

EVACUATION, CAMPS, REUNIFICATION

Russia's account of the Ukrainian children taken to Russia and the occupied territories has three words in it: evacuation, holiday camps, family reunification. The International Criminal Court issued arrest warrants for the President and his Children's Commissioner for unlawful deportation and transfer (17 Mar 2023); the UN Commission of Inquiry found war crimes (2023) and then crimes against humanity (12 Mar 2026); the ECtHR found "a systematic programme of long-term, indeed permanent, removal" (9 Jul 2025). Russia's own figures — 380 orphans placed in Russian families, 700,000 children "accommodated" — concede the transfers. Eight claims, the record, and what each concedes.

UKRAINE EVIDENCE HUB
VERIFIED RECORD
2023 - 2025

2

ICC arrest warrants — V. Putin and M. Lvova-Belova — for the war crimes of unlawful deportation and unlawful transfer of children, Rome Statute arts. 8(2)(a)(vii) and 8(2)(b) (viii) A

ICC, Pre-Trial Chamber II, 17 Mar 2023

1,200+ · 80%

children verified by the UN Commission of Inquiry as deported or transferred · share of documented cases not returned A

Commission of Inquiry, report to HRC 61, 12 Mar 2026

380

Ukrainian orphans Russia's Children's Commissioner says were placed in Russian foster families — Russia's own figure RU

M. Lvova-Belova, Moscow, 4 Apr 2023; her office's 2023 report (288 from the "DPR", 92 from the "LPR")

107 · 2,665

children reunited through Qatar's mediation, both directions, by Aug 2025 · children returned to Ukraine by all channels as of 7 Oct 2026 (Ukrainian figure) B C

Qatar MFA, 22 Aug 2025 · Ombudsman's Office via Ukrinform, 9 Oct 2026

BOTTOM LINE

"Evacuation" is a legal term with a time limit. An occupying power may evacuate civilians temporarily for their safety and must return them "as soon as hostilities in the area in question have ceased" (GC IV, art. 49); it may not change children's personal status or adopt them out (art. 50). The Commission of Inquiry found the children "placed long-term with families or institutions in 21 regions of the Russian Federation and in the occupied territories"; the ECtHR found a programme of "long-term, indeed permanent, removal". That is not evacuation.

Russia's own numbers prove the transfers. Lvova-Belova's office reported 700,000 children among 4.8 million people "accommodated" from Ukraine in 2022 and 380 orphans given to Russian foster families; she told Putin she had adopted a boy from Mariupol herself; Nebenzia said "temporary guardianship". Every figure confirms what the ICC, the Commission and the Court found — and none has been opened to verification.

The reunification Russia advertises is a trickle. "15 children from 8 families" (Mar 2023); "95 children from 75 families" (Feb 2025); 107 through Qatar by Aug 2025, both directions. Against that, 1,200+ cases verified by the UN with 80% not returned, and more than 19,000 children in Ukrainian records (Tier B). Russia answered none of the Commission's 39 requests for information.

The courts have moved on from the label. War crime (ICC warrants, Commission 2023, OSCE Moscow Mechanism 2023) → Convention violations under Arts. 3, 5 and 8 (ECtHR 2025) → crimes against humanity of deportation, forcible transfer and enforced disappearance, "directed at the highest level of the Russian state" (Commission, 12 Mar 2026). "Null and void" (Peskov) is a refusal to comply, not a legal answer.

Fair to say. Some children left frontline areas with parents or guardians and some evacuations from Donetsk and Luhansk before 24 Feb 2022 may have met IHL requirements (OSCE Moscow Mechanism). Ukrainian totals above 19,000 are not UN-verified. Returns through Qatar, the Vatican and the ICRC do happen — because the children are where Russia put them.

THE EIGHT CLAIMS

Vassily Nebenzia, Permanent Representative · interview to TASS, New York, 31 Mar 2023	"[The evacuation of children was carried out] in full compliance with international humanitarian law and the Convention on the Rights of the Child... millions of people have been evacuated [since the start of the special mi...]"	Misstates the law
Vassily Nebenzia · Arria-formula meeting, UNHQ, 5 Apr 2023 (concept note and statement)	"[The term "adoption" is] deliberately misleading... [Russia's role is] temporary guardianship. ... We organized our meeting in order to tell the truth about this situation. ... You don't need the truth, you have already reache..."	Contradicted by Russia's own commissioner
Maria Lvova-Belova, Presidential Commissioner for Children's Rights · Arria-formula meeting, by video, 5 Apr 2023	"[The situation had an] emergency character... [Russia had to] move these children from under shelling and move them to safe areas."	Evacuation must be temporary — these were not
Maria Lvova-Belova · press conference, Russian MFA, Moscow, 4 Apr 2023	"[Russia is ready to return children if their families ask.] Write to me... to find your child. [She said she had not been contacted by] any representative of the Ukrainian authorities. [She declined to publish a list of th..."	Burden reversed
Office of the Presidential Commissioner for Children's Rights · annual report, Jul 2023	"[Since February 2022 Russia has] accommodated about 4.8 million residents of Ukraine and the Donbas republics, of whom more than 700,000 were children. ... [288 children from the "DPR" and 92 from the "LPR" were] subsequen..."	Self-incriminating — and unverifiable
Dmitry Peskov, Presidential press secretary · Moscow, 17 Mar 2023	"We consider the very raising of the question outrageous and unacceptable. Russia, like a number of other countries, does not recognise this court's jurisdiction, and accordingly, any decisions of this sort are null and v..."	Misstates the law
Maria Lvova-Belova · Telegram statement on a Qatar-mediated handover, 13 Feb 2025	"On this occasion eight children aged five to fifteen are going to relatives in Ukraine. [translated] ... [Since 2023, 15 children from 10 families have been reunited with relatives in Russia and 95 children from 75 familie..."	Concedes the transfers; the scale is not matched
Maria Lvova-Belova to Vladimir Putin · Kremlin, 16 Feb 2023	"Now I know what it means to be a mother of a child from Donbas. [She had adopted a 15-year-old from Mariupol.]"	Self-incriminating

