

# FORCIBLE TRANSFER AND DEPORTATION OF CHILDREN FROM THE TEMPORARILY OCCUPIED TERRITORIES OF UKRAINE TO THE RUSSIAN FEDERATION

Analytical report



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# INTRODUCTION

After the beginning of the large-scale armed aggression against Ukraine, information began to appear about the facts of the displacement of children from the Ukrainian territories temporarily occupied by Russia to the territories occupied before February 24, 2022, or to the territory of the Russian Federation.

However, Russia began to transfer children from the occupied territories of Crimea, Donetsk and Luhansk regions in 2014<sup>1</sup>.

But just before the start of the full-scale invasion, on February 18, 2022, the «evacuation» began from the territories of Donetsk and Luhansk regions, which were occupied at that time, and one of the categories of people who were taken out first were children from orphanages and boarding schools<sup>2</sup>.

This practice was widespread in Mariupol immediately after the city was captured by Russia, and in the autumn, children began to be taken from orphanages and boarding schools in Kherson region with the approach of the Ukrainian offensive and the increasing possibility of de-occupation of these territories.

Also, during the summer 2022, Russia began implementing a new tactic of children's displacement – sending them «for a vacation» or «treatment» to camps and sanatoriums which are situated in the territory of occupied Crimea and regions of the Russian Federation. After the end of the session period, which the parents agreed to, the children were denied return due to the «security situation». During the so-called “vacation”, children were also involved in educational and cultural activities according to the Russian curriculum, and with the beginning of autumn, most of the children were placed in local educational institutions, where children are taught according to the Russian curriculum.

The campaign of displacement of Ukrainian children, both orphans and those whose parents have been deprived of parental rights, and who have relatives in Ukraine, to the custody and care of Russian families with the prospect of their adoption carries a particular danger.

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1 The Stolen Children: How Russia Attempts To Kidnap Ukraine's Future, Fedosiuk Tetiana / International Centre for Defence and Security, February 2023: <https://icds.ee/en/the-stolen-children-how-russia-attempts-to-kidnap-ukraines-future/>

2 Deportation of custodial facilities in the Kherson region. Analytical report by the Human Rights Centre ZMINA, 2023.

This analytical report is aimed at forming the general picture concerning the policy of Russia on the displacement of Ukrainian children, methods of re-education by making them study according to the Russian educational program, and transfer children to the custody and care of Russian families. Studying all these aspects in their entirety will allow us to make conclusions about the presence of signs of the deportation of Ukrainian children and the crime of genocide in terms of the displacement of children from one group to another. Particular attention is paid to the guardianship system in Russia to determine the danger of Ukrainian children staying in Russian families.

The analytical report covers the period from the start of the full-scale invasion on February 24, 2022 to March 11, 2023.

This analytical report is based on information collected by the Human Rights Centre ZMINA from open sources and as a result of documenting the testimonies of people who suffered or witnessed the crime of deportation and forcible transfer, in particular, managers and employees and residents of custodial facilities, as well as on the analysis of reports from state authorities of the Russian Federation and the occupation administrations regarding the displacement, accommodation and organization of education for children who were forcibly transferred to other occupied territories of Ukraine or deported to the Russian Federation and transfer of such children to the care and custody of Russian families.

## SUMMARY

1. International humanitarian law regulates an absolute ban on the displacement of children to other states (taking into account the special vulnerability of this category of protected persons and their inability to make an informed choice on their own), with the only exception being urgent reasons related to health conditions. The prohibition of forced displacement also applies to transfer within the occupied territories, with the exception of evacuation, if there are legitimate reasons for it. The occupying power also has obligations not to obstruct and support the functioning of institutions responsible for the care of children in the occupied territory.
2. The relocation of institutions which are responsible for the care of children to the Russian Federation began before the full-scale invasion. It was much easier to relocate such institutions from the territories of Ukraine occupied by the Russian Federation until February 24, 2022, due to the mechanism and occupation infrastructure already formed over a long period of time. However, the Russian Federation carries out forcible transfer first to previously occupied territories with a long-established occupation system, and then deportation from territories occupied after the start of the full-scale invasion.
3. Another method of displacement of children from the occupied territories of Ukraine is to transfer them to camps in the temporarily occupied territory of Crimea or the Russian Federation. The Russian side claims that the children should have a «healthy recreation», but the process of their transfer is accompanied by numerous manipulations and violations: the Russian side uses the vulnerable position of the parents, their desire to protect the children from shelling and the difficulties of life in the occupied territory, misleading them about the nature and duration of the so-called «vacation». At the end of the session period, it is usually extended without returning the children to their parents for various reasons: danger of shelling, pro-Ukrainian views.
4. Camping is also used for the purpose of «re-education». In particular, during the entire stay in the camps, the children are offered a curriculum and cultural program based on Russian propaganda, and from the autumn of 2022, they were involved in studying the school curriculum according to Russian education standards, which include false information about Russia's invasion of Ukraine, as well as «patriotic education», which is accompanied by the militarization of education. All these measures are carried out at the initiative and with the broad support of the political leadership of the Russian Federation.

5. The displacement of Ukrainian children to the Russian Federation for custody and care, as well as the recognition of Ukrainian children as citizens of the Russian Federation to facilitate their adoption, is a violation of the obligation of states to respect the rights of the child to preserve individuality, including citizenship, name and family ties, and the right to change the civil status of children. Such a displacement of children has signs of the crime of genocide in terms of forcibly transferring children of the group to another group, in particular, taking into account the circumstances of immersion of children into the Russian education system immediately after the displacement, accommodation of children in the care or custody of Russian families instead of properly searching for relatives in their national group and the transfer of such children to the responsible authorities of Ukraine, the procedure for adopting children, which provides for the closure of information about a child, as well as the opportunity for new parents to change children's personal data which makes their further identification impossible.

# 1.

## GENERAL DESCRIPTION OF THE SITUATION AND QUALIFICATION

Article 78 of Protocol Additional to the Geneva Conventions of 12 August 1949 (Protocol I) establishes a direct prohibition on the displacement of children to a foreign country and establishes the only exceptional circumstance under which the displacement of children who are in the occupied territory may be allowed: compelling reasons of the health or medical treatment. In the case of children, even the general rule provided for all protected persons is not taken into account: **public safety and military necessity are not permissible grounds for displacement of children outside the country.**

At the same time, it is emphasized that even if there is a reason, such evacuation should be temporary, and all necessary measures should be taken to ensure a quick return, as soon as the circumstances that made this evacuation necessary disappear. To facilitate the process of returning a child to the country of citizenship, a comprehensive information card for each child evacuated should be provided to the e Central Tracing Agency of the International Committee of the Red Cross.



The State shall make every effort to find child's relatives or guardians and obtain their written consent in the course of such evacuation. If these persons cannot be found, the written consent to such evacuation of the persons who by law or custom are primarily responsible for the care of the children is required.

Although such consent is not enough. In the absence of the sole legal basis, the consent of the responsible persons does not make the displacement of children legal. In addition, such consent must be free, that is, given without coercion. Any reference to the wishes or consent of the children themselves to such a transfer also does not make the transfer legal, because children cannot give informed consent due to their status.

