁶¹⁸

During the visit, the Mission was also informed that the legal proceedings concerning indoctrination were not directed at teachers, but only at individuals actively involved in

⁶¹⁴ Article 31-1 as amended by Law No. 4012-IX of 9 October 2024.

⁶¹⁵ Article 442-1(1)(1).

⁶¹⁶ As for Article 111-2 : added pursuant to Law No. 2198-IX of 14 April 2022. As for Article 436: preexisting, second paragraph on penalties amended by Law No. 3342-IX of 23 August 2023. As for Article 436-2: added pursuant to Law No. 2110-IX of 3 March 2022; and amended by Law No. 3342-IX of 23 August 2023.

⁶¹⁷ Interview 11 and documents on file with the Mission.

⁶¹⁸ Interview 11.

organizing these activities within the occupation administrations or in close collaboration with them.⁶¹⁹ Examples afforded concern people holding official functions in the “ministries” of education in the regions under occupation. The Mission emphasizes that a particularly cautious approach must guide prosecutions based on offences relating to acts of collaboration with the enemy, given the constraints faced by the local population in the occupied territories.

National courts of countries other than Ukraine may also adjudicate war crimes and crimes against humanity possibly connected with the practices of indoctrination and militarization of Ukrainian children in the occupied territories or in Russia, including on the basis of universal jurisdiction, if there is sufficient evidence. The Mission is however not aware of the existence of such proceedings within the ambit of its mandate.

C. REMEDIES AND REPARATIONS FOR VICTIMS

Those whose rights have been violated by the Russian Federation’s practice of forcible transfers and deportations of Ukrainian children, their adoption, indoctrination and militarization, have the enforceable right to compensation and to remedy more broadly which rests with each individual victim.

As stipulated in the Basic Principles and Guidelines on the Right to a Remedy and Reparation for Victims of Gross Violations of International Human Rights Law and Serious Violations of International Humanitarian Law,⁶²⁰ remedies include: (i) equal and effective access to justice; (ii) adequate, effective and prompt reparation for harm suffered; and (iii) access to relevant information concerning violations and reparation mechanisms.⁶²¹ Notably, reparations are to comprise restitution,⁶²² compensation,⁶²³ rehabilitation,⁶²⁴ satisfaction,⁶²⁵ and guarantees of non-repetition.⁶²⁶

In relation to the guarantees of non-repetition, it is important to note the work of the Ukrainian National Preventive Mechanism (NPM), established in accordance with the Optional Protocol to the Convention against Torture and other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment (OPCAT).⁶²⁷ As stipulated in Article 4 of OPCAT, NPMs are to have access to all places of deprivation of liberty to ascertain that those in such facilities are treated humanely. It is important to recall that the term “deprivation of liberty” does not only encompass the institutions of the criminal justice system, such as prisons and police stations, but also other settings such as medical care (for example, psychiatric institutions) and social care.⁶²⁸ The latter certainly includes children’s institutions and homes. Consequently, the mandate of the Ukrainian NPM could be usefully employed to ascertain the treatment of the children in question should it have access to them now or in the future. Since the Russian Federation, which is not a State party to OPCAT, currently has custody of Ukrainian citizens (children) in its childcare institutions, it should consent to such visits, arranged either with the Ukrainian NPM, or with third States or with international organizations such as UNICEF or ICRC.

⁶¹⁹ Interview 11.

⁶²⁰ UN Doc A/RES/60/147 (21 March 2006).

⁶²¹ UN Doc A/RES/60/147 (21 March 2006), para 11.

⁶²² *Ibidem*, para 19.

⁶²³ *Ibidem*, para 20.

⁶²⁴ *Ibidem*, para 21.

⁶²⁵ *Ibidem*, para 22.

⁶²⁶ *Ibidem*, para 23.

⁶²⁷ On 19 September 2006 Ukraine designated the Parliament Commissioner for Human Rights as its NPM.

⁶²⁸ UN Doc CAT/OP/GC/1 *General comment No. 1 (2024) on article 4 of the Optional Protocol (places of deprivation of liberty)* (4 July 2024).

In the context of its mandate, the Mission has not established any instances of any form of reparations exercised by the Russian Federation in relation to the practice of forcible transfers and deportations of Ukrainian children, their adoption, indoctrination and militarization. The Mission has received information about some Ukrainian children being able to reunite with their families either with the assistance of third states or through the efforts of civil society organizations and network, working on individual family reunification cases. However, in the view of the Mission, while the return of the Ukrainian children is undeniably welcome, the practice does not satisfy the obligations of Russia under IHL and IHRL since these sets of obligations require unconditional return of all Ukrainian children.

Some steps have been taken by other States and by international and regional organizations aimed at compelling the Russian Federation to do so.⁶²⁹ This includes the UN General Assembly resolution A/RES/ES-11/5 of 14 November 2022 *Furtherance of remedy and reparation for aggression against Ukraine*, which “recognizes that the Russian Federation must be held to account for any violations of international law in or against Ukraine, including its aggression in violation of the Charter of the United Nations, as well as any violations of international humanitarian law and international human rights law, and that it must bear the legal consequences of all of its internationally wrongful acts, including making reparation for the injury, including any damage, caused by such acts”.⁶³⁰ The Resolution further recommends “the creation by Member States, in cooperation with Ukraine, of an international register of damage to serve as a record, in documentary form, of evidence and claims information on damage, loss or injury to all natural and legal persons concerned, as well as the State of Ukraine, caused by internationally wrongful acts of the Russian Federation in or against Ukraine, as well as to promote and coordinate evidence-gathering”.⁶³¹

Subsequently, at the Council of Europe level, the Committee of Ministers of the Council of Europe, adopted a Resolution, establishing the Register of Damages mentioned in the United Nations General Assembly Resolution⁶³² and creating the administrative apparatus of the Registry. According to the resolution, the Register is to serve as a record and “shall receive and process information on claims of damage and evidence; categorise, classify and organise such claims, assess and determine the eligibility of claims for inclusion in the Register and record the eligible claims for the purposes of their future examination and adjudication. The Register shall not have any adjudication functions with respect to such claims, including determination of responsibility and allocation of any payments or compensation”.⁶³³

Claims may thus be filed by Ukraine as well as by any natural or legal persons. On 16 November 2023 the Conference of Participants of the Register of Damage for Ukraine elected its Board,⁶³⁴ which held its inaugural meeting on 14 December 2023.⁶³⁵ The Register has adopted rules and claims forms for individuals, including for “Forcible Transfer or Deportation of Children or Adults”, and for “loss of access to education” — education being understood as “ability to have

⁶²⁹ UN Doc. A/HRC/52/CRP.4, *Conference room paper of the Independent International Commission of Inquiry on Ukraine*, 29 August 2023, paras 951-989.