WHAT WE ASK

Support execution of the ICC warrants and the Commission's 2026 findings in all accountability texts, including the crimes-against-humanity characterisation · call on Russia to provide the Commission, OHCHR, the ICRC and UNICEF with the names, ages and locations of all transferred children, as GC IV arts. 26 and 50 and AP I art. 78 require · back the International Coalition for the Return of Ukrainian Children and Qatar's, the Vatican's and the ICRC's channels, and ask Russia to scale them from dozens to all · press Russia to halt adoptions, citizenship changes and "re-education" of transferred children (OSCE MM recommendations, 4 May 2023) · keep the children's return as a non-negotiable element of any settlement, with verification by a UN mechanism.

WHO SAID IT, WHERE, AND TO WHOM

Where each claim was made, who made it, how the others in the room answered, and what the statements left out.

UKRAINE EVIDENCE HUB

VERIFIED RECORD

2023 - 2025

THE OCCASION AND THE RECORD	
Occasion	Transfer and deportation of Ukrainian children from occupied territory to Russia and within occupied areas since 24 Feb 2022 (with precedents in 2014: ECtHR found three groups of children moved across the border involuntarily in summer 2014)
Where the claims were made	Kremlin, meeting Putin–Lvova-Belova (16 Feb 2023) · Russian MFA press conference, Moscow (Lvova-Belova, 4 Apr 2023) · Security Council Arria-formula meeting "Children and Armed Conflict: Ukrainian Crisis. Evacuating Children From Conflict Zone", Conference Room 7, UNHQ (5 Apr 2023; not webcast after the UK's objection) · Nebenzia interview to TASS (31 Mar 2023) · Lvova-Belova's annual report (Jul 2023) and handover statements (Sep 2024, 13 Feb 2025)
Record	ICC warrants, Pre-Trial Chamber II (17 Mar 2023) · Commission of Inquiry A/HRC/52/62 (15 Mar 2023) and report to HRC 61 (12 Mar 2026, A/HRC/61/61) · OSCE Moscow Mechanism report ODIHR.GAL/37/23 (4 May 2023) · ECtHR GC Ukraine and the Netherlands v. Russia (9 Jul 2025, HUDOC 001-244292) · Yale HRL / Conflict Observatory reports (14 Feb 2023; 3 Dec 2024) · Qatar MFA statements (2023–2025) · PACE res. 2495 (2023)
What happened next	Peskov and Zakharova: ICC warrants "null and void" (17 Mar 2023) · Russia's Investigative Committee opened criminal cases against the ICC Prosecutor and judges (20 Mar 2023) · US, UK and others boycotted or walked out of the Arria meeting; 49 states and the EU issued a joint statement in response (5 Apr 2023) · Qatar-mediated returns from Oct 2023 · Russia ignored 39 Commission requests for information (12 Mar 2026)

THE SPEAKERS		
Maria Lvova-Belova	Presidential Commissioner for Children's Rights since Oct 2021 · ICC arrest warrant 17 Mar 2023 · under EU, US, UK and other sanctions	Ran the placement programme; briefed the Arria meeting remotely (5 Apr 2023); published the 2023 report with the 700,000 and 380 figures; announces Qatar-mediated handovers
Vassily Nebenzia	Permanent Representative of the Russian Federation to the UN	Convened the Arria meeting of 5 Apr 2023; called "adoption" "deliberately misleading" and the practice "temporary guardianship"; TASS interview 31 Mar 2023
Dmitry Peskov · Maria Zakharova	Presidential press secretary · MFA spokesperson	"Outrageous and unacceptable... null and void for Russia" (Peskov, 17 Mar 2023); "null and void" (Zakharova)
Daria Morozova · Eleonora Fedorenko	"Human rights commissioner" and "children's commissioner" of the Russian-installed "DPR" administration	Briefers at the Arria meeting of 5 Apr 2023 alongside Lvova-Belova