The prohibition of forced displacement also applies to transfer within the occupied territories. In this case, the general rule prohibiting forced displacement of protected persons applies and only two legal grounds for evacuation are provided. With regard to children, the prohibition of displacement is of particular importance due to their inability to make informed choices on their own, as well as the possibility of causing irreparable harm to the child through such displacement under already existing stress conditions.

It is worth highlighting the rights of children not to be separated from their families. States are obliged to respect the right of a child to preserve its individuality, including nationality, name and family ties<sup>3</sup>. Children cannot be separated from their parents against their wishes, and the only exception is when competent authorities determine, in accordance with applicable law and procedures, pursuant to a court decision, that such separation is necessary in the best interests of the child<sup>4</sup>.

It is assumed that the request of a child or their parents to enter a state party to the Convention on the Rights of the Child (including Russia) or leave it for the purpose of family reunification should be considered by the state parties in a positive, humane and prompt manner<sup>5</sup>. The member states of the convention are also obliged to take measures to combat the illegal displacement and non-return of children from abroad<sup>6</sup>.

According to the National Information Bureau of Ukraine, as of March 11, 2023, 16,226 children are considered deported<sup>7</sup>. At the same time, the Russian side does not convey any information about children displaced without legitimate grounds, contrary to its obligations.

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3 Article 8 of the Convention on the Rights of the Child: [https://zakon.rada.gov.ua/laws/show/995\\_021#Text](https://zakon.rada.gov.ua/laws/show/995_021#Text)

4 Article 9 of the Convention on the Rights of the Child: [https://zakon.rada.gov.ua/laws/show/995\\_021#Text](https://zakon.rada.gov.ua/laws/show/995_021#Text)

5 Article 10 of the Convention on the Rights of the Child: [https://zakon.rada.gov.ua/laws/show/995\\_021#Text](https://zakon.rada.gov.ua/laws/show/995_021#Text)

6 Article 11 of the Convention on the Rights of the Child: [https://zakon.rada.gov.ua/laws/show/995\\_021#Text](https://zakon.rada.gov.ua/laws/show/995_021#Text)

7 Platform "Children of War" ": <https://childrenofwar.gov.ua>



## CLOSED CHILDREN'S INSTITUTIONS

First of all, the occupying power is obliged to ensure the proper operation of children's institutions. This obligation involves both a requirement not to interfere with their activities and to actively support them. The occupying power must refrain from requisitioning personnel, premises or equipment used by such institutions and in cooperation with local authorities should ensure that these institutions receive food, medicine and everything necessary to continue their work.

This obligation of the occupying power allows us to conclude that its primary task is to ensure the functioning of such institutions in the occupied territory. The occupying power is obliged to do everything possible so that institutions can fully perform their functions, continuously, on the territory where they are located, because any violations of this process can cause irreparable damage to the physical and psychological development of the residents.



The role of the occupying power is limited only to the case when the local authorities do not fulfil their duties, and there are no relatives who can provide care and education for the child. Only in this case, the occupying state can hand over such children to authorized persons or institutions. According to Article 24 IV of the Geneva Convention for the Protection of Civilian Population in Time of War, such persons shall, if possible, be of the same nationality, speak the same language and practice the same religion as the children cared of. The question of the territoriality of such care is not even raised: international humanitarian law provides for a complete prohibition on the displacement of children.

However, Russia massively relocates children's institutions and some of their residents. Often this happens within the occupied territories of Ukraine, but this stage is usually intermediate, and subsequently the institutions and residents are transported to the territory of the Russian Federation or immediately placed under the care of Russian families.

The relocation of children's institutions to the Russian Federation began before the full-scale invasion. In particular, on February 18, 2022, the «evacuation» from the «DPR» and «LPR» was announced<sup>8</sup>. Then, on February 19, 2022, the first buses with 225 pupils of the Donetsk Boarding School No. 1 arrived at the border of the Russian Federation<sup>9</sup>. On February 27, 2022, information appeared about the settlement of «refugees from Donbas», «evacuated» before a full-scale invasion on the territory of the Rostov region of the Russian Federation. Specifically on February 19, 2022, children arrived from three boarding houses in Donetsk to the “Romashka” sports and recreation complex on the territory of Neklinovskiy district of the Rostov region in the Russian Federation. Among them was Donetsk Boarding School No.1. 457 children were accommodated in «Romashka»<sup>10</sup>. On April 23, 2022, an interview with the director of the facility appeared, who stated that the decision to evacuate was made «within minutes» before a full-scale invasion, and that all children «gave their consent» to be transferred to families in Russia<sup>11</sup>.

On October 2, 2022, it became known about the transfer of 39 pupils of the Donetsk Boarding School No. 1, who were previously in the territory of the Rostov region, to the city of Kirov in the Russian Federation. In October, they had to pass a medical examination and start studying<sup>12</sup>.

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8 The heads of the DPR and LPR announced the beginning of a mass evacuation / RIA Novosti, 18.02.2022: <https://ria.ru/20220218/evakuatsiya-1773598104.html>

9 Rostov Oblast has started receiving evacuees from Donbass / VestiRU, 19.02.2022: <https://www.vesti.ru/article/2679189>

10 Convoys of buses and about 200 TACs: how refugees from the LPR and DPR were accommodated in the Rostov Region / DONTR.RU, 27.02.2022: <http://surl.li/gwrjo>

11 Every day, the children of Donetsk listened to the rockets / 360, 23.04.2022: <https://360tv.ru/tekst/obschestvo/kazhdyj-den-deti-donetska-prislushivalis-k-raketam/>

12 39 children from the Donetsk boarding school / Svoy Kirovsky arrived in Kirov, 02.10.2022: <https://kirov-portal.ru/news/poslednie-novosti/v-kirov-pribyli-39-detej-iz-doneckoj-shkoly-internata-31840>

On August 5, 2022, Maria Lvova-Belova, Children's Rights Commissioner for the President of the Russian Federation, visited the temporarily occupied territory of the Luhansk region and reported that 160 children from the territory of the so-called «DPR» have been placed under the care of Russian families, of which 133 have already received Russian citizenship. In the so-called «LPR» there are 442 such children and another 90 teenagers over the age of 16 who study in colleges. According to Lvova-Belova, the children in question were those who lived in boarding schools as orphans for a long time. The plan was to place children in families in the Astrakhan, Volgograd, Leningrad, Murmansk, Nizhny Novgorod, Novosibirsk, Omsk, Penza, Samara, Tyumen and Chelyabinsk regions of the Russian Federation.

At a joint meeting of representatives of the authorities of the so-called «LPR» and Lvova-Belova, it was decided that 104 children who are in children's social institutions of the «LPR» will be soon prepared to be transferred to Russian families for care. It was also decided to create a data bank of orphans and children left without care in the «LPR»<sup>13</sup>.

On October 13, 2022, 24 orphans under the age of 16 were brought to the Novosibirsk region of the Russian Federation from the temporarily occupied Luhansk region for the purpose of transferring them to eight Russian foster families<sup>14</sup>.