⁶³⁰ UN Doc. A/RES/ES-11/5, *Furtherance of remedy and reparation for aggression against Ukraine*, 14 November 2022, para 2.

⁶³¹ *Ibidem*, para 4.

⁶³² CM/Res(2023)3, *Resolution of the Committee of Ministers establishing the Enlarged Partial Agreement on the Register of Damage Caused by the Aggression of the Russian Federation Against Ukraine*, 12 May 2023.

⁶³³ *Ibidem*, Article 1.

⁶³⁴ Council of Europe, The Conference of Participants of the Register of Damage for Ukraine elects its Board, *Press Release*, 16 November 2023.

⁶³⁵ Council of Europe, The Board of the Register of Damage for Ukraine holds its inaugural meeting, *Press Release*, 14 December 2023.

access (...) to an available learning environment directed to the development of personality and the sense of its dignity”.⁶³⁶ The Register has received around 150,000 claims in total until now.

A new milestone has been reached on 16 December 2025 with the adoption, within the institutional framework of the Council of Europe, of the Convention Establishing an International Claims Commission for Ukraine.⁶³⁷ The Claims Commission will assess and decide claims and determine the amount of compensation. This is the second component, after the Register, of a comprehensive compensation mechanism related to the Russian Federation’s war of aggression against Ukraine. The convention, which has already been signed by 34 countries and the European Union, will enter into force once the 25th instrument of ratification has been deposited. Article 28 of this convention provides for the possible participation of the Russian Federation and for its participation in the bodies of the Commission. This Mission encourages the Russian Federation to ratify this convention, in light of the right of victims of violations of IHL and IHRL to remedies and reparation.

Lastly, the ICC maintains a Trust Fund for Victims, created in 2004 pursuant to Article 79 of the Rome Statute. Considering that the ICC Prosecutor is investigating the situation in Ukraine and that the ICC has already issued six arrest warrants in relation to this situation (see above), including for the war crime of forcible transfer or deportation of children, the children concerned may have access to reparations following the trial and conviction of those responsible. They may also be eligible to the assistance programmes established by the Fund for the most vulnerable victims of international crimes.

⁶³⁶ Respectively, Claim Form and Rules for Categories A2.8, A2.9 Forcible Transfer or Deportation of Children and Adults, and Claim Form and Rules for Category A4.2 Loss of access to education (at point 3.2). Available at: <https://www.rd4u.coe.int/en/documents>.

⁶³⁷ Council of Europe Treaty Series No. 229. Available at: <https://www.coe.int/en/web/conventions/full-list?module=treaty-detail&treaty-num=229>.

VII. GENERAL CONCLUSIONS

A. FACTS

The policies of the Russian Federation in the occupied territories of Ukraine since 2014 have been constantly refined, building on previous experiences and subsequently applied and increased resources. These now constitute a comprehensive system for the purpose of moulding the residents of these territories into a compliant population unable and unwilling to resist the illegal Russian occupation of their homeland. The indoctrination and militarization of Ukrainian children in the occupied territories, as well as of those deported or forcibly transferred to the Russian Federation, is a critical component of this overall occupation regime and simultaneously one of the key instruments to ensure its long-term success.

The system of indoctrination and militarization of Ukrainian children in the occupied territories was initially developed from 2014 onwards and has been implemented at an accelerated pace and with a noticeable increase in the amount of coercion applied in those territories of Ukraine that the Russian Federation has occupied since the start of the full-scale invasion in 2022. It now affects some 1.6 million Ukrainian children who find themselves under Russian control and have suffered the effects of systematic Russian efforts to alter their identity, including by imposing on them Russian curricula and standards of education as they apply in the Russian Federation and eliminating all Ukrainian elements from their education.

Alongside an increase in the organizational and infrastructural capacity that underpins the strategic ambition of comprehensive indoctrination and militarization of Ukrainian children, the Russian Federation has also invested considerable effort and resources in the institutional elaboration of the military-patriotic extracurricular education infrastructure to ensure its complementarity with the regular education system and their frictionless integration within the overall system of indoctrination and militarization of Ukrainian children. This more elaborate institutional architecture has simultaneously been further extended: vertically and horizontally. The vertical extension is evident from the involvement of ever younger children and their exposure to indoctrination and militarization from kindergarten age on. Horizontally, Russian efforts have been extended by both involving more corporate actors in the financing and running of relevant indoctrination and militarisation programmes, while Russian state actors have also used facilities in third countries for implementing aspects of these programmes. Thus, the institutional network used by the Russian Federation for the indoctrination and militarization of Ukrainian children can no longer be considered solely a Russia-internal affair. Instead, it is developing an international dimension that implicates third States in the indoctrination and militarization of Ukrainian children.

B. LEGISLATIVE ARCHITECTURE OF INDOCTRINATION, MILITARIZATION AND RE-EDUCATION OF UKRAINIAN CHILDREN

The legislative, regulatory and institutional architecture governing Ukrainian children in the occupied Ukrainian territories as well as in the territory of the Russian Federation has been purposefully designed and refined over more than a decade and now represents a well-developed and well-coordinated system of indoctrination and militarization. This architecture intertwines education law, youth policy, religious education, anti-extremism legislation, military-patriotic programmes, family law, citizenship-related measures, historical-memory policy and security governance within a single normative and administrative framework, supported by a vertical institutional structure.

