



Indoctrination and Militarization of Ukrainian Children by the Russian Federation: An Analysis under International Law

Interim Report

International Criminal Justice Initiative

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Glossary

Acronym	Full term
ACA	Atrocity Crimes Advisory Group for Ukraine
BKB	Bring Kids Back UA
CERD	International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination
CICED	Core International Crimes Evidence Database
CRC	Convention on the Rights of the Child
ECtHR	European Court of Human Rights
GC IV	Fourth Geneva Convention (Geneva Convention Relative to the Protection of Civilian Persons in Time of War)
GULC	Georgetown University Law Center
ICC	International Criminal Court
ICCPR	International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights
ICESCR	International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights
ICJ	International Court of Justice
ICJI	International Criminal Justice Initiative
ICL	International criminal law
ICRC	International Committee of the Red Cross
ICTY	International Criminal Tribunal for the former Yugoslavia
IHL	International humanitarian law
IHRL	International human rights law
IIM	International, Impartial and Independent Mechanism for Syria
OHCHR	Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights
OPG	Office of the Prosecutor General of Ukraine
OSCE	Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe
RCHR	Regional Center for Human Rights
SMO	“Special Military Operation”
UAV	Unmanned aerial vehicle
UN	United Nations
UNGA	United Nations General Assembly
USD	United States dollar

Executive Summary

1. The Russian Federation's policy to systematically indoctrinate and militarize Ukrainian children under its control presents a myriad of factual and legal issues that the International Criminal Justice Initiative (ICJI) of Georgetown University Law Center (GULC) has recently begun to examine. This interim report reflects our analysis up to July 2026 and will be followed by a final report when we complete our work. Four questions are reserved for the final report: the harm caused to affected children; the framework for assessing individual criminal responsibility, including categories of potentially responsible actors and applicable modes of liability; the application of specific offense provisions to particular practices; and the evidentiary standards required to establish the systematic character of the conduct. Each requires evidence that was not available at the time of this interim report and has been identified among the priorities for investigation.
2. Since 2014, Russian Federation authorities have pursued a coordinated policy in the occupied territories of Ukraine directed at erasing Ukrainian identity and replacing it with Russian. The policy accelerated after the full-scale invasion in February 2022. It operates through connected measures: forcible transfer and deportation, the imposition of Russian citizenship, the replacement of Ukrainian law and State institutions, the substitution of the school curriculum, and interference with family life and allegiance to Ukraine. Within that policy sit two distinct practices, indoctrination and militarization. This report is predominantly directed at militarization, and at those aspects of indoctrination that bear directly upon it.
3. Approximately 1.6 million children in the occupied territories are exposed to State-directed indoctrination and militarization, of whom at least 582,600 are of school age. More than 20,000 Ukrainian children have been deported or forcibly transferred to the Russian Federation and to the occupied territories. The practices encompass changes to curricula, citizenship, and identity; military-patriotic education and youth organizations; camps and military training; and pathways toward recruitment, enlistment, and conscription.
4. For purposes of this report, indoctrination means ideological and educational measures directed at shaping or reshaping children's political, historical, cultural, or national beliefs and allegiance. Militarization means a deliberate process through which children are subjected to measures that normalize or valorize military service, or that build military-oriented attitudes, skills, institutional connections, or pathways toward future service. The two are distinct but overlapping. Neither is itself an international offense: the legal significance of each lies in its constituent acts and the rules those acts engage.
5. The assessment draws principally on international findings concerning systematic practices of indoctrination and militarization, Russian Federation legislative and regulatory instruments, and independent documentation, and is structured around the applicable legal requirements and elements. The report was developed by the ICJI at GULC, an implementing entity of the Atrocity Crimes Advisory Group for Ukraine, at the request of the Bring Kids Back UA initiative of the President of Ukraine. Its proposed measures are directed at supporting and continuing the efforts already undertaken by the Office of the Prosecutor General of Ukraine (OPG), as well as to support wider accountability, monitoring, and policy efforts.
6. The analysis focuses on measures imposed by an occupying power on children in occupied territory concerning nationality, indoctrination, and militarization, including their potential

integration into armed forces or affiliated military or paramilitary structures. Each body of law addresses the conduct from a different perspective, and each requires different facts and legal elements for a violation to be established.

7. The law of occupation is the primary framework governing this conduct. It applies by reason of the occupation itself, it binds the occupying power irrespective of any change to the status of the territory, and its obligations are owed directly to the children concerned as protected persons. The Russian Federation's effective control over occupied Ukrainian territory establishes it as an occupying power and triggers the corresponding obligations without conferring sovereignty. Purported annexation and the imposition of Russian citizenship do not displace those obligations or deprive protected persons of occupation-law safeguards. The documented practices breach, and in several respects continue to breach, the Russian Federation's obligations toward Ukrainian children living under its occupation.
8. The practices engage specific prohibitions, not only the general obligations of an occupying power. Replacing the Ukrainian education system, restricting Ukrainian-language instruction, and substituting curricula directed at displacing Ukrainian identity engage the duty to respect the laws in force in occupied territory, and the duty to facilitate the proper working of institutions devoted to the care and education of children. Introducing military instruction into the school curriculum, and encouraging entry into the armed forces of the occupying power, engage the prohibition on pressure or propaganda aimed at securing voluntary enlistment. That prohibition applies whether or not enlistment follows. Enrolling children in State-directed youth movements and cadet structures engages the prohibition on enlisting children in formations or organizations subordinate to the occupying power. That prohibition admits of no exception.
9. Under international human rights law (IHRL), including child rights, legislative and administrative measures affecting children may themselves form the subject of legal assessment, and international courts and treaty bodies have already reached findings concerning the Russian Federation's practices in occupied Ukrainian territory. The Committee on the Rights of the Child has called for an end to the politicization and militarization of schools. The European Court of Human Rights (ECtHR) has established administrative practices of suppressing Ukrainian-language teaching and of indoctrination in education. The International Court of Justice (ICJ) found that the Russian Federation violated the International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination (CERD) through the manner in which it implemented Ukrainian-language school education in Crimea. These measures also engage the rights of children belonging to national and linguistic minorities, who are entitled to enjoy their own culture and to use their own language. Where the education system is replaced, instruction in the child's own language restricted, and participation in the cultural life of the child's own community displaced, those protections are engaged alongside the general provisions concerning education and identity.
10. Not every prohibition engaged by these practices is a war crime. Only two are: recruiting children into armed forces and compelling protected persons to serve in the forces of a hostile power. The second requires that militarization result in enlistment. Militarization does not, however, require subsequent military service. The measures described engage obligations by reason of their character and imposition, irrespective of whether enlistment follows. The remaining conduct is not reached by those provisions taken individually and falls to be assessed cumulatively. Although existing proceedings address the deportation and forcible transfer of Ukrainian children,

other documented conduct—education policies, youth organizations, military-patriotic programming, training, and citizenship and identity measures—remains largely outside existing criminal charges. These practices provide a substantial basis for serious and comprehensive investigation directed at establishing the elements of specific offenses, particularly as acts of persecution. Persecution on national grounds, as an underlying offense of crimes against humanity, provides the framework best able to capture the conduct cumulatively and in context, rather than as a series of isolated measures, and accordingly warrants particular investigative attention.

11. The documentation assembled to date was produced largely for monitoring and advocacy purposes, and without physical access to occupied territory. Converting material of that character into evidence capable of supporting criminal proceedings is a distinct exercise. It requires resources, access, and coordination commensurate with the scale of the conduct. This report identifies the elements of several international crimes that would need to be established with credible, reliable evidence.
12. The report's principal contribution is operational. It treats the militarization and indoctrination of Ukrainian children as an interconnected sequence: education and identity are reshaped, children are integrated into institutions subordinate to the occupying authority, military participation is normalized, and pathways toward recruitment or conscription are created. Disaggregating that system into legally cognizable conduct identifies the applicable rules, the facts to be proved, the evidence required, and the institutions and actors responsible. The resulting framework can support investigation and prosecution, evidence preservation, monitoring and prevention, return and reintegration, and remedies for affected children.
13. No single authority can undertake what is required. The report accordingly calls for collective action by Ukrainian investigative and prosecutorial authorities, by States and international partners, by international accountability mechanisms, and by civil society and documenting organizations, whose work forms much of the record set out here. The recommendations set out in this report identify what each is placed to do.
14. The report finds that the documented practices breach the obligations of the Russian Federation under the law of occupation and under IHRL, and that international courts and treaty bodies have already made findings to that effect in respect of education, language, identity, and the transfer of children. It finds that the same conduct provides a substantial basis for investigation directed at establishing the elements of international crimes, and that persecution on national grounds is the characterization best suited to that conduct. It finds that the evidence presently available was assembled for monitoring and advocacy rather than for adjudication, and that what is required is not further legal analysis but documentation and investigation directed at the elements identified in this report.

I. Recommendations

15. The recommendations below follow from the legal assessment of the documented practices and from the evidentiary requirements identified in the course of it. They are addressed in turn to Ukrainian authorities, to international partners and States, to the United Nations (UN) and regional bodies, to courts and prosecution authorities, and to those concerned with reparation and with the return and restoration of identity of affected children.

A coordinated documentation effort

16. The scale of the conduct, the absence of access to occupied territory, and the evidentiary requirements of criminal proceedings place the necessary documentation beyond the capacity of any single authority. A coordinated effort offers the most realistic prospect of assembling a record capable of supporting proceedings, involving the OPG as the principal investigative and prosecutorial authority; international organizations with relevant mandates, including the Independent International Commission of Inquiry (the Commission), the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR), and the International Commission on Missing Persons in respect of identification; the joint investigation team and the Core International Crimes Evidence Database (CICED) as established channels for preservation and transmission; and the Ukrainian civil society organizations whose documentation forms much of the record set out in this report.
17. Civil society organizations, national and international, should be recognized as participants in that effort rather than as sources to be drawn upon. Their contribution is not confined to material already gathered: they hold the institutional memory of how the practices developed, direct contact with affected families and returned children, and the language and regional expertise on which further collection depends. Arrangements for their participation would benefit from being placed on a more formal footing, including agreed protocols on provenance and handover, access to preservation infrastructure, protection for those undertaking the work, and sustained rather than short-term project funding. Where documentation is transferred for use in proceedings, the interests of the organizations that gathered it and of the individuals who provided information to them, require protection.
18. Material gathered for monitoring, advocacy, and documentation purposes may require supplementation to meet evidentiary standards, with attention to provenance, verification, and chain of custody. The requirements of the forums most likely to act should be established while collection is under way, since deficiencies of this kind are difficult to cure afterwards.
19. Collection could usefully give priority to the instruments themselves—citizenship and guardianship decrees, curriculum and educational standards orders, the founding documents and funding of youth organizations, and the records of registration and placement—which establish policy, identify the institutions responsible, and are obtainable without access to occupied territory. Files organized by the elements to be proved are more readily transferable than chronological compilations.

Ukrainian investigative and prosecutorial authorities

20. Investigation should be directed at establishing the elements of the international prohibitions engaged by each practice, and at identifying the institutional structures through which those practices are implemented — lines of authority, funding, and decision-making — together with the functions held by identified officials within them. Assessment of individual responsibility, including the applicable modes of liability, depends on that identification and on evidence of the mental element, and is properly undertaken once such evidence is available. The framework applicable will differ according to the forum in which proceedings are brought, and the temporal limitation on command responsibility under the Criminal Code of Ukraine should be borne in mind in respect of conduct before October 24, 2024.

21. War crimes reports, criminal proceedings, and investigative files relating to aspects of indoctrination and militarization form part of the wider documentation and consolidation effort described in this report. As part of that effort, such material should be mapped, systematized, analyzed, and aggregated together with the documented practices set out here, and assessed against the elements identified in this report. Consolidation of that kind would indicate which elements the existing material supports, which it supports in part, and where further collection should be directed. It would also indicate which files are capable of transmission to other jurisdictions and which require supplementation to meet evidentiary standards.

Options for international partners

22. States in a position to assist may contribute in several distinct respects, corresponding to the requirements identified in this report.
23. On documentation and evidence, support for the joint investigation team coordinated through Eurojust and for CIED, including funding, secondment of investigators, and technical assistance in open-source investigation, forensic identification, and child-sensitive interviewing.
24. On cooperation, facilitation of evidence-sharing and mutual legal assistance, and ratification of the Ljubljana–The Hague Convention where this has not yet occurred.
25. On proceedings, support for investigations and prosecutions under universal or other forms of extraterritorial jurisdiction, and support for engagement with international criminal justice mechanisms.
26. On preventive measures, the adoption of targeted restrictive measures against individuals and entities involved in the practices described, which reach the administrative and operational level and do not require judicial proceedings.
27. On institutional capacity, support for the identification of children, for the establishment of genetic identification capability in advance of returns, and for the preservation of documentation to evidentiary standards.
28. On the questions identified for the final report, support for research into the long-term consequences of these practices for affected children, and for documentation of the institutional structures through which they are implemented.