It was much easier to relocate children's institutions in the territories of Ukraine occupied by Russia until February 24, 2022, due to the mechanism and occupation infrastructure already formed over a long period of time. However, the Russian Federation does not limit displacement only to these territories – Russia carries out forcible transfer first to other occupied territories of Ukraine with a long-established occupation system and then deports children to Russia from the territories occupied after the start of the full-scale invasion as well.

The Donetsk Regional Prosecutor's Office also initiated proceedings regarding cases of forcible transfer and deportation from the city of Mariupol. In particular, in March 2022, under the pretext of evacuation, the armed forces of the Russian Federation forcibly displaced 12 minor patients of the Regional Children's Bone and Tuberculosis Center of Mariupol to the territory of the Donetsk region occupied before February 24, 2022. Another 14 foster children of two family-type orphanages together with three foster parents were taken from Mariupol to the Rostov region of the Russian Federation<sup>15</sup>.

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13 Let's give them a chance - Maria Lvova-Belova about orphans in the LPR / Official website of the Commissioner under the President of the Russian Federation for Children's Rights, 05.08.2022: <http://deti.gov.ru/articles/news/davajte-dadim-im-shans-mariya-l-vova-belova-o-detyah-sirotah-v-lnr>

14 Novosibirsk families accepted children from the LPR / RIA Novosti, 13.10.2022: <https://ria.ru/20221013/siroty-1823636704.html?in=t>

15 Forced evacuation of children from Mariupol to the Russian Federation and pseudo-republics - an investigation has been launched / website of the Prosecutor General's Office, 11.04.2022: <https://www.pg.gov.ua/ua/posts/primusova-evakuaciya-ditei-z-mariupolya-do-rf-ta-psevdorespublik-rozpocato-rozsliduvannya>

This practice also spread in the Kherson region, which was occupied in the first weeks after the beginning of the Russian invasion, which made it impossible to evacuate all children's institutions from this territory.

On June 2, 2022, servicemen of the Russian Federation came to the Center for Social and Psychological Rehabilitation of Children of the Kherson Regional Council, where 52 children were staying, and inspected the children and the institution. The director decided to return some of the children to their parents or relatives of the children - grandparents, etc. The return of the children was organized in accordance with Ukrainian legislation. Seventeen children did not have close relatives, and a decision was made to transfer the children to the families of the institution's employees. As of July 2, 2022, there were five boys aged 14-17 along with the director, and one more child left in the hospital. When the Russian servicemen arrived at the institution on July 2, 2022, they took away documents, computers and a video surveillance system to find out where the children were<sup>16</sup>. They had a conversation with the five boys present, who refused to go to the Russian Federation for rehabilitation and generally to leave anywhere. In this way, the director managed to save the children from deportation. Today, almost all the children from the institution were evacuated to appropriate institutions in safer cities of Ukraine.

On July 15, 2022, Russian servicemen brought 15 orphans, who were pupils of the Novopetrivka special school (Municipal institution «Novopetrivka special school» in the village of Novopetrivka, Snihurivka district, Mykolaiv Regional Council) which at that time was on the front line, to the Center for Social and Psychological Rehabilitation of Children of the Kherson Regional Council. These children were brought by the Russian military in military vehicles and were kept under control throughout their stay in Stepanivka, where the mentioned center is located, so there was no way to hide these children. The children lived in the Center until October 19, 2022, and with the retreat from Kherson, the Russians took the children with them<sup>17</sup>. The director was told that they were being taken to Henichesk, Kherson region, but the bus driver said that they were going to Crimea. Three days later, the director was able to contact the director of the "Novopetrivka special school", the state guardian of the children. Since July 2022, she has been moving with her pupils and reported that they were brought to the city of Anapa in the Krasnodar region of the Russian Federation. Then a long rescue operation began, and the pupils of the "Novopetrivka special school" are now safe in the territory of Georgia<sup>18</sup>.

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16 Ukraine War: Chilling moment Russians came for Ukrainian orphans / Sky News YouTube channel, 21.12.2022: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=c9js35juYBI>

17 Armed Russians broke into an orphanage in the Kherson region to kidnap children (video) / UNIAN, 22.12.22: <https://www.unian.ua/society/rosiyani-zi-zbroyeyu-vderlisya-v-ditbudinok-nahersonshchini-shchob-vikrasti-ditey-video-12087105.html>

18 The Russians wanted to steal 52 children from the Kherson region! They were not allowed to do it! - Volodymyr Sagaydak / TSN, 03.01.23: <https://tsn.ua/youtube/rosiyani-hotili-vkrasti-52-ditey-z-hersonschini-ne-dali-yim-ce-zrobiti-volodimir-sagaydak.html>

At the time of the occupation, there were about 100 children in the Kherson Regional Children's House. In April 2022, it was reported that there were already 58 children in this House, and they were in the basement for a long time, hiding from shelling and bombing by the Russian military. The administration of the Children's House and the Children's Service could not guarantee the safe transfer of children to the territory under the control of the Government of Ukraine, because it was not possible to agree on a humanitarian corridor from the Kherson region. Problems with food, medicines, and hygiene products began at this time because the Russian side did not allow humanitarian aid to enter the city<sup>19</sup>. All the children from the Children's House were taken to Crimea, their future fate is unknown. Forty-six children under the age of five were taken to Simferopol by ambulance. Among the 46 «evacuees», 18 children are deprived of parental care, nine are temporary residents, 19 do not have legal status (taken from the family)<sup>20</sup>. Kyrylo Stremousov, «Deputy Chairman of the Governor of Kherson region», also announced this transfer<sup>21</sup>.

On January 26, 2023, the website of the Russian media «Vyorstka» published the article «The Russian authorities took no less than 14 orphans from Kherson under the age of five to the Yolochnka Crimean orphanage»<sup>22</sup>, in which the authors suspect that these 14 children are from a group of 46 children taken out of the Children's House. All 14 children were photographed in the same interiors of the Yolochnka orphanage which specializes in working with children with lesions of the central nervous system, psychological and behavior disorders, hearing and vision impairments, and HIV. The orphanage is subordinate to the Crimean Ministry of Health.

In addition, volunteers from Yalta, who visited Yolochnka during the reception of orphans from Kherson, wrote that the children needed warm clothes, pants, jackets and educational toys, and launched a fundraising campaign. Among the messages published in connection with this campaign, messages about the arrival of 46 orphans from Kherson to the orphanage have been preserved<sup>23</sup>. This information is also confirmed in the comments to the message.

Therefore, the organized and massive cases of relocation of institutions responsible for the care of children allow making the conclusion that the Russian Federation consciously implements the policy of forcible transfer and deportation of children from Ukrainian children's institutions.

