

On 24 February 2022, the Russian Federation launched another act of armed aggression against Ukraine - the full-scale invasion, which, in terms of violations of international humanitarian law and international human rights law, is the largest armed conflict in Europe since the end of World War II.

The unprecedented aggression of the Russian Federation has a significant impact on ensuring the rights of children in the territory of Ukraine. Minors are increasingly becoming the target, rather than random victims, of the actions of representatives of the RF, united by the declared intention of the highest officials of the Russian Federation to destroy the Ukrainian people, their identity and deprive them of the right to independent development.

During almost 14 months of the full-scale invasion, children became victims of the Russian Federation's indiscriminate and disproportionate attacks on the civilian population and civilian objects; get maimed, become victims of sexual violence, are forced to leave their homes, fleeing the horrors of war to other regions of Ukraine or abroad. The aggressor state exposes children to hunger and diseases, complicates the operation of humanitarian and evacuation corridors. Cases of child abduction, illegal deprivation of liberty, hostage-taking, torture of minors, cynical use of children for military advantage are not less shocking.

Having established and maintained effective control over parts of the territories of the Luhansk, Donetsk, Zaporizhzhia and Kherson oblasts, Russia is trying to implement the "Crimean scenario" by banning the use of the Ukrainian language and destroying Ukrainian-language books, the immediate introduction of education in the Russian language and with a Russian ideological orientation, illegal deportations and forcible transfer, giving to Russian families for upbringing, militarization<sup>1</sup> of children with the aim of eradicating their national identity<sup>2</sup> and turning them into enemies of their own Motherland. Senior officials are involved in the development and implementation of the mentioned policy, which is evidenced, among other things, by the adoption of the decision by the Pretrial Chamber II of the International Criminal Court to issue arrest warrants for the President of the Russian Federation Vladimir Putin and the Commissioner for Children's Rights of the Russian Federation Maria Lvova-Belova on 17 March 2023.

Russia's disregard for the rights of children who are residing in the territory of Ukraine, in particular, occupied Ukraine, where it is obliged to guarantee the observance of fundamental rights and freedoms, the scale and heinousness of committed international crimes against minors have actualized the need to highlight and assess illegal acts, form recommendations for national authorities, foreign states and governments, international organizations in order to improve the state of ensuring the rights and freedoms of the child, stop ongoing violations, prevent the Russian Federation from committing new international crimes and bring the guilty parties to justice.

The special report covers the period from February 2022 to April 2023 (inclusive). The intensity and scale of the violations, the number of victims and affected persons, the lack of access to the territories of detention of minors, the intentional distortion of information by Russia for propaganda purposes, and hostilities had a limiting effect during the writing of the Report. This report focuses mainly on describing those rights of the child that have been unlawfully interfered with or that have been violated in connection with the full-scale intrusion. During the writing of the Report, data obtained as a result of the activities of the Secretariat of the Commissioner, as well as through cooperation with other competent authorities of Ukraine, testimonies of victims of violations and their relatives, analytical materials from specialized non-governmental organizations, reports of international organizations, information from official websites of

state authorities of the aggressor state, as well as information from open sources were used.

By providing specific facts of the violations, as well as their concise classification through the prism of international law, the authors seek to allow readers to draw their own conclusions of the perpetrators and the goal they pursue. The report provides an analysis of the actions of both Russia and Ukraine, and offers measures to improve the state of observing children's rights during the armed conflict.

This report was prepared by the Secretariat of the Ukrainian Parliament Commissioner for Human Rights with the active participation of experts - Kateryna Rashevskya, a lawyer at the Regional Center for Human Rights, Onysii Syniuk, a legal analyst at ZMINA Center for Human Rights.

1 Militarization of children is a policy of the RF aimed at forming the loyalty of minors to the use of force methods in the regulation of interstate relations, which involves in-depth military training, in particular, training with the use of weapons, additional lessons or extracurricular activities, participation in militaristic sports events, membership in military-patriotic organizations (Young Army Movement, Pennant, Movement of the First, etc.).

2 Eradication of national identity is the process of violently changing the objective and subjective affiliation of a person to a national group, destroying or devaluing cultural, social, historical and other aspects that determine the identity of the national group as a whole.