

Summary:

This report by Every Human Being and Kidmapping highlights the systematic deportation of children from Ukraine to Russia, including orphans and children who lost their parents during the conflict. The report raises concerns about the lack of transparency and the practice of placing deported children under temporary guardianship and subsequent adoption. The report recommends measures to ensure the protection of children's rights and family life, as well as the creation of a commission of inquiry to investigate the issue of deportations of children from Ukraine to Russia.

About Us:

Every Human Being is a human rights organization that supports POWs, civil hostages, and forcibly deported children in the Russian-Ukrainian war. We have over 60 active cases and have already managed to release more than 200 people. Kidmapping is a team of independent investigative activists engaged in an open-source search of the places where Ukrainian children were deported to Russia during the full-scale invasion of 2022.

Report:

At this point, we have recorded approximately 200 locations where we are observing traces of deported orphans, children who lost their parents during the conflict, and children who have parents but have not been filtered and the child is illegally deported to another state. Such a large scale, the involvement of all branches of power of the Russian Federation and the desire to adopt these children as quickly as possible tells us that this set of actions is systematic.

Children are moved between institutions, creating an additional lack of transparency, which makes it impossible to track the situation of children, poorly monitored and as closed to the eyes of non-governmental organizations, volunteers and human rights defenders as possible.

At the same time, according to open sources, we observe that the integration of children (in particular orphans or children who lost a parent in the military conflict) from the occupied territories of Donbass took place well before 2022. We see "vacation trips," "rehabilitation," or "recruitment for studies" as early as 2017. In addition to trips to the Russian Federation, we note trips of children from the occupied territories to the Republic of Belarus, which have intensified since the full-scale invasion.

Also of concern is the practice of placing deported children under temporary guardianship and subsequent adoption. Such actions are fully supported and directly organized by the Russian authorities, as evidenced by public statements by officials, including the Russian Presidential Commissioner for Children's Rights, Ms. Maria Lvova-Belova. We do not see direct support from the UN and UNCHR.

Separately, it is worth noting that there are cases not only of deportation of children without parental care but also of forced family separation. Often, during so-called filtration, through which all those wishing to leave the territories of active hostilities pass, children are separated from their parents and directly handed over to the Russian juvenile system. We

have also observed cases where parents have successfully passed through filtration (such detention can last from several hours to several days), their children have already been moved to other regions of Russia, and the process of reuniting legal representatives with the child has been complicated by Russian authorities.

Cases have also been recorded of siblings being separated during the process of being placed in foster care. This contradicts not only international norms on the protection of the rights of the child, but also Russian law, which requires the state to assist in every way possible in order for such children to be brought into the same family.

Two aspects raise questions: the quality of children's lives (poor food, physical violence and intimidation of children, lessons by the Federal Security Service and police) and the desire to deprive children of their cultural identity (language, intimidation of children for using the Ukrainian language and execution of threats against children who were positive about Ukraine) fall under the definition of torture (attempts at conventional re-education) and the conventional definition of genocide.

There are also questions about the active involvement of Russian law enforcement agencies (the Investigative Committee, the General Prosecutor's Office, and the Ministry of Internal Affairs) in the organization of places of detention for deported children and further educational work with them. This is seen as prejudicial treatment of children on the basis of their citizenship and national identity, as special emphasis is placed on the fact that they are Ukrainians.

Recommendations:

Take measures to ensure there is a legitimate safeguarding interest, and ensure strict adherence to the principles of legality, necessity, and proportionality

Implement effective judicial oversight over the practice of deportation and adoption of children from occupied territories of Ukraine to better protect the family life of children

Ensure unhindered access of international human rights and humanitarian organizations to children and places of detention displaced from the occupied territories

Create a commission of inquiry to confirm or deny the systematic movement of children from one human group to another

Promote the creation of a clear, transparent, and workable mechanism for the evacuation of forcibly deported children and their placement in safe countries, primarily EU countries, with cooperation with both national and international humanitarian organizations

Create a commission of inquiry, including independent activists from various countries, which would transparently investigate the issue of deportations of children and from which the Russian Federation and the Republic of Belarus are involved.

Links:

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