



AS IT IS

Some Ukrainian Children back with Families after Being Taken to Russia

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A humanitarian group called Save Ukraine is working to bring Ukrainian children home from Russia.

Ukraine says nearly 20,000 children were illegally taken into Russia during the war that started in February 2022.

The group has carried out five **missions** so far. This past week the group returned 31 children to Ukraine.

Ukraine says Russia is “**abducting**” children from Russian-controlled parts of the country. Russia says that is false. It says the children have been taken from dangerous areas for their safety.

Mykola Kuleba is the founder of Save Ukraine and is an official with the office of Ukraine’s president. He said the recent mission was “special” because of the number of children they brought home and its “complexity.”

Save Ukraine said it helped relatives plan the trip to Russia so they could find their children and bring them home. One woman died on the trip. She was supposed to bring her two grandchildren home. So, they were forced to remain in Russia.

Three children who were rescued on an earlier mission talked with reporters recently in Kyiv. The two boys and one girl said their parents were told they were being taken to a summer camp in Russia and would be home in two weeks.

Instead, they were away from home for four to six months and moved many times.

One boy named Vitaly said he was from the Kherson area. “We were treated like animals. We were closed in a separate building,” he said.

Kuleba said “some children say they were living with rats and cockroaches.”

The International Criminal Court issued an arrest **warrant** for Russian President Vladimir Putin and its children’s rights commissioner, Maria Lvova-Belova. They are charged with abducting children from Ukraine.

Russia said moving the children was for their protection. In addition, Russia rejected the ICC’s arrest warrant, saying it does not recognize the court.

Lvova-Belova recently said the work to move children out of Ukraine was on humanitarian grounds. She said they only moved the children after getting permission from their parents.

An aid organization in Ukraine is seeking to find a way to punish Russia for not returning the children sooner.

Kateryna Rashevskaya is a lawyer for a Ukrainian group called the Regional Center for Human Rights. She said her group was trying to build a case against Russian leaders who prevented the children from going back to Ukraine.

"In every story there is a whole **range** of international violations, and it cannot go unpunished," she said.

I’m Dan Friedell.

Dan Friedell adapted this story for VOA Learning English based on a report by Reuters.

Words in This Story

mission –n. a special task or job given to a person or group; a military or naval task

abduct –v. to take someone away by force

warrant –n. a court order that gives police the power to do something under the law

range –n. a group of different things that have a similarity in common

We want to hear from you. Do you think Russia will be punished for moving the children? Do you think the children will get home?

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