The General Assembly and United Nations bodies

29. The consolidation of the record should proceed while existing mandates subsist, the discontinuation of mandated fact-finding in other situations indicating that the present set of mandates cannot be assumed to be permanent.
30. The bodies performing this work should be adequately and predictably resourced, and States in a position to do so are encouraged to provide financial, technical, and secondment support, including expertise in open-source investigation, forensic genetics, and child-sensitive interviewing.
31. The Commission's existing mandate already extends to all alleged violations and abuses of human rights, violations of international humanitarian law (IHL), and related crimes in the context of the Russian Federation's aggression against Ukraine, and includes the collection, consolidation, analysis, and preservation of evidence for future legal proceedings. Militarization and indoctrination could therefore be given specific attention within that mandate. Consideration might further be given to providing the Commission with additional capacity, or establishing a complementary mechanism, for the preparation of case files for use by national, regional, and

international jurisdictions, on the model of the mechanism established for the Syrian Arab Republic.¹

32. Recruitment and use of children is already one of the grave violations monitored under the Monitoring and Reporting Mechanism and a trigger for listing parties to conflict. Continued monitoring should assess whether the evidence satisfies the applicable criteria for listing the Russian armed forces for recruitment and use; no new mandate is required for that purpose. The Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Children and Armed Conflict is encouraged to pursue engagement directed at that conduct. Treaty body follow-up should be maintained, in particular in respect of the recommendations of the Committee on the Rights of the Child. Follow-up should address expressly the position of children belonging to national and linguistic minorities, since the measures examined in this report engage those protections in addition to the general provisions concerning education and identity.

Council of Europe

33. The supervision of execution should encompass the findings concerning children. The Committee of Ministers exercises that function in respect of judgments establishing administrative practices of suppressing the Ukrainian language in schools, of indoctrination in education, and of transferring children and facilitating their adoption, and those findings warrant distinct treatment rather than absorption into the general supervision of the inter-State cases. Continued attention by the Parliamentary Assembly and by the Commissioner for Human Rights would assist, as would the inclusion of these matters within Council of Europe cooperation programs with Ukraine, and support from member States for the Register of Damage and for the International Claims Commission once operational. The monitoring bodies established under the Framework Convention for the Protection of National Minorities and the European Charter for Regional or Minority Languages may also be invited to consider the position of Ukrainian children in the occupied territories.²

European Union bodies

34. Consideration might be given to a dedicated coordinating structure for crimes affecting children, on the precedent of the International Centre for the Prosecution of the Crime of Aggression. Continued support for the joint investigation team coordinated through Eurojust and for CISED, together with the extension of technical assistance to the OPG, would address the documentation requirements identified in this report. Member States may also apply targeted restrictive measures against individuals and entities involved in the practices described, which reach the administrative and operational level and require no judicial proceedings.

¹ International, Impartial and Independent Mechanism to Assist in the Investigation and Prosecution of Persons Responsible for the Most Serious Crimes under International Law Committed in the Syrian Arab Republic since March 2011, established by UN General Assembly resolution 71/248 of 21 December 2016, iiim.un.org [hereinafter IIIM].

² Convention for the Protection of Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms, Article 46(2), https://www.echr.coe.int/documents/d/echr/convention_ENG, under which final judgments are transmitted to the Committee of Ministers for supervision of their execution. The Russian Federation ceased to be a Party to the Convention on 16 September 2022; the obligation to abide by judgments in respect of acts occurring before that date is unaffected.

International courts and prosecution authorities

35. The existing fora may be used more fully as the evidentiary record develops. The conduct examined in this report extends beyond the provisions on which existing charges rest, and the Office of the Prosecutor's Policy on Children provides the applicable framework for evidence obtained from children.³ Coordination among jurisdictions exercising universal jurisdiction should be strengthened, and States are encouraged to ratify the Ljubljana–The Hague Convention with a view to reducing cooperation difficulties.⁴ As the evidentiary record develops, each practice should be assessed against the elements of every candidate provision rather than against a single characterization. The conduct examined here may satisfy the elements of specific war crimes, contribute to persecution as a crime against humanity, or both.

Reparation and remedy

36. Provision should expressly be made for harms relating to identity, education, and development while the claims categories remain open, and consideration should be given to the temporal scope of the compensation mechanism so as not to exclude children affected from 2014.⁵ The methodology adopted in *Armed Activities* merits consideration, namely that uncertainty as to aggregate numbers need not preclude an award. Establishing the categories of harm for which reparation may be sought requires documentation in identified cases. That documentation should address the long-term psychological, social, developmental, and educational consequences of these practices; the harm arising from the erosion or transformation of Ukrainian national identity, including the severance of family, community, and linguistic ties; and, where they have materialized, the consequences of the conduct examined here, including conscription into the armed forces of the occupying power, participation in hostilities, injury, death, and capture.

³ ICC Office of the Prosecutor, *Policy on Children*, December 2023, [icc-cpi.int](https://www.icc-cpi.int/sites/default/files/2024-05/Rome-Statute-eng.pdf); Rome Statute of the ICC, 17 July 1998, Articles 6(e) and 8(2)(b)(xxvi), <https://www.icc-cpi.int/sites/default/files/2024-05/Rome-Statute-eng.pdf> [hereinafter Rome Statute]; ICC, *Elements of Crimes*, Article 7(1)(h), <https://www.icc-cpi.int/sites/default/files/ElementsOfCrimesEng.pdf>. In *Prosecutor v. Bosco Ntaganda*, Trial Chamber VI held that, in determining whether conduct results in the severe deprivation of fundamental rights required for persecution, acts should be examined “in their context and with consideration of their cumulative effect” to determine whether, alone or together with other acts, they amount to a gross or blatant denial of fundamental rights. ICC, *Prosecutor v. Bosco Ntaganda*, 8 July 2019, ICC-01/04-02/06-2359, Judgment, Trial Chamber VI, para 992, https://www.icc-cpi.int/sites/default/files/CourtRecords/CR2019_03568.PDF. Accordingly, for purposes of this report, measures concerning education, identity, citizenship, language, youth programming, and military preparation may be examined cumulatively, rather than as legally isolated acts, where the evidence supports a connected course of conduct involving the intentional and severe deprivation of fundamental rights on discriminatory grounds. The underlying policies, institutional relationships, and modes of contribution should therefore be investigated together.

⁴ Convention on International Cooperation in the Investigation and Prosecution of the Crime of Genocide, Crimes against Humanity, War Crimes and other International Crimes (Ljubljana–The Hague Convention), opened for signature at Ljubljana on 14 February 2024.

⁵ Register of Damage for Ukraine, <https://rd4u.coe.int/>; Convention establishing an International Claims Commission for Ukraine, <https://www.coe.int/en/web/portal/convention-establishing-an-international-claims-commission-for-ukraine>. Opened for signature 16 December 2025, providing for temporal jurisdiction from 24 February 2022 with express provision for later amendment extending it to 20 February 2014.

Evidence of this kind bears not only on reparation but on the severity element of persecution and on the gravity of the conduct.

Return and the restoration of identity

37. Capability for identity restoration should be established in advance of returns becoming possible, on the Argentine model, including a genetic identification capability and a designated body empowered to act, supported by international technical assistance. The administrative pathway for each child, comprising the instrument relied upon, the institution involved, the placement decision, and any alteration of identity documents, should be recorded alongside the information required for return, so that a single record serves both reunification and accountability. Coordination between accountability and return processes should be strengthened, including through the International Coalition for the Return of Ukrainian Children.⁶ Provision should be made for the assessment and treatment of the consequences of indoctrination and militarization in children who have been returned, and for their reintegration into Ukrainian education. Children returned from these structures will require support directed at the restoration of language, culture, and identity, and not solely at the restoration of civil-status records. Their circumstances are also the principal available source of evidence as to the effects of the practices examined in this report, and documentation should be undertaken with that in mind, subject to the safeguards that apply to evidence obtained from children.

States acting individually

38. Dossiers may be prepared in support of targeted measures. Restrictive measures have already been adopted in respect of indoctrination and militarized education, they reach the administrative and operational level, and they do not require judicial proceedings, which may lend them a preventive as well as a responsive function.⁷

II. Introduction

Scope and purpose

39. This report examines the militarization of Ukrainian children in the territories of Ukraine occupied by the Russian Federation, together with those aspects of indoctrination that bear directly upon it and assesses that conduct against the law of occupation and other applicable rules of IHL, IHRL, and international criminal law (ICL). Measures directed at the alteration of Ukrainian identity more broadly, and at the denial of Ukraine as an independent State or of Ukrainians as a distinct nation, are addressed as context rather than examined in depth. It covers developments from February 2014 to July 2026. As the process remains ongoing, subsequent legislative, policy, and curricular changes are not reflected.

⁶ International Coalition for the Return of Ukrainian Children, established in 2024 and co-chaired by Ukraine and Canada. *See also* UN General Assembly, *Resolution ES-11/9: Return of Ukrainian Children*, 3 December 2025, docs.un.org. The resolution was adopted by 91 votes to 12 with 57 abstentions.

⁷ Council of the European Union, *Ukrainian children unlawfully deported and forcibly transferred to Russia: EU sanctions 16 individuals and seven entities*, 11 May 2026, consilium.europa.eu.

40. Measures concerning nationality, personal status, and identity are assessed alongside indoctrination and militarization because they operate as a single system. The conferral of Russian citizenship establishes the legal basis on which conscription is subsequently imposed; the substitution of the curriculum and the restriction of Ukrainian-language instruction supply its ideological content; and enrollment in youth structures provides the institutional pathway between them. Each measure derives part of its significance from the others, and the report accordingly assesses them together rather than in isolation.
41. The six practices identified in the original request—militarized education, ideological indoctrination, military-patriotic upbringing, military training, recruitment, and integration into military structures—are assessed within the categories used in the assessment section. Militarized education and ideological indoctrination are addressed under education and curriculum; military-patriotic upbringing and integration into military structures under youth organizations and cadet structures; military training under training, camps, and clubs; and recruitment under the conscription pathway, together with measures concerning nationality and personal status, which are assessed separately.
42. The report is intended to serve three purposes: to consolidate the documented record in a form usable by investigative and prosecutorial authorities; to identify the legal rules engaged by each category of conduct and the facts that would have to be proved to establish a violation of each; and to identify where further documentation and evidence-gathering are required.
43. The report does not attribute individual criminal responsibility and does not address modes of liability. Those questions require a separate analysis of the elements of the relevant offense, the conduct and mental state of identified individuals, and the applicable legal framework in the forum in which proceedings are brought.

Methodology and evidentiary basis

44. The record relied on in this report consists of four classes of material, which differ in what they are capable of establishing.
45. The first comprises primary instruments of the Russian Federation and of the occupation authorities: federal laws, presidential decrees, government orders, ministerial letters, budget allocations, and the founding documents of State-sponsored organizations. Where obtained from official sources, these materials provide direct evidence of the existence, content, formal adoption or endorsement, and character of the measures described. Considered cumulatively, this body of evidence provides compelling direct evidence of the official policies underlying the practices described herein.
46. The second comprises documentation produced by Ukrainian institutions and civil society organizations, in particular the Ukrainian Parliament Commissioner for Human Rights, the Center for Civic Education "Almenda," and the Regional Center for Human Rights (RCHR). Much of this material was prepared for monitoring, documentation, and advocacy purposes rather than for adjudication. Aggregate figures drawn from it are therefore attributed to their source and are not presented as independently verified by this report.
47. The third comprises reports of mandated international bodies, principally the 2026 Moscow Mechanism Report of the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE) and reports of the OHCHR. Both the Moscow Mechanism mission and OHCHR apply a reasonable-grounds-to-believe standard to the relevant findings relied on in this report. Neither

had access to the occupied territories for independent on-site monitoring and reporting. The Moscow Mechanism mission expressly declined to address individual criminal responsibility, on the ground that the subjective element would require examination beyond the scope of a short-term mission.

48. The fourth comprises open-source material, including official and State-aligned social media accounts, occupation and Russian regional media, and analytical reporting. This material is used to corroborate the existence and character of specific practices and is archived where possible.
49. Material in the first three categories may support findings that conduct attributable to the Russian Federation as a State constitutes a breach of its obligations under the law of occupation and IHRL. The same material may also be relevant to an assessment under ICL, but individual criminal responsibility requires further inquiries: whether identified conduct satisfies the factual elements of a specific international crime (*actus reus*) and whether that crime can be attributed to an identified individual acting with the specific mental requirement (*mens rea*). That distinction is maintained throughout the assessment.

