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**HUMAN RIGHTS ABUSES DURING RUSSIAN-UKRAINIAN
WAR: CASE OF DEPORTATION OF CHILDREN**

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ABSTRACT

Kateryna Strutynska. Human rights abuses during Russian-Ukrainian war: the case of deportation of children. Supervisor: Assoc. Prof. Gintarė Žukaitė-Zelenkienė. Department of Political science.

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Relevance and novelty. This thesis is a reminder of how important is to protect foundational rights of human beings and a sign for the international community to make strong actions to protect human dignity. The specific focus on child deportation, on concrete numbers of deported children, how this human rights violation is portrayed in Ukrainian and Russian media adds something new to the existing body of literature.

Research question (problem). What are the extent and implications of Russia's human rights abuses, particularly focusing on the deportation of children in Ukraine during the war that commenced in 2022, and how do these actions impact human rights?

Research object. Children's deportation from Ukraine by Russia since full-scale invasion in 2022.

Research aim. To analyze the human rights abuses committed by Russia in Ukraine since full-scale invasion in 2022, with a particular focus on children's deportation.

The following **objectives** are addressed to achieve the research aim: 1) To explain how social constructivism can provide insights into the analysis of human rights advocacy; 2) To examine international legal regulations and frameworks that safeguard rights of the child in war; 3) To analyze documented reports, cases on children's rights violation during Russia's war in Ukraine; 4) To compare how the problem of children's deportations during Russian-Ukrainian war is portrayed both in Russian and Ukrainian media outlets.

Research methods. Descriptive method, content and media analysis, document analysis, assessment of scientific literature.

Conclusions. The research revealed that "Ukrinform", a prominent Ukrainian media outlet, has repeatedly highlighted the suffering of deported children, emphasizing the difficulties in measuring and classifying their experiences as well as the scope of Russia's state-sponsored efforts to remove them forcibly from homes. "TASS", in contrast, has presented a totally different narrative, framing deportations as "evacuations" and humanitarian measures to protect the children. But these narratives are full of propaganda tactics designed to manipulate public perception.

Keywords: Protection of Children, Children's Rights Abuses, Deportation of Children.

SANTRAUKA

Kateryna Strutynska. Žmogaus teisių pažeidimai Rusijos ir Ukrainos karo metu: vaikų deportacijos atvejais. Darbo vadovas: Doc. Gintarė Žukaitė-Zelenkienė. Politologijos katedra. Politikos mokslų ir diplomatijos fakultetas. Vytauto Didžiojo universitetas. 2024 m.

Aktualumas ir naujumas. Šis baigiamasis darbas yra priminimas, kaip svarbu ginti pamatines žmogaus teises, ir ženklas tarptautinei bendruomenei imtis ryžtingų veiksmų ginant žmogaus orumą. Ypatingas dėmesys skiriamas vaikų deportacijos atvejams ir konkreitiems deportuotų vaikų skaičiams, analizuojama, kaip šis žmogaus teisių pažeidimas vaizduojamas Ukrainos ir Rusijos žiniasklaidoje, ir kaip tai papildo esamą literatūrą.

Tiriamąo darbo klausimas (problema). Koks yra Rusijos žmogaus teisių pažeidimų mastas ir pasekmės, atkreipiant dėmesį į vaikų deportaciją Ukrainoje per karą, prasidėjusį 2022 m., ir kaip šie veiksmai paveikia žmogaus teises?

Tiriamąo darbo objektas. Rusijos vykdoma vaikų deportacija iš Ukrainos teritorijos nuo plataus masto invazijos pradžios 2022 m.

Tiriamąo darbo tikslas. Išanalizuoti Rusijos įvykdytus žmogaus teisių pažeidimus Ukrainoje nuo plataus masto invazijos 2022 m., pagrindinį dėmesį skiriant vaikų deportacijos atvejui. Siekiant įgyvendinti išsikelą tiriamąo darbo tikslą, iškeliami šie **uždaviniai**: 1) paaiškinti, kaip socialinis konstruktyvizmas gali suteikti įžvalgų žmogaus teisių gynimo analizei; 2) išnagrinti tarptautinius teisės aktus ir sistemas, kurios gina vaikų teises karo metu; 3) išanalizuoti pranešimus, bylas dėl vaikų teisių pažeidimų Rusijos – Ukrainos karo kontekste; 4) palyginti, kaip Rusijos ir Ukrainos karo metu vaikų deportacija yra vaizduojama tiek Rusijos, tiek Ukrainos žiniasklaidos priemonėse.

Tiriamąo darbo metodai. Aprašomasis metodas, turinio ir medijų analizė, dokumentų analizė, mokslinės literatūros vertinimas.

Išvados. Tiriamąo darbo metu buvo atskleista, kad garsus Ukrainos žiniasklaidos kanalas „Ukrinform“ ne kartą akcentavo deportuotų vaikų patirtas kančias, pabrėždamas sunkumus matuojant ir klasifikuojant jų patirtis, taip pat – Rusijos valdžios remiamų pastangų mastą, priverstinai išvežant Ukrainos vaikus iš jų namų. Priešingai, „TASS“ pateikė visai kitokį naratyvą, pateikdami deportacijas kaip „evakavimą“ ir humanitarines priemones, skirtas apsaugoti Ukrainos vaikus. Tačiau šiuose pasakojimuose gausu propagandos, kuri naudojama, siekiant manipuluoti visuomene.

Raktiniai žodžiai: vaikų apsaugojimas, vaikų teisių pažeidimai, vaikų deportacija.

INTRODUCTION

The full-scale invasion of Russia into Ukraine in 2022 has been intensely discussed all over the world. It reminds us of the highest cost-human's life. Various human rights breaches were committed since the aggression in Ukraine erupted. Children as well became the victims of numerous abuses, such as murders and mutilations, raping, abduction. The systematic deportation of children by Russian forces and authorities is a cause for great concern since it violates their fundamental rights and causes enduring harm to their communities and lives, as well as long-term implications for society as a whole. In order to address the larger problem of human rights violations in war zone, it is imperative to comprehend the dynamics and ramifications of these violations.

Relevance of research. During the Russian-Ukrainian war, where over 20,000 of children have been illegally deported to Russia, investigating human rights violations, is paramount. And these numbers are not even final, to collect data is incredibly complicated. This research has greater implications for the world and the area than just addressing problem mentioned before. We need to comprehend and document these violations and, in such way, contribute to stability efforts in region, because there might be a spillover effect of war. Furthermore, this thesis is a reminder of how important is to protect foundational rights of human beings. It is a sign for the international community to make strong actions to protect human dignity and put an end to brutality in zones of war by bringing attention to one of the most vulnerable population- children. The study also contributes to the ongoing efforts to hold offenders accountable, to fight for justice.

Novelty of research. Even though human rights breaches in war areas have been the subject of many studies, particularly during Russian-Ukrainian war as well, the specific focus on child deportation, on concrete numbers of deported children, how this human rights violation is portrayed in Ukrainian and Russian media adds something new to the existing body of literature. The study provides new insights and views by focusing on this specific aspect of the war, emphasizing the special difficulties that children confront and the pressing need for focused treatments and governmental responses.

Research problem. Thesis is raising such a question: What are the extent and implications of Russia's human rights abuses, particularly focusing on the deportation of children in Ukraine during the war that commenced in 2022, and how do these actions impact human rights? Furthermore, how do these violations challenge existing international legal frameworks and accountability mechanisms? There will be provided an examination of these abuses and their effects.

Research object. Children's deportation from Ukraine by Russia since full-scale invasion in 2022.

Research aim. Study aims to provide light on the human rights abuses committed by Russia in Ukraine since full-scale invasion in 2022, with a particular focus on children's deportation.

Research tasks.

1. To explain how social constructivism can provide insights into the analysis of human rights advocacy.
2. To examine international legal regulations and frameworks that safeguard rights of the child in war.
3. To analyze documented reports, cases on children's rights violation during Russia's war in Ukraine.
4. To compare how the problem of children's deportations during Russian-Ukrainian war is portrayed both in Russian and Ukrainian media outlets.

Methodology. To thoroughly investigate the complexities that underline human rights violations, with a particular focus on children's deportation during Russian-Ukrainian war, the research methodology used in the thesis chose a multifaceted approach. A thorough *assessment of the literature* is the basis of this investigation and is essential to comprehending the theoretical foundations and conceptual frameworks that are pertinent to the research question. In order to obtain an understanding of constructivism's theoretical stance, human rights advocacy, and international legal frameworks concerning children's rights in armed conflicts, especially deportation of children, a thorough *document analysis was conducted*. This literature review offers an extensive theoretical framework that guides all phases of the research by combining findings from many sources.

Furthermore, the study utilizes a thorough written *content analysis* to explore how the children's rights breaches are portrayed in Russian and Ukrainian media outlets such as "Ukrinform" and "TASS". Through the usage of content and discourse analysis methodologies the media narratives surrounding the deportation of children and other violations of child's rights are examined with the aim to identify prejudices and discursive tactics used by various media outlets. By examining media portrayals, the ways in which media discourse shapes and influences public attitudes and perceptions of human rights violations were identified.

Descriptive method is used in addition to literature reviews and media analyses to give a detailed summary of the cases and reports of documented violations of children's rights during the Russian-Ukrainian war. In order to provide a thorough picture of the scope and character of these crimes, information from a variety of sources, such as news articles, human rights reports, and official documents, is compiled and categorized. The main methodological focus is on content analysis, which involves the methodical collection and analysis of textual data from written media sources. Media narratives and representations of children's deportation are examined through qualitative content analysis techniques, such as theme analysis, in order to comprehend the framing, language,

and imagery employed by media outlets in both Russia and Ukraine. Overall, the qualitative method functions as the primary methodological tool for the study and provides insightful information about how perceptions of children's deportation and more general human rights issues are shaped and reflected in both Russian and Ukrainian media in the context of the Russian-Ukrainian war.

Literature overview. There is provided a deep analysis of existing literature on human rights violations, with a special emphasis on the deportation of children during the full-scale Russian invasion into Ukraine. The theoretical foundations and conceptual frameworks related to the human rights research are understood through the literature review. A comprehensive examination of international legal frameworks pertained to children's rights in armed conflicts, constructivism's theoretical perspective, and human rights advocacy is introduced. This review aims to delve into deportation issues and draws upon scientific publications, scholarly journals, legal documents, and authoritative texts. Main books used such as “The Persistent Power of Human Rights: From Commitment to Compliance” by Thomas Risse, Stephen C. Ropp, and Kathryn Sikkink provides insights into the concept of human rights and connects it with the theoretical framework, constructivism, chosen for the research. Furthermore, fundamental works like “World of Our Making” by Nicholas Onuf and “TAKING STOCK: The Constructivist Research Program in International Relations and Comparative Politics” by Martha Finnemore and Kathryn Sikkink helps us to understand that human rights are a social phenomenon. The U.N. Convention on the Rights of the Child stands out as a primary legal framework for protecting children's rights in armed conflicts. Legal glossaries like “Children and Armed Conflict: A Legal Glossary on Abduction and Deportation” and the “Handbook on European law relating to the rights of the child”, uses specific language, terminology and European legal standards crucial for analyzing this important topic.

Additionally, sources like various articles from Ukrainian (“Ukrinform”) and Russian (“TASS”) media portals such as “Захист прав дітей під час війни: протидія насильству” (Protection of Children's Rights during the War: Resistance to Violence) from Ukrinform and “Полянский: страны Запада становятся соучастниками преступлений против детей в Донбассе” (Polyansky: Western countries are becoming accomplices in crimes against children in Donbass) from TASS presents Ukrainian and Russian perspectives on children's deportation. This sections offers a thorough analysis of the complexities of human rights abuses, specifically children’s rights, during the ongoing Russian aggression through the integration of various findings from academic literature, legal texts, and media sources.

Structure. Generally, structure of the thesis offers an exploration of connections between constructivism and human rights, an analysis of how human rights abuses, particularly the deportation of children, are portrayed in Ukrainian (“Ukrinform”) and Russian (“TASS”) media portals. In the first chapter an overview of such theoretical approach as constructivism, its concepts and critiques,

is provided. This theoretical approach fits the most for analysis of human rights advocacy. The second major chapter is dedicated to exploration of international regulations related to children's rights. It examines how children's rights in cases of deportation and abduction are described in international legal documents. The last section, devoted to children rights violations in Russia's war in Ukraine, has the goal to concentrate on how Russia abuses children's rights in Ukraine (including examples of murders, mutilations, different kinds of violence and deportations perpetrated against children). Within this chapter, there are subchapters devoted to the analysis of the media portrayal of children's deportation both in Ukrainian ("Ukrinform") and Russian ("TASS") media portals. These subsections emphasize how the media could represent these events and how they shape public opinion.

I. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK: CONSTRUCTIVISM AND HUMAN RIGHTS

Establishing a strong theoretical framework that will guide the analysis is crucial as we begin our investigation of human rights breaches during the Russian-Ukrainian war 2022. We explore social constructivism in this part, a theoretical framework that provides insightful analysis of human rights advocacy. We can better comprehend the complexities of human rights breaches during the Russian-Ukrainian war of 2022 if we grasp the guiding concepts of the thesis.

1.1 Overview of constructivism

Social constructivism, also known as constructivism in the field of international relations, states that social processes impacted by a variety of variables, including identity, norms, and rules, are deeply intertwined with the narrative of global developments as it unfolds. Constructivism, a prominent figure in the field of international relations theory, originated from an enthralling synthesis of sociological and philosophical reflections that reverberated across generations and continents. Its origins are found in the foundational writings of Immanuel Kant, whose philosophical investigations established a strong framework for comprehending the relationship between awareness and knowledge creation.

But what gave rise to constructivism as we know it now was the intellectual ferment of the late 19th and early 20th centuries. This generation of Neo-Kantians, which included notables like Friedrich Nietzsche, Max Weber, Wilhelm Dilthey, and Edmund Husserl, advocated for a radical change in epistemological viewpoints. It was said that one must dive into the field of consciousness and examine the nuances of phenomenology and subjective interpretations in order to fully understand the complexities of human behavior and society institutions. Dilthey, for example, contended that the human mind, which is deeply ingrained in languages, behaviors, and institutions, is the subject matter of human sciences. Alternatively, Weber's concept of 'verstehen' stressed the significance of comprehending and clarifying the reasons behind human acts, while Husserl offered phenomenology as a powerful tool for dissecting and examining the complexities of consciousness. Nietzsche questioned the fundamental tenets of conventional social theories by arguing that knowledge creation is intrinsically subjective and influenced by our presumptions and opinions. He did this by challenging the concepts of objectivity and value neutrality.¹

¹ Dr. Roshan Varghese V. *Constructivism*. Research Scholar, Political Science, IGNOU, New Delhi. Available at: <https://egyankosh.ac.in/bitstream/123456789/71223/1/Unit-7.pdf>.

These philosophical foundations were developed by the Austrian philosopher Alfred Schutz, who explored the complex dynamics of social relationships and how they affect how we perceive the world. American sociologists Peter Berger and Thomas Luckmann developed the idea of the "social construction of reality," building on Schutz's observations. They proposed that shared ideas and beliefs emerge from our interactions with one another as a group and eventually get institutionalized within societal structures.² Constructivism was greatly influenced by French philosophers working over the English Channel, including Jacques Derrida, Michel Foucault, and Emile Durkheim. Constructivist ideas about the importance of ideational variables and the social construction of reality resonated strongly with Durkheim's claim that social phenomena are real and Foucault's analysis of power structures. By further upending established narratives, Derrida's deconstructive method created new perspectives on the fluidity and contingency of knowledge.³

Constructivism arose in reaction to the inflexible positivist frameworks of Neorealism and Neoliberalism, which were seen as deficiencies in mainstream views of international relations. Constructivism's rise was enabled by the 'third debate' in IR, which was marked by a synthesis movement meant to make IR more scientific. Constructivism was one of the many postpositivist, postmodernist, and poststructuralist theories that emerged from this intellectual ferment, which also set off the 'fourth debate' between positivists and postpositivists. Constructivism also benefited from the English School's subtle view of international relations as fundamentally social and historical, which provided a rich environment for the theoretical development of constructivism. Constructivism's origins are essentially entwined with a complex discourse that crosses the fields of philosophy, sociology, and history, upending preconceived notions and providing new perspectives on the intricacies of world politics.