The system operates across multiple, mutually reinforcing legislative levels: criminal law provides the threat of severe penalties; administrative law enables rapid sanctions at lower

evidentiary thresholds; preventive frameworks require the identification and monitoring of perceived risks; education law facilitates intervention within schools; and regional implementation plans localise these mechanisms in the occupied territories.

Cumulatively, these measures indicate a coordinated system through which the political, cultural, religious and civic identity of Ukrainian children is being purposefully reshaped through legal, administrative, social and educational means. These measures also operationalize structural permanence at the level of the individual child by using a combination of such different legal, administrative, social and educational and administrative instruments to create pressure points that can be used to break down resistance to concerted Russian indoctrination and militarization efforts of Ukrainian children and to make changes to their identity difficult, if not impossible, to reverse.

C. COERCION AND OTHER FORMS OF VIOLENCE AGAINST CHILDREN

The Mission, on the basis of reports from international organizations, NGOs and interviews with direct witnesses, has documented numerous forms of violence practiced against Ukrainian children. These show recurring methods that clearly reveal patterns of violence.

The occupying authorities have created a repressive environment which inevitably takes its weight on the population of the occupied territories and their perception of the need to comply not only with orders, but also with recommendations and incentives of the occupying forces.

In implementing the new education framework, Russian authorities have exercised considerable pressure on those children and their parents who attempted to maintain ties with the Ukrainian education system so that they would join Russian schools. There are also strong incentives and pressure to participate in militarized youth associations and recreation camps, and to join the cadet classes.

Forms of violence against Ukrainian children extend beyond the school system and extracurricular activities to every-day life. Considerable pressure is being exerted on parents to ensure that they and their children acquire Russian citizenship. Coercion also targets access to online content and discussions on social media via the children's electronic devices.

In the testimonies available to the Mission, witnesses expressed their feeling that they had been subjected to ideological pressure. In addition, the boys expressed anxiety over the prospect of conscription.

D. LEGAL ASSESSMENT UNDER INTERNATIONAL LAW

1. International Humanitarian Law

Regarding the legal assessment of the situation under international law, the Mission established, first, that international humanitarian law is being violated on a grand scale.

The Russian Federation has adopted a considerable number of legal acts aimed at expanding its education system, with large patriotic and militarized components, throughout the occupied Ukrainian territories, and it has significantly tightened criminal and administrative legislation applicable in these territories. This clearly breaches its obligation to respect the laws of the State whose territory it occupies.

The curricula implemented in schools in the occupied territories contain elements that are in direct conflict with the idea that educational institution should be “devoted to the care and education of children” as provided for in Article 50(1) of the Fourth Geneva Convention.

The extracurricular activities widely promoted within the school system, *i.e.*, participation in youth movements and recreational camps directly or indirectly established or controlled by the Russian Federation, violate its obligation not to enlist children in formations or organizations subordinate to it.

The occupying authorities have implemented a widespread practice to alter or modify the personal status of the Ukrainian children, in clear violation of Article 50(2) of the Fourth Geneva Convention: they have issued birth certificates using Russian instead of Ukrainian spelling of children's names and places of birth while wrongly indicating the children's birthplace as the Russian Federation; they have put pressure on parents and legal guardians to apply for Russian citizenship for their children; and they have permitted and encouraged the adoption of Ukrainian children from the occupied territories or of Ukrainian children who have been unlawfully transferred or forcibly deported to Russia. In addition, and as a consequence of this compelled passportization policy, the Russian Federation applies conscription in the occupied territories to boys upon reaching the age of 18, in blatant disregard of the Geneva Conventions.

Generally speaking, coercion and intimidation of children are methods regularly used against children, their parents and their teachers.

Concerning children who were forcibly transferred to or within these territories and those who were deported to the Russian Federation, this Mission reiterates that their forcible transfer and deportation have constituted serious violations of international law and that, considering their massive scale and systematic preparation, they also amount to a crime against humanity. The number of Ukrainian children unlawfully deported or forcibly transferred is generally estimated to be around 20,000. While the Mission found no evidence that deportations and displacement are continuing at a similar scale as just prior and in the immediate aftermath of Russia's full-scale invasion of Ukraine, the Mission is deeply concerned that the legal, administrative and social systems that enable the deportation and forcible displacement of Ukrainian children remain in place, facilitating further deportation and displacement, and preventing the reunification of affected children with their families.

In this context, the Mission must, regrettably, add that the number of returned children, recorded as numbering 2,274 as of 21 June 2026, remains extremely low compared with the number of children who were victims of such a violation. Far from fulfilling its obligations to facilitate these children's return, the Russian Federation is obstructing the efforts of Ukrainian authorities, humanitarian organizations, the children's families, international mediators and the wider international community by concealing information about their whereabouts, changing their personal status, creating administrative and practical obstacles to family reunification, and adopting an attitude of denial.

2. International Human Rights Law

Numerous and overlapping violations of the rights of the Ukrainian children deported to the Russian Federation as well as those remaining in the occupied territories have taken place. The Russian Federation not only continues to manifestly violate the best interests of these children repeatedly, it also continues to deny their right to identity, their right to family, their right to unite with their family as well as severely violates their rights to education, access to information, right to rest, leisure, play, recreation and participation in cultural life and arts as well as right to thought, conscience and religion, and right to health, and the right to liberty and security. These are ongoing violations of fourteen substantive provisions of the UNCRC. The cumulative effects of these multiple violations also give rise to very serious concerns that the right of these children to be free from torture and ill-treatment and other inhuman or degrading

treatment or punishment (Article 37 (a) of the UNCRC) has been violated. There are also very serious concerns about the possible violations of child's right not to be recruited to armed forces, protected by Article 2 of the Optional Protocol to the UNCRC.

The Mission moreover concludes that the practice of the forcible transfer and/or deportation of Ukrainian children to the temporarily occupied territories and to the territory of the Russian Federation amounts to a crime against humanity of "deportation or forcible transfer of population".

