

United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510

June 23, 2022

The Honorable António Guterres
Secretary-General of the United Nations
United Nations Headquarters
799 United Nations Plaza
New York, NY 10017

Dear Secretary-General Guterres,

We write concerning recent reports that thousands of Ukrainian children have gone missing since Russia's unprovoked invasion of Ukraine on February 24, 2022. According to the Ukrainian Permanent Representative to the United Nations (U.N.), Sergiy Kyslytsya, 234,000 children are among the one million Ukrainians forcibly displaced into Russia, many thousands of which are being placed into adoptive homes.¹

Recent reporting highlights that authorities and human rights advocates suggest that these cases are examples of how Russia utilizes abductions and disappearances as a military tactic. Moscow appears to be using the abduction of Ukrainian children to put extra pressure on Kyiv to surrender. These types of practices terrorize communities and demoralize civilian resistance.

Reports of child abduction date back to March 19, when the Ukrainian Foreign Ministry reported that Russian forces had kidnapped 2,389 Ukrainian minors from the Luhansk and Donetsk regions. Simultaneously, Mariupol city officials reported that around 4,500 residents were taken against their will across the border into Russia. These claims have yet to be verified and locating specific children and families has proved difficult in wartime.

Additionally, on June 1, Ukrainian President Zelenskyy announced that children are being taken to remote areas of Russia to prevent them from returning home.² Russian Commissioner for Children's Rights, Maria Lvova-Belova, advocated to simplify Russian adoption laws and confirmed that Russian families could soon adopt around 1,560 Ukrainian children.³ Russian

¹ <https://www.washingtonpost.com/>

² <https://www.president.gov.ua/en/news/>

³ <https://info24.ru/news/>

Senator Lilia Gumerova is discussing special summer camps to teach Ukrainian children the Russian language.⁴ This development is alarming considering that not only are Russian forces allegedly kidnapping Ukrainian children, but the country now intends to indoctrinate Ukraine's most vulnerable population.

The kidnapping of minors violates the U.N. Genocide Convention. Additionally, abduction of children is directly listed in a 1999 United Nations Security Council resolution that condemns six grave violations affecting children the most in times of war.⁵ In the past, kidnappings during wartime by authoritarian regimes have led to sinister acts such as child recruitment, rape, sexual slavery, and murder.⁶ Furthermore, the scale of atrocities has prompted international organizations, including the International Criminal Court and the International Commission on Missing Persons, to help document the reported cases.

If the reports of kidnapping are accurate, President Putin continues to add to the war crimes that it has committed during this fatal war. We urge the U.N. to investigate the validity of these reports. Additionally, we write to request a Congressional briefing on this information and the United Nations' findings.

We stand with the Ukrainian people and in any nation across the globe where an illiberal regime is threatening defenseless children during armed conflict.

Thank you for your attention to this critical matter.

Respectfully,



Marsha Blackburn
United States Senator



Bill Cassidy, M.D.
United States Senator



Chuck Grassley
United States Senator



Roy Blunt
United States Senator

⁴ <https://theins.ru/en/news/250272>

⁵ <http://www.securitycouncilreport.org/>

⁶ <https://childrenandarmedconflict.un.org/six-grave-violations/>



Mike Braun
United States Senator



Tim Scott
United States Senator

cc: The Honorable Linda Thomas-Greenfield
United States Ambassador to the United Nations
United States Mission to the United Nations