III. Terminology

50. As noted in the Executive Summary, neither “indoctrination” nor “militarization of children” is used in this report as the name of a discrete international offense. Each is used as a descriptive and analytical term. The characterization of conduct as indoctrination or militarization does not, by itself, establish that the conduct is unlawful or criminal.
51. **Indoctrination** refers to ideological and educational measures directed at shaping or reshaping children’s political, historical, cultural, or national beliefs and allegiance, including through curricula, historical narratives, language policy, propaganda, symbols, and other forms of State-directed instruction.⁸ In assessing such measures under IHRL, the report draws on the jurisprudence of the ECtHR, under which a State exercising functions in relation to education and teaching must ensure that information or knowledge included in the curriculum is conveyed in an objective, critical, and pluralistic manner, and may not pursue an aim of indoctrination that fails to respect parents’ religious and philosophical convictions.⁹ The ECtHR has applied that principle directly to occupied Ukraine, finding that teaching which advanced the occupying power’s narrative pursued an aim of indoctrination contrary to the convictions of Ukrainian parents.¹⁰

⁸ Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE) Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights, *Report on Violations and Abuses of International Humanitarian, Human Rights and Criminal Law related to Militarization and Indoctrination of Ukrainian Children by the Russian Federation*, ODIHR.GAL/34/26/Corr.1, 9 July 2026, pp. 26–33, 59–69, 120–21, https://odihr.osce.org/sites/default/files/documents/official_documents/2026/07/odgal0034c1%20ODIHR%20NV%20201-2026%20with%20MM%20Report.pdf [hereinafter *Moscow Mechanism Report*].

⁹ European Court of Human Rights (Chamber), *Kjeldsen, Busk Madsen and Pedersen v. Denmark*, App nos. 5095/71, 5920/72, and 5926/72, 7 December 1976, para. 53, <https://hudoc.echr.coe.int/eng?i=001-57509>.

¹⁰ European Court of Human Rights, *Ukraine and the Netherlands v. Russia*, App. nos. 8019/16, 43800/14, 28525/20, and 11055/22, 9 July 2025, paras. 1494–97, p. 449, <https://hudoc.echr.coe.int/eng#%7B%22itemid%22%3A%22001-244292%22%7D>. The Court treated suppression of Ukrainian-language education and indoctrination in education as related but distinct practices, finding a pattern or

52. **Militarization of children** means a deliberate process through which children are subjected to ideological, educational, organizational, or practical measures that (i) normalize or valorize military service, armed conflict, or support for armed forces; or (ii) develop military-oriented attitudes, knowledge, skills, institutional connections, or pathways that prepare or orient children toward future military service or other military involvement.¹¹ This is a conduct-based definition and does not itself determine the legality or criminal characterization of the practices identified. The term "enlistment" is used in this report in the sense given to it by Article 50(2) of the Fourth Geneva Convention (GC IV) of 1949, which prohibits the enlistment of children in formations or organizations subordinate to the occupying power. It is broader than recruitment or conscription in the sense of formal incorporation into armed forces. Where this report refers to recruitment or conscription, it does so in that narrower sense.
53. The two are distinct but capable of overlapping and of operating in conjunction, contributing to the broader policy pursued by the Russian Federation in the occupied territories of Ukraine and directed at the assimilation of Ukrainians, and of children in particular, in violation of international law. That policy comprises a system of connected measures, among them forcible transfer and deportation, the alteration of identity through the imposition of Russian citizenship, and the replacement of the Ukrainian legal regime, State institutions, education curriculum, and cultural sphere with Russian equivalents, leaving the population of the occupied territories no alternative but to engage and integrate with them.

Analytical elements

54. In assessing whether conduct constitutes militarization for purposes of this report, the foregoing sources support an analytical framework comprising two elements: a conduct element, requiring that a child be subjected to one or more military-oriented ideological, educational, organizational, or practical measures; and a military nexus element, requiring that, viewed objectively and in context, the conduct has a specifically military character or be directed toward military socialization, preparation, integration, or future military involvement.¹² In the context of occupied territory, that nexus is particularly evident where such measures orient protected children toward service in, support for, or integration into the armed forces or affiliated structures of the

system of the former between 11 May 2014 and 16 September 2022 and of the latter between 24 February and 16 September 2022, *see* paras. 1495, 1497.

¹¹ Existing documentation reflects both the ideological and practical dimensions incorporated into this definition. The Center for Civic Education “Almenda” describes militarization as a systematic set of deliberate measures aimed at developing children’s mental and practical readiness to serve in the Armed Forces of the Russian Federation and participate in hostilities on its behalf, including by presenting military service as a civic duty and developing the practical skills necessary for it. Center for Civic Education “Almenda,” *The Russian System of Destroying the Identity of Children in the Temporary Occupied Territories (TOT)*, 6 April 2023, section “Militarization,” <https://almenda.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/04/THE-RUSSIAN-SYSTEM-OF-DESTROYING-THE-IDENTITY-OF-CHILDREN-IN-THE-TOT-3.pdf>. *See also* OSCE, Moscow Mechanism Report, *supra* note 8, at 51–52, documenting militarization through school curricula, extracurricular activities, military-patriotic organizations, camps, and other State and State-aligned structures and describing the resulting system in occupied Ukrainian territory as “a pipeline toward eventual service—conscripted or contracted—in the Russian armed forces.” These sources reflect the cumulative relationship between ideological or attitudinal preparation and practical or institutional preparation.

¹² OSCE, Moscow Mechanism Report, *supra* note 8, at 26–52, 59–75; on the legislative and institutional architecture of military-patriotic youth policy and structures in particular, pp. 59–73.

occupying power, including potential participation in hostilities against Ukraine. The military nexus requirement gives effect to the purposive character of militarization and distinguishes deliberate military-oriented measures from incidental exposure to military subject matter.¹³ These are analytical elements for purposes of this report and do not constitute elements of an international offense.

55. The military nexus may be assessed from the content, design, stated or apparent purpose, and context of the measure, including its relationship to armed forces, auxiliary forces, or security institutions; the involvement of military personnel; the provision of military or pre-military skills; incentives or pathways toward military education or service; and the institutional structures through which the measure is implemented. No single factor is determinative, and the relevant purpose may be inferred from the measure's objective characteristics and surrounding circumstances.
56. The conduct element may be established through one or more of the following non-exclusive forms:
- *Military-oriented ideological socialization*: presenting military service, participation in armed conflict, or support for armed forces as desirable, honorable, patriotic, or a civic obligation, including through curricula, propaganda, commemorative practices, symbols, narratives, or interaction with military personnel.
 - *Military-patriotic organization and institutional affiliation*: incorporating children into military-patriotic, cadet, paramilitary, or other youth structures that establish sustained institutional connections between children and armed forces, security services, or affiliated organizations.
 - *Practical military or pre-military preparation*: providing instruction or experience in activities associated with military service or combat, including military drill, weapons handling, tactical exercises, battlefield medicine, unmanned aerial vehicle (UAV) operation, survival skills, or analogous training.
 - *Orientation toward future military service or participation*: encouraging, incentivizing, channeling, or otherwise preparing children for subsequent entry into military academies, armed or auxiliary forces, military-related occupations, recruitment systems, or participation in hostilities.
57. These forms may occur separately or cumulatively and may overlap. Militarization need not culminate in recruitment, conscription, enlistment, or participation in hostilities; the relevant inquiry is whether the conduct, viewed in context, satisfies the conduct and military nexus elements identified above.
58. Similar forms of military education or socialization exist in other States, including programs directed at a State's own nationals. The existence of comparable practices does not resolve the legal inquiry. The legal significance of the practices identified in this report depends on the applicable rules and the factual context in which they occur. In occupied Ukraine, they must be assessed in light of the rules governing an occupying power's treatment of protected persons and in the context of measures affecting Ukrainian identity, allegiance, education, and assimilation.

¹³ *Id.* at 4, 51–52, 59–75; Center for Civic Education “Almenda,” *The Russian System of Destroying the Identity of Children in the TOT*, 6 April 2023, section “Militarization.”

IV. The Factual Record

Context

59. Since 27 February 2014, the Russian Federation has exercised effective control over Crimea.¹⁴ On 18 March 2014, the Russian Federation signed a “treaty” purporting to incorporate Crimea into the Russian Federation,¹⁵ and in May 2014 extended the Russian education system to the occupied peninsula.¹⁶ In 2014, the Russian Federation also established effective control over parts of Donetsk and Luhansk regions, where education and youth policy were progressively brought into alignment with Russian systems and priorities.¹⁷
60. Following the full-scale invasion launched on 24 February 2022, the Russian Federation occupied additional territories of Ukraine, including parts of Kherson and Zaporizhzhia regions. In September 2022, the Russian Federation purported to incorporate the occupied Donetsk, Luhansk, Zaporizhzhia and Kherson regions into the Russian Federation,¹⁸ and in February 2023 formally legislated the integration of the Russian education system into these occupied territories through Federal Law No. 19-FZ.¹⁹
61. The period covered by this report is not legally uniform. The Russian Federation ceased to be a High Contracting Party to the European Convention on Human Rights on 16 September 2022, although the ECtHR retains competence in respect of acts or omissions capable of constituting Convention violations that occurred up to that date.²⁰ The international compensation mechanism presently being established has a temporal scope beginning on 24 February 2022, and the existing

¹⁴ European Court of Human Rights (Grand Chamber), *Ukraine v. Russia (re Crimea)*, Applications nos. 20958/14 and 38334/18, Judgment, para. 1217, 25 June 2024, <https://hudoc.echr.coe.int/eng?i=001-235139>.

¹⁵ President of Russia, *Agreement between the Russian Federation and the Republic of Crimea on the Admission of the Republic of Crimea to the Russian Federation and the Formation of New Subjects within the Russian Federation*, 18 March 2014, <http://kremlin.ru/events/president/news/20605>.

¹⁶ President of Russia, *Law on the Integration of the Education Systems of Crimea and Sevastopol into the Educational Space of the Russian Federation*, 5 May 2014, <http://kremlin.ru/events/president/news/20913>.

¹⁷ European Court of Human Rights, *Ukraine and the Netherlands v. Russia*, *supra* note 10, at paras. 694–97; Ukrainian Helsinki Human Rights Union, *Educational Field in the Temporarily Occupied Territories of Ukraine* (2014–2019), 2020, https://helsinki.org.ua/wp-content/uploads/2021/02/Osvita_02.pdf.

¹⁸ President of Russia, *Signing of Treaties on Accession of Donetsk and Luhansk People’s Republics and Zaporizhzhia and Kherson Regions to Russia*, 30 September 2022, <http://kremlin.ru/events/president/news/69465>.

¹⁹ Russian Federation, *Federal Law No. 19-FZ, On the Peculiarities of the Legal Regulation of Relations in the Spheres of Education and Science in Connection with the Admission of the Donetsk People’s Republic, the Luhansk People’s Republic, the Zaporizhzhia Region and the Kherson Region to the Russian Federation and the Formation of New Subjects within the Russian Federation, and on Amendments to Certain Legislative Acts of the Russian Federation*, 17 February 2023, <http://publication.pravo.gov.ru/Document/View/0001202302170006>.

²⁰ European Court of Human Rights, *The Russian Federation ceases to be a Party to the European Convention on Human Rights*, 16 September 2022, explaining that the Court remains competent in relation to acts or omissions capable of constituting Convention violations occurring up to 16 September 2022, <https://hudoc.echr.coe.int/app/conversion/pdf/?filename=The%20Russian%20Federation%20ceases%20to%20be%20a%20Party%20to%20the%20European%20Convention%20on%20Human%20Rights.pdf&id=003-7435446-10180882&library=ECHR>.

warrants of the International Criminal Court (ICC) concern conduct following the full-scale invasion.²¹ A cohort of children who entered school in Crimea following the 2014 occupation has now reached adulthood after spending all, or a substantial amount of, its schooling under the occupation regime.²² These distinctions are drawn where they bear on the assessment.

Legislative and regulatory framework

62. The legislative and regulatory framework underpinning the militarization and indoctrination of Ukrainian children has been purposefully and strategically developed since 2014 and is documented in detail in the 2026 Moscow Mechanism Report and the 2025 OHCHR report on children's rights in Ukraine.²³ Its evolution increasingly creates a coercive environment geared toward preparing children for service in the Russian armed forces upon reaching military age. Key instruments include the 2022 Foundations of State Policy for the Preservation and Strengthening of Traditional Russian Spiritual and Moral Values,²⁴ the Concept of the Federal System for Preparing Citizens of the Russian Federation for Military Service up to 2036,²⁵ the Action Plan for Patriotic and Spiritual-Moral Education of Young People in the Russian Federation up to 2028,²⁶ and the Development Strategy of the All-Russian Children's and Youth Military-Patriotic Public Movement "Young Army" up to 2030.²⁷ The Action Plan also provides for the involvement of participants and veterans of the so-called "Special Military Operation" (SMO) in children's upbringing. Implementation involves federal and occupation authorities,

²¹ Council of Europe, *Convention establishing an International Claims Commission for Ukraine*, Article 3(1)(a), providing jurisdiction over damage caused by internationally wrongful acts committed "on or after 24 February 2022," <https://www.coe.int/en/web/conventions/full-list?module=treaty-detail&treaty-num=229>; ICC, *Situation in Ukraine*, including warrants issued in respect of crimes alleged to have been committed from at least 24 February 2022, <https://www.icc-cpi.int/situations/ukraine>.

²² OSCE, Moscow Mechanism Report, *supra* note 8, at 57–72.

²³ *Id.* at 58–71; Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR), *The Impact of the Armed Conflict and Occupation on Children's Rights in Ukraine, 24 February 2022–31 December 2024*, 21 March 2025, p. 15, <https://ukraine.ohchr.org/sites/default/files/2025-04/2025-03-21%20OHCHR%20Report%20on%20Children%27s%20Rights%20in%20Ukraine.pdf>.