WHAT OTHERS SAID	
United States, 5 Apr 2023	Ambassador Thomas-Greenfield refused to attend; the US expert in the chair was "instructed to walk out when the briefer that we've objected to is speaking"; opposed a platform for "a woman who has been charged with war crimes".
United Kingdom, 4–5 Apr 2023	Boycotted the meeting and blocked its webcast: "If she wants to give an account of her actions, she can do so in the Hague"; the invitation to an ICC-indicted person "speaks for itself" (Kariuki).
Joint statement, 5 Apr 2023	49 states and the EU issued a joint statement at the UN in response to the meeting on the deportation of Ukrainian children.
Human Rights Council, 4 Apr 2023	Adopted a resolution on Russian aggression by 28 votes to 2 with 17 abstentions, co-sponsored by Albania, Ecuador, France, Malta, Switzerland, the UK and the US; China voted against.
45 OSCE participating States, Apr–May 2023	Invoked the Moscow Mechanism on 30 Mar 2023 and, in a joint statement on 4 May 2023, called on Russia to stop the transfers and return the children.
Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe, 27 Apr 2023	Resolution 2495 on deportations and forcible transfers of Ukrainian children: "create conditions for their safe return, stop these crimes and punish the perpetrators".
Qatar, 2023–2025	Mediated the return of 107 children in both directions by Aug 2025; each handover publicly confirmed by the Russian Commissioner.
Security Council Report, Apr 2023	Noted that the ICC warrants and the Commission's war-crime finding were on the record before the meeting, and that several members would condemn the transfers.

WHAT THE STATEMENTS LEFT OUT
- That the ICC's Pre-Trial Chamber found "reasonable grounds to believe" that both suspects bear individual criminal responsibility for unlawful deportation and transfer of children from occupied Ukraine to Russia "at least from 24 February 2022" (ICC, 17 Mar 2023). - That the Commission of Inquiry found in March 2026 that the transfers amount to the crimes against humanity of deportation and forcible transfer and of enforced disappearance, that the children were placed long-term in 21 regions of Russia and occupied areas, that 80% of documented cases have not been returned, and that Russia answered none of 39 written requests (12 Mar 2026). - That the ECtHR found the border crossings of three groups of children in summer 2014 "involuntary" and, for 2022, "a systematic programme of long-term, indeed permanent, removal of these children", in violation of Arts. 3, 5 and 8 (9 Jul 2025). - That the OSCE Moscow Mechanism mission found no functioning reunification mechanism, obstacles for parents, and non-transparent adoptions, and recommended that Russia stop adoptions, "re-education" and expedited changes of citizenship (4 May 2023). - That Yale HRL identified 314 children from Ukraine in Russia's coerced adoption and fostering system, more than half placed directly with Russian citizens and the rest listed in federal placement databases (3 Dec 2024, Tier C).

HOW IT TRAVELS
The "evacuation" framing travels through TASS ("Evacuating children from Ukrainian conflict zone complies with law — Russian envoy to UN", 31 Mar 2023; "Western countries deaf to truth about children evacuated from Ukraine", 5 Apr 2023), RT and Lvova-Belova's own Telegram channel, where each handover is presented as proof of good faith ("On this occasion eight children aged five to fifteen are going to relatives in Ukraine", 13 Feb 2025, via RTVI). State media reported the Mariupol adoption as a human-interest story (16 Feb 2023) one month before the ICC warrant; the warrant was then reported as proof of Western bias. The Arria meeting left no UN record and was not webcast; the version that circulates is TASS's.

Sources: Nebenzia, TASS 31 Mar and 5 Apr 2023; SCR What's in Blue 4 Apr 2023 · Lvova-Belova, Kremlin 16 Feb 2023 (Moscow Times); MFA 4 Apr 2023 (AFP/Kyiv Post); report Jul 2023 (Novaya Gazeta Europe); RTVI 13 Feb 2025 · Peskov 17 Mar 2023 (Anadolu/Ukrainska Pravda) · ICC 17 Mar 2023 (Lawfare) · COI A/HRC/52/62; COI 12 Mar 2026 (ukraine.un.org; UN Geneva) · OSCE Moscow Mechanism 4 May 2023 (osce.org; EJIL:Talk) · ECtHR GC 9 Jul 2025 (press release, Q&A) · Yale HRL 14 Feb 2023, 3 Dec 2024 (RFE/RL; JURIST) · Qatar MFA 22 Aug 2025 · Bring Kids Back UA 4 Jun 2025; Ombudsman via Ukrinform 9 Oct 2026 · CBS 5 Apr 2023 · full list on page 6



CLAIM, RECORD, CONCESSION (1-4)

Each claim as made, with the date, the venue and a link; the record it runs into, with the tier of the evidence; and what it concedes. Words in square brackets are the Hub's.