But firstly officially introduced this theoretical framework was by Nicholas Greenwood Onuf in 1989.⁴ Constructivists contend that common understandings rather than a collection of tangible objects or subjective experiences are what create the social reality, drawing influence from Max Weber's social theory. According to this constructivist viewpoint, social norms, ideas, and culture influence international relations players and serve as a set of guiding principles. They contend that these cultural factors affect how decisions are made and how the dynamics of global politics are affected. Constructivism argues that the complex interactions between people are the fundamental components of international relations, emphasizing the critical role that shared interests and values play on a global scale. Constructivism is fundamentally an advocacy for the transforming power of

² Peter L. Berger. Thomas Luckmann. *The Social Construction of Reality: A treatise in the Sociology of Knowledge*, (1966);

³ Steve Fuller, James H. Collier. *Philosophy, Rhetoric, And The End of Knowledge*. Lawrence Erlbaum Associates, Publishers. New Jersey (1966). Available at: <http://ndl.ethernet.edu.et/bitstream/123456789/30005/1/18..pdf>;

⁴ Onuf, N. *World of Our Making*. Columbia, SC: University of South Carolina Press;

ideas. This argument is emphasized by McGlinchey, Walters, and Gold, who point out that ideas have a big influence on how world events turn out. Furthermore, as per Risse and Ropp, constructivism functions as an all-encompassing framework that smoothly incorporates many components, such as coercion, incentives, persuasion/discourse, and capacity building, offering a full comprehension of the dynamics in international relations.⁵

According to Christian Reus-Smit, constructivism is characterized by its emphasis on the importance of normative and material structures, stressing the mutually constitutive link between actors and structures, and emphasizing the role of identity in influencing political acts. In his further development of this paradigm, Emanuel Adler presents constructivism as a viewpoint that describes the social world as dynamic, contingent, and culturally grounded. It presents a perspective of the social sciences as contingent, somewhat indeterminate, nominalist, and somewhat verified by external sources. It highlights the reciprocal interaction between nature and human knowledge. Seng Tan adds even more by emphasizing constructivism's dual nature. It assumes a voluntarist person that uses instrumental activities to socially construct identities and ideologies. It interprets social production simultaneously in terms of discourses and ideas that deterministically form reality.⁶

Constructivism is a dynamic and changing worldview because scholars who study ideas, socialization, and common beliefs often reinterpret it. Since constructivism illuminates the ontological truth of intersubjective knowledge, it is imperative to separate it from neorealism and neoliberalism. Constructivism maintains that intersubjective knowledge and the material world interact and have an impact on one another, rather than rejecting the existence of the material world. This method argues that the interests, identities, and norms of various players impact how the material world is seen in the context of international relations through moral and epistemic lenses.⁷

Moreover, constructivism maintains that reality is created and dependent on human agreement, even although it admits the existence of an external phenomenal world. Constructivism in the field of International Relations (IR) holds that connections between nations are socially produced.⁸ States, alliances, and international organizations are products of social interactions between people, influenced by language, norms, assumptions, identity, and social values. Constructivism has three conceptual facets when it comes to international relations. The first is a metaphysical position that looks at and interprets what international relations actually are. Second, it emphasizes the part that information and informed actors play in creating social reality since it is a

⁵ Thomas Risse, Stephen C. Ropp, and Kathryn Sikkink (eds), *The Persistent Power of Human Rights: From Commitment to Compliance*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, Pp. 372 (2002);

⁶ Christian Reus-Smit. *Imagining society: constructivism and the English School*. British Journal of Politics and International Relations, vol. 4, pp. 487-509 (October 2002);

⁷ Dr. Roshan Varghese V. *Constructivism*. Research Scholar, Political Science, IGNOU, New Delhi. Available at: <https://egvankosh.ac.in/bitstream/123456789/71223/1/Unit-7.pdf>;

⁸ Sarina Theys. *Introducing Constructivism in International Relations Theory* (2018). Available at: <https://www.e-ir.info/2018/02/23/introducing-constructivism-in-international-relations-theory/>;

social theory. Finally, constructivism as an IR theory seeks to carry out research based on strong epistemological and social ontological underpinnings. Constructivists claim that historical contacts, norms, and state ideas have all contributed to the social construction of concepts like security. They contend that states' conceptions of anarchy in international affairs affect their sense of independence and make them view other states as enemies. The allocation of military might among nations does not by itself define an international social system. Without necessarily building up their national security system, states might achieve cooperation, security, and peace by changing their ideas and perspectives.

Constructivism departs from traditional viewpoints in conceptualizing world order by emphasizing the critical roles that knowledge and social construction play in determining the dynamics of international relations. Constructivists believe that the world is not a static thing, but rather an environment that may change as a result of interactions between people. This need for change is fueled by an awareness of the systemic weaknesses in the global order that lead to entrenched injustices, disparities, and widespread misery. Through its emphasis on the social creation of reality, constructivism offers an alternate perspective for analyzing and understanding the complexities of global governance. Constructivism's core tenets include a strong emphasis on people's agency in actively creating meaning and knowledge via their interactions with concepts and experiences. Furthermore, constructivism emphasizes how norms have a significant impact on how players behave and define their identities on the global stage. The theory acknowledges normativity, historicity, and the active subject as three fundamental tenets that set constructivist methods apart.

Constructivism questions the dominant emphasis on reasoned action and shifts the focus to the function of ideas and social interaction, explaining how society norms come to be accepted and how radical change becomes conceivable. Constructivism goes beyond academic domains to support student-centered, multi-sensory teaching methods that enable learners to actively create their own knowledge.⁹ Furthermore, constructivism maintains that truths about agency, morality, and rationality are not just found or created, but are carefully crafted via the rigorous application of sound reasoning. It is essentially a perspective that supports the notion that basic truths are not discovered or invented, but rather are the result of careful and rational creation. Constructivism opposes the dominant rationalist approach to objectivity in the field of international relations by highlighting the critical role that ideas and social interaction play in explaining how conventions become societal norms and how revolutionary change becomes a realistic possibility.

⁹ Евгения Бакалова. *Конструктивизм в исследовании международных норм защиты прав человека. От генезиса, признания и соблюдения к нарушению, оспариванию и эрозии*. Международные процессы, Том 13, No 1, сс. 48-67 (2016);

The emphasis on human consciousness unites the many constructivist streams. This emphasis demands a dedication to idealism and holism. In this context, idealism emphasizes how important it is to treat ideas with respect when it comes to international affairs. While it acknowledges the existence of the tangible world, it argues that ideas and interpretations have a role in how it is constructed. In this constructivist paradigm, material forces are given meaning and consequences by human interpretations. Constructivism also fits with the concept of holism since it sees the world as intrinsically social and opposes breaking it down into the characteristics of previously existing actors. However, holism recognizes that agents have some autonomy that allows them to create, replicate, and alter systems.¹⁰

It is crucial to remember that constructivists study how social behaviors and objects are constructed, especially those that societies or academics take for granted as normal or given. This curious approach also looks into the formation of identities and beliefs, as well as how social life is structured. Constructivism in international relations places a strong emphasis on ethical issues since it views the good in the world as coming from a variety of sources and aims to understand and pursue that good rather than dictating it. Constructivism's moral component is found in its duty to educate the public while presenting a constitutive method, understanding that the public's reaction is a different issue. Constructivists, crucially, promote the mutual constitution of structure and agency in the universe. The international system is represented by tangible and ideational parts, and agency, or the capacity to act, and structure are interwoven. Emphasizing the dynamic interplay between the two, structures form agency, and agency shapes structures. Constructivism presents a cohesive view of the intricate dynamics governing international relations by taking a firm stand on the agent-structure dilemma and emphasizing the ideational and intersubjective facets of social existence.

It is important to discuss such term as “anarchy”. Within the field of international relations, anarchy designates a societal structure devoid of legally recognized governing bodies. In the midst of the great debate between Neoliberalism and Neorealism, both schools agreed on what anarchy is. They both believed that the lack of a worldwide government led to anarchy on a global scale, something like a "state of nature" outside national borders. While Neoliberals suggested interconnectedness as a way to lessen insecurity, Neorealists argued for self-reliance mechanisms to navigate this anarchy. Constructivists, on the other hand, disagreed, arguing that chaos isn't always the result of the lack of a global government. They distinguished between three categories of rules to control and govern international relations: "instruction rules," "directive rules," and "commitment rules." These regulations include provisions for enforcement and penalties for violations, and they

¹⁰ Elizabeth Stubbins Bates. *Sophisticated Constructivism in Human Rights Compliance Theory*. Published by Oxford University Press on behalf of EJIL Ltd. The European Journal of International Law Vol. 25 no. 4 The Author, (2015);

cover broad concepts like sovereignty and human rights.¹¹ According to Nicholas Onuf, as a result, these regulations rather than a sovereign body regulate international relations.¹² Wendt similarly challenged the Neorealist and Neoliberal perspectives, claiming that ideational elements, national state interactions, and practices determine the essence of anarchy. According to this theory, the dynamics of relationships—whether amicable, neutral, or hostile—determine the course of events within anarchy.¹³

1.2 Concepts of constructivism and its critique

The central idea of constructivist theory is identity, which Alexander Wendt characterized as “a reasonably consistent self-perception that encapsulates duties and expectations. Determining one's interests is based on this complex concept of identity”.¹⁴ Wendt's 1999 investigation explores how states show different degrees of readiness to engage in communal acts depending on how positively or negatively they identify with others. Expanding upon this concept, constructivists contend that governments possess the ability to adopt numerous identities, which are formed dynamically by continuous social interactions with different actors on the international scene. According to the constructivist perspective, these identities are more than just labels; rather, they are potent symbols of an actor's self-awareness that successfully convey their goals and have an impact on their behavior. Consider the example of a small state, whose identity implies a distinct set of interests centered on survival, to gain a greater understanding of the constructivist viewpoint. On the contrary, the identity of a big state could push it to take the lead in international military, political, and economic spheres. Constructivism's central idea is that a state's identity and its interests are mutually reinforcing, and that a state's actions ought to be consistent with its identity. Any departure from this alignment calls into question the legitimacy of the state's stated preferences as well as the coherence of the state's identity. According to Hurd, constructivists contend that the process of forming an identity is closely linked to relationships and happens either before or at the same time as the establishment of an interest. According to the constructivist viewpoint, interests include both material and nonmaterial aspects.¹⁵ Constructivists emphasize the importance of culture, ideas, institutions, language, and social norms in influencing identity and behavior, even as they acknowledge the value of power and

¹¹ David A. Lake. *Hierarchy in International Relations: Authority, Sovereignty, and the New Structure of World Politics*. Department of Political Science University of California, San Diego. (2006). Available at: <https://citeseerx.ist.psu.edu/document?repid=rep1&type=pdf&doi=39d8f658e014c78f4d6551cd7215f103dafa1475>;

¹² Onuf. *World of Our Making*. Columbia, SC: University of South Carolina Press (1989);

¹³ Edited by Stefano Guzzini and Anna Leander. Alexander Wendt and his critics. *Constructivism and International Relations*. ISBN (2006);

¹⁴ Edited by Stefano Guzzini and Anna Leander. Alexander Wendt and his critics. *Constructivism and International Relations*. ISBN (2006);

¹⁵ Ian Hurd. *Constructivism*. Pp. 298-316 (2009);

material interests. This constructivist perspective is especially relevant when attempting to explain how actors, institutions, and social structures come to be as well as how they change over time. Constructivists contend that lowering uncertainty in the international system requires a knowledge of states' identities. States are able to anticipate and predict one other's actions because of the relative stability of these identities. A country can decide whether cooperation is still a feasible choice by carefully evaluating the complex identities of other states and making educated decisions regarding possible deviations in relationships. Constructivists have described the dynamic interplay among material structure, global social structures, and domestic politics that gives rise to a diversity of identities in international politics. Constructivists hold that states represent many, dynamic identities, in contrast to neorealists who support the idea of a single, largely unchanging self-interest identity. A state can simultaneously portray itself as a developed, democratic, and capitalist nation, acting as a rival or adversary to one other while supporting or assisting another. This nuanced viewpoint highlights the complexity of international relations and calls for an acceptance of the dynamic, ever-evolving nature of state identities in the international sphere.

Norms, which effectively place constructivism as a normative theory with a socially defined agenda, is another crucial idea in constructivism that has to be investigated. The normative framework of constructivism is dynamic, with norms arising naturally from the beliefs and acts of actors within particular communities. Constructivists illuminated how humanitarian norms, for example, might be purposefully established to produce real and meaningful change. According to this reasoning, performers presumably adhere to internalized guidelines that support socially constructed ideas of what is considered appropriate and normal.¹⁶ One of the many arenas where specific norms and practices determine acceptable arguments, justification requirements, and standards for criticism in various contexts is the international stage. As Wendt pointed out, this powerful constructivist viewpoint dramatically influences whose justice and logic take precedence and eventually chooses the victors and losers on the world arena.¹⁷ In order to further explore the concept of norms, it is helpful to distinguish between three different kinds of norms, as defined by Finnemore and Sikkink: "constitutive norms, prescriptive norms, and regulative norms". Prescriptive norms specify particular standards, essentially implying that from the viewpoint of those who support them, no norm is intrinsically wrong. Regulative norms serve to order and constrain behavior. Constitutive norms generate new actors, interests, or categories of action. It's important to remember that norms have a "lifecycle" before they are generally accepted; they only become expected behavior when a sufficient

¹⁶ Matthew J. Hoffman. *Norms and Social Constructivism in International Relations* (2017). Available at: [https://oxfordre.com/internationalstudies/oso/viewentry/10.1093\\$002facrefore\\$002f9780190846626.001.0001\\$002facrefore-9780190846626-e-60](https://oxfordre.com/internationalstudies/oso/viewentry/10.1093$002facrefore$002f9780190846626.001.0001$002facrefore-9780190846626-e-60);

¹⁷ Edited by Stefano Guzzini and Anna Leander. Alexander Wendt and his critics. . *Constructivism and International Relations*. ISBN (2006);

number of pertinent state actors embrace and incorporate them into their operations. The original constructivist research on social norms was divided into three main categories: (1) Normative behavior: investigating how a norm within a community shapes behavior; (2) socialization: investigating how a norm from one group diffuses and becomes internalized by actors outside of that community; and (3) Normative emergence, which looks into how a concept becomes intersubjective in a community. This early research showed how ideational elements influence or constrain political action by treating social norms as independent variables. Subsequent advances in constructivist philosophy included the study of the "norm life cycle" by Finnemore and Sikkink, which was a major breakthrough.¹⁸ This idea of a life cycle captures how normative entrepreneurs try to convince states that new norms are suitable, serving as catalysts for the growth of a cascade of new normative understandings. Finnemore and Sikkink recognized the dynamic interplay within the norm life cycle and the highly contingent and contentious nature of normative change. Constructivists recognize that mutual constitution—the dynamic interaction between agents and social structures—reconstitutes social norms on a continuous basis. These norms continue to be identifiable as comparatively stable shared beliefs even though they trigger common behavioral expectations. Social norms were frequently viewed as static entities in the early phases of empirical constructivist research, which made it difficult to explain normative development. The norm life cycle model, on the other hand, offered a more complex explanation by showing how normative entrepreneurs continue to persuade states and enable changes in normative landscapes. Normative structures are essentially dynamic and constantly changing as a result of actors' beliefs and behaviors. This suggests that norms are created daily in the complex dance between actors and their normative settings. Seeing norms as adaptable and fundamental social facts rather than as set concepts is a necessary step towards escaping the static conception of them. Similar to general standards, social norms assist people in managing different circumstances. They don't always provide clear directions, particularly in unfamiliar circumstances. Rather, as Gregg¹⁹ suggests, standards are like broad ideas that must be tailored into particular acts. This change in viewpoint acknowledges that social norms are flexible and crucial for directing conduct in many contexts.

Language is the third crucial component that constructivism, which is ingrained in international relations, places a great deal of stress on. It is thought to be a transformative force that is reshaping society. Constructivists argue that language is a powerful weapon that shapes speech, interactions, thoughts, behaviors, and perceptions, ultimately shaping the structure of international

¹⁸ Martha Finnemore and Kathryn Sikkink. *TAKING STOCK: The Constructivist Research Program in International Relations and Comparative Politics*. *Annu. Rev. Polit. Sci.* 4:391–416 (2004). Available at: https://home.gwu.edu/~finnemor/articles/2001_takingstock_arps.pdf;

¹⁹ Benjamin Gregg. *Human rights as social construction* (2012). Available at: <http://ndl.ethernet.edu.et/bitstream/123456789/5070/1/104.pdf.pdf>;

relations. Language plays a crucial role in revealing the complexity of values²⁰. When we examine each of the aforementioned elements in detail, we can see that constructivism in global politics is a paradigm that essentially holds that important facets of politics are socially built. It addresses the complex agent-structure issue by embracing a devoted dedication to mutual constitution. Constructivism differs from traditional dualisms of objective and subjective realities in that it places a strong emphasis on intersubjective reality. When analyzing world politics, this theoretical paradigm gives ideational and identity aspects utmost importance. Furthermore, constructivists challenge the traditional wisdom regarding state behavior in their quest to provide fresh perspectives and alternative explanations. They subvert the deterministic theory that claims that only material resources, affluence, and geographic circumstances can account for state behavior by taking into account the powerful roles that ideas and identities play. The focus on ideational elements highlights a dynamic view of reality, implying that it is ever-changing rather than static. Constructivist scholarship highlights the significant influence of speech, norms, culture, and identity in forming and defining interests in the field of international relations.