3. International Criminal Law

Under International criminal law, the Mission's conclusions are based on the finding that the Russian Federation has implemented a policy regarding schooling and extracurricular education underpinned by various forms of coercion directed at Ukrainian children, their parents and teachers. This education policy promotes propaganda in support of the Russian authorities' official political positions, a particular view of Russian culture and history, and military activities in support of Russian occupation, with a view to conscription or supposedly voluntary enlistment in the army. This has resulted in multiple and severe violations of the fundamental rights of the children, their parents and teachers.

Moreover, this policy entails a significant element of discrimination towards the Ukrainian national or ethnic group, an element that is all the more pronounced when families attempt to maintain a connection with the Ukrainian language and culture, or express views contrary to the official line of the occupying authorities.

For these reasons the Mission concludes that the laws and practices implemented by the Russian Federation in the education sector in the occupied territories and in Russia, aimed at indoctrinating and militarizing children of Ukrainian nationality and/or ethnicity, may amount to a crime against humanity in the form of persecution.

Furthermore, the information gathered by the experts on this Mission points to a high number of incidents that occurred throughout the period under review, in various locations within the occupied territories, which are related to the coercion exercised against children, their families and their teachers. These may be classified as the war crimes of wilful killing, torture or inhuman treatment, wilfully causing great suffering or serious injury to body or health, extensive destruction and appropriation of property, and compelled service in the forces of a hostile power.

E. ACCOUNTABILITY

In the section on accountability, the Mission examines the existing mechanisms available for ensuring accountability for the violations of IHL and IHRL committed by the Russian Federation.

One initial approach is to question State's responsibility, beginning with the Russian Federation as a State. It has an obligation to cease violation international law and offer reparation. Lacking compliance, the different options available to put pressure on the Russian Federation are to turn to the International Court of Justice, to the United Nations institutions dedicated to human rights, to the human rights treaty bodies, and to the European Court of Human Rights. For their part, Ukraine and third states have developed different forms of international cooperation, such as mediation efforts and financial support, which must continue.

A second approach is to hold individual perpetrators criminally liable. Criminal proceedings and judgement may be pursued at both international and national levels. At the international level, the Prosecutor of the International Criminal Court (ICC) has opened an investigation on

the situation in Ukraine, and has issued six arrest warrants, including for war crimes committed against children. At the national level, the Office of the General Prosecutor of Ukraine has launched a significant number of criminal proceedings and cooperates with the Office of the ICC Prosecutor. Prosecuting authorities of countries other than Ukraine may also investigate possible war crimes and crimes against humanity connected with the Russian policy of indoctrination and militarization of Ukrainian children.

A third and last approach is to concretize the right of victims to remedies and reparation. Lacking any action of the Russian Federation in this respect, the international community has established, on the initiative of the United Nations General Assembly and within the framework of the Council of Europe, a register of damages, which has now been supplemented by a claims commission. Furthermore, the ICC maintains a Trust Fund for Victims, which may provide reparation and assistance to the children victims of violations of IHL and IHRL.

RECOMMENDATIONS

A. TO ALL STAKEHOLDERS

The *principal recommendation* of the present Mission addressed to all stakeholders is to immediately, effectively, and meaningfully recognize the centrality of the plight of Ukrainian children for their safety, identity and family life in the ongoing war and in all cease-fire and peace negotiations. Humanitarian corridors should urgently be established to ensure restoration and safeguarding of meaningful family contact. The safe reunification of all separated Ukrainian children with their parents, relatives, and true legal guardians should be ensured, and these children be allowed to develop their own identities without undue interference. Under no circumstances should children be part of any exchanges of prisoners of war. The best interests of children command that all this is implemented without any further delay and above all other considerations.

In the remits of the present mandate, the Mission makes the following recommendations, addressed to the Russian Federation and Ukraine as well as to other States and international organizations.

B. TO THE RUSSIAN FEDERATION

- (1) Without delay cease the practice of propaganda and indoctrination under the pretext of so-called “military-patriotic education” of all Ukrainian children. Ensure full respect for the rights of these children to, *inter alia*, speak the Ukrainian language, receive education in Ukrainian, practice their own religion, and develop their own identities, rooted in their genuine personal status and their personal and family identity, as required by the GC IV and UNCRC.
- (2) Urgently put an end to the systemic and deliberate efforts to alter the identity of the Ukrainian children.
- (3) Cease without delay the persecution of Ukrainian children and their families on the basis of their national identity and ethnicity. Ensure full respect for the best interests of these children which includes their right to, *inter alia*, speak the Ukrainian language and receive education in Ukrainian.
- (4) Allow the provision of Ukrainian language education through online media and ensure respect for the choices of Ukrainian children and their parents regarding the mode of education, including the right to refuse mainstream schooling in favour of an alternate system of education respectful of their national identity, including home-schooling or online provision without any threat of or actual adverse consequence.
- (5) Adopt effective measures to ensure that history education is provided in a manner which prevents a dominant historical narrative and ethnic hierarchizing.