²⁴ President of the Russian Federation, *Decree No. 809, On Approving the Foundations of State Policy for the Preservation and Strengthening of Traditional Russian Spiritual and Moral Values*, 9 November 2022, <http://www.kremlin.ru/acts/bank/48502>, archive <https://archive.ph/g20dR>.

²⁵ Government of the Russian Federation, *Order No. 134-r, Concept of the Federal System for Preparing Citizens of the Russian Federation for Military Service for the Period up to 2036*, 3 February 2010, as amended on 25 June 2025, https://www.consultant.ru/document/cons_doc_LAW_97419/83b736ec01430402843a8f1d1dec0f8ad83c6168/, archive <https://archive.ph/kl8tf>.

²⁶ Center for Civic Education "Almenda," *Russia Intensifies Militarization of Youth: A Set of Measures on Patriotic Education Approved*, 15 December 2025, <https://almenda.org/rosiya-posilyuye-militarizaciyu-molodi-zatverdzheno-kompleks-zaxodiv-z-patriotichnogo-vixovannya/>.

²⁷ All-Russian Children's and Youth Military-Patriotic Public Movement "Yunarmiya," *Development Strategy of the All-Russian Children's and Youth Military-Patriotic Public Movement "Yunarmiya" up to 2030*, https://www.ooazeya.ru/sites/default/files/doc/strateg_unarm.pdf, archive <https://archive.ph/XHwMK>.

educational, cultural, and sports institutions, youth and veterans' organizations, camps, public organizations, and the Russian Orthodox Church.

63. Over time, the system has expanded from an early emphasis on ideological and propaganda activities glorifying war, military service, and the Soviet victory in the Second World War into an increasingly institutionalized system combining ideological instruction and military-patriotic youth organizations with military training embedded in formal education. As of July 2026, militarization extends across multiple spheres of children's lives and may be structured into six interconnected categories: militarized education, ideological indoctrination, military-patriotic upbringing, military training, recruitment, and integration into military structures. These operate through formal education, religious education, child and youth movements, camps, military-patriotic clubs, dedicated programs, and online video games.²⁸ According to the Center for Civic Education "Almenda," at least 582,600 children in the occupied territories of Ukraine were educated under Russian State educational standards during the 2025–2026 academic year.²⁹
64. The incremental development of this framework is relevant to the later evidentiary assessment. Successive legislative and regulatory instruments, institutional expansion, and dedicated budgetary allocations may be probative of coordinated State policy and deliberate design, rather than incidental or isolated conduct.³⁰

Citizenship and personal status

65. The Russian Federation, through federal and occupation authorities, altered children's civil status and rendered the acquisition of Russian citizenship *de facto* compulsory in occupied territories through administrative and legal measures, including Russian birth registration and conditioning access to health care, education, and social benefits on Russian citizenship.³¹ Coercion to acquire Russian citizenship is reported to be a widespread practice,³² and there have been documented threats to remove children from parents who have not obtained Russian citizenship.³³ The imposition of Russian citizenship also has consequences for military-service obligations:

²⁸ Center for Civic Education "Almenda," *The Russian System of Destroying the Identity of Children in the TOT*, 6 April 2023, p. 3; NGO "LingvaLexa," *New Weapon in the Shadows: How the Kremlin Uses Video Games for War Propaganda*, 9 October 2025, <https://www.lingvalexa.com/en/posts/research-a-new-weapon-in-the-shadows-how-the-kremlin-uses-video-games-for-war-propaganda/>.

²⁹ Center for Civic Education "Almenda," "Universal Soldier" or Education as the Weapon of Russia in the Temporarily Occupied Territories of Ukraine: Monitoring Report for January–June 2026, 2026, p. 5, https://almenda.org/wp-content/uploads/2026/08/Solder_1_Eng.pdf.

³⁰ OSCE, Moscow Mechanism Report, *supra* note 8, at 4, 59–73. The Mission characterizes the relevant legislative architecture as a "system of purposeful design" and documents the progressive development of the institutional and regulatory framework.

³¹ OHCHR, *The Impact of the Armed Conflict and Occupation on Children's Rights in Ukraine*, *supra* note 23, at 16.

³² OSCE, Moscow Mechanism Report, *supra* note 8, at 80.

³³ Ombudsman of Ukraine, *Cross-Pollinated: Russia's Systemic Policy of Destroying Children's Ukrainian Identity*, 2024, p. 18, https://www.ombudsman.gov.ua/storage/app/media/uploaded-files/Special%20Report%20_CROSS-POLLINATED_.pdf.

measures compelling residents of occupied territory to acquire Russian citizenship expose them to conscription into the Russian armed forces, while boys in occupied territories are subjected to pre-conscription measures from as young as sixteen and become subject to conscription upon reaching eighteen.³⁴

Militarized education and ideological indoctrination

66. Since the beginning of the occupation, the Russian Federation has imposed its education system in occupied territory, replacing the Ukrainian curriculum and textbooks and sharply restricting Ukrainian-language instruction and Ukrainian-studies content.³⁵ School attendance is compulsory, with documented threats of deprivation of parental rights for non-attendance.³⁶ Russian Federation textbooks are one of the principal instruments of ideological indoctrination. They promote narratives that replace Ukrainian identity with Russian identity, foster positive attitudes toward the Russian armed forces, and justify Russian imperial policy and its armed aggression against Ukraine.³⁷ The introduction of unified history textbooks for grades 10–11 from September 2023³⁸ and grades 5–9 from the 2025–2026 academic year³⁹ further institutionalizes these practices.
67. Following the full-scale invasion, the Russian Federation further militarized formal education. At the beginning of the 2023–24 academic year, the subject “Fundamentals of Security and Defense of the Motherland” became a requirement in schools in occupied territories, introducing initial military training into the regular curriculum.⁴⁰ The subject, introduced for grades 8–11, integrates weapons handling, UAV operation, and tactical medicine into the standard school curriculum.⁴¹
68. Since September 2022, the mandatory “Conversations About Important Things” course has been held every Monday for pupils in Years 1–11 and extended to schools in the temporarily occupied

³⁴ United Nations General Assembly, *Situation of human rights in the temporarily occupied territories of Ukraine, including the Autonomous Republic of Crimea and the city of Sevastopol: Report of the Secretary-General*, A/79/258, 30 July 2024, para. 60, <https://docs.un.org/en/A/79/258>.

³⁵ European Court of Human Rights (Grand Chamber), *Ukraine v. Russia (re Crimea)*, Apps. nos. 20958/14 and 38334/18, Judgment, 25 June 2024, paras. 1160–65; OHCHR, *The Impact of the Armed Conflict and Occupation on Children's Rights in Ukraine*, *supra* note 23, at 17.

³⁶ OHCHR, *The Impact of the Armed Conflict and Occupation on Children's Rights in Ukraine*, *supra* note 23, at 17.

³⁷ Center for Civic Education “Almenda,” *Textbooks and War: Educational Literature in the Russian Federation as a Tool for Destroying the Identity of Ukrainians*, 9 January 2023, <https://almenda.org/doslidzhennya-pidruchnik-i-vijna-navchalna-literatura-rf-na-okupovani-j-teritorij-yak-instrument-znishchennya-identichnosti-ukrainciv/>.

³⁸ Ministry of Education of the Russian Federation, *Letter No. AB-3318/03, On the Use of Unified History Textbooks for Grades 10–11*, 7 August 2023, <https://www.garant.ru/products/ipo/prime/doc/407421349/>, archive <https://archive.ph/OcdWk>.

³⁹ Center for Civic Education “Almenda,” *Russia's Policy of Eradicating the Identity of Children in the TOT of Ukraine: Results for 2025, 2026*, pp. 8–9, https://almenda.org/wp-content/uploads/2026/02/Zvit_politics_web_Eng.pdf.

⁴⁰ OSCE, *Moscow Mechanism Report*, *supra* note 8, at 36–37.

⁴¹ *Id.* at 4.

territories.⁴² The course addresses themes including patriotism, statehood, historical memory, Russian state holidays, and support for military personnel, and includes instruction reflecting official Russian narratives concerning the war against Ukraine.⁴³ Participants in the war against Ukraine and representatives of the Russian Orthodox Church have also been involved in educational activities of this kind, including the promotion of narratives depicting the conflict as a continuation of a historical struggle against “Nazism.”⁴⁴

69. “Lessons of Courage” further reinforce this system by advancing positive attitudes toward military service and presenting participants in the war against Ukraine as examples of courage, heroism, and service to the “Fatherland.”⁴⁵ Such lessons have been conducted by active military personnel, veterans, and representatives of the security services and have included discussions of military experience and patriotism.⁴⁶
70. Militarized education is further reinforced through school-based practices such as required “Letter to a Soldier” activities⁴⁷ and the production of supplies for the Russian armed forces,⁴⁸ as well as the memorialization of participants in the “SMO” within school spaces through memorial plaques, commemorative signs,⁴⁹ remembrance corners, and “Hero’s Desks.”⁵⁰ Together, these practices embed support for the Russian armed forces and the commemoration of participants in the war against Ukraine within the everyday school environment.
71. Although schools are the primary institutional setting for militarization due to compulsory attendance, military-patriotic activities have also been documented in kindergartens. These include activities fostering positive attitudes toward the Russian armed forces, glorifying war and

⁴² Ministry of Education of the Russian Federation, “*Conversations About Important Things*” (*Razgovory o vazhnom*), official website, <https://xn--80aafadvc9bifbaeq0p.xn--p1ai/>, archive <https://archive.ph/NdpFR>.

⁴³ VKontakte, post concerning the “Conversations About Important Things” program, 26 September 2024, https://vk.com/wall-29994121_18023, archive <https://archive.ph/IThq7>.

⁴⁴ Center for Civic Education “Almenda,” *Religion of War: Russian Orthodox Church as the Instrument for Militarization and Indoctrination in the Temporarily Occupied Territories*, 5 June 2025, <https://almenda.org/en/religiya-vijni-rosijska-pravoslavna-cerkva-yak-instrument-militarizacii-ta-indoktrinacii-na-timchasovo-okupovanix-teritoriyax/>.

⁴⁵ Karolina Hird, *Russian Occupation Update, August 21, 2026*, Institute for the Study of War, 21 August 2026, <https://understandingwar.org/research/russia-ukraine/russian-occupation-update-august-21-2026/>.

⁴⁶ OSCE, Moscow Mechanism Report, *supra* note 8, at 39; VKontakte, post concerning “Lessons of Courage,” https://vk.com/wall-122681115_8799; Vladimir Saldo, Telegram post, https://t.me/SALDO_VGA/10338; VKontakte, post concerning “Lessons of Courage,” https://vk.com/wall-220761950_1794; VKontakte, post concerning “Lessons of Courage,” https://vk.com/wall-196982714_2039, archived at <https://archive.ph/R2tZ6>.

⁴⁷ OHCHR, *The Impact of the Armed Conflict and Occupation on Children’s Rights in Ukraine*, *supra* note 23, at 16.

⁴⁸ Institute for the Study of War, *Russian Occupation Update, April 2, 2026*, 2 April 2026, <https://understandingwar.org/research/russia-ukraine/russian-occupation-update-april-2-2026/>.

⁴⁹ Center for Civic Education “Almenda,” *Commemorative Plaques as the Evidence of Crimes of the Russian Federation in Crimea, Research*, 27 July 2023, https://almenda.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/07/COMMEMORATIVE-PLAQUES-AS-THE-EVIDENCE-OF-CRIMES-OF-THE-RUSSIAN-FEDERATION-IN-CRIMEA_CCE-ALMENDA.pdf.

⁵⁰ OSCE, Moscow Mechanism Report, *supra* note 8, at 67; Center for Civic Education “Almenda,” *Russia’s Policy of Eradicating the Identity of Children in the TOT of Ukraine*, *supra* note 39, at 22.

military service, and introducing preschool children to State-sponsored child and youth movements.⁵¹

Military-patriotic upbringing and integration into military structures

72. Since 2016, the Russian Federation has increasingly incorporated military-patriotic youth movements into children's civic socialization and exposure to military activities. This expansion has occurred within a broader scaling-up of federally funded youth policy across the Russian Federation: federal budget allocations for youth policy increased from approximately 21.1 billion rubles in 2021 to 70.9 billion rubles in 2025.⁵² One of the principal explicitly military-patriotic structures is the All-Russian Children's and Youth Military-Patriotic Public Movement "Yunarmiya," a State-supported organization established in 2016 on the initiative of Russia's then-Minister of Defense.⁵³ Open to children aged eight to eighteen, its documented activities include military-patriotic education, drill, weapons-related instruction, physical and tactical training, and preparation for military service.⁵⁴ Yunarmiya reports approximately 2 million members as of 2026,⁵⁵ while Almenda reports that more than 44,000 children in occupied Ukrainian territory participate in the movement.⁵⁶
73. Established in 2022 under Federal Law No. 261-FZ, the Movement of the First is a State-sponsored children's and youth movement created to support State youth policy and participate in children's upbringing, including by shaping their worldview around traditional

⁵¹ Crimea News, *Heroes Are Dedicated: How the Year of the Defender of the Fatherland Began in Kindergartens and Schools*, 21 February 2025, <https://crimea-news.com/other/2025/02/21/1598969.html>; Center for Civic Education "Almenda," *Influencing the Youngest: How the Occupiers Shape Russian Identity among Preschool Children in the Temporarily Occupied Territories*, LB.ua, 9 May 2026, https://lb.ua/society/2026/05/09/736907_vpliv_naymenshih_yak_okupanti.html; Навигаторы Детства (Childhood Navigators), VKontakte, post concerning patriotic and militarized activities involving children, https://vk.com/wall-214910068_224797.