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19 Commissioner: 58 orphans remain in danger in temporarily occupied Kherson / website of the Commissioner for Human Rights of the Verkhovna Rada of Ukraine, 14.04.2022: <http://surl.li/gwrlw>

20 The Russians took 46 small children from Kherson to Simferopol - RMA / Ukrainska Pravda, 21.10.2022: <https://www.pravda.com.ua/news/2022/10/21/7372970/>

21 Today, the house of a baby was completely evacuated from the city of Kherson / the Telegram channel of "Deputy Chairman of the Governor of the Kherson Region" Kirill Stremousov, 21.10.2022: [https://t.me/Stremousov\\_Kirill/567](https://t.me/Stremousov_Kirill/567)

22 The Russian authorities took no less than 14 orphans under the age of five from Kherson to the Crimean orphanage "Yolochnka" / Verstka, 26.01.2023: <https://verstka.media/rossijskie-vlasti-vyvezli-nemenee-14-sirot-iz-hersona/>

23 Correspondence of volunteers, published on Kateryna Gorelkina's personal Vkontakte account, 28.10.2022: [https://vk.com/wall36790778\\_12175](https://vk.com/wall36790778_12175)

# 3.

## CHILDREN IN CAMPS

At least 43 «camps» were found in the occupied territories of Ukraine and in Russia, where children from the occupied territories of Ukraine were brought<sup>24</sup>.

In October 2022, during a visit to the temporarily occupied territory of Crimea, the «head of the occupation administration» of Kherson, Volodymyr Saldo, announced that about 5,000 children from the Kherson region would come to Crimea for rehabilitation. But, as noted, at that time there were already about 1,500 children in Crimea<sup>25</sup>.

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24 Russia's systematic program for the re-education & adoption of Ukraine's children Yale School of Public Health's Humanitarian Research Lab, 14.02.2023: <https://hub.conflictobservatory.org/portal/apps/sites/#/home/pages/children-camps-1>

25 Crimea will take on vacation up to five thousand children from the Kherson region, 08.10.2022: <https://crimea-news.com/society/2022/10/08/975810.html>

It is also known about the transfer of 350 children from Mariupol under a similar scheme to the Dubrava health resort in the Soligorsk district of Belarus on the instructions of the Belarusian President Alexander Lukashenko and the organization of the process by the Alexei Talay Foundation in September 2022. According to published data, in the autumn Belarus was supposed to receive more than 1,000 «children from hot spots»<sup>26</sup>.

The first group of children from the Kharkiv region was sent to the camp in the village of Kabardinka<sup>27</sup> in the Krasnodar region of Russia in early August 2022. A total of 203 children from the Kupyansk district of the Kharkiv region were taken by bus to Krasnodar, accompanied by the military police and the so-called «Ministry of Internal Affairs of the LPR». Krasnodar Mayor Andrey Alekseenko was present for part of the journey with the children. Children from the occupied part of the Kharkiv region were placed in a children's camp which is funded from the budget of the Krasnodar region of the Russian Federation. By the end of August 2022, it was also planned to bring a second group of 300 more children<sup>28</sup>. At that time, 350 children from the Kharkiv region and Debaltseve (Donetsk region) were already in the camp<sup>29</sup>.

Two weeks before the retreat of Russian troops from the Kharkiv region, 20 more children were taken from the border village of Kozacha Lopan to the Medvezhenok children's camp in the village of Kabardinka, between Gelendzhik and Novorossiysk: seven from Strilecha village on the border with Russia, and another 13 – from Kozacha Lopan<sup>30</sup>.

On September 10, 2022, the Ministry of Labor and Social Development of the Krasnodar Region of the Russian Federation announced that children from the Kharkiv region, who are on vacation in Gelendzhik, will remain in the camp for one more session «for safety purposes»<sup>31</sup>. And on September 22, Kuban state media reported that

26 The second group of children from Donbas arrived in Belarus for recovery / ONT, 26.09.2022: <https://ont.by/news/v-belarus-na-ozdorovlenie-pribyla-vtoraya-gruppa-rebyat-s-donbassa>; Another group of children from Donbas arrived in Belarus for recovery - Mariupol, Donetsk / A. Talay, 26.09.2022: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=mHdDmlSvuTY>

27 The village is part of the municipal entity "Gelendzhik city-resort", Krasnodar region, Russian Federation.

28 "Why do you need other people's children?" After the de-occupation of Kharkiv region, parents cannot return their children who were taken to Russia for summer vacation / Graty, 29.09.2022: <https://graty.me/uk/navishho-vam-chuzhi-diti-pislya-deokupaczi%D1%97-harkivshhini-batki-ne-mozhut-povernuti-ditej-yakih-vivezli-u-rosiyu-na-litnij-vidpochinok/>

29 More than 200 children from the Kharkiv region are now resting in Gelendzhik / Kuban News, 11.08.2022: <https://kubnews.ru/obshchestvo/2022/08/11/bolee-200-detey-iz-kharkovskoy-oblasti-seychas-otdykhayut-v-gelendzhike/>

30 "Why do you need other people's children?". After the de-occupation of Kharkiv region, parents cannot return their children who were taken to Russia for summer vacations / Graty, 29.09.2022: <https://graty.me/uk/navishho-vam-chuzhi-diti-pislya-deokupaczi%D1%97-harkivshhini-batki-ne-mozhut-povernuti-ditej-yakih-vivezli-u-rosiyu-na-litnij-vidpochinok/>

31 Children from the Kharkiv region will stay in Gelendzhik for a second shift / Kuban 24, 10.09.2022: <https://kuban24.tv/item/deti-iz-harkovskoj-oblasti-ostanutsya-otdyhat-v-gelendzhike-na-vmoruy-smenu>

223 children from the Kharkiv region were placed in primary classes at school No. 7 in Gelendzhik<sup>32</sup>.

In October 2022, information was received about the start of education for 75 children from the Kharkiv region, who were previously in the Medvezhenok children's camp (Kabardinka village, RF) in the Zhemchuzhina Rossiya health resort (Anapa city, RF). Children from Kherson, Zaporizhzhia regions and the unrecognized «LPR» and «DPR» were also in the health resort, more than 400 Ukrainian children in total<sup>33</sup>.

During the press conference, the representative of the occupation administration of the Kherson region - the «head of the department of education and science of the Kherson region», Tetiana Kuzmich, said that the process of organizing «healthy recreation» for children from Kherson and the region at the resorts of the Russian Federation is ongoing. For this purpose, separate districts of the Kherson region were assigned to the regions of the Russian Federation: Henichesk and Novotroitske districts were to be taken to the Republic of Adygea (Lan children's health camp, Gornaya tourist and local history camp), Skadovsk district – to the Republic of Kabardino-Balkaria (Gornyi Istochnik health resort), Beryslav district – Pskov region, Kakhovka district – Riazan region, the city of Kherson was assigned to Kaliningrad region, but the region did not take the children and the «rehabilitation» is carried out in Yevpatoria, Crimea. Also, the Krasnodar region of the Russian Federation (Zhemchuzhina Rossiya), the Rostov region of the Russian Federation (Kozachok, Azovskoye Vzmorye camps) were listed as places where the children were sent. It is planned to send 2,500 children from Kherson on vacations<sup>34</sup>.