UKRAINE EVIDENCE HUB
VERIFIED RECORD
2023 - 2025

CLAIM 1 · VASSILY NEBENZIA, PERMANENT REPRESENTATIVE · INTERVIEW TO TASS, NEW YORK, 31 MAR 2023

“[The evacuation of children was carried out] in full compliance with international humanitarian law and the Convention on the Rights of the Child... millions of people have been evacuated [since the start of the special military operation]... [most children arrived with parents, guardians or custodians; those from orphanages are] a small number... 15 children from eight families have already been reunited with their relatives.”

TASS, "Evacuating children from Ukrainian conflict zone complies with law — Russian envoy to UN", 31 Mar 2023
tass.com/politics/1597141/amp

CLAIM 2 · VASSILY NEBENZIA · ARRIA-FORMULA MEETING, UNHQ, 5 APR 2023 (CONCEPT NOTE AND STATEMENT)

“[The term "adoption" is] deliberately misleading... [Russia's role is] temporary guardianship. ... We organized our meeting in order to tell the truth about this situation. ... You don't need the truth, you have already reached a verdict based on false facts and speculation.”

Security Council Report, What's in Blue, 4 Apr 2023 (concept note); TASS, 5 Apr 2023 (statement)
securitycouncilreport.org/whatsinblue/2023/04/ukraine-arria-formula-meeting-5.php

CLAIM 3 · MARIA LVOVA-BELOVA, PRESIDENTIAL COMMISSIONER FOR CHILDREN'S RIGHTS · ARRIA-FORMULA MEETING, BY VIDEO, 5 APR 2023

“[The situation had an] emergency character... [Russia had to] move these children from under shelling and move them to safe areas.”

CBS News report of the meeting, 5 Apr 2023; no UN record exists (not webcast)
www.cbsnews.com/news/u-s-balks-as-russian-official-under-international-arrest-warrant-claims-ukrainian-kids-kidnapped-for-their-safety/

CLAIM 4 · MARIA LVOVA-BELOVA · PRESS CONFERENCE, RUSSIAN MFA, MOSCOW, 4 APR 2023

“[Russia is ready to return children if their families ask.] Write to me... to find your child. [She said she had not been contacted by] any representative of the Ukrainian authorities. [She declined to publish a list of the children brought to Russia.] (English as reported by AFP)”

AFP via Kyiv Post, "Russia says ready to return Ukraine children if parents request", 4 Apr 2023
www.kyivpost.com/post/15398

MISSTATES THE LAW

Evidence

A

C

GC IV art. 49 permits an occupying power to evacuate an area only "if the security of the population or imperative military reasons so demand", within the occupied territory "except when for material reasons it is impossible", and requires return "as soon as hostilities in the area in question have ceased"; AP I art. 78 forbids evacuating children to a foreign country except temporarily, for compelling health or safety reasons, with the written consent of parents or guardians. The Commission of Inquiry: IHL allows evacuations only as temporary measures; the children were instead placed long-term in 21 regions of Russia and occupied areas (12 Mar 2026). The ECtHR found violations of Arts. 3, 5 and 8 (9 Jul 2025). "15 children from eight families" is Russia's own measure of the scale of return thirteen months into the practice.

What the claim concedes: That children, including children from institutions, were moved from occupied Ukraine to Russia by the Russian state — the act the ICC warrants describe — and that reunification is a Russian obligation.

CONTRADICTED BY RUSSIA'S OWN COMMISSIONER

Evidence

A

C

The day before, Lvova-Belova told a press conference at the Russian MFA that 380 Ukrainian orphans had been placed in foster families in Russia, including 22 minors found in Mariupol, and that adopted children were given Russian nationality (AFP/Kyiv Post, 4 Apr 2023). Her office's 2023 report lists 288 children from the "DPR" and 92 from the "LPR" "subsequently given over to Russian foster families". A presidential decree of 30 May 2022 created a simplified path to Russian citizenship for orphans and children without parental care from Ukraine and the "DPR"/"LPR" (Novaya Gazeta Europe; Ukrainska Pravda, 30 May 2022). Yale HRL identified 314 children in the adoption and fostering system (3 Dec 2024). The ECtHR: "transfer of children to Russia and their adoption there" is among the organised abuses found (9 Jul 2025). Guardianship that changes a child's name, citizenship and family is what GC IV art. 50 prohibits.

What the claim concedes: That Russia exercises "guardianship" over Ukrainian children — custody by the occupying power, which is the transfer.

EVACUATION MUST BE TEMPORARY — THESE WERE NOT

Evidence

A

C

The Commission of Inquiry accepted that Russian authorities described the relocations shortly before and after 24 Feb 2022 as "evacuations" for safety, and rejected the justification: IHL allows evacuation only as a temporary measure for compelling reasons of health, medical treatment or safety; the children were placed long-term with families or institutions; 80% of documented cases have not been returned; the policy was "directed at the highest level of the Russian state" (12 Mar 2026). The OSCE Moscow Mechanism: evacuation is lawful only if provisional; the children were not returned and were integrated into Russian families (4 May 2023). The ECtHR: "a systematic programme of long-term, indeed permanent, removal" (9 Jul 2025). Yale HRL documented 43 camps and facilities holding at least 6,000 children in Feb 2023, with political "re-education" as their primary purpose and some military training for children from 14 (Tier C).