- (6) Put an end to the politicization and militarization of schools and ensure that education is aimed at the preparation of children for a responsible life in a free society in a spirit of understanding, peace and tolerance, gender equality and friendship among all peoples, ethnic, national and religious groups.
- (7) Urgently ensure comprehensive revision of all school curricula for all school ages to ensure that the content of education is purely civilian and free from any military components. Education should be provided by properly qualified education professionals. Schools should have an appropriate educational set-up and environment, entirely free from military elements, including the glorification of war and especially any pressure or incitement to join the armed forces of the Russian Federation.
- (8) Ensure without delay that children below the age of 18 years enrolled in civil and military schools do not undergo military training and are not subject to military-style discipline. The prevailing practice of cadet classes in regular schools should cease.
- (9) Guarantee in law and in practice that all children and members of their families are free to express opinions that are critical of the Russian and occupation authorities, and the Russian war against Ukraine and its consequences without fear of retaliation, including deprivation of liberty and other sanctions.
- (10) Ensure free and unfettered access to pluralistic information, including in the digital environment, *inter alia*, by lifting restrictions on the operation of any Internet-based, electronic or other information dissemination systems and ensure free access to social media platforms for all children with full respect for the online privacy of children.
- (11) Immediately revise the so-called “family education” classes to eliminate any promotion of child pregnancies and gender-stereotyping.
- (12) Ensure that children and their parents and relatives are not put under any pressure, be it physical, psychological or social, to join child and youth military-patriotic including DOSAAF, “Yunarmiya”, “Orljata Rossii”, “Movement of the First” and others.
- (13) Immediately cease the practice of sending Ukrainian children to so-called recreational, “leisure camps” in view of their militarization.
- (14) Immediately put an end to the practice of changing the personal status of Ukrainian children, including altering their personal data in birth certificates (especially names, dates and places of birth) and the admission of such children into the Russian citizenship and their relinquishing of the Ukrainian citizenship.
- (15) Immediately establish a legal mechanism to assist with the restoration of the personal identity of all Ukrainian children in the temporarily occupied territories or the Russian Federation, in full compliance with Article 8(2) of the UNCRC.

- (16) Without further delay, establish a new National Information Bureau (NIB) or appropriately expand the mandate of the existing NIB in accordance with the obligations arising in respect to the Russian Federation under Articles 136 and 50 of the GCIV.
- (17) Without further delay, compile, provide and promptly update comprehensive lists of the names and whereabouts of all Ukrainian children in the occupied territories and the Russian Federation. Specifically indicate in such lists the legal status of each individual child, especially any cases of adoption and/or change in the personal data of the child (for example, name, date, and place of birth) in accordance with Article 78 of API. To this end, the principle of adoption secrecy must be immediately lifted to allow the provision of data to appropriate agencies such as NIBs of both countries and the ICRC.
- (18) Immediately impose a moratorium on any further adoptions of Ukrainian children until each individual adoption case can be verified as fully compliant with all requirements arising in respect to the Russian Federation under international law and especially with the provisions of the GCIV and UNCRC.
- (19) Urgently conduct effective, thorough and impartial investigations, prosecute and bring to account those responsible for the practices of indoctrination and militarization of Ukrainian children, imposing penalties commensurate with the grave nature of the crimes committed against Ukrainian children.

C. TO UKRAINE

- (1) Comprehensively implement the provision of online learning of the Ukrainian language and school curricula for all Ukrainian children wishing to take part in such learning through safe and secure means.
- (2) Devise and effectively implement a comprehensive strategy to address immediate and long-term educational, cultural and social needs of Ukrainian children. Programmes for dedicated mentors to assist the full educational, cultural, and social rehabilitation and reintegration of returned and returning Ukrainian children should be scaled up and expanded to all schools in Ukraine with the schools being properly equipped, including from the pedagogical, psychological, human and material standpoints. Targeted awareness-raising campaigns should be carried out among the population to highlight the challenges returning Ukrainian children are facing.
- (3) Further ease and streamline the administrative processes for the obtaining of Ukrainian documents, including birth certificates and passports, by returning Ukrainian children.
- (4) Further strengthen the coordination of multi-agency efforts to address the immediate and long-term needs of returning children as well as to collect and duly verify data of all Ukrainian children.

- (5) Redouble its efforts in seeking out the children who have been forcibly transferred or deported from Ukraine to the temporarily occupied territories and the Russian Federation with the view of promptly implementing their right to family reunification as stipulated in Articles 9 and 10 of the UNCRC.
- (6) Continue providing medical, psychological, social and other support to all children (and their families) who have returned, including long-term rehabilitation and reintegration programmes.
- (7) Accelerate the implementation of the Better Care reform programme to de-institutionalize care for children, including especially for returning children, and ensure their effective social reintegration in family-like settings to bring Ukraine in line with international human rights standards.
- (8) Ensure full respect for the right to develop their own identities of all Ukrainian children in full compliance with Article 8 of the UNCRC.
- (9) Continue with the efforts in seeking the assistance and good offices of third parties to facilitate the voluntary return of all Ukrainian children and ensure full respect of their right to family reunification as stipulated in Articles 9 and 10 of the UNCRC.
- (10) Actively and effectively support the work of the Council of Europe Register of Damage Caused by the Aggression of the Russian Federation Against Ukraine ensuring that it receives, *inter alia*, all requisite information concerning the amount of damages in respect to the return of Ukrainian children, including their long-term psycho-social rehabilitation and re-integration.
- (11) Continue ensuring that its legislation and criminal practices regarding unlawful collaboration with the Russian occupying power take appropriate account of the situation of duress to which the civilians living in the occupied territories are exposed.

D. TO OTHER STATES AND INTERNATIONAL ORGANIZATIONS

- (1) Take note of and act upon the obligation to “respect and ensure respect” of IHL foreseen in Common Article 1 of the GCs and to take appropriate measures in this regard.
- (2) Consider establishing a mission under the general mandate of United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) to monitor the functioning of the schools and recreational camps located in the occupied territories of Ukraine and those hosting Ukrainian children in the Russian Federation.
- (3) Provide urgently all necessary assistance, including logistical, know-how and financial, to Ukraine to support its efforts to ensure comprehensive provision of online learning of the Ukrainian language and school curricula for all Ukrainian children wishing to take part in such learning through safe and secure means.