⁵² Center for Civic Education "Almenda," *Russia's Policy of Eradicating the Identity of Children in the TOT of Ukraine*, *supra* note 39, at 12–13. The figures concern federal budget allocations for youth policy across the Russian Federation as a whole and are not specific to occupied Ukrainian territory. Almenda reports allocations of approximately 21.1 billion rubles in 2021, 42.6 billion rubles in 2022, 70.9 billion rubles in 2025, and 78.4 billion rubles in 2026, based on the relevant Russian federal budget laws.

⁵³ OSCE, Moscow Mechanism Report, *supra* note 8, at 40–41.

⁵⁴ All-Russian Children's and Youth Military-Patriotic Public Movement "Yunarmiya," *Charter of the All-Russian Children's and Youth Military-Patriotic Public Movement "Yunarmiya"*, approved 28 May 2016, as amended 26 March 2025, <https://yunarmy.ru/ustav.pdf>, archive <https://archive.ph/gYhB6>; OSCE, Moscow Mechanism Report, *supra* note 8, at 40–41; Ukrainian Parliament Commissioner for Human Rights, *Cross-Pollinated: Russia's Systemic Policy of Destroying Children's Ukrainian Identity*, Special Report, 2024, p. 28, https://www.ombudsman.gov.ua/storage/app/media/uploaded-files/Special%20Report%20_CROSS-POLLINATED_.pdf.

⁵⁵ "Yunarmiya," official website, <https://yunarmy.ru/>, archive <https://archive.ph/EwlAo>.

⁵⁶ Center for Civic Education "Almenda," *"Universal Soldier" or Education as the Weapon of Russia in the Temporarily Occupied Territories of Ukraine*, Monitoring Report, January–June 2026, 2026, p. 7, https://almenda.org/wp-content/uploads/2026/08/Solder_1_Eng-1.pdf.

Russian values and fostering love and responsibility toward the “Fatherland.”⁵⁷ Open to children from age six, it is significantly larger than Yunarmiya.⁵⁸ By the end of 2025, the Movement reported more than 13 million participants,⁵⁹ including over 344,600 in the occupied territories.⁶⁰ Alongside promoting Russian identity, the Movement incorporates military-patriotic training, notably through Zarnitsa 2.0, implemented jointly with Yunarmiya in occupied territories. Documented activities of this program include training associated with military specializations, casualty care, and UAV operation.⁶¹

74. Both movements are all-Russian structures rather than programs created exclusively for Ukrainian children. Their relevance to this report lies in their extension into occupied Ukrainian territory and the incorporation of Ukrainian children into those structures. The circumstances of participation—including whether enrollment is voluntary, encouraged, incentivized, or coerced—accordingly require separate assessment and are addressed in Part VI.
75. Beyond these mass youth movements, the occupation system also incorporates more formalized educational structures that connect schooling with future service in Russian military, law-enforcement, and security institutions. Cadet classes are specialized pre-professional programs designed to prepare students for such careers and may include weapons training, instruction by military personnel, and incentives including preferential admission to Russian military higher-education institutions.⁶² These programs have expanded substantially under occupation: the first three cadet classes were introduced in Crimea in 2015; their number

⁵⁷ Russian Federation, Federal Law No. 261-FZ, *On the Russian Movement of Children and Youth*, 14 July 2022, Articles 1–2, Official Publication No. 0001202207140025; Ukrainian Parliament Commissioner for Human Rights, *Cross-Pollinated: Russia’s Systemic Policy of Destroying Children’s Ukrainian Identity*, Special Report, 2024, pp. 25–28, https://www.ombudsman.gov.ua/storage/app/media/uploaded-files/Special%20Report%20_CROSS-POLLINATED_.pdf.

⁵⁸ OSCE, Moscow Mechanism Report, *supra* note 8, at 41; OHCHR, *The Impact of the Armed Conflict and Occupation on Children’s Rights in Ukraine*, *supra* note 23, at 18; Center for Civic Education “Almenda,” “Universal Soldier,” or The Activities of Russian Children’s and Youth Movements in the Temporarily Occupied Territories of Ukraine, Monitoring Report, 2025, pp. 8–16, https://almenda.org/wp-content/uploads/2026/02/Solder_55_eng_web.pdf.

⁵⁹ Russian Movement of Children and Youth “Movement of the First” (Dvizheniye Pervykh), official website, <https://xn--90acagbhgpc7c8c7f.xn--p1ai/>, archived at <https://archive.is/ajch6>.

⁶⁰ Center for Civic Education “Almenda,” *Russia’s Policy of Eradicating the Identity of Children in the TOT of Ukraine*, *supra* note 39, at 14–15. Almenda states that the statistics are based on open Russian sources and reflect the situation as of late 2025 and early 2026.

⁶¹ Center for Civic Education “Almenda,” *Zarnitsa 2.0 Game: Military Training for Children in the TOT*, 6 May 2025, <https://almenda.org/en/gra-zarnicya-2-0-vijskovij-vishkil-ditej-na-tot/>.

⁶² Center for Civic Education “Almenda,” *How the War Is Produced: Childhood Spent in the Cadet Classes in the TOT of the AR Crimea and the City of Sevastopol*, 2024, https://almenda.org/wp-content/uploads/2024/09/Cadet_web_eng.pdf; OSCE, Moscow Mechanism Report, *supra* note 8, at 37–38; OHCHR, *Report on the Human Rights Situation in Ukraine, 1 September–30 November 2024*, 31 December 2024, para. 80, <https://ukraine.ohchr.org/sites/default/files/2025-02/2024-12-31%20OHCHR%2041st%20periodic%20report%20on%20Ukraine.pdf>.

increased to 306 by 2025, and by 2026 at least 479 cadet classes had been established across occupied Ukrainian territory.⁶³

Military training: clubs, camps, and programs

76. The Russian Federation has established and used an extensive network of camps and other facilities to which Ukrainian children have been taken for “recreational,” educational, re-education, and related programming. The facilities vary substantially in character, and while not all involve military training, documented camp programming includes weapons-related instruction, grenade-throwing exercises, military-applied disciplines, and an ideological component.⁶⁴ Ukrainian children also participate in programs alongside children from the Russian Federation; of 210 facilities identified in one comprehensive study, 143 were camps or sanatoria that regularly hosted Russian children, combining the elements of militarization with broader processes of assimilation.⁶⁵ A separate study found at least 175 such facilities had been identified in the Russian Federation, Belarus, and the occupied territories as of the end of 2025.⁶⁶ Active-duty military personnel and participants in the war against Ukraine have also served as instructors and mentors, reinforcing narratives that legitimize the war and present military service as honorable.⁶⁷
77. The location of these facilities is legally significant. Measures imposed on children within occupied Ukrainian territory must be assessed under the law of occupation and the protections owed to the population of occupied territory. Where children are transferred or deported from occupied territory to the Russian Federation, additional rules governing transfer and deportation, as well as the protections applicable to protected persons outside occupied territory, may be engaged.⁶⁸ The transfer of Ukrainian children to facilities in Belarus raises additional questions concerning the responsibility and obligations of a third State participating in or facilitating measures affecting children removed from occupied territory.

⁶³ Center for Civic Education “Almenda,” *Russia’s Policy of Eradicating the Identity of Children in the TOT of Ukraine*, *supra* note 39, at 17–18; OSCE, Moscow Mechanism Report, *supra* note 8, at 38; President of the Russian Federation, *Decree No. 523, On the Foundations of State Policy of the Russian Federation in the Sphere of Cadet Education*, 27 July 2026, <http://static.kremlin.ru/media/events/files/ru/M4DdLNeJg7eeqVrauth1DCo54Ohb8sSg.pdf>, archive <https://archive.is/pseOD>.

⁶⁴ OSCE, Moscow Mechanism Report, *supra* note 8, at 45–47.

⁶⁵ *Id.* at 45.

⁶⁶ Regional Center for Human Rights (RCHR), *The Weaponization of Children. Re-education Camps*, 2025, <https://rchr.org.ua/analytics/dity-yak-zbroya-t-abory-perevyhovannya/>.

⁶⁷ OSCE, Moscow Mechanism Report, *supra* note 8, at 44–47, 93.

⁶⁸ Geneva Convention Relative to the Protection of Civilian Persons in Time of War (Fourth Geneva Convention), 12 August 1949, Article 49, <https://ihl-databases.icrc.org/en/ihl-treaties/gciv-1949/article-49>; ICRC, *Commentary on the Fourth Geneva Convention*, 2025, Article 49, paras. 3166–68, 3187, <https://ihl-databases.icrc.org/en/ihl-treaties/gciv-1949/article-49/commentary/2025>. Article 49(1) prohibits individual or mass forcible transfers and deportations of protected persons from occupied territory to the territory of the occupying power or any other country; protected persons unlawfully transferred or deported do not thereby lose their protected status.

78. Militarization is also reinforced through military-patriotic clubs and recurring extracurricular programs. Such clubs expressly identify preparation for future service in the Russian armed forces among their objectives.⁶⁹ This is complemented by programs such as “Dialogues with Heroes,”⁷⁰ military-patriotic games including Zarnitsa 2.0,⁷¹ competitions such as “Heirs of Victory 2025” and “To Be, Not to Seem,” and projects including “Keepers of History” and “Victory Train.” These activities combine ideological education with elements of practical military training and reinforce the normalization and glorification of military service among children.⁷²
79. A more specialized military-training structure is provided by the Voin Centers for Military-Sports Training and Patriotic Education of Youth.⁷³ Established in 2023 with federal funding and the support of President Putin, Voin provides structured training for children aged 14–18 in firearms, tactics, engineering, UAV operation, tactical medicine, and military sports.⁷⁴ Between 2023 and 2025, the program expanded into occupied Donetsk, Luhansk, Zaporizhzhia, and Kherson regions; by 2026, its centers in those territories had a reported capacity of more than 9,000 cadets over two years of operation.⁷⁵

The conscription pathway

80. The measures described above can operate as a pathway toward military service, whether through conscription or contract service. Before reaching eighteen, boys in occupied territory may be subjected to pre-conscription measures from as young as sixteen, while schools and youth structures have also been documented encouraging adolescents toward cadet education, military academies, or other forms of military involvement.⁷⁶ Upon reaching eighteen, Ukrainian boys in

⁶⁹ OSCE, Moscow Mechanism Report, *supra* note 8, at 27, 62, 71.

⁷⁰ Alla Hurska, *Russia Converts Ukrainian Children into Enemies*, Eurasia Daily Monitor, The Jamestown Foundation, 7 March 2024, <https://jamestown.org/program/russia-converts-ukrainian-children-into-enemies/>.

⁷¹ OHCHR, *The Impact of the Armed Conflict and Occupation on Children’s Rights in Ukraine*, *supra* note 23, at 18; Karolina Hird, *Russian Occupation Update, April 10, 2025*, Institute for the Study of War, 10 April 2025, <https://understandingwar.org/research/russia-ukraine/russian-occupation-update-april-10-2025/>.

⁷² Center for Civic Education “Almenda,” *Russia Intensifies Militarization of Youth: A Set of Measures on Patriotic Education Approved*, 15 December 2025, <https://almenda.org/rosiya-posilyuye-militarizaciyu-molodi-zatverdzheno-kompleks-zaxodiv-z-patriotichnogo-vixovannya/>.

⁷³ Coalition “Ukraine. 5 AM,” *VOINs for the Russian Regime: How Russia Militarizes Ukrainian Children from the TOT*, LB.ua, 21 June 2024, https://lb.ua/blog/koalitsiia_ua5am/620037_voini_rosiyskogo_rezhimu_yak.html; Aleksandr Ivanov, *Largest Patriotic Project: Voin Center in Mariupol to Open in 2026 and Operate Year-Round*, Komsomolskaya Pravda, 24 January 2026, <https://www.donetsk.kp.ru/daily/27753.5/5200759>, archive <https://archive.ph/ALMuL>; MK Zaporozhye, *Large-Scale Reconstruction of the ‘Voin’ Camp in Berdiansk Nears Completion*, 11 February 2025, <https://www.mk-zap.ru/social/2025/02/11/v-berdyanske-zavershaetsya-masshtabnaya-rekonstrukciya-lagerya-voin.html>; archive <https://archive.ph/BHJaV>.

⁷⁴ OSCE, Moscow Mechanism Report, *supra* note 8, at 43–72.

⁷⁵ *Id.* at 54.