On October 8, 2022, it became known that the occupying authorities of the Kherson region are going to send children with their parents and the elderly on vacations for several weeks to the occupied Crimea, Rostov region, and Krasnodar region of the Russian Federation to save them from shelling<sup>35</sup>. On October 14, 2022, a message with the following content was published: «Children from the Kherson region went on vacation to other regions of Russia» with a comment by Russian Deputy Prime Minister Marat Husnullin about the need to send the children of the Kherson region to the territory of the Russian Federation as a priority. He also noted that several thousand children are already in other regions of Russia, on vacation in resorts and children's camps<sup>36</sup>.

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32 In Gelendzhik, children from the Kharkiv region began studying according to the school curriculum / Kuban 24, 22.09.2022: <https://kuban24.tv/item/v-gelendzhike-deti-iz-harkovskoj-oblasti-nachali-obuchenie-po-shkolnoj-programme>

33 Anna Minkova checked how children from the annexed regions were placed in Anapa / Kuban 24, 14.10.2022: <https://kuban24.tv/item/anna-minkova-proverila-kak-razmestili-v-anape-detej-iz-prisoedinennyh-regionov>

34 The program for organizing recreation for children from Kherson and the region at the resorts of the Russian Federation continues / ZOV Kherson, 12.08.2022: <https://kherson-news.ru/society/2022/08/12/20978.html>

35 Children from Kherson region will be sent to Crimea, Rostov region / RIA Novosti, 08.10.2022: <https://ria.ru/20221008/deti-1822453496.html>

36 Children from the Kherson region went on vacation to other regions of Russia / RIA Novosti, 14.10.2022: <https://ria.ru/20221014/deti-1824187647.html>



The Russian side claimed to «rehabilitate» the children, but the process of their removal was accompanied by numerous manipulations and violations. In particular, first of all, the Russian side took advantage of the parents' vulnerable state, their desire to protect their children from shelling and the difficulties of life in the occupied territory, for example, the lack of food, while they were limited in their ability to leave the territory controlled by Ukraine. They also offered to sign a «consent to transfer» which does not specify the person to whom the children are entrusted, and the documents (birth certificate) of the child are taken away<sup>37</sup>.

There is also information that if the children were accompanied, the camp administrations demanded that the adults leave the camps, arguing that they were setting the children against the camps and Russia and spoiling discipline. It was argued that accompanying persons had no right to the children. Accompanying persons from Ukraine were told that if the parents want to take their children, they should come for them by themselves<sup>38</sup>.

Apart from the «session delay», children were not returned for other reasons also. For example, a 14-year-old boy from Kherson was sent by his mother to a camp in Crimea on October 4, 2022, and he was supposed to return in two weeks, but two months passed. At the end of November 2022, he forwarded her a series of chilling voice messages from his camp leader telling him he would not be allowed back to Kherson because of his pro-Ukraine views. The camp management extended the boy's stay, citing security reasons, and then, when Ukrainian troops entered Kherson, they said he could not return, as the city was now «occupied» by Ukraine<sup>39</sup>.

In some cases, the leaders of the Russian camps declared that they did not plan to return the Ukrainian children. In other cases, children were moved from one camp to another without notifying their parents<sup>40</sup>.

It is also difficult to call the consent of parents to send children to camps free, given the intimidation, the difficult humanitarian situation in the occupied territories, the restriction of travel to the territory controlled by the Government of Ukraine, and the misleading about the nature and duration of such «vacation». The parents admit that if they had known these circumstances in advance, they would not have sent their children there<sup>41</sup>.

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37 "Why do you need other people's children?". After the de-occupation of Kharkiv region, parents cannot return their children who were taken to Russia for summer vacation / Graty, 29.09.2022: <https://graty.me/uk/navishho-vam-chuzhi-diti-pislya-deokupaczi%D1%97-harkivshhini-batki-ne-mozhut-povernuti-ditej-yakih-vivezli-u-rosiyu-na-litnij-vidpochinok/>

38 Followers write about Kherson children who were taken to "health" resorts of Russia / Telegram channel KHERSON: War Without Fakes, 16.10.2022: [https://t.me/kherson\\_non\\_fake/3881](https://t.me/kherson_non_fake/3881)

39 Weeks turn to months as children become stuck at camps in Crimea / The Guardian, 27.12.2022: <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2022/dec/27/children-become-stuck-at-camps-in-crimea-ukraine-russia>

40 Ibid.

41 "Why do you need other people's children?". After the de-occupation of Kharkiv region, parents cannot return their children who were taken to Russia for summer vacation / Graty, 29.09.2022: <http://surl.li/gwrrj>

# 4.

## «RE-EDUCATION» PRACTICES

One of the main goals of displacement of children from the occupied territories of Ukraine to camps in Crimea and regions of the Russian Federation is «re-education» - the integration of Ukrainian children into the education and leisure system approved by the Russian government. At least 32 of the 43 established camps are actively and systematically engaged in providing «education and cultural development» of Ukrainian children according to the Russian system<sup>42</sup>. The program includes Russian narratives about the nature of the full-scale invasion and the history of Russian-Ukrainian relations.

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42 Russia's systematic program for the re-education & adoption of Ukraine's children Yale School of Public Health's Humanitarian Research Lab, 14.02.2023: <https://hub.conflictobservatory.org/portal/apps/sites/#/home/pages/children-camps-1>



According to the so-called «Minister of Education, Science and Youth of the Republic of Crimea», Valentina Lavryk, in children's camps in Crimea and the regions of the Russian Federation a lot of attention is paid to educational work with children from the «DPR», «LPR», occupied Zaporizhzhia and Kherson regions, where «Conversations on important topics» are held regularly<sup>43</sup>.

«Conversations on main/important topics» are lessons dedicated to the formation of «love for the Motherland, pride for one's country and patriotism» in schoolchildren. For example, as part of the program on «Defender of the Fatherland Day», the topics about «the peacekeeping operations of the Russian army in Nagorny-Karabakh, South Ossetia, Kazakhstan, the defeat of terrorists in Syria, the protection of compatriots and the liberation of Donbas during a special military operation» were discussed with Ukrainian children. Summarizing the discussion, teachers are instructed to emphasize that Russia is a country that uses its armed forces exclusively to maintain general peace<sup>44</sup>.

In addition, since the beginning of the academic year, children from the «DPR», «LPR», occupied Zaporizhzhia and Kherson regions (and there were more than 600 of them in the Crimean camps as of November 2022) began to study according to the Russian school curriculum<sup>45</sup>. Children who remained in the occupied territories, where they lived before, study according to the same curriculum and are forced to speak exclusively the Russian language at school. Schools in the occupied territories are also «guarded» by the Russian military<sup>46</sup>.

Children participated in lineups with the raised flags of the Russian Federation and the occupied Crimea; Volodymyr Saldo («Governor of Kherson Oblast»), Valentina Lavryk («Minister of Education, Science and Youth of the Republic of Crimea») and also Olena Romanovskaya («Deputy Chairman of the Council of Ministers of the Republic of Crimea - Minister of Labor and Social Protection of the Republic of Crimea»), Kateryna Arlamenkova (coordinator of the Russian movement of schoolchildren in the «Republic of Crimea») organized a meeting for children from Kherson with activists of the Russian movement of schoolchildren, Bolshaya Smena, Yunarmia<sup>47</sup>.