- (4) Proactively offer their good offices to Ukraine and the Russian Federation to urgently facilitate the family reunification of all Ukrainian children in full compliance with Articles 9 and 10 of the UNCRC.
- (5) Provide urgently all necessary assistance, including logistical, know-how and financial, to Ukraine to support its multi-agency efforts to collect and duly verify data of all Ukrainian children in the occupied territories and the Russian Federation as well as to support its efforts to locate such Ukrainian children with the view of duly implementing their right to family reunification as stipulated in Articles 9 and 10 of the UNCRC.
- (6) Provide urgently all necessary assistance, including logistical, know-how and financial, to Ukraine to accelerate its efforts to implement the Better Care reform programme to de-institutionalize care for children and ensure their effective social reintegration in family-like settings to bring Ukraine in line with international human rights standards.
- (7) Continue holding the Russian Federation to account pursuant to the obligations it has undertaken in respect to core international human rights treaties, including and especially the Convention on the Rights of the Child, the International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination and the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights.
- (8) Ensure that children of third countries do not travel to and take part, including through private arrangements, in the so-called recreational camps in the occupied territories, as well as the Russian Federation, and elsewhere.
- (9) Ensure their territories are not used for activities that assist in, or contribute to, the efforts by the Russian Federation to indoctrinate and militarize Ukrainian children under its control.
- (10) Actively and effectively support the work of the Council of Europe Register of Damage Caused by the Aggression of the Russian Federation Against Ukraine ensuring that it receives, *inter alia*, all requisite information concerning the amount of damages in respect to the return of Ukrainian children, including their long-term psycho-social rehabilitation and reintegration.
- (11) Urgently conduct effective, thorough and impartial national investigations of the international crimes committed against Ukrainian children in respect to their indoctrination and militarization by Russia and foster international judicial cooperation, including through international organizations, in this regard.
- (12) Support the Office of the Prosecutor (OTP) of the ICC in any efforts to pursue investigations into allegations of war crimes and crimes against humanity in relation to the practices of indoctrination and militarization of Ukrainian children.
- (13) Impose specific sanctions against individuals at all levels of the Russian authorities, including at medium and lower levels, involved in the indoctrination and militarization of Ukrainian children in violation of international law in relation to their education, cultural rights and identity. Consider the same in relation to the private companies and their directors implicated in such practices.

**Comments by Ukraine
on the Report on Violations and Abuses of International Humanitarian,
Human Rights and Criminal Law related to Militarization and
Indoctrination of Ukrainian Children by the Russian Federation
pursuant to paragraph 7 of Document of the Moscow Meeting of the
Conference on the Human Dimension of the CSCE (1991)**

1. Overall assessment

The principal findings of the report are consistent with Ukraine's official position.

The Mission rightly identifies the indoctrination, Russification and militarisation of Ukrainian children as components of a coordinated state policy pursued by the Russian Federation. This policy is implemented through the imposition of Russian education and citizenship, the erasure of Ukrainian identity, unlawful adoption, the persecution of children, parents and educators for manifestations of Ukrainian affiliation, as well as the activities of military-patriotic organisations and camps.[1]

Ukraine endorses the findings concerning systematic violations of international humanitarian law and the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child, the war crimes of unlawful deportation and forcible transfer, as well as potential crimes against humanity in the forms of deportation, forcible transfer and persecution.

At the same time, Ukraine's legal position is broader: the forcible transfer of Ukrainian children to the Russian national group may also constitute genocide under Article II(e) of the Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide. It is therefore appropriate to emphasise that the legal characterisations proposed by the Mission do not preclude further investigation into indications of genocide.[2]

As of 3 July 2026, the official Children of War portal recorded 20,610 cases of deportation and/or forcible transfer; [3]

2. Measures already taken by Ukraine

The Initiative Bring Kids Back UA of the President of Ukraine Volodymyr Zelenskyy, the state system for registering, tracing, returning and reintegrating children, and the International Coalition for the Return of Ukrainian Children are operational;

As of 3 July 2026, 2,335 Ukrainian children have been returned under the Bring Kids Back UA initiative - the State-led coordination platform that consolidates and accounts for all return efforts, regardless of the channel through which a child was returned. Returns have been achieved through two complementary tracks: diplomatic mediation involving third-party States, and organized rescue missions conducted in cooperation with non-governmental partners. Both tracks operate within

a single Ukrainian-led strategy, guided by the consistent objective of returning every child home and ensuring their placement in a family environment in line with Ukraine's Better Care reform. International actors - whether States, mediators, or civil society organizations - are partners within this strategy.

Rescue missions are conducted by a range of non-governmental partners operating under the coordination of Bring Kids Back UA, including Save Ukraine, Ukrainian Child Rights Network (UCRN), Pluriton, Helping to Leave, Humanity, the Plakhta, and other organizations that engage on a situational basis depending on the specific circumstances of each case.

The overall work aimed at the identification, return, provision of accompaniment and reintegration of children or persons from among children is ensured through coordinated action of relevant state authorities and institutions, including the Ukrainian Parliament Commissioner for Human Rights, representatives of the Ukrainian Parliament Commissioner for Human Rights, the Secretariat of the Ukrainian Parliament Commissioner for Human Rights, the Ministry of Social Policy, Family and Unity of Ukraine, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Ukraine, the Ministry of Justice of Ukraine, the Office of the Prosecutor General of Ukraine, the Security Service of Ukraine, the National Police of Ukraine, the State Service of Ukraine for Children's Affairs, the State Migration Service of Ukraine, the State Border Guard Service of Ukraine, the Joint Centre for Coordination of the Search and Liberation of Prisoners of War and Persons Unlawfully Deprived of Liberty as a Result of the Aggression against Ukraine under the Security Service of Ukraine, the Coordination Centre for the Development of Family Upbringing and Child Care, the Child Rights Protection Centre, other central and local executive authorities, local self-government bodies, public associations and charitable organizations.