In the constructivist realm, there exists a dichotomy between positivists and post-positivists. Positivists assert that constructivism fits within a positivistic framework in social science, suggesting that scientific methods can elucidate the dynamics of states and the international system. They emphasize a pragmatic analysis, focusing on causal relationships. Conversely, post-positivists diverge, preferring to scrutinize the feasibility of understanding phenomena and probing into the underlying rationales. Positivists bolster their stance with the scientific method, regarding social science as an objective pursuit. They place faith in science to unveil truths and dissect worldly issues through causal laws and rigorous methodologies. Conversely, post-positivists challenge the notion of objectivity in social inquiry, highlighting potential methodological flaws. They advocate for a diversified approach, rejecting the notion of perfection solely through science. While positivists advocate for reliance on empirical science and precise methodologies, post-positivists contend that the distinction between scientific reasoning and common sense is tenuous.

It is crucial to recognize that constructivism is not without its critics, who argue that it is better understood as a method than a complete theory. Within the field of International Relations, critiques of the constructivist paradigm are common, highlighting both its strengths and weaknesses. Critics contend that traditional proponents, such as Wendt, minimize the importance of internal elements and instead emphasize the role of social dynamics and actor interactions in shaping state identity. Constructivists are sometimes criticized for their failure to consider how inner-state components

²⁰ Jesús Aparicio de Soto. *The Constructivism of Social Discourse: Toward a Contemporaneous Understanding of Knowledge*. Open Journal of Philosophy, 12, 376-396 (2022). Available at: <https://www.scirp.org/journal/ojpp>;

respond to identification, which raises important issues about how historical, geographic, and cultural factors affect state identity.²¹ More difficulties arise in operationalizing the identification process and comprehending how intellectual components affect foreign policy, which exacerbates the criticism. Constructivists are also criticized for ignoring the wide range of transnational actors influencing contemporary global politics in favor of a limited focus on state and international organizational entities. The need for a more inclusive theoretical framework is highlighted by this mistake. A different perspective is provided by neorealism, which claims that constructivists overemphasize the importance of norms, which frequently conflict with the objectives of strong states. They argue that because the international system is essentially characterized by egoistic behavior, which makes precise predictions about actors' intentions difficult, social interactions do not always result in friendly ties among states.

In conclusion, opponents of constructivism emphasize the complexity and unpredictability of international relations and call for a more comprehensive understanding of the relationship between identity, interests, and power dynamics, while constructivists maintain that social interactions between nations are friendly. Nonetheless, proponents contend that constructivism offers a vital lens for comprehending complex dynamics in a world defined by complexity. Constructivism is an important alternative viewpoint that not only influences discussions but also provides fresh perspectives on fundamental issues in international relations, opening up fresh avenues for thinking through and promoting change on a worldwide scale.

1.3 Concept of human rights

Human rights are a collection of values that acknowledge our freedom to choose and reach our potential. They are concerned with equality and fairness. The post-World War II era witnessed international efforts to define and defend these rights, which have historical roots. The nations of the world have worked together since the end of this war to determine which rights are universal and how best to advance and defend them.

Most ideas about human rights are based on philosophical or religious presumptions, perceiving them as something that is imposed from outside of groups that already exist. Benjamin Gregg, however, has put forth an alternate viewpoint that sees human rights as locally created, voluntarily accepted, and legitimate in their own right. The concepts of reciprocity and generality, along with the right to justification, form the foundation of the moral idea of human rights.²² This

²¹ Ahmed Alanazi. *A Critical Review of Constructivist Theory and the Emergence of Constructionism*. American Research Journal of Humanities and Social Sciences (ARJHSS): 2378-7031 (2016);

²² Benjamin Gregg. *Human rights as social construction* (2012). Available at: <http://ndl.ethernet.edu.et/bitstream/123456789/5070/1/104.pdf.pdf>;

foundation is intrinsic and cross-cultural, and it is unaffected by any one culture. This basis is essential for maintaining cultural integrity, and no civilization can ignore it as an outside discovery. A society's members assert this right in order to demand certain rights, and the decision is not made in accordance with indisputable principles or laws. A universally applicable but adaptable foundation is necessary to build a complete understanding of human rights.

Human rights, which are often influenced by international law, are moral requirements for fairness that are separate from legal rights. As demonstrated in previous instances, legal frameworks can hinder human rights even when their interpretation is influenced by them. A moral claim that emphasizes treating others fairly and with respect is what it means to assert a right. The moral belief that every human being has certain rights, known as the universality of rights, permits a variety of international claims to be made even in the lack of any legal codification. While promoting legislative changes is a regular component of human rights activities, it's important to remember that human rights, which are fundamentally moral, can be asserted in situations when legal rights are not clearly defined.²³

Therefore, it is imperative to take into account human rights as a social phenomenon that is being established and evolved in society interactions, in addition to their legal element. Human rights are ingrained societal constructs that influence how we live.²⁴ In this situation, social constructivism theory and the idea of human rights may interact by establishing fundamentals for comprehending and analyzing contemporary society and the dynamics of its values. The dynamic character of human rights, which reflects the constant growth of society values and the promotion of universal commitments to human dignity and justice, is influenced by this continual discourse and adaptation across varied societies. This method offers a lens through which we can view the intricacies of social relationships, promoting a better understanding of the moral considerations involved in the creation and development of the concept of human rights. By applying constructivist theory, we can better understand the position of human rights in the international system. Constructivists are curious about how international connections between individuals and nations are impacted by human rights. Additionally, the constructivist method establishes the basis for human rights by providing a precise definition of the moral standards that human rights entail as well as standards by which to evaluate substantive justifications and arguments.

Although human rights are not set laws that the legal system must merely follow, the primary purpose of human rights is to safeguard people's moral equality. They ensure that no power imbalance produces skewed results and that every member of the political community has an equal voice in the

²³ Jutta Brunnée and Stephen J. Toope. *Constructivism and International Law*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press (2012). Available at: <https://tspace.library.utoronto.ca/bitstream/1807/128954/1/Constructivism%20and%20International%20Law.pdf>;

²⁴ Morton Winston. *Human Rights as Moral Rebellion and Social Construction*. Journal of Human Rights (2007);

process of creating a just basic framework. Additionally, they guarantee that people can legitimately disagree with rules and conventions in public discourse. Human rights are not universally applicable because they fluctuate greatly depending on the situation and the time period. Therefore, the only method to study human rights is as social constructions, or frames, or "meanings," that help people interpret reality by classifying people, events, circumstances, and processes in particular ways. Human nature, 'Western' culture, or reason from God are not the solid pillars on which human rights base.²⁵ Human rights can be formed to govern our understanding and actions, but their definition is provisional and historical at every particular time and place. Human rights are built socially in the sense that social norms and legal frameworks are social constructs that determine how they are protected. However, even with this aspect of evolving social interpretation and enforcement, rights still have a basis in the universal, particularly in light of our increasingly interconnected global society.

We must investigate several international human rights models in order to have a deeper understanding of the structure of human rights. Three of these were described by Jack Donnelly. First, there is the conventional state-defined paradigm, according to which states "suggest that international (interstate) relations ought to continue to be largely peripheral and that human rights remain primarily a matter of sovereign national jurisdiction." Second, this contradicts the cosmopolitan paradigm, which views states as the issue and abandons the idea that they are facts. Instead, it presents people and nongovernmental organizations as the opponents from "below." Internationalism is the third paradigm. This version or perspective may initially only be valid for communities that embrace it, but it throws a larger, inclusive arm across the society of states and the individuals, NGOs, etc., which together comprise a community of active participants.²⁶

Therefore, the norms of social and political behavior are created by these social communities. And it uses social construction specifically to accomplish this. The next task for humanity is to create a compelling code of conduct for itself in its many communities across vast differences in history, culture, experience, level of socioeconomic development, and so on. Over time, this code of conduct should become compelling beyond the local settings where it starts in each instance. Socially constructed human rights are a politics of agency that address the lack of agency in politics through moral language, group and community self-determination, and agency-response. Human rights ought to be seen as specific cultural inventions that are socially reinforced by other cultural innovations. These comprise the kinds of cultural inclinations that are present in different customs. Human rights

²⁵ Hayman, Paul Alexander. *Constructivism and human rights locating values in a divided approach*. Durham University (2008). Available at Durham E-Theses Online: <http://etheses.dur.ac.uk/2905>;

²⁶ Jack Donnelly. *The social construction of International Human Rights* (2011). Available at: https://repositorio.uam.es/bitstream/handle/10486/677599/RI_17_7_ingl%C3%A9s.pdf?sequence=2&isAllowed=y;

conceptions might clash in a cultural context where institutions that support individual acceptance, such as the legal system and public education, are in place. Social constructivism theory presents the autonomous, human-rights-supporting individual as a cultural invention and views cultural validity as human-made and variable. Furthermore, all cultural products, including human rights, are relative in this way. Thus, the human rights project is a result of various civilizations gradually freely committing to the same or comparable human rights.

1.4 Human rights in constructivism theory

According to the social constructivist perspective, an individual only has human rights if their community or group choose to accept them. As a moral language, human rights define a political connection between moral people who grant themselves morality. People who uphold human rights may become more socially cohesive as a result of that language. Efforts to overcome certain social, political, and cultural divides may frequently benefit from solidarity (partially because such disparities limit options for solidarity). However, the fact that various communities may have different moral standards under different conditions does not mean that one particular morality—human rights—can never become universal, in the sense that it will eventually be progressively accepted by an increasing number of these communities. In reaction to deemed moral obligations, we collectively create human rights, a process that entails difficult discussions and conflicts.²⁷ It involves the dynamic interaction of societal norms, legal frameworks, moral principles, and legal procedures.

As a result, due of the emphasis on their ethical instrumentality and the typically vague handling of values in International Relations (IR) theory, human rights norms can be perceived as "norms of value".²⁸ It is necessary for human rights principles to be manifest in a more tangible than metaphysical form in order to link them to an approach like constructivism, which lies along a changing positivist/post-positivist spectrum. Therefore, human rights are a set of specific social behaviors to actualize those goals, not merely a set of abstract values, according to social constructivism. Constructivists further note that the story of human rights is becoming increasingly valuable in the international system as a result of social movements of non-political actors socializing these norms, international institutions disseminating these norms, and the logic of appropriateness being used to shame states that adhere to these norms. It is important to distinguish between the substantive goal of a specific human right and its underlying principles and aspirations. The grounds and methods by which "the same" values are sought can diverge significantly.

²⁷ Kate Nash. *The social construction of human rights*. Cambridge University Press. Available at: https://assets.cambridge.org/97805211/97496/excerpt/9780521197496_excerpt.pdf;

²⁸ Morton Winston. *Human Rights as Moral Rebellion and Social Construction*. Journal of Human Rights (2007);

Specific principles that are currently upheld by the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, other associated documents that follow it, requiring (or encouraging?) international actors to operate in a certain way for maintaining certain standards. Because of what the rights it contains symbolize and how they affect the international system, here is where the Universal Declaration is most commonly used. The identities and interests of nations and people(s) as members of the international system are significantly enhanced by the formulation of human rights principles. Understanding human rights in the framework of identity politics places it once again in line with constructivism and calls into question accepted conventions and judicial systems. This instrumentality is consistent with how we generally interpret constructivism. Human rights are instrumental because they are presented largely as ethical claims coming from the Universal Declaration rather than as moral principles derived, perhaps, from nature.²⁹ This leads to more normatively evident impacts of human rights. Of course, human rights are principles, which are instruction-rules that express a certain amount of value. By making reference to common values, they encourage behavior uniformity in general. Human rights norms might naturally manifest in the mechanisms of interaction when they are a part of the discourse between states. Human rights norms complicate matters by demanding that difficult cases like humans, universalism, equality, etc. be included into an approach that is still plagued by a few enduring debates. This challenges the constitutive 'nature' of constructivism. Nowadays human rights are the result of a protracted social and political battle that may have gone quite differently. Furthermore, as new dangers arise, as our knowledge of human dignity evolves, and as society learns more about the institutions, norms, and values required to achieve that dignity, the list of officially recognized human rights may also alter. Despite their actual variances from these principles, the vision of human dignity they represent and work to accomplish is widely regarded as authoritative by practically all states in today's global society.

Furthermore, the social creation of human rights is a complex negotiation shaped by political, historical, and cultural settings rather than a single, monolithic process. Human rights can be interpreted and upheld differently by different cultures, depending on how best suits their own set of circumstances. Because of their versatility, human rights are able to be relevant in different cultural contexts. But the universality of human rights is not diminished by this social construction. Although there are differences in expression and interpretation, the fundamental ideas seek to uphold each person's inherent worth and dignity. Human rights are acknowledged and accepted worldwide as a reflection of a common commitment to core principles that cut across cultural divides.³⁰

²⁹ Universal Declaration of Human Rights. United Nations (1948). <https://www.un.org/en/about-us/universal-declaration-of-human-rights>;

³⁰ Kate Nash. *The social construction of human rights*. Cambridge University Press. Available at: https://assets.cambridge.org/97805211/97496/excerpt/9780521197496_excerpt.pdf;

It is significant to note that social constructivists in international relations have demonstrated how persuasion—rather than just argument or force—is a key component of the establishment of human rights. Social constructivists have played a significant role in IR in helping to focus attention on the activity of NGOs. Elites will aggressively seek to stop violations of human rights once they begin to value these rights. Social constructivists in international relations (IR) contend that routines based on respect for human rights can regulate and direct conduct, thereby ending violations even in the most extreme circumstances. A state's identity can be significantly influenced by its observance of human rights, since some states want to pursue a foreign policy that is both realistic and moral. Additionally, constructivists contend that in actuality, human rights need to be seen as an emerging norm for legitimate statehood rather than as a threat to state sovereignty.

Human rights give people and organizations a framework to express their goals, fight for justice, and oppose discriminatory behaviors. This moral language empowers people to demand their rights by fostering a sense of agency. Creating local conditions where oppressed minorities and socially marginalized groups, as well as society at the bottom of social hierarchies, can use human rights as a moral language to obtain the human rights they desire, is one of the main goals of the human rights project. We select human rights, not the other way around. This is in contrast to a theological view where people are held by their beliefs instead of believing things. Human rights start to function as a moral critique language, questioning established norms and power structures. Over ages, as political and philosophical ideas advanced, this social construct evolved. They wouldn't exist if there was no society ³¹.

To sum up, we might say that a complex interaction between political, cultural, and ethical elements shapes the social composition of human rights. Its changing character is influenced by the constant discussion and adaptation that take place within various societies. Individuals assert their agency through this process, forming a common moral language that aims to uphold human dignity and fairness across cultural divides. Because the concept of human rights is a reflection of societal values, they are significant for constructivism. A fresh viewpoint on contemporary society is made possible by the synthesis of social constructivism with the philosophy of human rights. As a social phenomenon, human rights are not simply a set of legal requirements but also a reflection of how values are constructed and interacted with in society. In addition to determining each person's rights and freedoms, this contact also helps values in the contemporary world evolve and flourish in a sustainable way. Constructivists believe that society is always changing. The communication of

³¹ Kate Nash. *The social construction of human rights*. Cambridge University Press. Available at: https://assets.cambridge.org/97805211/97496/excerpt/9780521197496_excerpt.pdf;

concepts and modes of existence determines how it changes. Constructivism needs to be sufficiently well-constituted to account for the variety of reasons why and how human rights matter in order to determine the significance of human rights norms to society.

II. INTERNATIONAL PROTECTION OF HUMAN RIGHTS

To ensure global stability, provide for everyone well-being and guarantee dignity, efforts to protect rights of human beings are crucial. The safeguard of rights of children has specific significance in this framework. In this section there will be provided a thorough overview of international regulations dedicated to kid's rights. At international level there exist lots of general principles and laws dedicated to this issue. And by analyzing them, we can delve into the fundamental principles that underpin the child's rights protection worldwide.

