



## **Red Flag Alert for Genocide**

### **RUSSIA**

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The Lemkin Institute is issuing a Red Flag Alert regarding the continuing escalation of the war in Ukraine, particularly the forcible removal of Ukrainian children to Russia, which stands in breach of Article II, subsection E of the Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide and Article 6, subsection E of the Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court.

From the outset of Russia's war of aggression there have been reports of the forcible transfer of children from their homes in Ukraine and Russian-occupied territories to the recognised territory of the Russian Federation. This is not simple opportunism but a pattern of deportation sanctioned and orchestrated by the Russian State, as evidenced by Russia's Presidential Commissioner for Children's Rights, Maria Lvova-Belova, who has overseen the official deportation and forced adoption of Ukrainian Children since April 2022.

Estimates vary on the number of children deported from Ukraine. However, figures range from 2000 to over 200,000, the latter figure claimed by Ukrainian President Zelensky in July of this year. The Ukraine-based Regional Center for Human Rights has corroborated this number, documenting up to 260,000 forced deportations of children and at least 309 illegal adoptions from that group. The state-sanctioned kidnapping and transfer of children are clear evidence of a broader campaign to deny the existence of the Ukrainian national group and destroy it through the erasure of a Ukrainian identity in future generations.

The kidnapping and transfer of children is a frequent practice by authorities perpetrating the crime of genocide. It was used in settler colonial genocides in the Western hemisphere and Oceania; in Middle Eastern genocides, including the genocides against the Armenians, Assyrian, and Greeks in the Ottoman Empire, the ongoing Darfur genocide in Sudan, and, more recently, ISIS's genocide against the Yezidi peoples of Northern Iraq; in Latin American military dictatorships, especially in Argentina; and in Nazi policies towards children in Eastern Europe who were deemed to be "Aryanizable." The aim of the forcible transfer of children is to impose the perpetrator's group identity onto the vulnerable child, a policy referred to in the United States as "kill the Indian, save the man." The terrible long-term effects of child transfer can be found in

the afterlife of dictatorships in Argentina, Spain, and Chile, where the kidnapping and transfer of children became a common practice, as well as in the ongoing struggles of indigenous groups in Canada, the USA, and Australia to heal the generational trauma of forced child removal.

These cases, regardless of scale, demonstrate an overlooked fact: that the forcible transfer of children, be it internally within a state or externally by a foreign state, both alienates a child from their group and denies them their right to learn from, be influenced by, and remember their natal home. The violent act of removal has immediate harmful effects on children, their families, and their communities, as well as an enduring, transgenerational negative impact on the ability of groups to reproduce themselves positively into the future. The Lemkin Institute considers the forcible removal and transfer of children to conform to Pattern 8 of genocide: Appropriation of Biological Resources.

Russia's coercive demographic policies towards Ukrainian children and their families are both a standalone and a component feature of genocide, rooted in the Russian denial of Ukrainianism as well as the regime's belief in Russian supremacy. The Lemkin Institute calls upon the international community to name the forcible transfer of children for what it is – an act of genocide. All efforts must be made to stop this destructive policy, to hold its architects responsible, and to find and repatriate the children who have been taken from their parents and their communities.