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43 Talk about the important: what is it and what is known about the program? / Online school Skysmart, 8.09.2022, updated 10.01.2023: <https://skysmart.ru/articles/useful/razgovory-o-vazhnom>

44 Talk about important things. Scenario of the lesson «Defender of the Fatherland Day» Grades 10-11: <https://razgovor-cdn.edsoo.ru/media/file/defenderday-1011-script.pdf>

45 Vladimir Konstantinov: «Despite the difficulties, the summer campaign for recreation and health improvement of children in Crimea took place» / Krymskiye Izvestia, 08.11.2022: <https://new.crimiz.ru/rubriki/89-gossovet/19779-vladimir-konstantinov-nesmotrya-na-trudnosti-letnyaya-kampaniya-po-otdykhu-i-ozdorovleniyu-detej-v-krymu-sostoyalas>

46 «They don't have the word "Ukraine" at all»: forced Russification of children in Zaporizhzhia and the role of collaborators in this crime / Zaporizhzhia Center of Investigation, 14.11.2022: <https://incentre.zp.ua/slova-ukrayina-u-nyh-vzagali-nemaye-prymusova-rusyfikacziya-ditej-na-zaporizhzi-i-rol-kolaborantiv-u-czomu-zlochyni/>

47 Vkontakte page «Navigators of Childhood | CRIMEA », 09.10.2022: [https://vk.com/wall-214910068\\_4716](https://vk.com/wall-214910068_4716)

For example, for children from Skadovsk, Kherson region, a cultural and patriotic recreation program was also organized in a camp on the territory of Kabardino-Balkaria in the Russian Federation. Representatives of Russian political parties acted as organizers<sup>48</sup>.

Cultural events were arranged for children from the Kherson region, which «lay down the cultural code», and where the children had to listen to the anthem of «their country» – the Russian Federation. It was claimed that in the educational process they «will no longer have to read fake books», they would «learn in a new way», and the term of stay in Crimea was unlimited, until «peace will come to their home»<sup>49</sup>.

A special program was planned for «difficult teenagers». 200 such teenagers from Russia, including teenagers from the «LPR» and «DPR», were bought for «preventive work for the purpose of military and patriotic education». They were taken to the Russian Special Forces University in Gudermes of the Chechen Republic of the Russian Federation, and were given a tour of the training ground and a lecture about the «heroes of the Russian Guard»<sup>50</sup>. The decision to send teenagers to this program was made at a meeting between Maria Lvova-Belova and Ramzan Kadyrov, the head of the Chechen Republic within the Russian Federation, and the organization of the trip was headed by Akhmed Dudayev, the Minister of National Policy, External Relations, Press and Information of Chechnya<sup>51</sup>.

So, during the entire stay in the camps, the children are offered curriculum and cultural program based on Russian propaganda, and from the autumn 2022 they were involved in learning process according to Russian education standards, which include disinformation about the Russian invasion of Ukraine and «patriotic education» as well as the militarization of education. All these measures are carried out at the initiative and broad support of the highest political leadership of the Russian Federation.

According to the Convention on the Rights of the Child, states are obliged to ensure the child's right to preserve individuality, and care for the child must take into account the child's ethnic origin, religious and cultural affiliation and native language<sup>52</sup>. The education of children under 15 years of age who became orphans or were sepa-

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48 What a "good toastmaster" and the contests are interesting / Kherson Telegram channel: War Without Feykov, 11.10.2022: [https://t.me/s/kherson\\_non\\_fake?q=Какой+«хороший+тамада»+и+конкурс+интересные](https://t.me/s/kherson_non_fake?q=Какой+«хороший+тамада»+и+конкурс+интересные)

49 A national concert for refugee children was held at KIPU / Millet, 24.11.2022: <https://trkmillet.ru/v-kipu-proveli-nacionalniy-koncert-d/>

50 As part of the implementation of the federal program "Teens of Russia", 200 difficult teenagers from various regions of Russia, including the Lugansk and Donetsk People's Republics, registered with the relevant authorities, arrived in the Chechen Republic / Ramzan Kadirov's Telegram channel, head of the Chechen Republic in the warehouse of the Russian Federation, 16.11.2022: [https://t.me/s/RKadyrov\\_95/3104](https://t.me/s/RKadyrov_95/3104)

51 The head of Chechnya, Ramzan Kadyrov, said that 200 teenagers from all over Russia, including from the Lugansk and Donetsk People's Republics, had arrived in the region. They are registered as difficult teenagers / Kommersant, 16.11.2022: [https://vk.com/wall-23482909\\_2718063](https://vk.com/wall-23482909_2718063)

52 Article 20 of the Convention on the Rights of the Child: [https://zakon.rada.gov.ua/laws/show/995\\_021#Text](https://zakon.rada.gov.ua/laws/show/995_021#Text)

rated from their families as a result of war should be entrusted to persons with the same cultural traditions<sup>53</sup> and, if it is possible, the same nationality, language and religion<sup>54</sup>.

Education in camps and schools according to the Russian curriculum, as well as additional extracurricular activities organized by the Russian Federation, are obviously aimed at destroying the ties of Ukrainian children with their national group and make returning to Ukraine impossible for them. In addition, the fact that parents in the occupied territories of Ukraine were searched and equipment was checked to determine whether children participated in online education in Ukrainian schools is evidence of a conscious intention to prevent education according to the Ukrainian program and replace it with education according to the Russian curriculum. During the searches, parents were threatened with fines and with their children being taken away if they were not sent to Russian schools<sup>55</sup>.

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53 Article 24 of the Convention relative to the Protection of Civilian Persons in Time of War: [https://zakon.rada.gov.ua/laws/show/995\\_154#Text](https://zakon.rada.gov.ua/laws/show/995_154#Text)

54 Article 50 of the Convention relative to the Protection of Civilian Persons in Time of War: [https://zakon.rada.gov.ua/laws/show/995\\_154#Text](https://zakon.rada.gov.ua/laws/show/995_154#Text)

55 In Berdiansk, the occupiers conducted a raid on families who do not send their children to Russian schools / National Resistance Center, 08.03.2023: <https://sprotyv.mod.gov.ua/2023/03/08/v-berdyansku-okupanty-provely-rejd-po-rodynah-yaki-ne-viddayut-ditej-do-rosijskyh-shkil/>

# 5.

## CHILDREN UNDER GUARDIANSHIP IN RUSSIA

In the context of putting children under guardianship in Russia, the recognition of children from the occupied territories of Ukraine as Russian citizens<sup>56</sup> and their possible adoption, it is worth once again emphasizing the obligation of states to respect the child's right to preserve individuality, including citizenship, name and family ties<sup>57</sup>.