2.1 General overview of international regulation on the rights of the children

The children's rights movement has seen significant growth in recent years, with international legal standards being seen as crucial for integrating children's rights into national laws. While children's rights often mirror universal human rights, they also include special measures addressing their unique vulnerabilities. The League of Nations was among the first to address this issue, forming a committee dedicated to children's protection and enacting conventions against trafficking and slavery in 1921 and 1926. The 1924 Geneva Declaration emphasized the necessity of providing children with the necessary means for their overall development, both materially and spiritually. Subsequent milestones include the 1948 Universal Declaration of Human Rights, which states that the need for special care for mothers and children should be provided, as well as the right to education. The 1959 Declaration of the Rights of the Child, endorsed by the General Assembly, affirmed children's entitlement to health, education and protection against neglect and exploitation. Many of these principles found further reinforcement in the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (1966). Alongside these key documents, numerous other international instruments also contain provisions for children's protection in specific contexts.³²

Children are widely acknowledged as rights bearers. Because children lack legal capacity, a large amount of case law in Europe originates from lawsuits brought by parents or legal guardians. A child is any person under the age of eighteen as it is broadly accepted throughout Europe. There isn't a single official meaning of "child" under EU law, while most instruments follow the CRC

³² Children's Rights Alliance for England. *Part of Just for Kids Law*. Available at: <https://crae.org.uk/our-guide-childrens-rights-and-law/laws-protecting-childrens-rights>;

definition.³³ Some do not, especially when it comes to rights like free movement, which may incorporate more expansive standards like financial dependency and biological ancestry. EU directives, like the Young Workers Directive, which distinguishes between young people, adolescents, and children based on age and educational attainment, are examples of how EU laws frequently distinguish between age groups when granting rights. The CRC's definition usually takes precedence in situations when EU activities complement national definitions, even while EU legislation defers to national definitions in some sectors, for example education area.

The European Convention on Human Rights demands from nations to protect the rights of "everyone," including children, without age discrimination, even though it does not define children in any particular way.³⁴ References to children's rights have moved from being ancillary to more expansive projects to becoming essential pillars throughout the evolution of EU law. Protecting the rights of the child has become increasingly important in the jurisdiction of European Union (for example in EU Strategy on the Rights of the Child 2021–2024). The EU recognized children's rights at the constitutional level with the adoption of the Charter of Fundamental Rights (2000) and the Lisbon Treaty (2009). These included clauses that forbade discrimination based on age, presented the right to education, protected against the exploitation and labor of minors. The Charter's Article 24 delineates fundamental principles related to the rights of children, which include protection, expression, consideration of best interests, family relationships, and privacy.³⁵

Furthermore, the Lisbon Treaty strengthened the EU's commitment to the child's rights. The Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union gives the EU the authority to pass laws intended to address children's problems like victim support, human trafficking, and sexual exploitation. Significant policy tools have arisen in tandem with legal advances. Specific programs tackle issues that never go away, such digital rights, social exclusion, and child poverty.

The EU can defend children's rights in various areas, for example in data protection, consumer protection, immigration and asylum, and civil and criminal cooperation. Because the rights of the kid are cross-sectoral, finding EU competence in sectors pertinent to children's rights is still a case-by-case process. It is crucial to mention about the contribution of Council of Europe in the evolution of the child's rights. Starting from its founding, it has been committed to defending and developing human rights. Children's rights are highly protected by the human rights treaty, the Convention for the Protection of Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms, also by the Human Rights European

³³ *U.N. Convention on the Rights of the Child* (1990). Available at: <https://www.ohchr.org/en/instruments-mechanisms/instruments/convention-rights-child>;

³⁴ *U.N. Convention on the Rights of the Child* (1990). Available at: <https://www.ohchr.org/en/instruments-mechanisms/instruments/convention-rights-child>;

³⁵ *Handbook on European law relating to the rights of the child*. Pp. 18-33 (2022 edition);

Convention and its added protocols. These involve provisions related to respect for family life, education, and equitable treatment in court.

Furthermore, the Council of Europe has created a sizable system of case law pertaining to children's rights. However, rather than providing a thorough summary of children's rights under the ECHR, the European Court of Human Rights considers each case on its own. The European Social Charter, which was updated in 1996, is another document from the CoE that emphasizes safeguarding social rights, especially children's rights. It places a strong emphasis on stopping economic exploitation and making sure kids get the care, education, and defense against abuse or neglect they require. Additionally, there was ratified by the CoE a number of treaties that particularly target different facets of kid's rights, for example the Lanzarote Convention.³⁶

At the policy level, national governments, civic society, the EU, and other stakeholders have collaborated to implement the CoE's "Building a Europe for and with children" program since 2006. Intergovernmental initiatives in this field are supervised by the Steering Committee for the Children's Rights. As part of this initiative, the Committee of Ministers has released soft-law instruments that offer helpful guidelines to go along with legally binding measures pertaining to children's rights. These instruments address topics like digital rights, child-friendly justice, and violence prevention. The new Strategy for the Rights of the Child (2022–2027) focuses on six key priority areas: freedom from violence, equal opportunities, technology access, child-friendly justice, child participation, and addressing children's rights in crisis situations.

Talking about other European law connected to children's rights, the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child is a foundational piece of European legal framework. It creates shared legal obligations among the member states, influencing how rights of the kid are developed and implemented throughout European institutions. Due to the CRC's limits, the European Union (EU) cannot formally join it; but, through general principles and the European Union Charter of Fundamental Rights, it incorporates its concepts into EU legislation. Within the limits of its jurisdiction, this integration guarantees that the EU upholds the norms and ideals of the CRC. Furthermore, the EU's commitment to children's rights is fortified by the EU Court of Justice, which has recognized the link between EU treaties and the CRC. Furthermore, the Convention on the Law of the Sea (CRC) and its optional protocols do not legally bind the CoE; rather, the CoE's standard-setting and treaty-making operations are influenced by the commitment of its member states to the convention. When the European Court of Human Rights is making any decisions related to child's rights, always takes the Convention of Child's Right into account. This emphasizes the CRC's wider influence on European legal systems outside of the EU.

³⁶ *Handbook on European law relating to the rights of the child*. Pp. 18-33 (2022 edition);

To put it briefly, the CRC essentially acts as a frame for the EU and the CoE when it comes to advancing and defending children's rights throughout Europe. It shapes laws, case law, and policy initiatives that aim to guarantee the welfare and growth of children across the continent. We shouldn't as well underestimate the role of the European courts in upholding children's rights. The jurisdiction of the Court of Justice of the European Union (CJEU) over children's rights has expanded, in part because of preliminary references, which allow national courts to ask the CJEU to interpret EU law in ongoing conflicts. This extension covers a huge scope of topics, including nondiscrimination, free movement, citizenship, immigration, and foster care. Crucially, the Court of Justice of the European Union (CJEU) bases on the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child, indicating a growing conformity with international norms. Though there has been resistance in the past, current case law suggests a willingness to incorporate CRC principles, especially those that are reflected in the European Union Charter of Fundamental Rights.³⁷ The European Court of Human Rights' (ECtHR) involvement with children's rights is developing since the execution of Protocol n. 16, which allows for advisory opinions. This has shaped the ECtHR's jurisprudence on issues ranging from how to treat children who are in legal trouble to more general societal issues that affect children's welfare.

As the European Social Charter's monitoring body, the European Committee of Social Rights is crucial in providing views in response to group complaints addressing several facets of children's rights, including cases related to exploitation, migration, and children involved in legal conflicts. Either through collective complaints or national reporting mechanisms, the ECSR assesses how well national laws and practices conform with the European Social Charter (ESC). If an ESC member state has adopted the complaints procedure, authorized national and international organizations are able to file collective complaints against that state. These complaints have covered topics like children being exploited for financial gain, children's physical health, children's rights to healthcare from migrants, children with disabilities having access to education, juvenile justice, and unaccompanied minors' rights.³⁸

Overall, the EU's dedication to expanding children's rights is a result of a multimodal strategy that includes legislative, policy, and judicial actions meant to guarantee children's safety, welfare, and active engagement in European society. This commitment necessitates a clear definition of a "child." Determining the legal age of minors is a challenge for the global community. There are still disagreements over the rights of unborn children, despite the fact that certain documents—such as the American Convention on Human Rights—promote protection beginning at conception. On the other hand, maximum ages differ for different papers and tasks. For example, the 1962 Convention on Marriage leaves it up to the states to determine, while the Supplementary Convention on Slavery

³⁷ *Handbook on European law relating to the rights of the child*. Pp. 18-33 (2022 edition);

³⁸ *Handbook on European law relating to the rights of the child*. Pp. 18-33 (2022 edition);

sets it at 18. The International Labor Organization Minimum Age Convention, which addresses child labor, makes a distinction between developed and developing nations. For hazardous job, the broad agreement is 18 years old. A comprehensive children's rights treaty is being drafted by the UN Commission on Human Rights with the goal of achieving universality, but detractors claim it ignores the different needs of children.³⁹

In terms of protection of children's rights during armed conflicts, a number of international laws and resolutions, the 1949 Geneva Conventions, and the protocols that followed offer precise standards for the protection of children impacted by violence. These legal documents all acknowledge that children are special individuals who should be treated with extra respect and care. The Fourth Geneva Convention, for example, emphasizes the value of preserving family relationships and guaranteeing contact between family members and offers detailed rules for the treatment of children separated from their families during wartime.⁴⁰

In addition, children's rights to maintain their identity and relationships with their parents are upheld by the 1989 United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child.⁴¹ It forbids separating parents and children against their will, unless it is determined that the child's best interests require such a separation and it is accomplished via legal means. In addition, the Convention stresses attempts to reunite families where it is in the best interests of the child and rejects the arbitrary restriction of children's liberty.

2.2 Children's rights in cases of deportation and abduction.

The kid's deportation is in the list of the most severe violations of law committed against children during war time listed in Resolution 1612, which was passed by the United Nations Security Council (1999). Abduction is "the removal, seizure, capture, apprehension, taking or enforced disappearance of a child either temporarily or permanently, including for the purpose of any form of exploitation of the child". This definition is stated by the Office of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Children and Armed Conflict. There must be a military conflict present for the kidnapping to occur and for it to be connected to one of the parties involved. When there has been an overflow into the territory of one or more adjacent states, this concept also applies in those

³⁹ Philip Alston. *Children's Rights in International Law* (2010). Available at:

<https://www.culturalsurvival.org/publications/cultural-survival-quarterly/childrens-rights-international-law>;

⁴⁰ *IV Geneva Convention relative to the Protection of Civilian Persons in Time of War* (1949). Available at: https://www.un.org/en/genocideprevention/documents/atrocities-crimes/Doc.33_GC-IV-EN.pdf;

⁴¹ *U.N. Convention on the Rights of the Child* (1990). Available at: <https://www.ohchr.org/en/instruments-mechanisms/instruments/convention-rights-child>;

circumstances.⁴² Hague Convention on the Civil Aspects of International Child Abduction (particularly Article 3) defines child abduction as the unapproved removal or detention of a kid across international borders. The same Convention states that children who have been illegally removed or held must be swiftly returned to the country of their habitual residence, where their courts will decide any custody disputes (Article 11(1)).⁴³

In addition to the Hague Convention, the Brussels Iia Regulation (recast) regulates children abduction proceedings inside the EU. It gives the courts of the child's habitual abode jurisdiction prior to their unjust transfer or detention. Introduced in 2019, this regulation streamlined the enforcement process by doing away with the requirement for exequatur. Additionally, it sets precise timelines for quick court hearings, which is essential for the prompt conclusion of kidnapping cases. In accordance with EU law's mutual trust concept, Member States are required to offer comparable basic rights protection. The Court of Justice of the European Union declares that the state from which the kid was illegally deported does not have the right to contest the enforcement of a certified judgment directing the child's return because the state from which the child was removed has jurisdiction over any claims of provisional violations.⁴⁴

The recast of Brussels Iia improves children's rights by mandating that Member States make sure kids have a real chance to voice their opinions while taking their age and maturity into account. This also applies to return proceedings, highlighting how crucial it is to consider the viewpoints of children when making decisions that will have an impact on them. The European Court of Human Rights has highlighted the urgency of resolving abduction cases, and the Hague Convention (Article 11) reflects this by setting a six-week deadline. In reunification proceedings, the ECtHR has emphasized the significance of prompt implementation because delays may have permanent effects on parent-child ties. Thus, it is imperative that these instances be handled quickly as a way to protect the children involved.

When it comes to judgments on deportation, Articles 2, 3, and 12 of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child are crucial for safeguarding children's rights. Nondiscrimination is emphasized in Article 2; the kid's best interests are given top priority in Article 3.⁴⁵ A fundamental legal principle, a procedural norm, and a fundamental right are the three separate facets of the children's best interests

⁴² *Children and Armed Conflict: A Legal Glossary on Abduction and Deportation* (2023). Available at: <https://reliefweb.int/attachments/525f03e6-a7fc-4d17-a524-4a0dab5794e8/legal-glossary-on-abductions-and-deportations.pdf>;

⁴³ US Department of State-Bureau of Consular Affairs. *Understanding The Hague Convention* (2024). Available at: <https://travel.state.gov/content/travel/en/Intercountry-Adoption/Adoption-Process/understanding-the-hague-convention.html>;

⁴⁴ *Endangered Kiwis: the Rights of Children in Deportation Decisions* (2012). University of Otago Law Theses and Dissertations. Available at: <http://www.nzlii.org/nz/journals/UOtaLawTD/2012/19.html>;

⁴⁵ *U.N. Convention on the Rights of the Child* (1990). Available at: <https://www.ohchr.org/en/instruments-mechanisms/instruments/convention-rights-child>;

concept, as highlighted by the Committee on the Rights of the Child. So, the child has a directly relevant and enforceable right to have their best interests evaluated and given priority when decisions that impact them are made. Furthermore, any time a choice is made involving a kid, the child or children involved must be considered, and the process of making a decision must evaluate the probable influence on the child or children involved.

A child's viewpoints, identity, the maintenance of the environment inside the family and relations, the children's care, safety, defense, their rights to healthcare, and the education right are all important factors to take into account when determining what is in their best interests. It is important to consider all of these factors, bearing in mind that the main goals are to ensure that all these rights are fully and effectively enjoyed and to support the child's holistic development. States must thus show how the kid's best interests were considered, what standards were applied, and how the child's interests were weighed against other factors—whether they be general policy concerns or specific instances—while defending a decision.

It is critical to take into account the child's welfare in deportation cases involving minors, taking into account aspects like maintaining family unity, providing a sufficient standard of living, and protecting identity. As stated in Article 12, children should also be given the chance to voice their opinions and have their opinions taken into consideration based on their age and maturity. Ensuring that children are treated with dignity and that their rights are upheld during deportation procedures requires the proper execution of these rules.⁴⁶ Through the incorporation of these principles into minor deportation cases, law enforcement can more effectively protect the rights and welfare of children involved in these proceedings. The Rome Statute's characterization of deportation and forced population transfers as crimes against humanity offers a framework for appreciating the seriousness of these acts and emphasizes the necessity of following international law in such circumstances. Moreover, "forcibly displaced" and "deported or forcibly transferred" are equivalent terms in accordance with ICC's Elements of Crimes framework. In contrast, forcible transfer refers to the removal of people taking place within the borders of a single country, while deportation involves the displacement of people across an admitted border (between two states) or, in some cases, a border that is recognized in practice. This distinction has been clarified by the International Criminal Tribunal for the former Yugoslavia.⁴⁷

For an act to qualify as a crime against humanity, the ICTY states that three essential elements need to be met. First one is forcible removal of people by eviction or other forms of coercion—which

⁴⁶ *The Convention on the Rights of the Child: The children's version* (1990). Available at: <https://www.unicef.org/child-rights-convention/convention-text-childrens-version>;

⁴⁷ *Children and Armed Conflict: A Legal Glossary on Abduction and Deportation* (2023). Available at: <https://reliefweb.int/attachments/525f03e6-a7fc-4d17-a524-4a0dab5794e8/legal-glossary-on-abductions-and-deportations.pdf>;

may involve the use of force, threats, intimidation, incarceration, or misuse of authority—is known as unlawful displacement. The victim's actual choice must not have existed prior to the displacement. Second element is legal presence in the area. It is not necessary to equate the victim's presence in the area from which they are forcibly removed with legal residency. This guarantees that the move is, in fact, against the victim's choice and not just a simple case of moving.