⁷⁶ *Id.* at 51–52.

occupied territory may become subject to conscription requirements applied on the basis of Russian citizenship imposed or rendered *de facto* compulsory under occupation; in November 2024, the first groups of conscripts from occupied territory reportedly traveled to the Russian Federation for military service.⁷⁷ Evidence from territories occupied since 2014 further shows that some young men educated under the occupation system, including through military-patriotic structures, have subsequently entered Russian military-service and mobilization systems.⁷⁸ Individuals who were children at the commencement of the occupation have since reached majority, and open-source material identifies persons within that cohort who are now serving in the Russian armed forces or who have been killed in action. No aggregate figures are publicly available.

V. Applicable International Legal Framework

Development and customary foundation

81. International legal protection of children developed progressively across IHL, IHRL, and ICL. Early child-specific international standards appeared in the 1924 Geneva Declaration of the Rights of the Child and treaty-based protections were subsequently developed in the GC IV, including provisions concerning children's care and education, identity, personal status, and enlistment in formations or organizations subordinate to the occupying power; the 1959 Declaration of the Rights of the Child, Article 77 of Additional Protocol I of 1977, and the 1989 Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC) further developed the international framework for the protection of children.⁷⁹
82. At the time of the conduct, later prosecuted after the Second World War, no child-specific international criminal offense had yet been codified, but that absence did not preclude individual criminal responsibility for conduct affecting children.⁸⁰ The Nuremberg Tribunal held it

⁷⁷ OHCHR, *The Impact of the Armed Conflict and Occupation on Children's Rights in Ukraine*, *supra* note 23, at 18; United Nations General Assembly, *Situation of human rights in the temporarily occupied territories of Ukraine, including the Autonomous Republic of Crimea and the city of Sevastopol: Report of the Secretary-General*, A/79/258, 30 July 2024, paras. 22–24, <https://docs.un.org/en/A/79/258>.

⁷⁸ OSCE, Moscow Mechanism Report, *supra* note 8, at 51–53.

⁷⁹ Geneva Declaration of the Rights of the Child, adopted by the Assembly of the League of Nations, 26 September 1924; Geneva Convention (IV) relative to the Protection of Civilian Persons in Time of War, 12 August 1949, Articles 24, 50, 51, 68, 76, and 82, <https://ihl-databases.icrc.org/en/ihl-treaties/gciv-1949>; Declaration of the Rights of the Child, UN General Assembly resolution 1386 (XIV), 20 November 1959; Protocol Additional to the Geneva Conventions of 12 August 1949, and relating to the Protection of Victims of International Armed Conflicts, 8 June 1977, Article 77, <https://ihl-databases.icrc.org/en/ihl-treaties/api-1977>; Convention on the Rights of the Child, 20 November 1989, <https://www.ohchr.org/en/instruments-mechanisms/instruments/convention-rights-child>. See generally Diane Marie Amann, *Child-Taking*, 45 Mich. J. Int'l L. 305 (2024), pp. 308, 337, 339–340, <https://repository.law.umich.edu/mjil/vol45/iss3/2/>.

⁸⁰ Charter of the International Military Tribunal, 8 August 1945, Article 6; Control Council Law No. 10, 20 December 1945, Article II. Neither instrument contained a child-specific international criminal offense. The Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide, adopted 9 December 1948, subsequently identified the forcible transfer of children of a protected group to another group as an act of genocide, Article II(e),

unnecessary to address the general participation clause of the Hague Convention, since by 1939 its rules were recognized by all civilized nations and regarded as declaratory of the laws and customs of war referred to in Article 6(b) of the Charter; violations of those laws and customs could therefore found individual criminal responsibility for war crimes.⁸¹ The General Assembly affirmed the principles recognized in the Charter and judgment of the Tribunal in 1946.⁸²

83. Those principles were given concrete application in the post-war prosecutions of Nazi Germanization policies carried out in occupied territories. The Germanization program formed part of a broader racial policy aimed at weakening conquered nations while strengthening Germany. Its measures included forced population transfers and the suppression of national and cultural life; with respect to children, the authorities selected children considered “racially valuable” and suitable for Germanization, sought to sever their connections with their Polish relatives and communities, transferred them to German institutions or families, changed their names and identity records, and subjected them to education and re-socialization in German surroundings.⁸³ Among the occupation-law provisions relevant to these measures were Articles 43, 45, and 46 of the Hague Regulations, set out below.⁸⁴ The Nuremberg and Tokyo Tribunals also examined the indoctrination and mobilization of youth as an element of the wider policies before them.⁸⁵

<https://www.ohchr.org/en/instruments-mechanisms/instruments/convention-prevention-and-punishment-crime-genocide>; Rome Statute, *supra* note 3, at Articles 6(e) and 8(2)(b)(xxvi).

⁸¹ Judgment of the International Military Tribunal, Nuremberg, 1 October 1946, *Trial of the Major War Criminals before the International Military Tribunal*, vol. I, p. 254, holding that by 1939 the rules contained in the 1907 Hague Convention were recognized as declaratory of the laws and customs of war referred to in Article 6(b) of the Charter; Charter of the International Military Tribunal, 8 August 1945, Article 6(b), <https://avalon.law.yale.edu/imt/judlawre.asp>.

⁸² Judgment of the International Military Tribunal, Nuremberg, 1 October 1946, on the applicability of the Hague Convention (IV) of 1907 notwithstanding the general participation clause in Article 2 thereof, <https://www.legal-tools.org/doc/45f18e/>; Affirmation of the Principles of International Law recognized by the Charter of the Nürnberg Tribunal, UN General Assembly resolution 95(I), 11 December 1946, <https://digitallibrary.un.org/record/209872?v=pdf>; Charter of the International Military Tribunal, 8 August 1945, Article 6(b); Control Council Law No. 10, 20 December 1945, Article II, under which the subsequent proceedings were conducted.

⁸³ United Nations War Crimes Commission, Law Reports of Trials of War Criminals, vol. XIII, *Trial of Ulrich Greifelt and Others*, Case No. 73, pp. 4–13, especially pp. 4–10 and 12–13, https://www.worldcourts.com/imt/eng/decisions/1948.03.10_United_States_v_Greifelt2.pdf.

⁸⁴ Convention (IV) respecting the Laws and Customs of War on Land and its annex, Regulations concerning the Laws and Customs of War on Land, 18 October 1907, Articles 43, 45, and 46, <https://ihl-databases.icrc.org/en/ihl-treaties/hague-conv-iv-1907> [hereinafter Convention (IV) respecting the Laws].

⁸⁵ On the Nuremberg Tribunal’s examination of the removal of teachers, the use of propaganda, and the formalization of the Hitler Jugend as a military training organization, together with the incorporation of all youth organizations into it such that the great majority of eligible children were already members when conscription was introduced, see Judgment of 1 October 1946, 22 IMT 203, at {415}–{418} and {512}. On the Tokyo Tribunal’s treatment of the use of the educational system to inculcate a spirit of totalitarianism, and of the indoctrination of Japanese youth, see Judgment of 4 November 1948 (International Military Tribunal for the Far East). Both are examined in Cécile Aptel, *Atrocity Crimes, Children and International Criminal Courts: Killing Childhood* (Routledge, 2023), pp. 106–112.

84. On that footing, in *United States of America v. Ulrich Greifelt et al.*, before a United States military tribunal at Nuremberg, fourteen officials of four Schutzstaffel organizations were tried for war crimes and crimes against humanity arising from the Germanization program. Thirteen were convicted on one or more counts, including eight convicted of crimes against humanity and war crimes; the tribunal found several defendants criminally responsible for, among other conduct, the kidnapping of foreign children and forced Germanization.⁸⁶

International human rights law

85. IHRL continues to apply in situations of armed conflict and occupation. The ICJ has confirmed that the protection offered by human rights conventions does not cease in the event of armed conflict, and that some rights may be matters of IHL, others of human rights law, and others of both branches, with humanitarian law operating as *lex specialis* where the two would otherwise yield conflicting results.⁸⁷ Application is subject to each treaty's jurisdictional requirements, and obligations extend to territory over which a State exercises effective control; the Committee on the Rights of the Child has expressly affirmed that the Russian Federation's obligations under the CRC extend to occupied Ukrainian territory.⁸⁸
86. Two features of the applicable instruments bear emphasis. The CRC contains no derogation clause and therefore remains applicable during armed conflict. Under the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR), the freedom of thought, conscience, and religion protected by Article 18 is expressly *non-derogable*.⁸⁹
87. The CRC provides the principal child-specific framework. Article 29 requires that education develop respect for the child's cultural identity, language, and values and prepare the child for responsible life in a free society in a spirit of peace and tolerance; Articles 14, 28, and 30 protect

⁸⁶ United States Military Tribunal, *United States of America v. Ulrich Greifelt et al.* (the RuSHA case), Case No. 8, Nuremberg, judgment of 10 March 1948, in *Trials of War Criminals before the Nuernberg Military Tribunals under Control Council Law No. 10*, vols. IV–V, <http://werle.rewi.hu-berlin.de/RUSHA-Case%20Judgment.pdf>. See also *Law Reports of Trials of War Criminals*, vol. XIII, Case No. 73, https://www.worldcourts.com/imt/eng/decisions/1948.03.10_United_States_v_Greifelt2.pdf. Thirteen of the fourteen defendants were convicted, eight on all three counts and five on the count of membership of a criminal organization alone; the four Lebensborn defendants were acquitted on the first two counts.

⁸⁷ ICJ, *Legality of the Threat or Use of Nuclear Weapons* (Advisory Opinion), 8 July 1996, para. 25; ICJ, *Legal Consequences of the Construction of a Wall in the Occupied Palestinian Territory* (Advisory Opinion), 9 July 2004, paras. 106–113, <https://www.icj-cij.org/case/131>; ICJ, *Armed Activities on the Territory of the Congo (Democratic Republic of the Congo v. Uganda)* (Merits), Judgment of 19 December 2005, para. 216, <https://www.icj-cij.org/case/116>.

⁸⁸ Human Rights Committee, *General Comment No. 31: The Nature of the General Legal Obligation Imposed on States Parties to the Covenant*, UN Doc. CCPR/C/21/Rev.1/Add.13, 26 May 2004, paras. 10–11, <https://digitallibrary.un.org/record/533996?ln=en&v=pdf>; Committee on the Rights of the Child, *Concluding Observations on the Combined Sixth and Seventh Periodic Reports of the Russian Federation*, UN Doc. CRC/C/RUS/CO/6-7, 2 February 2024, paras. 45–46, <https://www.refworld.org/policy/polrec/crc/2024/en/149239> [hereinafter *Concluding Observations*].

⁸⁹ Convention on the Rights of the Child, *supra* note 79; International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, 16 December 1966, Article 4(2), listing Article 18 among the provisions from which no derogation is permitted, <https://www.ohchr.org/en/instruments-mechanisms/instruments/international-covenant-civil-and-political-rights>.

freedom of conscience, education, and the rights of children of minorities.⁹⁰ The last of these is of particular relevance where the measures in question are directed at the displacement of a national and linguistic identity, since Article 30 protects the right of a child belonging to a national or linguistic minority to enjoy their own culture and to use their own language. Articles 7 and 8 protect the child's name, nationality, family relations, and right to preserve identity, and require assistance directed to the speedy re-establishment of identity where it has been removed. Articles 9, 10, and 16 address separation from parents and interference with family life; Articles 20 and 21 require that alternative care preserve continuity of upbringing and the child's ethnic, cultural, and linguistic background; Article 12 requires that the child be heard in matters affecting the child; and Article 39 obliges States to take measures for the physical and psychological recovery and social reintegration of child victims.⁹¹

88. The Optional Protocol on the involvement of children in armed conflict, to which the Russian Federation is a party,⁹² requires States to take all feasible measures to ensure that members of their armed forces under eighteen do not directly participate in hostilities, to prohibit compulsory recruitment below eighteen, and to deposit a binding declaration specifying the minimum age for voluntary recruitment and the safeguards adopted to ensure that such recruitment is neither forced nor coerced. Armed groups distinct from State armed forces must not recruit or use persons under eighteen in hostilities. Article 6(3) requires the demobilization of persons recruited or used contrary to the Protocol and assistance for their recovery and reintegration.⁹³ These protections are broader than the Rome Statute's under-fifteen threshold.
89. Article 3(5) provides that the requirement in Article 3(1) to raise the minimum age for voluntary recruitment does not apply to schools operated by or under the control of the armed forces of a State Party, in keeping with Articles 28 and 29 of the Convention. Three limitations follow. The exemption is confined in terms to the age-raising requirement in paragraph 1. It addresses schools operated by the armed forces and does not extend to general schools into which military instruction has been introduced, nor to youth formations constituted outside the education system. And it leaves unaffected the prohibition of compulsory recruitment in Article 2 and the obligation in Article 1 concerning direct participation in hostilities.⁹⁴

⁹⁰ Convention on the Rights of the Child, *supra* note 79, at Articles 14, 28, 29, and 30; Committee on the Rights of the Child, *General Comment No. 1: The aims of education*, UN Doc. CRC/GC/2001/1, 17 April 2001, <https://www.refworld.org/legal/general/crc/2001/39221>. On the compulsory subject introduced from September 2024 and its content, *see* OSCE, Moscow Mechanism Report, *supra* note 8, at Executive Summary, sections C–D.