Specific measures undertaken:

- Cabinet of Ministers of Ukraine Resolution No. 551 introduced a procedure for identifying, returning, accompanying and reintegrating deported and forcibly transferred children; [4]
- Returned children and young people receive individualised case management, psychological, social, educational and housing support, as well as one-off financial assistance of UAH 50,000; [5]
- The Strategy for Ensuring Every Child's Right to Grow Up in a Family Environment for 2024–2028 is being implemented; [6]
- In 2026, the procedures for recognising learning outcomes obtained in the temporarily occupied territories were simplified; [7]
- Criminal legislation has been updated: liability for crimes against humanity and command responsibility have been introduced, while Article 438 of the Criminal Code of Ukraine now expressly includes the unlawful transfer or deportation of a child; [8]

- On 29 April 2026, Ukraine imposed sanctions against 20 individuals and four legal entities involved in the removal and indoctrination of Ukrainian children; [9]
- The Register of Damage for Ukraine accepts claims under Category A2.8, "Forcible transfer or deportation of children". [10]

3. Further priority actions by Ukraine

1. Harmonise the inter-agency methodology for recording cases, clearly distinguishing between reported, identified, verified and returned cases.
2. Expand and strengthen secure distance-learning opportunities for children in the temporarily occupied territories, including asynchronous formats and digital protection measures.
3. Introduce a unified long-term reintegration standard encompassing the child, the family, the school, and psychological and social services.
4. Expand sanctions to include the heads of camps, educational and youth organisations, transport operators and companies financing the transfer and "re-education" of children.
5. Continue submitting evidence to the International Criminal Court, the competent authorities of foreign States and the Register of Damage for Ukraine.
6. Seek international access to the locations where Ukrainian children are held through the mechanisms of the United Nations, UNICEF, the ICRC, UNESCO and mediating States.

References

- [1] Report of the OSCE Moscow Mechanism Mission of Experts, 22 June 2026.
- [2] Statement by the Delegation of Ukraine on the Moscow Mechanism report concerning the deportation of Ukrainian children, 4 May 2023.
- [3] Official Children of War portal: consolidated data as of 20 June 2026.
- [4] Resolution of the Cabinet of Ministers of Ukraine No. 551 of 14 May 2024.
- [5] Ministry of Social Policy, Family and Unity of Ukraine: State support for children and young people returning from deportation, 24 February 2026.
- [6] Order of the Cabinet of Ministers of Ukraine No. 1201-r of 26 November 2024.
- [7] Ministry of Education and Science of Ukraine: Simplified recognition of learning outcomes obtained in the temporarily occupied territories, 30 April 2026.
- [8] Law of Ukraine No. 4012-IX of 9 October 2024.
- [9] Office of the President of Ukraine: Sanctions against persons and organisations involved in the abduction of Ukrainian children, 29 April 2026.
- [10] Register of Damage for Ukraine: Category A2.8.
- [11] OSCE ODIHR: Appointment of the Mission experts, 1 June 2026.

**ANNEX 1: LETTER TO THE PERMANENT REPRESENTATIVE OF UKRAINE TO THE
INTERNATIONAL ORGANIZATIONS IN VIENNA**

Prof. Hervé Ascensio (France)
Dr. Elīna Šteinerte (Latvia)
Prof. Stefan Wolff (United Kingdom)

Paris-Rīga-Birmingham, 2 June 2026

His Excellency
Ambassador Yurii Vitrenko,
Permanent Representative of Ukraine to the International Organizations in Vienna

cc Ms. Maria Telalian, Director of the Office of Democratic Institutions and Human Rights (ODIHR) and
Representatives of 41 invoking Participating States and of Ukraine

Your Excellency,

On 14 May 2026, the delegations of 41 OSCE participating States, after the consultation with Ukraine, invoked the Moscow Mechanism under paragraph 8 of the Moscow Document. They requested that ODIHR enquire with Ukraine whether it would invite a mission of experts to “1) *Establish the facts and circumstances surrounding possible contraventions of relevant OSCE commitments, and violations and abuses of IHRL and IHL, related to the militarization and indoctrination of Ukrainian children by the Russian Federation, including in temporarily occupied territories of Ukraine and including in the context of forcible transfer and/or unlawful deportation; 2) Collect, consolidate, and analyse information on these practices, including patterns of coercion, intimidation, repression, unlawful deprivation of liberty, illegal adoptions, ill-treatment, and other forms of violence affecting children; 3) Further, collect, consolidate, and analyse information on the legislative framework adopted by Russia for this purpose, and the school curricula imposed on Ukrainian children in the temporarily occupied territories; 4) Assess whether such practices indicate a coordinated and systematic policy aimed, inter alia, at erasing Ukrainian identity of children, including through their illegal adoptions as well as alteration of their nationality, and conditioning children for service to the occupying power; 5) Assess the impact of these practices on the rights of Ukrainian children, including the rights to life and development, health, education, family life, equality and non-discrimination, and protection from all forms of violence, and provide recommendations on urgent protective measures, prevention, and accountability pathways; 6) Offer recommendations on relevant accountability mechanisms, including how OSCE participating*

States and OSCE institutions can support documentation, child protection, return and reintegration efforts, and international co-operation to end impunity for crimes against children”.

Following on this inquiry, Ukraine established, on 1 June 2026, a mission composed of the three experts undersigned below. The mission of experts shall deliver its report by 22 June 2026.

The mandate of the mission pertains to events which originate in the territory of Ukraine and concern Ukrainian citizens. We therefore consider that your country might be in possession of information and materials relevant for the completion of our mission. Since, by virtue of Paragraph 6 of the Moscow document, *“the mission may receive information in confidence from any individual, group or organization on questions it is addressing”*, we would like to invite Ukraine to collaborate with our mission. With this in mind, we would very much appreciate an opportunity to meet with your Excellency. We would also particularly welcome information from, and contacts with, the following authorities:

- the Ministry of Social Policy, Family and Unity of Ukraine
- the Ministry of Education and Science of Ukraine
- the Office of the Prosecutor General of Ukraine
- the State Service of Ukraine for Children’s Affairs
- the Ukrainian Parliament Commissioner for Human Rights
- the Representative of the President of Ukraine in the Autonomous Republic of Crimea
- the Presidential Commissioner for Children’s Rights and Child Rehabilitation
- the State Language Protection Commissioner of Ukraine
- Representatives of the Presidential initiative Brings Kids Back UA
- Services in the Kyiv Regional State Administration and/or other municipal interlocutors involved in child-protection and work with returned children
- Relevant civil society organizations

We would be grateful to receive copies of any written communications, such as letters, that any of these offices, or indeed any other Ukrainian authorities, may have addressed to authorities of the Russian Federation concerning the subject matter of the present mandate. We would also appreciate if you could provide us with a total number and list of names of unaccompanied

children who have been transferred from Ukraine to the Russian Federation since 24 February 2022 or even prior to this date, and of those who have returned to Ukraine to date.