And third thing is perpetrator's objective must be to deport or transfer the victim by force, without necessarily planning to relocate them permanently. The duration of the displacement is not as important as the purpose of the displacement. Deportation or forcible transfer, as a crime against humanity, essentially refers to the forced removal of people—whether permanently or temporarily—by force or expulsion from a place where they are legally present. The criminal's intention is to carry out the forced removal.⁴⁸ The genocide crime refers to forceful transfer of children from one group to another (the Rome Statute). Its central goal is the total or partial destruction of a national, ethnic, racial, or religious community. The following criteria are also listed in the ICC Elements of Crimes to help identify this crime. Firstly, the offender forcibly relocates one or more people. Secondly, these individuals belong to a particular racial, ethnic, national, or religious group. Thirdly, the intent of the perpetrator is to completely or partially destroy the targeted group. Next is that the original group is transferred to another one. One more important point is that the individuals that are being transferred are not yet eighteen years old. Moreover, the age of the victims is known to the perpetrator, or should be known to them.⁴⁹

Therefore, in accordance with international legal frameworks, we should regard illegitimate deportation or transfer as serious violations and war crimes. This includes the forcible removal of protected individuals from occupied territories to the territory of the occupying power or to any other country, regardless of the underlying motivation. In addition, flagrant breaches of international humanitarian law include the occupying force's intentional transfer of civilians into the occupied territory and its unjustified hold-up in repatriating civilians or prisoners of war. The Geneva Conventions and Additional Protocol I, which categorically forbid such acts, expressly state these restrictions. These acts are classified as war crimes under the ICC's Rome Statute, which means that they are punishable by international law and constitute grave breaches. There are a number of requirements that must be met in order to establish guilt for these types of crimes, such as the offender's knowledge of the protected status of the people they have harmed, the existence of an international armed conflict, and their understanding of the specific circumstances surrounding the

⁴⁸ *Children and Armed Conflict: A Legal Glossary on Abduction and Deportation* (2023). Available at: <https://reliefweb.int/attachments/525f03e6-a7fc-4d17-a524-4a0dab5794e8/legal-glossary-on-abductions-and-deportations.pdf>;

⁴⁹ *Elements of Crimes* ICC (2002). Available at: <https://www.icc-cpi.int/sites/default/files/Publications/Elements-of-Crimes.pdf>;

conflict. Together, these components create the basis for locating and bringing to justice individuals who carry out illegal deportations or transfers that constitute grave breaches of international humanitarian law.⁵⁰

According to the Additional Protocol II displacement of civilians is considered a grave breach of the laws of war time and a war crime. Ample housing, hygienic conditions, medical attention, safety, and sustenance must be provided to civilians in any such relocation. It is also forbidden to force residents to evacuate their homes for reasons connected to the armed conflict. Customary international humanitarian law acknowledges this principle. Ordering the relocation of civilians, unless it is necessary for civilian protection or critical military reasons, is considered a war crime under the Rome Statute in non-international armed conflicts. This emphasizes how serious these acts are in terms of international law.⁵¹

A complete framework for child evacuation emphasizes a multifaceted approach to ensuring children's safety during conflicts, in addition to the measures outlined in Additional Protocol I. This framework calls for the construction of specific evacuation centers in the impacted area, complete with medical facilities, psychological support services, and kid-friendly instructional materials. These facilities act as safe havens where kids can get the help they need while still feeling a part of their families and cultures. In order to identify and prioritize the needs of vulnerable children, the framework also requires the presence of qualified child protection experts who collaborate closely with local communities. Children who have been abandoned or separated from their families receive special attention in order to provide them with individualized care and assistance that is catered to their particular situation.

The framework also emphasizes how crucial it is to protect kids' rights to cultural identity and education. Inside the evacuation shelters, efforts are undertaken to give residents access to high-quality education that is provided in an impartial and nonpartisan way. Incorporating cultural and recreational pursuits into everyday routines helps youngsters maintain a sense of normalcy and resilience in the face of adversity. The guideline also highlights how crucial international coordination and cooperation are to making child evacuations easier. To guarantee the safe and efficient execution of evacuation plans, it requires the participation of pertinent parties, such as governments, international organizations, and humanitarian groups.

All things considered, this all-encompassing framework for child evacuation places a high priority on safeguarding children's rights, maintaining their cultural identity, and offering

⁵⁰ *Elements of Crimes*. ICC (2002). Available at: <https://www.icc-cpi.int/sites/default/files/Publications/Elements-of-Crimes.pdf>;

⁵¹ *The Geneva Conventions of 1949 and their Additional Protocols*. International Committee of the Red Cross. Available at: <https://www.icrc.org/en/doc/war-and-law/treaties-customary-law/geneva-conventions/overview-geneva-conventions.htm>;

comprehensive support to lessen the negative effects of conflict on their wellbeing. In order to expedite the release of children during armed conflicts or periods of occupation, the Geneva Convention IV emphasizes the necessity of expeditiously releasing individuals as soon as the grounds for their detention expire. Accordingly, children ought to be released right away as soon as the reasons behind their incarceration become irrelevant.

In addition, the Convention emphasizes that parties to the conflict must work toward agreements for the release, repatriation, and return of certain categories of internees, including women and children, pregnant women, mothers of small children, wounded, and ill individuals. This entails establishing agreements that guarantee these populations' safe return to their homes, or to neutral nations.⁵² Comparably, extensive instructions for handling situations where children are impacted by forced disappearances are provided under the Convention for the Protection of All Persons from Enforced Disappearance. It requires states to take the appropriate steps to locate and single out these children, including those born while a parent was being held captive and the parent was the target of an enforced disappearance. Through the implementation of relevant international accords and legal processes, these steps seek to reconnect the children with their families. States also recognize the value of collaboration in handling such delicate cases and are required to help one another locate and identify these youngsters. The Convention also emphasizes how crucial it is to act in the child's best interests. This entails taking into account the ideas of the kid, particularly if they are able to voice them, and giving their viewpoints the weight that is appropriate for their age and maturity.⁵³

Furthermore, as recognized by law, the Convention addresses the need to protect these children's identities, including their country, name, and family relationships. With the aim to protect the children's rights and identities, it mandates that states with adoption or placement systems set up legal processes for examining such situations and voiding any adoptions or placements that started with forced disappearances. So, as we can see this Convention aims to protect the enforcement of visitation and custody rights for qualified parties, as well as the prompt return of children who ordinarily reside in one state but were illegally removed to or kept in another. For all these reasons we may conclude that international law definitely covers the defense of children which are affected by violence; yet, there are concerns about the processes for accountability and enforcement. Thousands of kids are still being forcibly removed from their houses and families in crisis zones, which highlight the need for increased enforcement and accountability measures to ensure their

⁵² *IV Geneva Convention relative to the Protection of Civilian Persons in Time of War* (1949). Available at: https://www.un.org/en/genocideprevention/documents/atrocities-crimes/Doc.33_GC-IV-EN.pdf;

⁵³ *International Convention for the Protection of All Persons from Enforced Disappearance*. United Nations Human Rights Office of the High Commissioner (2010). Available at: <https://www.ohchr.org/en/instruments-mechanisms/instruments/international-convention-protection-all-persons-enforced>;

safety.

III. CHILDREN RIGHTS VIOLATIONS IN RUSSIA'S WAR IN UKRAINE

The obstacles and difficulties that children in conflict zones meet is a huge global concern. There are millions of affected by war children all over the world. Since the full-scale Russian invasion into Ukraine, the effect on the child's rights is specifically concerning. Severe abuses committed against children, as documented by the United Nations, highlight the immediate need for intervention. In this chapter will be analyzed the details complex difficulties that children face during hostilities, investigation of the children's rights abuses perpetrated by Russia in Ukraine and media portrayals of this problem both by Ukrainian and Russian media portals.

3.1. Overview of the situation

Globally, around 449 million children, or one in six, reside in areas of war. The United Nations (UN) confirmed a total of 24,300 severe breaches of law against children in 2022 alone.⁵⁴ These violations included abductions, sexual violence, killing and maiming of children, deprivation of essential resources due to hospital and school destruction, and randomly refusing humanitarian aid.

The major crimes against children that the Russian Federation has committed since the start of hostilities on Ukrainian territory can be divided to several groups. First of all, the Russian Federation employs illicit strategies and tactics to wage war, particularly against minors. Thus, the Additional Protocol to the Geneva Conventions of August 12, 1949, concerning the protection of victims of international armed conflicts (Protocol I) of June 8, 1977 (Article 35), and the IV Convention on the Laws and Customs of War on Land and its annex: Regulations on the Laws and Customs of War on Land of October 18, 1907 (Article 23). The Russian military has been using unlawful weapons on a regular basis. On April 4, 2022, for instance, the occupiers launched cluster bombs against the civilian infrastructure of Mykolaiv, resulting in the death of one kid. On March 30-31, phosphorous bombs were deployed in the Slobozhan district, injuring four children. The

⁵⁴ *Children and Armed Conflict: A Legal Glossary on Abduction and Deportation* (2023). Available at: <https://reliefweb.int/attachments/525f03e6-a7fc-4d17-a524-4a0dab5794e8/legal-glossary-on-abductions-and-deportations.pdf>;

Russian Federation's military often and purposefully bombards homes, public buildings, and life support systems.⁵⁵

In the settlements that are under occupation, the Russian Federation is causing a humanitarian disaster. Specifically, Article 55 of the August 12, 1949, Geneva Convention on the Protection of the Civilian Population in Time of War. People who live in the occupied territories frequently go hungry as a result of the Russian military's intentional acts. The occupants in Kherson took control of a warehouse that contained goods, medications, and baby food. During the siege, the Russians barred locals from leaving, looted and damaged product-filled stores and warehouses, and even seized food straight from the population. These actions were documented in a systematic manner. The UN reports that there could be a food scarcity for over 1.5 million youngsters who stayed in the conflict area.⁵⁶

Russian Federation soldiers breach international laws related to the right to life and protection against cruel treatment. On March 18, the bodies of twins, ages seven, were discovered beneath the Chernihiv dormitory's debris by rescuers. The civilian populace, including children, is being tortured by the Russian military. For instance, in the Slobozhan Oblast's Izyum District, three people's charred and tortured bodies—one of whom was a child—were discovered.⁵⁷

According to Article 24 of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child, the Russian military denies children their access to health treatment.⁵⁸ Hospitals are attacked, leading to medical infrastructure issues. Due to the destruction of numerous medical facilities the difficulty in obtaining medical supplies; the increased workload of medical personnel as a result of the large number of wounded and their departure; and the difficulty in accessing children, there is a problem that affects both children in the area of occupation or hostilities and those who live in relatively "peaceful" parts of Ukraine. Babies die, and children are born in challenging circumstances. Long-term bomb shelter residents frequently lack access to enough food, clean water, and hygienic circumstances. Diseases in children are brought on by insufficient sunlight. Centralized supply and resource distribution presents challenges for children from institutional care facilities situated in conflict areas.

Crimes against an individual's sexual freedom and integrity are committed by the Russian military. Article 34 of the abovementioned Convention guarantees the right to be free from sexual abuse.⁵⁹ So, information of widespread rape incidents by the occupiers—including, regrettably, child

⁵⁵ Швець Я. І., Соколова І. О. *Порушення прав дітей під час війни Російською Федерацією* (2022). Available at: <http://visnyk-pravo.uzhnu.edu.ua/article/view/262897/259246>;

⁵⁶ Опольська Н. *Права дітей, які постраждали внаслідок збройного конфлікту в Україні*. Право. Випуск 27. Сс. 278-283 (2015);

⁵⁷ Швець Я. І., Соколова І. О. *Порушення прав дітей під час війни Російською Федерацією* (2022). Available at: <http://visnyk-pravo.uzhnu.edu.ua/article/view/262897/259246>;

⁵⁸ *U.N. Convention on the Rights of the Child* (1990). Available at: <https://www.ohchr.org/en/instruments-mechanisms/instruments/convention-rights-child>;

⁵⁹ *U.N. Convention on the Rights of the Child* (1990). Available at: <https://www.ohchr.org/en/instruments-mechanisms/instruments/convention-rights-child>;

rapes—became available following the liberation of the seized cities and villages of Polissia, Sivershchyna, and Slobozhanshchyna. For instance, eleven-year-old child was raped by Russian occupiers in Bucha. President Volodymyr Zelenskyi brought up the story of the baby who was raped by a Russian soldier and recorded it during his speech in Lithuania. Apart from the physical injury inflicted against the child, this can also be considered a criminal case involving the practice of using kids in pornographic publications. There are also instances of sexual offenses causing psychological harm committed in front of minors, especially when the rape victims are the child's relatives.⁶⁰

Article 38 of the UN Convention on Children's Rights and Article 77 of Protocol I both guarantee children's protection from recruitment into the armed forces and their participation in conflict, both of which are violated by the Russian military.⁶¹ Children from Ukraine who live in the temporarily seized territory are used by the Russian military for tactical objectives. Children and teens in particular are made to disseminate propaganda materials online and gather military intelligence, such as the locations of barricades, arms depots, and Ukrainian military hardware. Minors are mobilized by the so-called "LDNR"'s invading force. Many of the alleged "patriotic clubs of Novorossiya" graduates, who were 16 years of age and older and carried out combat duties for the Russian military, are already known to have passed away. Additionally, propaganda films featuring children are continuously shot in the occupied territories. Children were therefore made to recite poems about the conflict and wear St. George's ribbons while living in seized Melitopol. In Mariupol, a "children's center" was established in a chamber devoid of water or power with the intention of producing propaganda materials. There, instruction is based on Russian texts.

According to Article 28 of United Nations Convention on Children's Rights, Russians breach their right to an education.⁶² Safe and easily accessible education is a must. But kindergartens, secondary and tertiary educational institutions, and schools were all destroyed. Education is typically not a top priority during an active conflict since parents and kids are too busy trying to survive. The majority of the time is spent on survival, which disrupts the child's regular schedule due to air strikes, shelling, and hiding in shelters. Many factors make distant education difficult to access, and in the occupied communities, the Russians impose their propaganda-based educational curricula on the residents. The education aspect of evacuation is also problematic. Yes, it does take time to apply for a specific school or to receive funding for remote learning in the case of forced resettlement in Ukraine. These challenges are compounded by living overseas, the language barrier, potential general issues adjusting to a new environment, disparities in educational programs, and others.

⁶⁰ *Звернення Президента України до Парламенту Литви* (2022). Available at:

<https://www.president.gov.ua/news/zvernennya-prezidenta-ukrayini-do-parlamentu-litvi-7428>;

⁶¹ *U.N. Convention on the Rights of the Child* (1990). Available at: <https://www.ohchr.org/en/instruments-mechanisms/instruments/convention-rights-child>;

⁶² *U.N. Convention on the Rights of the Child* (1990). Available at: <https://www.ohchr.org/en/instruments-mechanisms/instruments/convention-rights-child>;

According to Article 31 of the same Convention, the Russians violate children's right to leisure and cultural development by destroying the infrastructure necessary for their extracurricular development. All children ought to have access to leisure, relaxation, and artistic and cultural pursuits. The destruction of cultural, sporting, and entertainment infrastructure occurs even in relatively safe or liberated places; this is not mentioned during the occupation or on the front lines of fighting.⁶³ For instance, on March 20, 2022, Russian troops opened fire upon a retail and leisure complex in Kyiv.⁶⁴ The world is also aware of the Mariupol theatrical theater airstrike case.

In other words, Russians obstructed the evacuation and set fire to the evacuation conveyance carrying children. The agreements about evacuation and green corridors are broken by the Russian armed forces. There were numerous reports of shots fired at civilian vehicles. A rocket strike on the Kramatorsk railway station in the Donetsk region on April 8, 2022 claimed the lives of seven children while over 4,000 people were waiting to be evacuated.⁶⁵ This scenario is made even more cynical by the phrase "For the children" on the Russian missile. Roads and stations that have been destroyed make it impossible to escape hazardous areas. Not even information about the option of evacuating is allowed to reach the public. More than 4.8 million Ukrainian children were forced from their homes by the full-scale conflict, more than 2 million of them fled to other countries, according to UNICEF.⁶⁶ They were all having trouble adjusting to their new environment. Children who live in state-run institutional care facilities are among the most vulnerable groups of people. The leaders' ability to work with the military authorities to coordinate their departure during conflicts and the likelihood of arranging for the children's safe evacuation or shelter within the facility are both critical factors.