⁹¹ Convention on the Rights of the Child, *supra* note 79, at Articles 7, 8, 9, 10, 12, 16, 20, 21, and 39. Article 8(2) requires States, where a child has been illegally deprived of some or all of the elements of identity, to provide appropriate assistance and protection with a view to speedily re-establishing that identity.

⁹² United Nations Treaty Collection, Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child on the involvement of children in armed conflict, New York, 25 May 2000, Russian Federation signed 15 February 2001; ratified 24 September 2008, <https://www.ohchr.org/en/instruments-mechanisms/instruments/optional-protocol-convention-rights-child-involvement-children>. The Russian Federation ratified the Protocol during Vladimir Putin's tenure as Prime Minister.

⁹³ *Id.* Articles 1–4 and 6(3). On pre-conscription notices issued from the age of sixteen and conscription on attaining eighteen in the occupied territories, *see* OSCE, Moscow Mechanism Report, *supra* note 8, at Executive Summary, sections C–D.

⁹⁴ *Id.* Article 3(5), read with Articles 1, 2, and 3 of the Protocol and Articles 28 and 29 of the CRC.

90. Further protections arise under the ICCPR, the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (ICESCR), CERD, and the Convention Against Discrimination in Education. Beyond Article 18, Article 20(1) of the ICCPR requires the prohibition of propaganda for war; Article 24 entitles the child to measures of protection, which the Human Rights Committee has applied to the appropriation of children and the falsification of their civil status;⁹⁵ and Article 27 protects persons belonging to linguistic and ethnic minorities. The CERD prohibits racial discrimination, including discrimination based on national or ethnic origin, and requires equality in the enjoyment of the right to education and training.⁹⁶ Article 13 of the ICESCR protects the right to education, which the Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights has interpreted as requiring that education be acceptable in form and substance and culturally appropriate.⁹⁷ The Convention against Discrimination in Education, to which the Russian Federation is a party, prohibits discrimination in access to and standards of education and protects the right of national minorities to carry on their own educational activities, including, depending on the educational policy of each State, the use or teaching of their own language, subject to the conditions set out in Article 5(1)(c), including that attendance at such schools be optional.⁹⁸
91. Human rights law also supplies obligations of remedy operating independently of criminal proceedings. Article 2(3) of the ICCPR requires an effective remedy entailing investigation, cessation, and reparation, and Articles 8(2) and 39 of the CRC require assistance directed to the re-establishment of identity and to recovery and reintegration.⁹⁹

⁹⁵ Human Rights Committee, *Mónaco de Gallicchio, on her behalf and on behalf of her granddaughter Ximena Vicario v. Argentina*, Communication No. 400/1990, UN Doc. CCPR/C/53/D/400/1990, views adopted 3 April 1995, finding violations of Articles 17, 23(1), and 24(1)–(2) in respect of the appropriation of a child and the falsification of her civil status, <https://humanrts.umn.edu/undocs/vs40053e.pdf>. See also International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, Articles 18–20, 24, and 27.

⁹⁶ International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination, 21 December 1965, 660 U.N.T.S. 195, Articles 1(1), 5(e)(v), <https://www.ohchr.org/en/instruments-mechanisms/instruments/international-convention-elimination-all-forms-racial>.

⁹⁷ International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, Article 13; Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, *General Comment No. 13 on the right to education*, UN Doc. E/C.12/1999/10, 8 December 1999, para. 6, on availability, accessibility, acceptability, and adaptability, <https://www.ohchr.org/en/resources/educators/human-rights-education-training/d-general-comment-no-13-right-education-article-13-1999>.

⁹⁸ Convention against Discrimination in Education, 14 December 1960, Articles 1, 3, and 5(1)(c), <https://www.unesco.org/en/legal-affairs/convention-against-discrimination-education>. On the Russian Federation and Ukraine as parties, see OSCE, Moscow Mechanism Report, *supra* note 8, at section I.C.

⁹⁹ International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, Article 2(3); Human Rights Committee, *General Comment No. 31*, UN Doc. CCPR/C/21/Rev.1/Add.13, 26 May 2004, paras. 15–17, <https://www.refworld.org/legal/general/hrc/2004/52451>; Convention on the Rights of the Child, *supra* note 79, at Articles 8(2) and 39.

The law of occupation

92. The Russian Federation has occupied parts of the territory of Ukraine since 2014.¹⁰⁰ Article 42 of the Hague Regulations provides that territory is considered occupied when it is actually placed under the authority of the hostile army.¹⁰¹ Occupation does not confer sovereignty, and purported annexation does not alter the applicable legal regime.¹⁰²
93. The occupant is required by Article 43 of the Hague Regulations to take all measures in its power to restore and ensure public order and safety, while respecting, unless absolutely prevented, the laws in force in the country.¹⁰³ Article 45 prohibits compelling the inhabitants of occupied territory to swear allegiance to the hostile Power. Article 46 requires respect for family honor and rights and for religious convictions and practice.¹⁰⁴
94. Article 47 of GC IV provides that protected persons in occupied territory shall not be deprived, in any case or in any manner whatsoever, of the benefits of the Convention by any change introduced as the result of the occupation into the institutions or government of the territory, by any agreement between the authorities of the occupied territory and the occupying power, or by any annexation by the latter of the whole or part of the occupied territory.¹⁰⁵
95. Article 50 of GC IV addresses children specifically. Its first paragraph requires the occupying power, with the cooperation of the national and local authorities, to facilitate the proper working of all institutions devoted to the care and education of children. Its second paragraph requires the occupying power to facilitate the identification of children and the registration of their parentage, and provides that it may not, in any case, change their personal status, nor enlist them in formations or organizations subordinate to it. Its third paragraph provides that, should local institutions be inadequate, the occupying power shall make arrangements for the maintenance and education, if possible, by persons of their own nationality, language, and religion, of children who are orphaned or separated from their parents as a result of the war and who cannot be adequately cared for by a near relative or friend.¹⁰⁶
96. Article 24 of the Convention requires the Parties to the conflict to ensure that children under fifteen who are orphaned or separated from their families as a result of the war are not left to their

¹⁰⁰ UNGA, Resolution 68/262, *Territorial integrity of Ukraine*, 27 March 2014, <https://digitallibrary.un.org/record/767883>; UNGA, Resolution 71/205, *Situation of human rights in the Autonomous Republic of Crimea and the city of Sevastopol (Ukraine)*, 19 December 2016, <https://docs.un.org/en/A/RES/71/205>; UNGA, Resolution ES-11/1 *Aggression against Ukraine*, 2 March 2022, <https://digitallibrary.un.org/record/3965290>; *Case of Ukraine v. Russia (Re Crimea)*, Applications nos. 20958/14 and 38334/18, HUDOC database of the European Court of Human Rights, 25 June 2024, <https://hudoc.echr.coe.int/eng?i=001-235139>; European Court of Human Rights, *Ukraine and the Netherlands v. Russia*, *supra* note 10.

¹⁰¹ Convention (IV) respecting the Laws, *supra* note 84, at Article 42.

¹⁰² UNGA, Resolution ES-11/1 *Aggression against Ukraine*, 2 March 2022, <https://digitallibrary.un.org/record/3965290>.

¹⁰³ Hague Convention (IV) 1907, *supra* note 84, at Article 43.

¹⁰⁴ *Id.* at Articles 45–46.

¹⁰⁵ Geneva Convention (IV), *supra* note 79, at Article 47.

¹⁰⁶ *Id.* at Article 50; ICRC, *Commentary on the Fourth Geneva Convention*, *supra* note 61, at commentary to Article 50.

own resources, and that their maintenance, the exercise of their religion, and their education are facilitated in all circumstances, their education being entrusted, as far as possible, to persons of a similar cultural tradition.¹⁰⁷

97. Article 51 provides that the occupying power may not compel protected persons to serve in its armed or auxiliary forces, and that no pressure or propaganda aimed at securing voluntary enlistment is permitted.¹⁰⁸ The prohibition in the second sentence applies to such pressure or propaganda irrespective of whether enlistment results. Article 147 designates compelling a protected person to serve in the forces of a hostile Power as a grave breach.¹⁰⁹
98. Article 27 requires that protected persons be treated humanely at all times and that their persons, honor, family rights, religious convictions and practices, and manners and customs be respected.¹¹⁰ Article 77 of Additional Protocol I requires that children be the object of special respect and be protected against any form of indecent assault, and that Parties take all feasible measures to ensure that children under fifteen do not take a direct part in hostilities.¹¹¹

International criminal law

99. Neither indoctrination nor militarization is a discrete offense under the Rome Statute. Their legal significance in criminal law derives from the constituent acts and the rules those acts engage. The following provisions are potentially applicable.
100. War-crime liability under Article 8 requires an armed conflict, a nexus between the conduct and that conflict, and an underlying violation of IHL. An international armed conflict has existed between the Russian Federation and Ukraine since 2014 and parts of Ukrainian territory are occupied, with the consequence that the grave breaches regime and the law of occupation apply.¹¹² Article 8(2)(b)(xxvi) criminalizes conscripting or enlisting children under fifteen into the national armed forces or using them to participate actively in hostilities.¹¹³ Article 8(2)(a)(v) criminalizes compelling a protected person to serve in the forces of a hostile Power, and Article 8(2)(b)(xv) the compelling of nationals of the hostile party to take part in operations of war directed against

¹⁰⁷ Geneva Convention (IV), *supra* note 79, at Article 24.

¹⁰⁸ *Id.* at Article 51; ICRC, *Commentary on the Fourth Geneva Convention*, *supra* note 68, at commentary to Article 51, paras. 3304, 3308.

¹⁰⁹ *Id.* at Article 147; ICRC, *Commentary on the Fourth Geneva Convention* (2025), *supra* note 68, at commentary to Article 147.

¹¹⁰ Convention (IV) relative to the Protection of Civilian Persons in Time of War, Geneva, 12 August 1949, Article 27, <https://ihl-databases.icrc.org/en/ihl-treaties/gciv-1949>.

¹¹¹ Protocol Additional to the Geneva Conventions of 12 August 1949, and relating to the Protection of Victims of International Armed Conflicts (Protocol I), 8 June 1977, Article 77, <https://ihl-databases.icrc.org/en/ihl-treaties/api-1977>.

¹¹² OSCE, Moscow Mechanism Report, *supra* note 8, at section V.A, on the existence of an international armed conflict and of occupation and the resulting applicability of the law of occupation, https://odihr.osce.org/sites/default/files/documents/official_documents/2026/07/odgal0034c1%20ODIHR%20NV%20201-2026%20with%20MM%20Report.pdf.

¹¹³ Rome Statute, *supra* note 3, at Article 8(2)(b)(xxvi); OHCHR, *The Impact of the Armed Conflict and Occupation on Children's Rights in Ukraine*, *supra* note 23, at 19; OSCE, Moscow Mechanism Report, *supra* note 8, at 51–52, 78–79, 86–87, 102.

their own country. The former corresponds to the grave breach in Article 147 and gives effect to Article 51 of GC IV; the latter derives principally from the prohibition in Article 23 of the Hague Regulations.¹¹⁴ The Elements of Crimes require, for the offense of compelled service, that the protected person be compelled by an act or threat.¹¹⁵ Articles 8(2)(a)(vii) and 8(2)(b)(viii) address unlawful deportation and unlawful transfer.

101. Article 7 governs crimes against humanity and requires an enumerated act committed as part of a widespread or systematic attack directed against a civilian population, pursuant to or in furtherance of a State or organizational policy, and with knowledge of that attack.¹¹⁶ The enumerated acts of principal relevance are deportation or forcible transfer of population under Article 7(1)(d), enforced disappearance under Article 7(1)(i), persecution under Article 7(1)(h), and other inhumane acts under Article 7(1)(k). Persecution as a crime against humanity consists in the intentional and severe deprivation of fundamental rights contrary to international law by reason of the identity of a group or collectivity, committed on grounds including national, ethnic, and cultural grounds, and in connection with another act referred to in Article 7(1) or with any crime within the jurisdiction of the Court.¹¹⁷ The connection requirement in Article 7(1)(h) is satisfied by an act referred to in Article 7(1) or by any crime within the jurisdiction of the Court. It is therefore not confined to other crimes against humanity: conduct constituting a war crime under Article 8 may equally supply the requisite connection. Persecution is accordingly not an alternative to the war crimes provisions but may operate alongside them, aggregating measures each of which falls below the threshold of an enumerated offense together with conduct that independently constitutes a grave breach or other war crime. Where the same conduct satisfies the elements of both, cumulative characterization is permissible provided each offense contains a materially distinct element.
102. The discriminatory element of persecution requires particular attention. Article 7(2)(g) defines persecution as the intentional and severe deprivation of fundamental rights contrary to international law by reason of the identity of a group or collectivity, and the Elements of Crimes require that the perpetrator have targeted the person or persons by reason of the identity of a

¹¹⁴ Rome Statute, *supra* note 3, at Articles 8(2)(a)(v) and 8(2)(b)(xv); Geneva Convention (IV), *supra* note 79, at Articles 51 and 147. Article 51 prohibits the occupying power from compelling protected persons to serve in its armed or auxiliary forces and provides that no pressure or propaganda aimed at securing voluntary enlistment is permitted. Hague Regulations, Articles 43 and 45, <https://ihl-databases.icrc.org/en/ihl-treaties/hague-conv-iv-1907>; ICJ, *Legal Consequences of the Construction of a Wall in the Occupied Palestinian Territory* (Advisory Opinion), 9 July 2004, para. 89, on the customary character of the Hague Regulations, <https://www.icj-cij.org/case/131>; ICJ, *Armed Activities on the Territory of the Congo (Democratic Republic of the Congo v. Uganda)* (Merits), Judgment of 19 December 2005, para. 217, <https://www.icj-cij.org/case/116>.