56 The President of the Russian Federation signed laws on joining the DPR, LPR, Zaporozhye and Kherson regions into Russia / Official website of the State Duma of the Federal Elections of the Russian Federation [Electronic resource: <http://duma.gov.ru/news/55420/>]

57 Article 8 of the Convention on the Rights of the Child: [https://zakon.rada.gov.ua/laws/show/995\\_021#Text](https://zakon.rada.gov.ua/laws/show/995_021#Text)



The adoption requirements also regulate that states must ensure that the adoption of a child is authorized only by competent authorities and that they must make sure that the adoption is permissible in view of the child's status in relation to the parents, relatives and legal guardians, and that, if needed, the persons concerned have given their informed consent to the adoption when such permission is granted. Adoption in another country is considered when a child cannot be placed in a foster family or cannot in any suitable manner be cared for in the child's country of origin<sup>58</sup>.

The occupying power has no right to change the citizenship status of children under any circumstances<sup>59</sup>.

Such a transfer of children also has the characteristics of the crime of genocide in terms of forcibly transferring children of the group to another group<sup>60</sup>. The intent to destroy a group or part of it, central to the crime of genocide, is traced to actions aimed at eradicating the identity of children who have been displaced. In particular, due to the practice of immersing them in the Russian education system immediately after displacement, which is applied both to children deprived of parental care and to children who were sent by their parents for «vacation in a camp».

Placing children under the care or custody of Russian families instead of properly searching for relatives in their national group and handing over such children to the competent authorities in Ukraine also indicates a planned campaign to forcibly exclude these children from the Ukrainian national group. The adoption of children is especially dangerous as the procedure involves closing information about a child and enables new parents to change the personal data of a child, making further identification impossible.

The campaign to displace children from the occupied territories of the Donetsk region to Moscow and the Moscow region began in April 2022. At the beginning of April, the Moscow region proposed a project to help find relatives for children left without parents in Donbas, and if that doesn't work, to find new families. The plan, however, was to search for relatives only in state bases of the Russian Federation and bases of the Red Cross. According to Russian sources, the initiative was discussed by the «Chairman of the «DPR» Denys Pushylin, Vice-Speaker of the Council of the Russian Federation Andrey Truchak, Vice-Speaker of the State Duma of the Russian Federation Anna Kuznetsova, Children's Rights Commissioner for the President of the Russian Federation Maria Lvova-Belova and Deputy Head of the Government of the Moscow Region Viacheslav Dukhin.

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58 Article 21 of the Convention on the Rights of the Child: [https://zakon.rada.gov.ua/laws/show/995\\_021#Text](https://zakon.rada.gov.ua/laws/show/995_021#Text)

59 Article 50 of the Convention on the Protection of the Civilian Population in Time of War: [https://zakon.rada.gov.ua/laws/show/995\\_154#Text](https://zakon.rada.gov.ua/laws/show/995_154#Text)

60 Article 2 (e) of the Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide: [https://zakon.rada.gov.ua/laws/show/995\\_389#Text](https://zakon.rada.gov.ua/laws/show/995_389#Text); Article 6 (e) of the Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court: [https://zakon.rada.gov.ua/laws/show/995\\_588#Text](https://zakon.rada.gov.ua/laws/show/995_588#Text)

At this meeting, the topic of synchronizing legislation was also raised to make it possible to adopt children from the «DPR». For this purpose, a joint headquarters was created under the leadership of Lvova-Belova and Eleonora Fedorenko, «Commissioner for Children's Rights in the DPR». Deputies and representatives of specialized ministries and agencies of the Russian Federation are involved in this headquarters<sup>61</sup>.

On April 23, 2022, 20 children from the Donetsk Boarding School No. 1, which was «evacuated» to Taganrog in Russia, were brought to the town of Aprelevka<sup>62</sup> in the Moscow Region of the Russian Federation. These were children whose parents died (not during hostilities) or were deprived of parental rights. The youngest child was three years old<sup>63</sup>. Twenty-eight children were brought earlier, and on July 14, 2022, nine more children, two of them from the «DPR» Children's House, were taken to Kursk in Russia, and in April 2022 they were transferred to the Moscow region. Andrey Vorobyov, the governor of the Moscow region, met them and thanked Lvova-Belova for her support in this process<sup>64</sup>.

Two children aged eight and nine from a boarding school in Donetsk were transferred to a foster family in the Moscow region. But it is known that their grandmother lives in Mariupol<sup>65</sup>.

Three children from a boarding school in Vuhledar in Donetsk region, who did not understand where they were being moved, were taken under temporary care by a family from the Moscow region. The leaders of the region and personally the governor Vorobyov contributed to the fact that 27 more orphans from the «DPR» were accepted into such families<sup>66</sup>.

Children from a health resort in Mariupol who have guardians were taken to Donetsk. In a story on a Russian state channel, it was claimed that the children were taken from the “health resort basement”<sup>67</sup>, while one of the children stated that a volunteer tried to take them to Zaporizhzhia, but at a checkpoint, the Russian military sent them to Manhush in Donetsk region, and from there they were transferred to Donetsk. When

61 The Moscow region will help with the placement of orphans from the LPR/DPR in foster families in Russia / 360, 06.04.2022: <https://360tv.ru/news/mir/podmoskove-pomozhet-s-ustrojstvom-detej-sirot-iz-ldnr-v-priemnye-semi-v-rossii/>

62 Naro-Fominsky city district of the Moscow region.

63 Children from Donbass were taken under guardianship in the Moscow region. The main thing about the humanitarian program / 360, 23.04.2022: <https://360tv.ru/tekst/obschestvo/opeka-detej-donbassa/>

64 A family from the Moscow region took custody of nine children from the DPR / Stupinskaya panorama, 14.07.2022: [https://instupino.ru/news/vlast\\_i\\_obschestvo/semya-iz-podmoskovyia-vzyala-pod-opeku-9-detej-iz-dnr](https://instupino.ru/news/vlast_i_obschestvo/semya-iz-podmoskovyia-vzyala-pod-opeku-9-detej-iz-dnr)

65 From memories of bomb shelters to dreams. Two brothers from Donetsk will be received by a family near Moscow / 360, 23.04.2022: <https://360tv.ru/tekst/obschestvo/dvuh-bratev-iz-donetska-primet-podmoskovnaja-semja/>

66 Half a life under shelling. A teenager from Ugegorsk and his two sisters found a new home in the suburbs / 360, 23.04.2022: <https://360tv.ru/tekst/obschestvo/polzhizni-pod-obstrelami/>

67 Children of the underground Mariupol Ukraine / YouTube channel “announcements”, 03/25/2022, re-uploaded live to the First Channel: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=csraK01YmSw>



the «Donetsk Children's Service» contacted the guardians, demanding the children's data to issue «DPR documents» to them and stated that if the parents did not come to take their children, the children would stay there, receive documents and be placed in families - these topics were raised while speaking both with the guardians and with the children themselves every day<sup>68</sup>.

When two orphan boys were taken from Manhush to Donetsk, no one was looking for their guardian. They were offered to stay in the occupied territory, told that they could go to the camp for 21 days to rest, and then continue their studies in the so-called «DPR»<sup>69</sup>. The children sought contact with the guardian by themselves.