The kid's right to heal physically and mentally is as well stated in the Convention of United Nations on the Rights of the Child, Article 39.⁶⁷ This is particularly true for kids who have experienced violence, abuse, humiliation, or torture. Ukrainian youngsters from the east, north, and south participated in a poll performed by the sociological business Gradus. Her statistics show that 79% of parents think that their child's psychological condition has gotten worse since the start of the full-scale conflict, 33% of parents evaluate their child's psychological health as average, and 75% of youngsters suffer from neurological problems. It is impossible to provide children with a suitable environment for mental healing and to systematically give psychological care in areas where there

⁶³ *U.N. Convention on the Rights of the Child* (1990). Available at: <https://www.ohchr.org/en/instruments-mechanisms/instruments/convention-rights-child>;

⁶⁴ *Росіяни вдарили по ТРЦ Retroville у Києві. Наслідки авіаудару*. Суспільне. Новини (2022). Available at: <https://susplne.media/219820-rosiani-vdarili-po-trc-retroville-u-kievi-so-vid-nogo-lisilos/>;

⁶⁵ *Ракетний удар РФ по вокзалу у Краматорську 2022 року: скільки людей загинуло і як триває розслідування*. ТСН (2022). Available at: <https://tsn.ua/exclusive/raketniy-udar-rf-po-vokzalu-u-kramatorsku-2022-roku-skilki-lyudey-zaginulo-i-yak-trivaye-rozsliduvannya-2552764.html>;

⁶⁶ *War in Ukraine*. UNICEF. Available at: <https://www.unicef.org/>;

⁶⁷ *U.N. Convention on the Rights of the Child* (1990). Available at: <https://www.ohchr.org/en/instruments-mechanisms/instruments/convention-rights-child>;

are ongoing hostilities. As a result, mental health issues can have long-term effects, contribute to PTSD, depression, and phobias and take time to show symptoms.

Various international and internal Ukrainian regulations are violated by the abduction and forced removal of children by Russians (Geneva Convention on the Protection of the Civilian Population in Time of War, Additional Protocol to the Geneva Convention, United Nations Convention on the Child's Rights, Family Code of Ukraine. More than 180,000 Ukrainian children had already been deported to the Russian Federation and the so-called "LDPR" as of May 2, 2022, according to Daria Gerasymchuk, the President of Ukraine's Commissioner for Kid's Rights and Rehabilitation.⁶⁸ This puts at risk Russian citizens' unauthorized adoption of Ukrainian children. The goal of this approach is to forcefully Russify and eradicates the child's Ukrainian identity. The deportees are transferred to isolated and desolate areas of Russia, where their personal possessions, communication devices, and Ukrainian passports are seized. In exchange, they are given paperwork that forbid them from leaving these areas for a period of two years. Children are made to go through infiltration camps during deportation, frequently in filthy circumstances. Apart from being deported to Belarus and the Russian Federation, there is also a chance of child kidnapping and trafficking, the future whereabouts of which are unclear. This makes it more difficult to find and bring back Ukrainian children.

It is crucial to record all of these horrible acts committed against Ukrainian children as well as against the entire civilized world since this is by no means a comprehensive list of the crimes that Russia has brought to Ukraine and for which it is accountable. After examining various child rights violations, it is important to highlight that these military operations constitute a flagrant violation of a child's rights to life, health care, education, family upbringing, protection from any possible kinds of violence, participation in hostilities and armed conflicts, the right to choose where they live, and other rights. These kids are entitled to extra protection and help from the government. According to Member states must take all necessary steps to support a child who has experienced any of the following: torture, cruel, inhuman, or degrading treatment or punishment; war; or neglect, exploitation, or abuse.⁶⁹

Such acts by Russian military personnel may be classified as war crimes under Article 8 of the Rome Statute of the ICC.⁷⁰ This includes the deliberate creation of barriers to the delivery of aid, such as that which is permitted by the Geneva Conventions, in order to intentionally starve the civilian

⁶⁸ Daria Herasymchuk speaks about abduction of Ukrainian children by Russia at UN Security Council's special meeting. President of Ukraine. Volodymyr Zelensky official website (2023). Available at:

<https://www.president.gov.ua/en/news/darya-gerasimchuk-na-specialnij-zustrichi-radi-bezpeki-oon-r-82553>;

⁶⁹ U.N. Convention on the Rights of the Child (1990). Available at: <https://www.ohchr.org/en/instruments-mechanisms/instruments/convention-rights-child>;

⁷⁰ Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court (2002). Available at: <https://www.icc-cpi.int/sites/default/files/Publications/Rome-Statute.pdf>;

population as a means of waging war (xxv, b, part 2 of article 8). Given the wide range of international crimes that Russian military personnel have committed against Ukrainian children and the fact that the Office of the Prosecutor of the International Criminal Court, the Office of the Prosecutor General, and other Ukrainian law enforcement agencies, as well as law enforcement agencies of other countries under the principle of universal jurisdiction (specifically, Latvia, Germany, Lithuania, and the USA), are already investigating these crimes, there are enough reasons to hope that war crimes committed by high-ranking Russian officials and military personnel against children on Ukrainian territory will be looked into at the proper level and those responsible will face criminal charges.

Furthermore, it is imperative to do preventive measures. For instance, one should improve the state's evacuation protocols to lessen the risk to the life and health of children living under occupation or in areas where conflicts are ongoing. This is heavily impacted by several level agreements on green corridors with Russia and its military. But rather than following these agreements, Russia frequently breaks them.

In order to safeguard children in areas where hostilities are ongoing, parents should also educate their kids appropriate behavior in safe havens, high-risk areas, and during air attacks. Furthermore, it is advised to offer professional medical and psychological services to kids who have already fallen prey to the occupiers. Though there are volunteer organizations that offer free consultations to war victims with qualified psychologists, we believe that children's specialists should be hired to work with children.

3.1.1. Murders and mutilations

In this subchapter will be analyzed one out of the greatest crimes against humanity that was committed by Russia and deprived all Ukrainian children of their childhood. Every minor has an unalienable right to life and states are required to do everything within their power to guarantee the child's survival and healthy growth.⁷¹ Article 3, which is shared by the four Geneva Conventions, forbids violence against a child's life or personality, including torture, mutilation, ill-treatment, and murder.⁷²

Parties to an armed conflict are required by international humanitarian law to distinguish between military and civilian targets and to protect the civilian population—including minors—from the effects of hostilities. These are conventional kinds of duties. They form the cornerstone of the

⁷¹ *U.N. Convention on the Rights of the Child* (1990). Available at: <https://www.ohchr.org/en/instruments-mechanisms/instruments/convention-rights-child>;

⁷² *The Geneva Conventions of 1949 and their Additional Protocols*. International Committee of the Red Cross. Available at: <https://www.icrc.org/en/doc/war-and-law/treaties-customary-law/geneva-conventions/overview-geneva-conventions.htm>;

principle of distinction, which is central to the laws and traditions of war. Each party to the conflict is also required by international humanitarian law to take all reasonable care when selecting the means and techniques of combat in order to prevent the unintentional death or harm of civilians, including children. Simultaneously, the Russian Federation persistently conducts disproportionate and indiscriminate attacks, targeting civilian critical infrastructure and protected facilities, including schools and hospitals. These attacks primarily impact the civilian population, resulting in deaths and severe injuries, including those of children.

Table 1. Numbers of murdered Ukrainian children by Russia in different areas (April 2023)

The name of the region	Reported numbers of children mortality
Donetsk	452
Kharkiv	275
Kyiv	127
Kherson	94
Zaporizhia	89
Mykolaiv	86
Chernihiv	68
Luhansk	66
Dnipropetrovsk	66

Made by the author⁷³.

The regions indicated above were most affected by child mortality. These numbers are not final (excluding Mariupol and other occupied territories). Work on their installation in places of hostilities, in temporarily occupied and liberated territories, continues. The provided information should not be regarded as definitive since investigations are still being conducted to determine the truth about crimes committed in areas of ongoing hostilities, including Ukraine's temporarily occupied and de-occupied territory. But in the nearly 14 months since the Russian Federation's large-scale armed aggression against Ukraine began, four times as many children have perished as

⁷³ Грубі порушення прав людини внаслідок збройної агресії проти України: загальний огляд. Офіс Омбудсмана України (2023). Available at: <https://ombudsman.gov.ua/childrenofwar-2023/hrubi-porushennia-prav-dytny-vnaslidok-zbroinoi-ahresii-proty-ukrainy-zahalnyi-ohliad>;

in the nine years prior to the Russian Federation's armed aggression, which included the occupation of the Crimean Peninsula and portions of the Donetsk and Luhansk regions.

In December 2022, 1,116 people's bodies—31 of whom were minors—were discovered in the de-occupied areas of the regions of Mykolaiv, Donetsk, Kherson, and Kharkiv. In the occupied regions, there have been documented cases of civilians being executed without cause. Ten torture cells were also found in the de-occupied areas of the Kherson region, four of which were located in Kherson proper. Children were confined in a different cell in one of the torture chambers at the same time. People who were there said that they were aware of the youngsters in the so-called "children's cell" next to them. The kids didn't receive meals; instead, they received water every other day. They applied psychological pressure, telling children that their parents had left them and would never come back.⁷⁴

As a result, evidence indicating children were housed in the torture camps was obtained when the Commissioner visited the camps located in the freed areas of the Kherson region. One poignant case involved a 14-year-old child who spent ten days in a torture chamber, where he experienced starvation and witnessed the effects of torture. Another incident involved Russian soldiers accusing a youngster and his uncle of espionage, resulting in their abduction and mistreatment. These instances highlight the grave humanitarian crisis and atrocities committed in the conflict-affected areas.⁷⁵ As per the Ministry of Health of Ukraine, 843 children were injured by gunfire and mine explosions as of January 2, 2023, out of the total number of injured children. Of the children affected, 28 occurrences of amputations at different levels of the lower and upper limbs were noted; this represents 3% of the total number of children affected. Four amputation-affected youngsters passed away, while seventeen more require upper and lower limb prosthesis.⁷⁶ Because of the Russian Federation's continuous shelling of cities and the deliberate destruction of vital infrastructure, many children are unable to access quality medical treatment at home (more on this below). As a result, parents who have children are compelled to relocate or depart from Ukraine in order to access appropriate healthcare, prostheses, and rehabilitation.

There have been flagrant breaches of international humanitarian law as a result of Russia's disastrous war on Ukraine, especially regarding to the child's protection. Numerous children have been killed and injured due to the indiscriminate targeting of civilian facilities, such as hospitals and schools. Reports show trends of crimes against humanity and war crimes, including the arbitrary

⁷⁴ Грубі порушення прав людини внаслідок збройної агресії проти України: загальний огляд. Офіс Омбудсман України (2023). Available at: <https://ombudsman.gov.ua/childrenofwar-2023/hrubi-porushennia-prav-dytyny-vnaslidok-zbroinoi-ahresii-protu-ukrainy-zahalnyi-ohliad>;

⁷⁵ Лілія Ярмол, Анастасія Карпюк. Порушення прав дитини в умовах війни в Україні (2022). Available at: <https://science.lpnu.ua/sites/default/files/journal-paper/2023/jan/29699/17.pdf>;

⁷⁶ Радіо Свобода. Забрали дитинство. Як маленькі українці страждають через агресію РФ (2023). Available at: <https://www.radiosvoboda.org/a/novyny-pryazovuya-viyna-prava-ditey-ahresiya-rosiyi/32437168.html>;

arrest, torture, and psychological trauma inflicted on minors. The seriousness of grief and suffering, as seen by the notable rise in child mortality and injuries, emphasizes how urgently responsibility and reparations are needed. The well-being of children must come first in efforts to address the continuing humanitarian catastrophe, as this will guarantee that individuals impacted by the fighting have access to necessary resources and assistance.

3.1.2. Sexual violence

In reality, sexual assault against women in Ukraine is a long-standing problem that has continued to worsen since the start of the war in the Donbas in 2014. It is not a new incident that emerged following the start of a full-scale invasion in 2022. Reports of widespread rapes and assaults against women and girls in Ukraine indicate the worrisome scope of the issue. These crimes take place both inside their own homes and following their incarceration by enemy forces.

The horrific image of the cruelty survivors witness is painted by their testimonies. Women describe being forced to see their family members being raped by Russian soldiers, raped in groups, and even had their attackers tattoo them as a mark of recognition. It is shocking to learn that some women are raped and used as sexual slaves, subjected to unspeakable abuse at the hands of their captors. The intentional participation of family members in these horrible deeds, whether via force or intimidation, is very upsetting. This strategy seeks to destroy family ties and society standards in addition to causing more stress to the victims, causing long-lasting damage to Ukrainian society. Unfortunately, sexual violence is a global problem because, throughout the conflict, these heinous crimes have also claimed the lives of Ukrainian children. Given the dire circumstances, it is imperative that swift action be taken to address and prevent sexual violence in all of its manifestations, protecting the dignity and safety of every person, regardless of gender or age.

Article 3, which are shared by the four Geneva Conventions, forbid sexual violence and rape and mandates the humane treatment of all civilians, including minors. Children must be respected and protected from indecent assault of any form according to Additional Protocol I to the Geneva Conventions (Article 77).⁷⁷ There is a typical quality to this standard. Many international and regional conventions forbid rape, sexual assault, and the exploitation of minors. Furthermore, the International Criminal Tribunal for the former Yugoslavia, which recognizes rape as torture and forbids it outright, modified the methodology.

According to international law, sexual and gender-based violence can be categorized as a war crime, a crime against humanity and genocide. Those found guilty of these crimes should be held

⁷⁷ *The Geneva Conventions of 1949 and their Additional Protocols*. International Committee of the Red Cross. Available at: <https://www.icrc.org/en/doc/war-and-law/treaties-customary-law/geneva-conventions/overview-geneva-conventions.htm>;

individually accountable for their crimes. All forms of sexual violence: rape, sexual slavery, forced prostitution, forced pregnancy, forced abortion, forced sterilization, forced marriages and any other forms of sexual violence of comparable severity are committed by the Russian military, Russian-aligned forces, and Russian-controlled separatists.

Sexual violence, which is tantamount to torture, and threats of such violence were identified by the UN's independent international committee of investigation into crimes in Ukraine as key components of the torture employed by the Russian government. Experts also underlined that it was sometimes painful for family members, especially young ones, to be made to witness these crimes. As of May 11, 2023, the Office of the Prosecutor General reports that 12 girls and 1 boy between the ages of 6 and 17 had experienced sexual violence. Specifically, there had been an attempted rape of a 10-year-old boy in the Kherson region, seven girls between the ages of 15 and 17, one girl aged 6, and rapes of three girls between the ages of 15 and 17 in the Donetsk and Chernihiv regions. Moreover, two girls, ages ten and sixteen, reported seeing sexual assault in the districts of Kherson and Kyiv. To roughly determine the true number of victims, however, these indications should obviously be multiplied by 100.⁷⁸

Unfortunately, there is little information available about sexual assault against minors throughout this battle. Due to a paucity of statistics from both Russian-occupied areas and Ukrainian frontline territories, there is an exceptionally high incidence of unreported occurrences of sexual abuse against minors. In areas that the Ukrainian army has liberated, parents and kids likewise seldom disclose violent occurrences for fear of being stigmatized and of Russian soldiers possibly returning. Additionally, incidences of sexual assault against children are frequently not reported because the victims either don't realize they were harmed or think it was their own fault. Experts suggest that a lack of faith in official institutions, a lack of sensitivity on the part of investigators, insufficient steps to protect victims, and a lack of state compensation are other reasons for silence. All of this makes criminal investigations and processes more difficult. The majority of cases (of sexual violence) will most likely occur 20–30 years after the war ends.

3.1.3. Deportations

International humanitarian law forbids forced transfers and deportations of protected individuals. Thousands of children impacted by the war in Ukraine, however, have either been deported to Russia or forcefully moved to areas under Russian occupation, severing them from their families, towns, and nation. In order to gather information on the forcible relocation of children,

⁷⁸ *Офіс Генерального Прокурора (2023)*. Available at: <https://www.gp.gov.ua/>;

including unaccompanied minor citizens of Ukraine and minors from orphanages, care facilities, shelters, and hospitals, numerous human rights investigations have already been conducted.