We thank you in advance for acknowledging receipt of this letter and for kindly providing a response. In view of the timeframe envisaged for the mission, we would be grateful to receive your reply by 9 June 2026.

Yours sincerely,



Hervé Ascensio



Elina Šteinerte



Stefan Wolff

**ANNEX 2: LETTER TO THE PERMANENT REPRESENTATIVE OF THE RUSSIAN
FEDERATION TO THE OSCE**

Prof. Hervé Ascensio (France)
Dr. Elīna Šteinerte (Latvia)
Prof. Stefan Wolff (United Kingdom)

Paris-Rīga-Birmingham, 2 June 2026

His Excellency
Ambassador Dmitry Polyanskiy
Permanent Representative of the Russian Federation to the OSCE

cc Ms. Maria Telalian Director of the Office of Democratic Institutions and Human Rights (ODIHR) and
Representatives of 41 invoking Participating States and of Ukraine

Your Excellency,

On 14 May 2026, the delegations of 41 OSCE participating States, after the consultation with Ukraine, invoked the Moscow Mechanism under paragraph 8 of the Moscow Document. They requested that ODIHR enquire with Ukraine whether it would invite a mission of experts to “1) *Establish the facts and circumstances surrounding possible contraventions of relevant OSCE commitments, and violations and abuses of IHRL and IHL, related to the militarization and indoctrination of Ukrainian children by the Russian Federation, including in temporarily occupied territories of Ukraine and including in the context of forcible transfer and/or unlawful deportation; 2) Collect, consolidate, and analyse information on these practices, including patterns of coercion, intimidation, repression, unlawful deprivation of liberty, illegal adoptions, ill-treatment, and other forms of violence affecting children; 3) Further, collect, consolidate, and analyse information on the legislative framework adopted by Russia for this purpose, and the school curricula imposed on Ukrainian children in the temporarily occupied territories; 4) Assess whether such practices indicate a coordinated and systematic policy aimed, inter alia, at erasing Ukrainian identity of children, including through their illegal adoptions as well as alteration of their nationality, and conditioning children for service to the occupying power; 5) Assess the impact of these practices on the rights of Ukrainian children, including the rights to life and development, health, education, family life, equality and non-discrimination, and protection from all forms of violence, and provide recommendations on urgent protective measures, prevention, and accountability pathways; 6) Offer recommendations on relevant accountability mechanisms, including how OSCE participating*

States and OSCE institutions can support documentation, child protection, return and reintegration efforts, and international co-operation to end impunity for crimes against children”.

Following on this inquiry, Ukraine established, on 1 June 2026, a mission composed of the three experts undersigned below. The mission of experts shall deliver its report by 22 June 2026.

The mandate of the mission pertains to events which, while originating in the territory of Ukraine and concerning Ukrainian citizens, also involve acts purportedly carried out by persons acting on behalf or under the control of the Russian Federation. We therefore consider that your country might be in possession of information and materials relevant for the completion of our mission. Since, by virtue of Paragraph 6 of the Moscow document, *“the mission may receive information in confidence from any individual, group or organization on questions it is addressing”*, we would like to invite Russia to collaborate with our mission. We this in mind, we would very much appreciate an opportunity to meet with your Excellency. We would also particularly welcome information from, and contacts with, the following authorities:

- the High Commissioner for Human Rights of the Russian Federation
- the Commissioner for Children’s Rights in the Office of the President of the Russian Federation
- the Ministry of Education of the Russian Federation
- the Federal Agency for Youth Affairs
- the National Information Bureau of the Russian Federation
- Services acting on behalf of the Russian Federation and in charge of education in the Donetsk, Luhansk, Kherson and Zaporizhzhia regions, and in Crimea and the city of Sebastopol

We would be grateful to receive copies of any written communications, such as letters, that any of these offices, or indeed any other Russian authorities, may have addressed to authorities of Ukraine concerning the subject matter of the present mandate. We would also appreciate if you could provide us with a total number and list of names of unaccompanied children who have been transferred from Ukraine to the Russian Federation since 24 February 2022 or even prior to this date, and of those who have returned to Ukraine to date.

We thank you in advance for acknowledging receipt of this letter and for kindly providing a response. In view of the timeframe envisaged for the mission, we would be grateful to receive your reply by 9 June 2026.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, consisting of a stylized 'H' followed by 'A' and a horizontal line.

Hervé Ascensio

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'Elina Steinerte' in a cursive script.

Elīna Šteinerte

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Stefan Wolff' in a cursive script.

Stefan Wolff

**ANNEX 3: RESPONSE FROM THE PERMANENT MISSION OF UKRAINE TO THE
INTERNATIONAL ORGANIZATIONS IN VIENNA**



Permanent Mission of Ukraine
to the International Organizations
in Vienna

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Nº 4131/36-180/7-79065

Vienna,
5 June 2026

Distinguished Experts,

In response to your letter of 2 June 2026 let me sincerely thank you for your willingness to act as experts of the mission of the OSCE Moscow Human Dimension Mechanism to address the issue of militarization and indoctrination of Ukrainian children by the Russian Federation.

As you are aware, this OSCE Mechanism was invoked on 14 May 2026 by 41 OSCE participating States in close cooperation with Ukraine.

We believe that your mission's activities and future report will significantly contribute to the international efforts and accountability mechanisms to ensure justice and hold to account the masterminds and perpetrators of Russia's crimes.

The Ukrainian Side stays ready to maintain fruitful cooperation with your mission of experts and looks forward to your forthcoming visit to Ukraine on 7-11 June 2026.

Please accept, dear Experts, the assurances of my highest consideration.

Yurii Vitrenko

**Ambassador,
Permanent Representative of Ukraine to
the International Organizations in Vienna**

**Prof. Hervé Ascencio
Dr. Elīna Šteinerte
Prof. Stefan Wolff**

**Paris
Rīga
Birmingham**