

Children of war

From the very beginning, Russia's full-scale invasion of Ukraine was accompanied by the well-known Russian narratives of "denazification" and "demilitarization." However, in reality, in **the war against Ukraine, Russia has completely different, larger aims.**

"All of us are well aware of what the Russian goals really are. For more than one year, it has threatened to start a war if Ukraine joins NATO. But Ukraine is not in NATO, and Russia's full-scale war against our country has been going on for the seventh month - after eight years of war in Donbas. So why did everyone believe for decades that it was NATO that could allegedly provoke Russia to do something with its actions?" - stressed the President of Ukraine, Volodymyr Zelenskyi.

To understand the true aims of Russia, we should check the statistical data. In total, the Russian army carried out **more than 22,000 strikes on civilian targets** and **about 300 on military targets**. In this way, the banal destruction of civilian infrastructure and terror against the population actually takes place.

An extraordinary blow falls on the child population of Ukraine. Children are forced to live in shelters for months, leave their homes, some lose their parents, suffer serious injuries, violence, and cruelty by the Russian army, and many children have their lives taken away.

As of September 7, as a result of the actions of the Russian army, **1,125 children were injured**, of which **383 were killed**, and **more than 742 have injuries of various degrees of severity**.



According to data, **Russia deported more than 200,000 children**, which is almost **6% of the child population of Ukraine**, and according to Russian statements, this number reaches 350,000. Currently, 7,297 deported children have been identified, 53 children have already been returned home, and 230 children are considered missing in Ukraine.



*"The kidnapping of at least 230,000 Ukrainian children among the 1.4 million Ukrainians forcibly deported to Russia is a crime aimed at destroying the Ukrainian nation by depriving of its younger generations, which is a **modern manifestation of colonialism**,"* Serhii Dvornyk, Permanent Representative of Ukraine to the United Nations.

The statistics are actually impressive. **This is the so-called Russian "demilitarization"**.

Russia first makes Ukrainian children orphans by killing their families, separates families in deportations, deprives them of their basic rights, and then places them in families with strangers in a foreign land.

Interestingly, the Russian Federation is preparing changes to the legislation that will allow the adoption of Ukrainian children using a simplified procedure. At the end of May, Russia simplified the procedure for acquiring citizenship for children who were under occupation, and this creates an opportunity for their adoption by Russians. According to the Russian authorities, Ukrainian children received their first passports from the Russian Federation already in July.

"By his decree, Vladimir Putin actually legalized the abduction of children from the territory of Ukraine," said the statement of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Ukraine.

Thus, in order to encourage Russians to adopt children illegally taken out of Ukraine, **the state offers them a "one-time payment of maternity capital and state aid."** Russia promises to pay its citizens 20,000 rubles every year for each adopted child from Ukraine and more than 150,000 for a child with a disability, a child older than 7 years; or siblings.



According to information on the website of the Department of Family and Childhood of the Krasnodar Territory, **more than 1,000 Ukrainian children** who were illegally taken from Mariupol captured by the occupiers **were given up for adoption in the Krasnodar Territory** alone. It is reported that the children will now live in Tyumen, Irkutsk, Kemerovo, and Altai region. In addition, **more than 300 Ukrainian children are currently in line for adoption.** Also, according to data, there are currently **540 orphans** from the Donetsk region in one of the camps in the Rostov region, among them are children from Mariupol and Volnovakha, cities fully annihilated by Russia.



Previously, illegal adoption was already practiced in Russia. For example, in 2014, **the "Train of Hope" project** was implemented. Trains with adults who were ready to become "adopters" went to different regions of the Russian Federation and to the occupied Ukrainian territories. This train, in particular, run to the territory of the annexed Crimea.

Children, which have not yet formed a worldview, become an easy target for manipulations and are being "re-educated" and used for the purposes of propaganda. As these children do not have freedom of choice, their situation becomes a real tragedy.

It is worth noting that **one of the signs of genocide** is the forced transfer of children from one human group to another. This is emphasized by the 1948 Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide. In the way of kids' deportations, Russia is trying to destroy Ukrainian identity, violating all norms of international law.

Russia has designed a strategy to implement after the invasion and occupation of Ukrainian territory. It included 3 stages: the first stage is the capture of the territory, the second stage – is the complete transition of universities, colleges, kindergartens, and other social welfare institutions into the Russian government system, and the third – is the stage of jurisdiction.

Education is one of the most powerful components of Russian propaganda, along with religion and the media sphere. Children are taught from an early age to blindly support the cult of the president and to undoubtedly believe that their country is superior to all others. In this way, kindergartens, schools, universities and informal youth associations complement the vast propaganda system of the Russian Federation.



For years, Russia has been teaching a distorted world history in school, educating **"ideologically correct"** youth who will continue the course of their country's development. The strengthening of propaganda in educational institutions also occurred with the beginning of the full-scale war in Ukraine.

Russians are trying to completely Russify education in captured cities, introducing their own standards, destroying Ukrainian books, cultural monuments, etc. However, there is nothing surprising in this, because as noted by the ideological inspiration of Russian propagandists and Hitler's closest associate Joseph Goebbels: *"Youth cannot be given to anyone."*



For example, the general secondary education program of the so-called Donetsk People's Republic states that education should achieve the goal of **"awareness in schoolchildren of a sense of involvement in the fate of Russia and the DPR, readiness to serve the motherland and its defense."** In this context, the Russian language is defined as "the basis of civic identity and the main factor of national self-determination." It is also necessary to "educate students in the spirit of patriotism, respect for the multinational Russian state." Accordingly, using such an arsenal of imperial ideological stamps, the Russians primarily take the minds of children in the occupied territories.

To date, more than 885 schools are under occupation in the south alone. As part of the "adaptation" to Russian programs, **only three subjects** are taught in schools in the occupied territories: Russian language and literature, Russian history, and mathematics.

The Kremlin curator for Donbas, Serhiy Kiriienko, said that in the occupied territories of Donetsk and Luhansk regions, schoolchildren will study under a military escort. He noted that Vladimir Putin personally instructed to provide armed security in the schools of the so-called "LDPR".

In addition, the Russians defined the school as a regime object. Parents are almost never allowed in, all gadgets and phones are taken away from children and given back at the end of classes. This shows that they want to use children as human shields, and definitely not give them knowledge.

For example, in captured Mariupol, collaborators force parents to send their children to Russian schools. For refusal, the invaders first threaten to send a warning, then a fine of 40,000 rubles and then deprive parents of their parental rights.

The occupiers brought about half a thousand Russian teachers to Melitopol to organize the educational process and promised them housing and high salaries. The invaders also arranged "organizational and methodical" meetings of teachers who are forced to cooperate in the educational process. Those who disagree are threatened with "negative" consequences - from "filtration camps" to the restriction of "humanitarian" aid.

It becomes obvious that the true aim of Russia's war is not the so-called "demilitarization", the threat from NATO, etc., but the desire to destroy the Ukrainian identity in general and **the Russification of the child population**, which could be manipulated in the interests of Russia.

We can note that Russia's war against Ukraine has turned the lives of millions of children upside down, leaving deep traumas for life. The war has caused one of the fastest large-scale movements of children since World War II, marking an ominous milestone whose dire consequences may be felt for at least several generations to come.