Illegally bringing Ukrainian children to the Russian Federation, Russians there swiftly change their citizenship and offer them up for adoption despite their living parents and relatives in Ukraine. Thus, hope for the Ukrainian future and identity are lost. The Verkhovna Rada Commissioner for Human Rights, Dmytro Lubinets, estimates that about 150,000 children were forcibly removed from Ukraine by Russia. The Verkhovna Rada Commissioner for children's rights, Darya Gerasimchuk, a colleague of his, refers to the number as "several hundred thousand children, i.e. somewhere around 200-300 thousand".⁷⁹ According to platform "Children of war" that was created by the Ministry of Reintegration and the National Information Bureau on behalf of the Office of the President of Ukraine over 19,546 Ukrainian children have been abducted to Russian territory since the start of the war.⁸⁰ These numbers are specifically identified children; the list with their names is in the Red Cross International Committee. However, the real data is closer to several hundred thousand. Unfortunately, given the circumstances that are lack of access, underreporting, still occupied Ukrainian territories, precise data is hardly reachable. And this is a major problem- accurately to collect and count the concrete numbers of children taken by Russian aggressor. Simultaneously, around 700,000 children were moved from Ukraine to the Russian Federation's territory, according to Russian data.⁸¹ Most of them were transported alongside one of their legal representatives, but some were children without parental supervision, or unaccompanied children for other reasons. Children from both occupied (who were in rest camps, sanatoriums) and non-occupied territories (without any parental permission) were illegally deported to Russia. Along with these children, there are those who were left alone after the parent or any other relative was killed during the war; children who were separated from their parents during fighting or during the forced "evacuation" to Russian territory and of course, children from orphanages. At least 380 children were victims of forced adoption into Russian households, with records of their presence found in 16 out of the 57 Russian Federation areas. There have also been reports of kidnappings by the Russian military in the temporarily controlled areas with the intention of inciting fear, applying pressure to family members, and obtaining intelligence.⁸² There exist six scenarios in which the Russian invaders deport Ukrainian children: they kill the parents first, then take the children; they separate the children from their parents during filtering operations; they remove the children from institutional care facilities; or they remove the children from their biological

⁷⁹ Daria Herasymchuk speaks about abduction of Ukrainian children by Russia at UN Security Council's special meeting. President of Ukraine. Volodymyr Zelensky official website (2023). Available at: <https://www.president.gov.ua/en/news/darya-gerasimchuk-na-specialnij-zustrichi-radi-bezpeki-oon-r-82553>;

⁸⁰ Children of war platform. Available at: <https://childrenofwar.gov.ua/en/>;

⁸¹ Russian news agency TASS. Available at: <https://tass.com/>;

⁸² Лілія Ярмол, Анастасія Карпюк. *Порушення прав дитини в умовах війни в Україні* (2022). Available at: <https://science.lpnu.ua/sites/default/files/journal-paper/2023/jan/29699/17.pdf>;

families by denying them parental rights under false pretenses or by making the parents sign a "paper" authorizing the removal of the children to "rehabilitation" camps, from which they are never brought back home. Medical examinations were disclosed as the sixth scenario of child deportation and forcible removal.

We should mention that this process of illegal deportation began long time before the onset of a full-scale invasion. In 2019, Vladimir Putin, the president of the Russian Federation, signed an order granting certain groups of people—namely, the local populace of the puppet entities "DPR" and "LPR"—a simplified path to Russian citizenship. A few days prior to the start of the full-scale war, heads of these entities simply start the process of evacuating individuals by signing an "evacuation order" for the local population to the Russian Federation. In the midst of the war, there have been reports of Russian military personnel and their allies kidnapping children. Forcible deportations from boarding schools and orphanages, regardless of the children's legal guardians or parents, are reportedly ongoing. Putin approved a new order on May 30, 2022, and according to it, acquisition of citizenship obtained a simplified procedure. By the end of September 2022, the largest kid deportation waves will have already begun under the most diverse pretexts: "evacuation" of the local population, rest or treatment.⁸³

In Russia, Ukrainian children are "re-educated" and taught to be true patriots of the Russian Federation. There, they are also enlisted in the military and deployed militarily against Ukraine. As a result, aggressor country takes all purposeful steps to destroy the identity of the children who have been deported and prevent them from ever being able to identify themselves as Ukrainians. In order to locate and record child deportation instances and bring the children back home, the Ukrainian government, society, the international community and numerous organizations must make every effort. It is crucial to investigate and punish all those responsible for this heinous crime.

3.2 Media portrayal of children's deportation in Ukraine

The deportation of children has become a sensitive and extremely upsetting component of the humanitarian situation during the Russian-Ukrainian war. Media channels are crucial in influencing the public's perception and comprehension of the events taking place as the war develops. This chapter focuses on the way the media in Ukraine portrays the deportation of children, analyzing articles from "Ukrinform," one of the nation's most recognizable written media portals.

⁸³ Ірина Назарчук. *Вбивства, каліцтва, примусове вивезення. Про воєнні злочини стосовно українських дітей*. Юридична газета (2022). Available at: <https://yur-gazeta.com/golovna/vbivstva-kalictva-primusove-vivezennya-pro-voenni-zlochini-stosovno-ukrayinskih-ditey-.html>;

“Ukrinform” that was founded in 1918 was chosen as Ukrainian media portal for analysis because of numerous reasons. First of all, it is one of the oldest, most famous and well-known news agencies in Ukraine that offers thorough reporting on both national and as well global events. “Ukrinform” is a government-owned media portal that consistently upholds a high level of credibility, honesty and competence, which makes it a great choice for the media portrayal of such important issue as children’s deportation. Secondly, the vast readership and outreach of “Ukrinform” guarantee that its coverage has a substantial impact on public opinion in Ukraine. In February 2024, Ukrinform attracted over 5.35 million users and around 14.7 million views. By methodically analyzing the narratives and concepts that "Ukrinform" uses, we hope to reveal the subtleties and complexities related to how this urgent humanitarian issue is portrayed. By means of this analysis, we aim to illuminate the complex aspects of media representations of children’s deportation during times of Russian-Ukrainian war. Key words that I used for the analysis were “the deportation of children” and “abduction of children”. These topics were chosen according to the relevance to the research object and their importance in comprehending the human rights advocacy during Russian-Ukrainian war. The data is taken from the start of the full-scale Russian invasion into Ukraine (24th of February 2022) until present times (April 2024). This timeframe was selected to provide an extensive summary of “Ukrinform’s” reporting on the deportation of children during the ongoing Russian-Ukrainian war enabling a comprehensive analysis of dynamic narratives and patterns. Articles that were chosen for the examination all jointly addressed various recurrent themes and focus points related to the deportation of Ukrainian children, notwithstanding the range of perspectives and nuances offered in each article. The division that follows seeks to capture the scope of coverage offered by the media outlet "Ukrinform".

Table 2. Topics covered in Ukrainian media portal “Ukrinform”.

Topic	Number of Articles in Ukrinform
Deportation of children (also referred to as "evacuation" by Russia)	53
Accuracy of data on deported children and tracing issues	12
Categories of deported children	3
Russia's planned deportation campaign	11
International aid and support	10
Russia's substitution of the concept of "deportation"	3
Treatment of deported Ukrainian children in Russian territory	2

Mechanisms for identification and return of deported children	7
Russia's responsibility for committed crimes	5

Made by the author.

So, the first topic that Ukrainian media uncovers is dedicated to numbers of deported children and the problem of accurate data establishment as well as tracing of children.

The accurate estimation of deported children poses a significant challenge due to the complex nature of the process, compounded by limited access to affected areas and a lack of transparency from the aggressor country. Records from the National Information Bureau show that around 20,000 children were taken away by force from areas including Donetsk, Kherson, and Zaporizhzhia. However, given the covert nature of the deportations, it is probably only a small portion of the total number, as it is challenging to track down and account for every child impacted.

In an effort to provide more precise information, Deputy Minister of Internal Affairs Kateryna Pavlichenko has brought attention to the fact that at least 234,000 children have been taken from Ukraine by force. This staggering statistic highlights the severity of the situation and the pressing need for thorough data gathering and analysis. Concerns have also been expressed about what will happen to these kids, especially the orphans, who might be adopted illegally in Russia and avoid the legally recognized international adoption processes in Ukraine. Alarming figures have been given by Lyudmila Denisova, the Verkhovna Rada Commissioner for Human Rights, showing that the Russian Federation forcefully relocated over 1 million 400 thousand Ukrainians to its territory, more than 240,000 of whom were children. The catastrophic effects of this widespread relocation on families and communities have made the already dire humanitarian situation worse.⁸⁴

Concerns about the Russian Federation's inaction in promoting family reunification and safeguarding the child's best interests have been expressed by UNICEF. The actual number of children who have been forcibly deported may approach 50,000, according to estimates from human rights advocates and the Institute of Strategic Research and Security, highlighting the urgent need for international intervention. Additional reports suggest that deported children in Crimea and Siberia are being militarized, with compulsory military training and indoctrination adding to their anguish and suffering.⁸⁵

The difficulties continue despite continuous efforts by agencies such as the National Information Bureau to gather and maintain data on children who have been deported. The names of

⁸⁴ *Захист прав дітей під час війни: протидія насильству*. Укрінформ. Ukrinform. (2024). Available at: <https://www.ukrinform.ua/rubric-presshall/3496685-zahist-prav-ditej-pid-cas-vijni-protidia-nasilstvu.html>;

⁸⁵ *В ООН вивчають факти масового викрадення росією українських дітей*. Укрінформ. Ukrinform. (2022). Available at: <https://www.ukrinform.ua/rubric-ato/3507823-v-oon-vivcaut-fakti-masovogo-vikradenna-rosieiu-ukrainskih-ditej.html>;

adoptive parents are known, but not much has been done to bring children back to the native country or make perpetrators responsible for their crimes. Particular incidents, such the unauthorized adoption of a two-year-old orphan from Mariupol to France, serve as sobering reminders of the pressing need to resolve these problems and pursue victims' justice through global legal channels like as the International Criminal Court.

Next topic that “Ukrinform” highlights is categories of deported children. The first group of children consists of those whose parents were forcibly removed from them by the invaders and brought into Russia illegally under the guise of rehabilitation. The second category consists of minor Ukrainian nationals who lost their parents but who still have grandparents, aunts, uncles, or other family members. The invaders do not send the children back to their relatives; instead, they offer them up for adoption inside the Russian Federation. Children who have been forcibly removed by the Russians from orphanages situated in the temporarily occupied territory of Ukraine constitute the most challenging third category. Since the invaders frequently destroy the children's paperwork and alter their identities and nationalities before adoption, they are the most challenging to identify.

“Ukrinform” draws our attention to another important topic, which is Russia’s planned campaign of the deportation process. An example of Russia's genocidal intention to suppress and erase Ukrainian identity is their planned program of forcible deportations of children from Ukraine. Just a few weeks after hostilities began, conversations in Russian circles were already focused on expediting the adoption process for Ukrainian children adopted by Russian families. Reminiscent of the forcible assimilation strategies used by totalitarian governments of the previous century, Senator Gumerova urged immediate steps to teach Ukrainian children the Russian language. The severity of Russia's activities is highlighted by historical comparisons to the military dictatorships in Argentina and Francoist Spain, which paint Putin as a disciple of the cruel tactics used by his predecessors.

Government records and human rights reports make clear how methodical Russia's approach is. The Russian Federation Government’s Resolution No. 349 establishes caps on the number of Ukrainian refugees that may be hosted, demonstrating careful state-level preparation and coordination. The extent of Russia's role in the displacement and relocation of Ukrainian children has been highlighted by human rights activists' discovery of multiple facilities in places throughout Russia that shelter forcibly relocated Ukrainian orphans.⁸⁶

Furthermore, Russia's actions are a part of a planned campaign to destroy Ukrainian identity and spread lies about the war, not individual instances. It is attempted to remove children's Ukrainian ethnicity and familial ties through indoctrination and teaching them to despise Ukraine. Russia's

⁸⁶ *Правозахисники знайшли кілька установ у рф, де перебувають депортовані українські сироти.* Укрінформ. Ukrinform (2022). Available at: <https://www.ukrinform.ua/rubric-ato/3629703-pravozahisniki-znajsl-kilka-ustanov-u-rf-de-perebuvaut-deportovani-ukrainski-siroti.html>;

calculated attempt to eradicate the Ukrainian spirit and identity through cultural and psychological manipulation is blatantly genocidal in intent. Moreover, it is said that Russia's legislative actions show that it is trying to hide its own misdeeds. The State Duma's legislative committee's creation to look into "crimes of Ukraine against the children of Donbas" is a thinly veiled attempt to deflect criticism away from Russia's own crimes, which include kidnappings of Ukrainian children. This willful falsification of the truth demonstrates the extent Russia is willing to go to in order to preserve its appearance of legitimacy while committing grave human rights crimes.

It is important to single out such theme drawn out in the articles as international aid and support. Biggest number of publications were dedicated to this topic. International condemnation and coordinated endeavors to tackle the predicament of Ukrainian minors facing compulsory repatriation have attracted substantial interest and backing from diverse worldwide organizations. In an effort to stop the deportation or forced transfer of children to Russian territory, the UN has taken the lead. The Secretary-General underlined how crucial it is that kids stay with their family and caregivers and that their best interests always come first.

The seriousness of the situation is highlighted by calls for comprehensive investigations into cases of children abducted into Russian territory, as well as for access to Ukrainian children in Russia and steps to guarantee their safe return and family reunion. The deportations and forcible, unlawful transfers of Ukrainian citizens, including minors, to Russia and areas temporarily held by the Russian Federation have been categorically denounced by the European Union. The EU's commitment to defending human rights and safeguarding vulnerable groups is reaffirmed by this position. Under the direction of Polish Prime Minister Morawiecki and President of European Commission Ursula von der Leyen, the two countries have joined forces to find and bring back Ukrainian children. This project demonstrates how European institutions are working together and in solidarity to solve the humanitarian situation that is developing in Ukraine. International legal experts have labeled the process of forced deportation of children from Ukraine to Russia as an act of genocide. One such expert is Payam Akhavan, an advisor to the prosecutor of the International Criminal Court. These legal evaluations draw attention to how serious the problem is and how the victims deserve justice and accountability.

In spring 2023, the Ukrainian children's deportation and forced transfer to Russian Federation territory was declared genocide by the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe. This acknowledgement emphasizes the gravity of Russia's conduct even more and demands swift international action to resolve the situation. With the prospect of forced Russification and the loss of their cultural identity, Ukrainian children deported to the Russian Federation require immediate

support from European organizations. To preserve these vulnerable children's rights and wellbeing, efforts must be made to offer them assistance and safety.⁸⁷

One more subject that was highlighted in “Ukrinform” is about the substitution of the concept of "deportation" by the Russians, how they explain the abduction. Russia's intensified practice of deportation and abduction in the occupied territories is cloaked under the guise of so-called "evacuation." This deceptive terminology serves to obscure the true nature of the actions being taken by Russian forces. Children from Luhansk Oblast are being deported under the pretext of providing them with special medical care. Thousands of children aged 2 to 17 have undergone in-depth medical examinations, with doctors imported from Russia noting in examination documents that 70% of these children require special medical attention. The Russians employ terms such as "adoption," "transfer to guardianship," and "temporary placement" to legitimize their actions. However, these are merely different legal statuses and procedures within which orphans and children deprived of parental care are transferred to be raised in family forms. The deportation of Ukrainian children constitutes a grave crime of genocide against the Ukrainian people. For the Russians, the primary objective is the reduction of the Ukrainian population. By issuing Russian passports to Ukrainian children, they seek to artificially increase the number of Russians, further illustrating the insidious nature of their actions and their disregard for the rights and well-being of Ukrainian children.⁸⁸

Moreover, some articles from media portal “Ukrinform” considered such question as what do Russians do with deported Ukrainian children in Russian territory? It was mentioned that potential adoptive parents of Ukrainian children in the Russian Federation are required to complete "ideological education," indicating Russia's conviction that Ukrainian youngsters need a different kind of upbringing. While healthy children are sought after for adoption in Russia, those with health problems are frequently abandoned in temporarily controlled territory. This is made possible by campaigning for a federal bank for orphans in these areas, which would function as a "supermarket" for adopters. Coercive tactics are used in this procedure, such as the forced issuing of Russian passports, which are then entered into a federal database in an attempt to find the child's biological parents. Concerns about the total integration of Ukrainian children into the Russian community—which denies them the opportunity to maintain their identity, language, and culture—have been voiced by Ukrainian officials. This is a grave breach of international humanitarian law. After their parents pass away or are separated from them, children are frequently sent to Russia, where attempts

⁸⁷ ПАРС визнала геноцидом депортацію українських дітей до росії. Укрінформ. Ukrinform (2023). Available at: <https://www.ukrinform.ua/rubric-ato/3701663-pare-viznala-genocidom-deportaciu-ukrainskih-ditej-do-rosii.html>;

⁸⁸ Дітей з Луганщини загарбники хочуть вивозити до рф «за шкільним обміном» - ОВА. Укрінформ. Ukrinform (2023). Available at: <https://www.ukrinform.ua/rubric-regions/3666610-ditej-z-lugansini-zagarbniki-hocut-vivoziti-do-rf-za-skilnim-obminom-ova.html>;

are made to keep families apart by snatching phones and moving them around a lot. Numerous camps housing deported Ukrainian children have been uncovered by humanitarian organizations in Russia, Crimea, and Belarus. Some of these camps participate in military training and indoctrinate children with hostile Russian ideologies. Children whose parents perished in the fighting, orphans, and those judged unpatriotic are the targets of systematic deportation, which forces them to grow up outside of the Ukrainian ethnic tradition and fosters the myth of "Russian Peace" ideology. With Russia providing streamlined citizenship procedures to Ukrainian children from seized territories and using them as hostages to compel parental participation, education is exploited as a tool of extermination. There are documented cases of officials' children being taken to Russia in order to ensure their loyalty, as well as persecution against Ukrainian-centric education in occupied territory, including threats of denial of parental rights and incarceration for noncompliance.