What the claim concedes: That the Russian state organised the movement of the children — the actus reus of deportation and transfer. Shelling by the attacking state is not a ground for that state to keep the children.

BURDEN REVERSED

Evidence

A

C

GC IV art. 50 obliges the occupying power to facilitate the identification of children and the registration of their parentage; art. 26 obliges it to facilitate enquiries by dispersed families; AP I art. 78(3) requires a card for each evacuated child to be sent to the ICRC Central Tracing Agency. The Commission of Inquiry recommended in March 2023 that Russia disclose the number and location of transferred children; it sent 39 written requests and received no reply (12 Mar 2026). The OSCE Moscow Mechanism found no functioning reunification mechanism and obstacles for parents who tried (4 May 2023). The children were returned, when they were, through Qatar, the Vatican, the ICRC and private journeys by relatives — not through a Russian list. Lvova-Belova's own tally on 13 Feb 2025: 95 children from 75 families reunited with relatives in Ukraine and other countries since 2023.

What the claim concedes: That the children are in Russian custody and that the names are known to Russia — which has chosen not to publish them.

Sources: Nebenzia, TASS 31 Mar and 5 Apr 2023; SCR What's in Blue 4 Apr 2023 · Lvova-Belova, Kremlin 16 Feb 2023 (Moscow Times); MFA 4 Apr 2023 (AFP/Kyiv Post); report Jul 2023 (Novaya Gazeta Europe); RTVI 13 Feb 2025 · Peskov 17 Mar 2023 (Anadolu/Ukrainska Pravda) · ICC 17 Mar 2023 (Lawfare) · COI A/HRC/52/62; COI 12 Mar 2026 (ukraine.un.org; UN Geneva) · OSCE Moscow Mechanism 4 May 2023 (osce.org; EJIL:Talk) · ECtHR GC 9 Jul 2025 (press release, Q&A) · Yale HRL 14 Feb 2023, 3 Dec 2024 (RFE/RL; JURIST) · Qatar MFA 22 Aug 2025 · Bring Kids Back UA 4 Jun 2025; Ombudsman via Ukrinform 9 Oct 2026 · CBS 5 Apr 2023 · full list on page 6



CLAIM, RECORD, CONCESSION (5–8)

Each claim as made, with the date, the venue and a link; the record it runs into, with the tier of the evidence; and what it concedes. Words in square brackets are the Hub's.

UKRAINE EVIDENCE HUB

VERIFIED RECORD

2023 - 2025

CLAIM 5 · OFFICE OF THE PRESIDENTIAL COMMISSIONER FOR CHILDREN'S RIGHTS · ANNUAL REPORT, JUL 2023

“[Since February 2022 Russia has] accommodated about 4.8 million residents of Ukraine and the Donbas republics, of whom more than 700,000 were children. ... [288 children from the "DPR" and 92 from the "LPR" were] subsequently given over to Russian foster families.”

Report on the Commissioner's website, Jul 2023, as reported by Novaya Gazeta Europe, Moscow Times, Ukrinform, 31 Jul 2023
novayagazeta.eu/en/articles/2023/07/31/russia-deported-over-700000-children-from-u

CLAIM 6 · DMITRY PESKOV, PRESIDENTIAL PRESS SECRETARY · MOSCOW, 17 MAR 2023

“We consider the very raising of the question outrageous and unacceptable. Russia, like a number of other countries, does not recognise this court's jurisdiction, and accordingly, any decisions of this sort are null and void for Russia from a legal point of view.”

TASS / Anadolu, 17 Mar 2023
pravda.com.ua/eng/news/2023/03/17/7393970

CLAIM 7 · MARIA LVOVA-BELOVA · TELEGRAM STATEMENT ON A QATAR-MEDIATED HANDOVER, 13 FEB 2025

“On this occasion eight children aged five to fifteen are going to relatives in Ukraine. [translated] ... [Since 2023, 15 children from 10 families have been reunited with relatives in Russia and 95 children from 75 families with relatives in Ukraine and other countries.] ... [Ukraine] did nothing [to evacuate children from Mariupol].”

RTVI, 13 Feb 2025, citing Lvova-Belova's Telegram (Russian; translated); Qatar MFA statement 14 Feb 2025
rtvi.com/news/rossiya-pri-posrednichestve-katara-peredala-ukraine-vosem-detej

CLAIM 8 · MARIA LVOVA-BELOVA TO VLADIMIR PUTIN · KREMLIN, 16 FEB 2023

“Now I know what it means to be a mother of a child from Donbas. [She had adopted a 15-year-old from Mariupol.]”