Another situation in which parents and guardians can be separated from their children is when the parents fail the so-called «filtration». Thus, the children (a boy and two girls) were separated from their father at a checkpoint because he is a former soldier. The children were put on an evacuation bus, and the father was detained. The children were first taken to the Novoazovsk hospital and after some time a representative, probably of the guardianship and care authorities, came and took them «to the camp».

About 30 children were transported by special flight to Moscow by plane from Rostov-on-Don, and then to the Polyana camp. The father, who had just left the colony in Olenivka (Donetsk region) on the day the children were taken away, was assured that the children had been taken for treatment and would soon be returned. But in the middle of May 2022, three representatives of the social service came to the camp and said that «due to the circumstances that occurred», they would not be able to transport them to their father because of the shelling. The children were offered to contact their relatives in Russia if they have any, but they too would not have time to come. The children were told that they could be accommodated either in a temporary family or in an orphanage. The father managed to take the children away, but the boy said that in the camp, many of the children were told about both «temporary» and «permanent» families, and many were adopted. His friend was adopted personally by Maria Lvova-Belova<sup>70</sup>.

Another example is the story of Serhiy, who was taken from a settlement near Mariupol to Donetsk, although he had relatives there. His relatives found out about it after the fact from an employee of the «guardianship service» by chance. His only Ukrainian document – his birth certificate – was «lost» when it was “sent to Moscow».

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68 "I brought healthy and alive little ones": how six children survived in Mariupol, got stuck in the DPR and ended up in Europe / BBC News Russian service, 18.07.2022: <https://www.bbc.com/russian/features-62149012>

69 Operation lasting six days: how two teenagers taken from Mariupol were returned to Ukraine / Hromadske Radio, 08.07.2022: <https://hromadske.radio/podcasts/simeynyy-al-bom-dity-viny/1057176>

70 "Dad, you have a maximum of five days to pick us up. Meduza tells the story of a Mariupol man who went through captivity and the famous colony in Yelenovka and prevented the Russians from adopting his children / Meduza, 03.11.2022: <https://meduza.io/feature/2022/11/03/pap-u-tebya-est-maksimum-pyat-dney-chtoby-nas-zabrat>

In Donetsk, Serhiy was informed that it is dangerous to stay there due to shelling, and therefore he would be taken to an orphanage in Russia. From Donetsk, Serhiy was taken to Rostov-on-Don, and then to an orphanage in the suburbs of Moscow by plane. He spent a month there, and then he was transferred to another orphanage in Yegoryevsk (Moscow region of Russia), with a promise he would be brought back later. In the summer of 2022, Serhiy was accommodated with a Russian couple, a «new family», which already had three own children and one adopted child. They were constantly discussing Ukraine, «Nazis in Ukraine», although the boy always asked not to do this. Serhiy was also forcibly issued a Russian passport, at the initiative of Maria Lvova-Belova, but it was immediately taken away by his adoptive parents<sup>71</sup>.

In June 2022, Lvova-Belova stated that several regions of Russia «following the example of the Moscow region according to a worked-out scheme» accepted 108 Ukrainian children into families – these are Moscow, Yamalo-Nenets Autonomous District, Kaluga, Tula, Rostov and Voronezh regions<sup>72</sup>.

On July 14, 2022, a plane with 108 children from the «DPR» arrived at the Chkalovo military airfield in the Moscow region. They were met by Yelena Zaitseva, head of the department for guardianship and care of minors of the Department of Labor and Social Protection of the Population of Moscow. They were to be sent to new families immediately from the airport. Eight children remained in Moscow<sup>73</sup>.

On July 16, 2022, it became known that a family from Salekhard, Yamalo-Nenets Autonomous District of the Russian Federation, took care of two orphans from the «DPR», and a total of 10 adopted children from Donbas would live in the district. The children were accompanied to Salekhard by Daniil Trubitsyn, the child rights representative of this district<sup>74</sup>.

Regarding the individual displacement of children from the occupied territories, Lvova-Belova stated that adults brought many orphans to Russia from the war zone, «everyone was given the right to care for them without any problems» («You saved them, so you have the full right to care for them»)<sup>75</sup>.

It should also be taken into account that in the custody and care procedure, Russian families who adopt a child under the procedure receive financial payments. In particular, for 2022, the one-time payment amounted to 20,472.77 rubles. At the same

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71 "Help me." The story of the deportation of a teenager who managed to return to Ukraine / Ukrainska Pravda, 30.12.2022: <https://life.pravda.com.ua/society/2022/12/30/252072/>

72 Foster families in Yamalo-Nenets Autonomous Okrug are ready to accept children from Donbass / URA.RU, 09.06.2022: <https://ura.news/news/1052560207>

73 Moscow families become guardians of children from Donbass / Official portal of the Mayor and Government of Moscow, 15.07.2022: <https://dszn.ru/press-center/news/9116>

74 A family from the Yamalo-Nenets Autonomous Okrug become guardians of children from Donbass / URA.RU, 16.07.2022: <https://ura.news/news/1052570684>

75 I promised Alena. Zhanna saved children of deceased neighbor and they were returned to DPR / Arguments and Facts, 21.09.2022: [https://aif.ru/society/people/dala\\_slovo\\_alene\\_zhanna\\_spasla\\_detey\\_pogibshey\\_sosedki\\_a\\_ih\\_vernuli\\_v\\_dnr](https://aif.ru/society/people/dala_slovo_alene_zhanna_spasla_detey_pogibshey_sosedki_a_ih_vernuli_v_dnr)

time, if a child taken into care has a disability, or the child is over seven years old, or the family takes in siblings at the same time (does not separate them), the amount increases to 156,428.66 rubles. And the amount is calculated for each child separately.

In addition, such parents are provided with monthly payments which can be arranged at the same time as the one-time payment, and which parents can receive until the child turns 18 years old. These payments can be accrued to both a child and a guardian. However, if the payments are transferred directly to a child, it is impossible to dispose of them freely – only with the permission of the guardianship authorities. If the parents receive these payments, they dispose of them freely, only a possible check by the guardianship authorities is provided for. Monthly payments depend on the region of residence. For example, in Moscow in 2022, parents received 18,150 rubles per month<sup>76</sup>.

Therefore, the Russian Federation violates its obligations to respect a child's right to preserve individuality, including citizenship, name and family ties and the prohibition to change the civil status of children, by handing over children displaced from the occupied territories of Ukraine to the care and custody of Russian citizens, not conducting a proper search for their relatives and not reporting and handing over such children to the responsible authorities in Ukraine. Measures to simplify their adoption, recognition of such children as citizens of the Russian Federation, as well as education of children within the Russian education system are also violations of these obligations. Such actions of the Russian Federation are aimed at severing the connection children have with Ukraine, making it impossible for them to return, and have signs of the crime of genocide in terms of forcibly transferring children of the group to another group.

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76 How much do guardians and wards get paid / Daria Sopina, 05.10.2022: <https://life.akbars.ru/personal-finance/zhivem-po-zakonu/skolko-platyat-opekunam-i-opekaemym/>