Next, but not the least topic that was discussed in the articles is about the mechanisms, investigations, and actions required for children's identification and return. It was said that identification and repatriation of abducted and deported Ukrainian children necessitate a comprehensive strategy and concerted international cooperation: A plan has been made to create a governmental organization that would be responsible to the President, the Verkhovna Rada, the Ukrainian people, and the administration for methodically locating children in areas that are temporarily occupied. Although there are still few children who have been successfully returned, the Ministry of Reintegration of the Temporarily Occupied Territories in Ukraine has started the process of returning children who were abducted unlawfully to the Russian Federation. Under the direction of Mateusz Morawiecki (Polish Prime Minister) and Ursula von der Leyen (European Commission's President), a specific program for the discovery and return of Ukrainian children is to be launched as part of a cooperative endeavor between the two organizations. According to Dmytro Lubinets, the Verkhovna Rada Commissioner for Human Rights, fifteen Russian-abducted children have been returned to Ukraine. A total of 10,597 children have been considered found in Ukraine since the beginning of the full-scale war.⁸⁹

An expert mission will be formed by the OSCE to look into violations pertaining to the forced relocation of minors in areas of Ukraine occupied or controlled by Russia. This could result in the creation of the "Moscow mechanism" to hold Russia responsible. In order to expedite the return of children from Russia, President Volodymyr Zelensky has tasked relevant ministers, the Office of the Prosecutor General, and the Ombudsman with creating a step-by-step action plan to collaborate with foreign organizations, the media, and public personalities. Zelensky stressed the urgency of taking

⁸⁹ *Депортація дітей до рф: Лубінець каже, що кількість може сягати сотень тисяч.* Укрінформ. Ukrinform (2023). Available at: <https://www.ukrinform.ua/rubric-ato/3686633-deportacia-ditej-do-rf-lubinec-kaze-so-kilkist-moze-sagati-soten-tisac.html>;

immediate action during the International Coalition for the Return of Ukrainian Children's founding meeting. By December 7, 2023, 387 deported children were returned to Russia by the Ukrainian state, as reported by Dmytro Lubinets, the Commissioner for Human Rights in Verkhovna Rada. With the support of various organizations (for example Office of the UN High Commissioner for Refugees) and other impartial parties, Ukraine and Canada established the International Coalition for the Ukrainian Children Return in an effort to find practical methods for their return.⁹⁰

We all understand that Russia will have to bear responsibility for all the committed crimes, including deportation of children as well. “Ukrinform” devoted to this topic few articles. So, addressing the criminal responsibility for the illegal deportation and transfer of Ukrainian children, the Prosecutor of the International Criminal Court has singled out President of the Russian Federation Vladimir Putin and Russian Ombudsman Maria Lvova-Belova. They are implicated in the heinous acts committed against Ukrainian children in the occupied territories. Additionally, the establishment of the "Moscow mechanism" is proposed as a means to hold Russia accountable for its actions. However, overcoming the consequences of the abduction and forced deportation of Ukrainian children will require extensive efforts from the international community and significant time, measured in years, emphasizing the long-term impact of Russia's actions on the affected children and their communities.

The analysis of articles from “Ukrinform” was provided. This media portal applies rhetorical strategies and well-chosen terminology to portray the issue of deporting children. Key words used in the research such as "deportation" and “abduction” emphasized the severity of the situation and highlighted human rights abuses that were endured by Ukrainian children. “Ukrinform’s” focus on various themes, outlined above, shows the complexity of the subject. “Ukrinform” considers a range of sources, such as opinions of international organizations, human rights groups, and government representatives. From the analysis it is visible that Ukrainian media portal emphasizes the experiences of people who are directly impacted by war, specifically to hear Ukrainian voices. “Ukrinform” always reminds that human rights abuses committed by Russia in Ukraine is part of Russia's ongoing aggression against Ukraine. In such way it attracts international support and aid for Ukraine.

In conclusion, the way that children's expulsion is portrayed in Ukrainian media, especially when viewed through the eyes of the media outlet "Ukrinform," clarifies a difficult and unpleasant subject. The media has diligently highlighted the difficulties in precisely determining the numbers of deported children and classifying them according to their situations, with 53 devoted articles covering various aspects of the topic. In addition, the media has highlighted Russia's upcoming child

⁹⁰ *Україна і Канада створили міжнародну коаліцію з повернення українських дітей.* Укрінформ. Ukrinform (2024). Available at: <https://www.ukrinform.ua/rubric-polytics/3822080-ukraina-i-kanada-stvorili-miznarodnu-koaliciu-z-povernenna-ukrainskih-ditej.html>;

deportation campaign and shown the startling scope of state-sponsored initiatives to forcefully remove Ukrainian children from their homes. In spite of all of this hardship, foreign assistance and support have shown to be rays of hope, helping Ukraine in its quest to look into and bring back deported children. Russia's attempts to control the narrative by replacing the word "deportation" with euphemisms and explanations have also been exposed by the media, which has also shown the terrible reality of what happens to Ukrainian children who are deported to Russia. The media has brought attention to the procedures for looking into and returning deported children as well as making Russia responsible for its crimes against them through in-depth reporting and inquiry. In general, the way this topic has been covered by the media highlights how vital it is that we take action and stand together to defend the rights and welfare of vulnerable Ukrainian children who are facing deportation.

3.3 Media portrayal of child's deportation in Russia

The way in which the deportation of children during the Russian-Ukrainian war is portrayed has become a major point of intense media attention and international discussion. The word "deportation," as it is used in Ukrainian and Western discourse, is framed as "humanitarian evacuations," according to Russian media, especially "TASS" (Telegrafnoe agentstvo Sovetskogo Soyuza), the country's top news agency. It was selected as the Russian media portal due to several reasons. "TASS" is one of the largest and most renowned news agencies in Russia. "TASS" is often described as state propaganda channel, so to determine the concrete number of readers is hardly reachable. It has a huge influence on the discourse within the country and can shape public perception. "TASS" is a government-control organization, so it is expected to conform its coverage with official narratives and the agenda of government. This makes it the perfect resource for researching the ways in which propaganda sways public opinion and distorts the truth. Moreover, TASS's broad reach and influence within Russia cannot be disregarded, despite the fact that it may lack credibility in terms of objective journalism. This analysis explores how "TASS" understands the children's deportation by presenting it as "evacuation" and savior of children" (key words used) and in such way manipulate the information, support government agendas. All the articles that were examined are taken since the period of the beginning of the full-scale invasion of Russia in Ukraine (the 24th of February 2022) until April 2024. This period of time was chosen to give a thorough picture of TASS's propaganda tactics and to monitor any modifications or shifts in messaging over time. The following section aims to encompass the spectrum of coverage provided by "TASS" media.

Table 3. Topics covered in Russian media portal "TASS".

Topic	Number of Articles in TASS
Deportation of children (also referred to as "evacuation" by Russia)	14
Accuracy of data on deported children and tracing issues	4
Russia's accusations against Ukraine regarding deportation	6
Interpretation of deportation as "evacuation" and savior of children	4

Made by the author.

First topic analyzed by “TASS” is dedicated to the question of how Russia interprets the deportation of children and which terms use instead. It was mentioned that Russian officials and representatives have been outspoken in their defense of their activities surrounding the evacuation of children from the impacted areas in response to the continuing "special military operation" in Ukraine. They have always presented these evacuations as legitimate humanitarian efforts that are compliant with international humanitarian law standards. They state that protecting the safety and wellbeing of children caught up in war t is the main objective of these evacuations.

Western media and governments have fiercely criticized Russian authorities, characterizing these evacuations as "forced displacements" or "kidnappings." Rather, they contend that this kind of language is purposefully deceptive and intended to harm Russia's reputation. Russian officials claim that the term "kidnapping" is being used to distort reality and to discredit Russia's attempts to help Ukrainian children in need of safety. Moreover, Russian delegates have made it clear that their activities are not meant to take children away from their homes, but rather to temporarily place them under guardianship with the goal of eventually reuniting them with their family or other trustworthy individuals. They claim that these actions are being performed with the utmost respect for children's rights to stay in touch with their loved ones, wherever they may be in the world.

In spite of these claims, Western diplomats have come under fire for allegedly avoiding interacting with rehabilitated children from conflict areas in favor of sticking to their disparaging remarks about Russia. According to Russian officials, this failure to engage with the youngsters shows a lack of sincere concern for their welfare and raises the possibility that Western nations are more concerned with furthering their political goals than with actually aiding those in need. Russian officials, on the other hand, have made a point of securing the security and welfare of the children who have been evacuated. Their dedication to fostering family ties is demonstrated by the open processes they have put in place for reuniting kids with their friends and family. Despite these efforts, Russia is nevertheless the target of charges from Western nations and media organizations, which it

vehemently disputes. Such charges, according to Russian officials, are unfounded and amount to nothing more than a cynical attempt to damage Russia's standing internationally.

Second topic that was described by Russian media portal “TASS” is about Russia's accusations against Ukraine regarding children’s deportation and other crimes. In articles it was said that Russia has leveled several accusations on the Ukrainian side, charging them with a range of offenses including child abuse and deportation. These charges have been made in a number of ways, such as official pronouncements and parliamentary committees. Vice-Speaker of the Federation Council and co-chair of the parliamentary panel on crimes against children, Inna Svyatenko, has made requests to foreign organizations to help reveal information on the expulsion of families with children and orphans from Ukraine. Svyatenko cited instances in which children were purportedly transported by opaque Ukrainian authorities to more tranquil places. She stressed the necessity of openness in information exchange and likened such acts to kidnapping.⁹¹

Svyatenko went on to claim that the Ukrainian government had broken more than a dozen international agreements meant to protect children. These transgressions cover a wide range of offenses, including kidnapping for the purpose of unlawful adoption, exploitation, organ sales, violations of social rights, and the spread of neo-Nazi and Russophobic propaganda. The Armed Forces of Ukraine have been portraying Russian military troops as brave heroes who sacrificed their lives to protect children from being shelled. Moscow vigorously refutes claims that it violates children's rights, calling the allegations baseless.

Ukraine has been committing genocide in Donbass since 2014 resulting in the deaths of hundreds of children and numerous injuries. Western media and politicians remained silent on these alleged crimes and instead blame Russia for the evacuation and relocation of minors. The First Deputy Permanent Representative of Russia to the UN, Dmitry Polyansky, charged that children were killed because of the Ukrainian military's callous bombing of civilian facilities in Donbass. He held accountable various Western nations for crimes against children by accusing them of supplying the weapons used in these assaults.⁹² Therefore, Russia's allegations against Ukraine over the expulsion of children and other crimes are complex and involve allegations of propaganda, military aggression against civilians, especially minors, and violations of international law.

One of the subjects analyzed by Ukrainian media outlet “Ukrinform” was numbers of deported children. Russian media as well emphasize this vital topic, but gives different numbers. According to Russian Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov, Russian authorities have given the UN access to the identities of Ukrainian children who have been moved to safe places, and Moscow is willing

⁹¹ *Святенко предлагает обратиться в международные организации из-за вывоза детей с Украины.* ТАСС. TASS (2023). Available at: <https://tass.ru/obschestvo/19782579>;

⁹² *Полянский: страны Запада становятся соучастниками преступлений против детей в Донбассе.* ТАСС. TASS (2022). Available at: <https://tass.ru/politika/15256847>;

to supply this information upon request. According to the Russian Ministry of Defense, since the special operation began, around 600,000 children have been evacuated, including 14,000 youngsters from Donbass in a single day. By June 23, 2022, more than 2 million people—nearly 325,000 of whom were minors—had been evacuated from dangerous regions of Ukraine and the Donbass republics to Russia.⁹³ These voluntary evacuations were carried out in order to protect lives, particularly those of children. The Russian government is aggressively working to reconnect youngsters with their relatives and is offering targeted medical and humanitarian assistance to children, including psychological rehabilitation.

In summary, the way in which the media depicts the evacuation of children during the Russian-Ukrainian conflict captures the nuanced dynamics and contrasting viewpoints that are present. "TASS" refutes Western criticism of forced displacements by highlighting Russia's attempts to safeguard and reunite children with their families through its coverage. It's crucial to remember, though, that Russia uses propaganda techniques, frequently presenting false material and rephrasing narratives. For example, it may refer to evacuations as humanitarian actions rather than deportations. Russia aims to advance its own agenda and mold public perception by manipulating vocabulary and storylines. This underscores the importance of critically analyzing media depictions during times of war.

⁹³ Захарова назвала ложью обвинения Украины в насильственном вывозе Россией детей из Донбасса. ТАСС. TASS (2022). Available at: <https://tass.ru/politika/15031501>.

CONCLUSIONS

1. After detailed overview of constructivism it was revealed that the major concepts are norms, identities and language. Human rights appeared to have direct connection to constructivist approach. Human rights are dynamic constructs which evolve through dialogues, adaptations among various societies. By connecting with the human rights ideology, constructivism presents a comprehensive perspective for understanding the connections between society ideals and the idea of rights. This broader approach highlights that human rights are not just static legal standards, instead, they are dynamic representations of social interactions, norms and identities. Comprehending this dynamic character of human rights norms and their cultural contexts is imperative for effective advocacy and intervention endeavors. So constructivism offers a complex framework for understanding the evolving nature of human rights and the various mechanisms and justifications for its social importance.

2. After the examination of international legal frameworks and mechanisms that protect the children's rights in war times, it was noted that despite the existence of comprehensive international legislation, like various treaties and conventions, there are still gaps in the effective application and enforcement of children's rights during armed conflicts. The analysis emphasizes how crucial it is to improve accountability systems and work together to safeguard the rights of minors, particularly when massive violations, such as deportation, occur. However international legal frameworks offer a strong basis for safeguarding children's rights, their effectiveness is reliant on strong enforcement mechanisms and coordinated efforts by the global community. Moreover, the analysis of the rights of child in the cases of abduction and deportation brings to light the difficulties and vulnerabilities that children during war must contend with. So it should be mentioned that despite the strong international legal protection framework for the children's rights, coordinated efforts are needed to ensure the well-being of children during the times of war.

3. The analysis of documented cases and reports on children's rights abuses during Russia's war in Ukraine was presented. It reveals a range of human rights abuses (rapes, murders and mutilations, deportations) committed by Russia against children in Ukraine. All these crimes could be categorized into several groups, all of which constitute grave violations of international humanitarian law designed to uphold children's rights in times of war. The Russian military's actions have caused massive suffering for innocent children, ranging from the use of illegal weapons and intentional destruction of civilian infrastructure to creating humanitarian disasters through food shortages and preventing access to healthcare. Moreover, reports of numerous murders and mutilations, sexual violence, recruitment of children for military purposes emphasize how extensive these violations are. Among these various crimes perpetrated against children in Ukraine, the issue of deportation stands

out as an especially severe violation of their rights and dignity. It is essential to identify and record all these abuses against children to hold the perpetrators accountable and guarantee that the victims' voices are heard. It can be implemented only through concerted efforts of international governments and communities.

4. A comparison of how the problem of children's deportations during Russian-Ukrainian war is portrayed both in Russian and Ukrainian media outlets was provided. It offers insights into the narratives and perspectives presented by Ukrainian and Russian media. "Ukrinform", a prominent Ukrainian media outlet, has repeatedly highlighted the suffering of deported children, emphasizing the difficulties in measuring and classifying their experiences as well as the scope of Russia's state-sponsored efforts to remove them forcibly from homes. The importance of moral and responsible journalism in promoting the rights and welfare of vulnerable Ukrainian children is demonstrated by the media's involvement in bringing attention to these tragedies and generating support from around the world. "TASS", biggest and oldest Russian media outlet, in contrast, has presented a totally different narrative, framing deportations as "evacuations" and humanitarian measures to protect the children. But these narratives are full of propaganda tactics designed to manipulate public perception. So the comparison of Russian and Ukrainian media underscores the larger geopolitical tensions and power dynamics during Russian-Ukrainian war. It shows us the need for transparent and ethical journalism to stand for the voices of everyone.

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