Kremlin meeting, 16 Feb 2023, as reported by The Moscow Times, "Putin's children's envoy reveals she adopted child from Mariupol", 16 Feb 2023
themoscowtimes.com/2023/02/16/putins-childrens-envoy-reveals-she-adopted-child-fro

SELF-INCRIMINATING — AND UNVERIFIABLE

Evidence

A

B

C

The 700,000 figure is Russia's and cannot be checked: it counts everyone who crossed, including families, and no body has had access to confirm it. The 380 figure is specific, Russia's own, and matches what the ICC, the Commission and Yale HRL describe: children without parental care from occupied Donetsk and Luhansk taken into Russian families. GC IV art. 50: the occupying power "shall not, in any case, change their personal status, nor enlist them in formations or organizations subordinate to it". The Commission's verified count (1,200+) is a floor built case by case without access to Russia; the Ukrainian figure (19,000+, Tier B) is a register of reported cases. The gap between Russia's 700,000 and the UN's 1,200+ is a gap in access, not in fact.

What the claim concedes: The transfer of at least 380 children without parental care into Russian families — the core of the ICC charge — in Russia's own words.

MISSTATES THE LAW

Evidence

A

The ICC's jurisdiction does not depend on Russia's consent: Ukraine accepted the Court's jurisdiction over crimes on its territory by declarations under art. 12(3) of the Rome Statute (9 Apr 2014; 8 Sep 2015) and became a State Party on 1 Jan 2025 after ratifying the Statute in 2024; under art. 12(2)(a) the Court may act where the conduct occurred. Art. 27 makes official capacity, including as head of state, irrelevant. The 125 states parties are obliged to arrest (art. 89); the Pre-Trial Chamber found that Mongolia failed to comply by not arresting Putin during his visit in Sep 2024 (decision of 24 Oct 2024). The warrants are public because the Chamber considered that awareness "may contribute to the prevention of the further commission of crimes" (ICC, 17 Mar 2023).

What the claim concedes: That the warrants exist and name the President — and that they bind every state party, as the Court's Mongolia decision of 24 Oct 2024 shows.

CONCEDES THE TRANSFERS; THE SCALE IS NOT MATCHED

Evidence

A

B

C

Qatar's mediation, begun in 2023, had reunited 107 children with their families by 21 Aug 2025 — in both directions (Qatar MFA, 22 Aug 2025). The Commission of Inquiry: 1,200+ children verified as deported or transferred, 80% not returned (12 Mar 2026). Ukraine's Bring Kids Back UA initiative counted 1,345 children returned by all routes as of 4 Jun 2025; the Ombudsman's Office counts 2,665 returned as of 7 Oct 2026 (via Ukrinform, Tier B). Each child handed over by Russia confirms that Russia held the child. On Mariupol: Russian forces besieged and shelled the city from 24 Feb 2022; the 22 "abandoned" Mariupol children Lvova-Belova cites were taken into Russian families, and the boy she adopted is one of them (claim 8).

What the claim concedes: That the children were in Russia, that Russia decides who leaves, and that the number it has let go is in the dozens.

SELF-INCRIMINATING

Evidence

A

C

One month later the ICC issued arrest warrants for both participants in this conversation for the unlawful deportation and transfer of children from occupied Ukraine (17 Mar 2023). The boy, Filipp, was among the Mariupol children taken to the Moscow region in 2022; Lvova-Belova later said another Mariupol teenager who wanted to return was not allowed to leave Russia (Ukrainska Pravda, 4 Apr 2023, Tier C). Adoption of a child from occupied territory by the occupying power's official is the clearest case of what GC IV art. 50 prohibits. The ECtHR listed "transfer of children to Russia and their adoption there" among the Convention violations found (9 Jul 2025).

What the claim concedes: That the Commissioner's programme reached into her own family: the personal status of a Ukrainian child from an occupied city was changed by the official in charge, with the President's encouragement.

Sources: Nebenzia, TASS 31 Mar and 5 Apr 2023; SCR What's in Blue 4 Apr 2023 · Lvova-Belova, Kremlin 16 Feb 2023 (Moscow Times); MFA 4 Apr 2023 (AFP/Kyiv Post); report Jul 2023 (Novaya Gazeta Europe); RTVI 13 Feb 2025 · Peskov 17 Mar 2023 (Anadolu/Ukrainska Pravda) · ICC 17 Mar 2023 (Lawfare) · COI A/HRC/52/62; COI 12 Mar 2026 (ukraine.un.org; UN Geneva) · OSCE Moscow Mechanism 4 May 2023 (osce.org; EJIL:Talk) · ECtHR GC 9 Jul 2025 (press release, Q&A) · Yale HRL 14 Feb 2023, 3 Dec 2024 (RFE/RL; JURIST) · Qatar MFA 22 Aug 2025 · Bring Kids Back UA 4 Jun 2025; Ombudsman via Ukrinform 9 Oct 2026 · CBS 5 Apr 2023 · full list on page 6



THE RECORD			
QUESTION	WHAT RUSSIA SAYS	WHAT THE RECORD SHOWS	SOURCE
Children moved from Ukraine to Russia since Feb 2022	"More than 700,000" (among 4.8 million people "accommodated") — Lvova-Belova's office, Jul 2023	1,200+ children verified as deported or transferred (UN COI, 12 Mar 2026); 19,000+ in Ukraine's register (B, Jun 2025)	Novaya Gazeta Europe 31 Jul 2023; COI 12 Mar 2026; Bring Kids Back UA 4 Jun 2025
Children placed in Russian families	380 orphans in foster families (288 "DPR", 92 "LPR"); "temporary guardianship"	314 children identified in Russia's coerced adoption and fostering system; ECtHR: "transfer of children to Russia and their adoption there"	Lvova-Belova 4 Apr 2023; Yale HRL 3 Dec 2024 (C); ECtHR 9 Jul 2025
Children returned	15 from 8 families (Mar 2023); 95 from 75 families to Ukraine (Feb 2025)	107 via Qatar, both directions (Aug 2025); 2,665 by all routes (B, Ombudsman, as of 7 Oct 2026); 80% of COI-documented cases not returned	Nebenzia 31 Mar 2023; RTVI 13 Feb 2025; Qatar MFA 22 Aug 2025; Ombudsman via Ukrinform 9 Oct 2026; COI 12 Mar 2026
Legal characterisation	"Evacuation... in full compliance with IHL and the CRC"	War crime (ICC warrants; COI A/HRC/52/62; OSCE MM); ECHR Arts. 3, 5, 8 violated; crimes against humanity of deportation, forcible transfer, enforced disappearance (COI 2026)	ICC 17 Mar 2023; COI 15 Mar 2023, 12 Mar 2026; OSCE 4 May 2023; ECtHR 9 Jul 2025
Information to investigators	"Write to me"; no list published	39 written requests from the Commission, 0 replies; no functioning reunification mechanism (OSCE MM)	COI 12 Mar 2026; OSCE 4 May 2023
Camps and "re-education"	"Holiday camps", "rest and recuperation"	43 camps and facilities, at least 6,000 children, political re-education as primary purpose (C)	Yale HRL 14 Feb 2023

FAIR TO SAY

Children did leave frontline areas with their parents or guardians, and the OSCE Moscow Mechanism mission accepted that some evacuations from Donetsk and Luhansk before 24 Feb 2022 appeared to meet Russia's IHL obligations; the illegality lies in non-return, change of status and separation from families, not in every movement of every child.

The Ukrainian figures (19,000+ deported or forcibly displaced; 2,665 returned as of 7 Oct 2026) are a government register, not UN-verified, and are marked Tier B here; the Commission's verified figure (1,200+) is far lower because it is built case by case without access to Russia. The Hub should quote both with their sources.

Returns do take place through Qatar, the Vatican, the ICRC and family journeys, and Russia has handed over children in each case. That cooperation is real; it is also the evidence of custody.

ESTABLISHED, PATTERN, POSITION

What mandated bodies have established, what the record shows as a pattern, and what is a position — kept apart. Then the lines to take and the questions to expect.

UKRAINE EVIDENCE HUB
VERIFIED RECORD
2023 - 2025

THE LAW

Fourth Geneva Convention, Art. 49: individual or mass forcible transfers and deportations of protected persons from occupied territory are prohibited "regardless of their motive"; evacuations are permitted only for the population's security or imperative military reasons, within the occupied territory where possible, and the persons "shall be transferred back to their homes as soon as hostilities in the area in question have ceased". **Art. 50:** the occupying power shall facilitate the identification of children and "shall not, in any case, change their personal status". **Art. 147:** unlawful deportation or transfer is a grave breach.

Additional Protocol I, Art. 78: no party shall evacuate children to a foreign country except temporarily, for compelling reasons of health or safety, with written parental consent; each child's particulars go to the ICRC Central Tracing Agency. **Rome Statute, Arts. 8(2)(a)(vii), 8(2)(b)(viii):** the war crimes in the ICC warrants; **Art. 7(1)(d), (i):** deportation or forcible transfer and enforced disappearance as crimes against humanity — the Commission's 2026 finding.

Convention on the Rights of the Child, Arts. 8, 9, 20, 21: preservation of identity and nationality; no separation from parents against their will; alternative care with "due regard to the desirability of continuity in a child's upbringing and to the child's ethnic, religious, cultural and linguistic background"; inter-country adoption only as a last resort through competent authorities. Russia invoked the CRC; it is the instrument its programme breaches.

Three layers. Established: unlawful deportation and transfer as war crimes (ICC warrants; COI 2023; OSCE MM); Convention violations (ECtHR 2025); crimes against humanity (COI 2026). **Pattern:** camps, re-education, citizenship changes, adoption, non-return (Yale HRL; COI). **Position:** that the transfers amount to the genocide act of "forcibly transferring children of the group to another group" (Genocide Convention, art. II(e)) — raised by PACE (res. 2495, 2023) and in Ukraine's submissions; not found by any court.

LINES TO TAKE

- "Evacuation ends when the shelling stops and the child goes home. Three years on, the UN finds 80% of the children it has documented have not gone home."
- "Russia's own Children's Commissioner counts 380 Ukrainian orphans placed in Russian families. That number is the charge."
- "The ICC has issued arrest warrants for the President and the Commissioner; the UN Commission of Inquiry now calls this a crime against humanity. 'Null and void' is not a defence, it is a refusal."
- "Russia answered none of the Commission's 39 requests for information. It asks parents to write to the Commissioner instead."
- "Every child returned through Qatar proves two things: that returns are possible, and that Russia held the child."
- "Ask the Russian delegation: publish the list. Names, ages, places. If this is evacuation, the list is the proof."

Q&A

"These children were rescued from shelling; would you rather they had stayed under fire?"

Evacuation is lawful when temporary and followed by return. The UN found long-term placement in 21 regions, changes of citizenship, adoptions, and 80% not returned. And the shelling was Russia's.

"Most children came with their parents."

The ICC warrants and the Commission's findings concern children taken without their families — including the 380 Russia itself says it placed in Russian homes — and families separated at filtration. Russia has not let anyone verify the rest.

"Russia has returned children; Ukraine refuses to cooperate."

Russia has handed over dozens of children through Qatar and others, and each handover shows who held them. The UN Commission sent 39 requests for information; Russia answered none. The obligation to identify, register and return is the occupying power's (GC IV arts. 26, 49, 50).

"The ICC has no jurisdiction over Russia."

The crimes were committed on Ukrainian territory, over which Ukraine accepted the Court's jurisdiction in 2014 and 2015 and which is now a state party. Head-of-state immunity does not apply before the ICC (art. 27). 125 states are bound to arrest.

"The Ukrainian figure of 19,000 is propaganda."

It is a national register, and we cite it as such. The UN has verified more than 1,200 individual cases without any access to Russia — and Russia's own figure is 700,000. Access would settle the number; Russia refuses it.

"Adoption gives orphans a family — what is wrong with that?"

An occupying power may not change the personal status of children in its hands (GC IV art. 50) or adopt them across a border (CRC art. 21). A Ukrainian child's family is in Ukraine; the Commission found no effort to trace it.

WHAT WE ASK

Support execution of the ICC warrants and the Commission's 2026 findings in all accountability texts, including the crimes-against-humanity characterisation · call on Russia to provide the Commission, OHCHR, the ICRC and UNICEF with the names, ages and locations of all transferred children, as GC IV arts. 26 and 50 and AP I art. 78 require · back the International Coalition for the Return of Ukrainian Children and Qatar's, the Vatican's and the ICRC's channels, and ask Russia to scale them from dozens to all · press Russia to halt adoptions, citizenship changes and "re-education" of transferred children (OSCE MM recommendations, 4 May 2023) · keep the children's return as a non-negotiable element of any settlement, with verification by a UN mechanism.

Sources: Nebenzia, TASS 31 Mar and 5 Apr 2023; SCR What's in Blue 4 Apr 2023 · Lvova-Belova, Kremlin 16 Feb 2023 (Moscow Times); MFA 4 Apr 2023 (AFP/Kyiv Post); report Jul 2023 (Novaya Gazeta Europe); RTVI 13 Feb 2025 · Peskov 17 Mar 2023 (Anadolu/Ukrainska Pravda) · ICC 17 Mar 2023 (Lawfare) · COI A/HRC/52/62; COI 12 Mar 2026 (ukraine.un.org; UN Geneva) · OSCE Moscow Mechanism 4 May 2023 (osce.org; EJIL:Talk) · ECtHR GC 9 Jul 2025 (press release, Q&A) · Yale HRL 14 Feb 2023, 3 Dec 2024 (RFE/RL; JURIST) · Qatar MFA 22 Aug 2025 · Bring Kids Back UA 4 Jun 2025; Ombudsman via Ukrinform 9 Oct 2026 · CBS 5 Apr 2023 · full list on page 6



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METHOD

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Each claim is checked first against the ICC, the Commission of Inquiry, the OSCE Moscow Mechanism and the ECtHR (Tier A). Yale HRL (Tier C) is used for the camps and the placement database, where no Tier A body has published equivalent detail, and is labelled. Qatar's figures are those of the mediating state (C). Ukrainian official totals (Children of War / Bring Kids Back UA) are context only, marked B, and are not used to rebut Russian claims.

Reactions of states are taken from the record of the Arria meeting (Security Council Report, CBS), the Human Rights Council vote of 4 Apr 2023, the OSCE Permanent Council of 4 May 2023 and PACE; they are summarised, not quoted in full.

Tiers: **A** — UN-mandated bodies, international courts and organisations (OHCHR/HRMMU, Commission of Inquiry, ICC, ECtHR, IAEA, OSCE, OPCW, Security Council record); **B** — Ukrainian official bodies, marked "according to Ukraine"; **C** — independent investigators and media; **RU** — Russian official statements, the position under review. Tiers are never combined in one figure.