¹¹⁵ ICC, *Elements of Crimes*, *supra* note 3, at Article 8(2)(a)(v).

¹¹⁶ Rome Statute, *supra* note 3, at Article 7(1) and (2)(a). On the administration, delivery, and funding of the policy by State and State-affiliated actors, *see* OSCE, Moscow Mechanism Report, *supra* note 8, at Executive Summary, section F.

¹¹⁷ Rome Statute, *supra* note 3, at Article 7(1)(d), (h), and (i); ICC, *Elements of Crimes*, *supra* note 3, at Article 7(1)(h); ICJ, *Application of the International Convention for the Suppression of the Financing of Terrorism and of the International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination (Ukraine v. Russian Federation)* (Merits), Judgment of 31 January 2024, paras. 338–370, <https://www.icj-cij.org/sites/default/files/case-related/166/166-20240131-jud-01-00-en.pdf> [hereinafter *Application of International Convention for Suppression of Financing Terrorism*].

group or collectivity, or have targeted the group or collectivity as such, on grounds including national, ethnic, and cultural grounds. For purposes of the present assessment, national grounds are directly relevant; ethnic and cultural grounds may also be implicated by the same conduct. Linguistic identity is not separately enumerated in Article 7(1)(h) but may be relevant insofar as it forms part of national, ethnic, or cultural identity.¹¹⁸ Three matters follow. The discriminatory intent must relate to the specific conduct charged as persecution, and not merely to the wider context in which that conduct occurs. The acts said to constitute persecution fall to be assessed in context and with regard to their cumulative effect, rather than individually. Targeting must be established by reference to the identity of the group: measures applied identically to children within the Russian Federation do not, by themselves, establish or negate targeting on national grounds. The relevant inquiry is whether the conduct alleged as persecution was directed at persons by reason of Ukrainian national, ethnic, or cultural identity. Measures affecting Ukrainian language, Ukrainian studies, national identity, or citizenship may therefore be relevant to that inquiry, but their legal characterization depends on the evidence concerning the conduct, its severity, and the required discriminatory intent. The finding of the ICJ that the implementation of school education in Crimea disadvantaged children of Ukrainian ethnic origin, and the finding of the ECtHR of discrimination on grounds of national origin, are the most authoritative determinations presently available on this element.¹¹⁹

103. The acts capable of constituting persecution in this context may be enumerated. They include the deportation and forcible transfer of children; the imposition of nationality and the alteration of civil-status records; the replacement of the education system and the restriction of instruction in the child's own language; the substitution of curricula directed at displacing national identity; the enlistment of children in formations or organizations subordinate to the occupying power; the delivery of military training within the education system; and the application of pressure or propaganda directed at securing entry into the armed forces of the occupying power.
104. These acts stand in three different relationships to the war crimes provisions. Deportation and forcible transfer are independently criminalized under Articles 8(2)(a)(vii) and 8(2)(b)(viii). Compelled service, and the recruitment or enlistment of children under fifteen into the national armed forces, are independently criminalized under Articles 8(2)(a)(v), 8(2)(b)(xv), and 8(2)(b)(xxvi). The remaining acts are not criminalized individually, although each breaches an obligation of the occupying power.

¹¹⁸ Rome Statute, *supra* note 3, at Articles 7(1)(h) and 7(2)(g); ICC, *Elements of Crimes*, *supra* note 3, at Article 7(1)(h), elements 2–3; ICJ, *Application of International Convention for Suppression of Financing Terrorism*, *supra* note 117, at paras. 354–56, especially para. 355.

¹¹⁹ Rome Statute, *supra* note 3, at Articles 7(1)(h) and 7(2)(g); ICC, *Elements of Crimes*, *supra* note 3, at Article 7(1)(h), elements 1–3. On the requirement that discriminatory intent relate to the specific conduct charged, International Criminal Tribunal for the former Yugoslavia (ICTY), *Prosecutor v. Krnojelac*, Case No. IT-97-25-T, Trial Judgment, 15 March 2002, paras. 435–436, <https://ucr.irmct.org/scasedocs/case/IT-97-25#trialJudgement>; on assessment of persecutory acts in context and cumulatively, *see* ICTY, *Prosecutor v. Stakić*, IT-97-24-T, Trial Judgment, 31 July 2003, paras. 733–736, <https://www.refworld.org/jurisprudence/caselaw/icty/2003/40192>; and *see* ICC, *Prosecutor v. Al Hassan Ag Abdoul Aziz Ag Mohamed Ag Mahmoud*, ICC-01/12-01/18, Trial Judgment, 26 June 2024, paras. 1201–1211, especially paras. 1203–1205, <https://www.icc-cpi.int/court-record/icc-01/12-01/18-2594-red>. On the determinations referred to, *see* ICJ, *Application of International Convention for Suppression of Financing Terrorism*, *supra* note 117, at paras. 338–370; European Court of Human Rights, *Ukraine and the Netherlands v. Russia*, *supra* note 10.

105. Persecution operates across all three. Where an act is independently a war crime, it may be charged as such and may also supply the connection required by Article 7(1)(h). Where an act is not independently criminalized, it may nonetheless contribute to persecution when assessed cumulatively with the others. The characterization is accordingly not an alternative to the war crimes provisions but a means of capturing conduct that those provisions, taken individually, do not reach.
106. Article 6(e) of the Rome Statute, reflecting Article II(e) of the Genocide Convention, identifies the forcible transfer of children of a protected group to another group as an act of genocide.¹²⁰ The prohibited act has been found to encompass more than physical removal. In its report on crimes committed against the Yazidis, the Independent International Commission of Inquiry on the Syrian Arab Republic concluded that the transfer of Yazidi boys to training centers, where they were registered under new names, cut off from their families and communities, and subjected to structured indoctrination and military training, constituted the forcible transfer of children to another group.¹²¹ Liability requires proof of the specific intent to destroy a national, ethnic, racial, or religious group, in whole or in part. Where direct evidence of such intent is absent, it may be inferred from a pattern of conduct, but only where that is the sole inference reasonably available on the evidence.¹²²

VI. Assessment

107. This Part assesses each category of documented conduct against the framework set out above. For each, the assessment proceeds from IHRL, to the law of occupation, and then to ICL. The final paragraph of each section states what the present record supports.
108. That order requires explanation, since the purpose of this report is directed at ICL. It reflects the character of the available record rather than the relative importance of the three bodies of law. The documented practices have been identified principally by human rights bodies and mechanisms and assessed by them against human rights instruments: the Committee on the Rights of the Child, the ECtHR, the ICJ in proceedings under the CERD, OHCHR, and the Moscow Mechanism mission. The material they have produced has supported findings concerning compliance with applicable human rights obligations, including in relation to legislative and administrative measures.¹²³ Proceeding from that established body of material to the law of

¹²⁰ Rome Statute, *supra* note 3, at Article 6(e); Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide, 9 December 1948, 78 UNTS 277, Article II(e), <https://www.ohchr.org/en/instruments-mechanisms/instruments/convention-prevention-and-punishment-crime-genocide>.

¹²¹ UN Human Rights Council, “*They came to destroy*”: *ISIS Crimes Against the Yazidis*, UN Doc. A/HRC/32/CRP.2, 15 June 2016, paras. 94, 96, 147–148. See Cécile Aptel, *Atrocity Crimes, Children and International Criminal Courts: Killing Childhood* (Routledge, 2023), pp. 67–68.

¹²² ICJ, *Application of the Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide (Bosnia and Herzegovina v. Serbia and Montenegro)* (Merits), 26 February 2007, para. 373, <https://www.icj-cij.org/case/91>; ICJ, *Application of the Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide (Croatia v. Serbia)* (Merits), 3 February 2015, para. 148, <https://www.icj-cij.org/case/118>.

¹²³ Committee on the Rights of the Child, *Concluding Observations*, *supra* note 88, at paras. 45–46; ICJ, *Application of the International Convention for Suppression of Financing of Terrorism*, *supra* note 117, at paras. 338–70,

occupation, and then to the more demanding requirements of ICL, allows each successive assessment to identify which legal questions are already addressed by the existing record and where additional evidence or findings may be required. The perspective of this report remains that of ICL; the order of analysis reflects where the evidence presently stands.

Education and curriculum

109. Under human rights law, the substitution of the Russian curriculum, the elimination of Ukrainian-language instruction, and the imposition of compulsory ideological instruction engage Articles 14, 28, 29, and 30 of the CRC, Article 13 of the ICESCR, Article 18 of the ICCPR, and the Convention against Discrimination in Education. Measured against the standard applied by the ECtHR, a weekly compulsory course promoting statehood and support for military personnel, unified history textbooks justifying the armed aggression against Ukraine, and narratives of a future victory over modern Nazism delivered by participants in that war are not conveyed in an objective, critical, and pluralistic manner. Mandated bodies have reached findings to this effect: the Committee on the Rights of the Child has called for an end to the politicization and militarization of schools in occupied territory,¹²⁴ the ECtHR has established an administrative practice of suppressing Ukrainian-language teaching and of indoctrination in education,¹²⁵ and the ICJ has found that the implementation of school education disadvantaged children of Ukrainian ethnic origin whose parents wished them instructed in Ukrainian.¹²⁶
110. Under the law of occupation, the wholesale replacement of the Ukrainian education system engages Article 43 of the Hague Regulations to the extent that it entails displacement of the laws in force in the occupied territory, which the occupying power must respect unless absolutely prevented. It also engages the positive obligation in Article 50(1) of GC IV to facilitate the proper working of institutions devoted to the care and education of children. The 2025 International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) Commentary explains that the occupying power must not replace the existing education system with its own administrative structures.¹²⁷ To the extent that instruction fosters positive attitudes toward service in the Russian armed forces and presents participants in the war as exemplars, it engages the prohibition in the second sentence of Article

especially para. 370; European Court of Human Rights, *Ukraine and the Netherlands v. Russia*, *supra* note 10; OHCHR, *The Impact of the Armed Conflict and Occupation on Children's Rights in Ukraine*, *supra* note 23; OSCE, Moscow Mechanism Report, *supra* note 8.

¹²⁴ Committee on the Rights of the Child, *Concluding Observations*, *supra* note 88, at paras. 39–40, 45(h), and 46.

¹²⁵ European Court of Human Rights, *Ukraine and the Netherlands v. Russia*, *supra* note 10, finding administrative practices of suppressing the Ukrainian language in schools between 11 May 2014 and 16 September 2022 and indoctrinating schoolchildren between 24 February and 16 September 2022, in violation of Article 2 of Protocol No. 1; *see also Catan and Others v. the Republic of Moldova and Russia* (Grand Chamber), App nos. 43370/04, 8252/05, and 18454/06, 19 October 2012, <https://hudoc.echr.coe.int/eng?i=002-7212>; OSCE, Moscow Mechanism Report, *supra* note 8, at 111–112.

¹²⁶ International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination, *supra* note 96, at Articles 2(1)(a) and 5(e)(v); ICJ, *Application of the International Convention for Suppression of Financing Terrorism*, *supra* note 117, at paras. 338–370, particularly para. 370.

¹²⁷ Hague Convention (IV), *supra* note 84, at Article 43; Geneva Convention (IV), *supra* note 79, at Article 50(1); ICRC, *Commentary on the Fourth Geneva Convention*, *supra* note 61, at Article 50, paras. 3260–61.

51(1) on propaganda aimed at securing voluntary enlistment. That prohibition attaches to the pressure or propaganda itself and does not depend upon enlistment resulting.¹²⁸

111. Under ICL, no offense corresponds to the imposition of a curriculum. The conduct is not among the grave breaches enumerated in Article 147 and has no counterpart in Article 8. It may be assessed as a component of persecution under Article 7(1)(h), where the severity and discriminatory elements are established, and it is in this context that the educational measures are of most significance, since they are directed specifically at Ukrainian identity and language. A further question, which cannot be addressed separately under the present structure, is whether propaganda aimed at securing enlistment may in certain circumstances contribute to the compelling of protected persons to serve, rather than constituting only a distinct violation of the prohibition in Article 51(1). The Commentary indicates that sufficiently extreme forms of pressure or propaganda may amount to coercion. Resolution of that question requires both a restructured assessment organized by category of conduct and evidence of the circumstances in which participation was sought in individual cases.
112. *On the present record:* the human rights position is supported by findings of three mandated bodies, although the scope and legal basis of those findings differ. The occupation-law assessment rests principally on Articles 43 and 50(1), both of which are engaged by the instruments themselves, together with the ICRC Commentary; the application of Article 51 depends on whether its requirements are established on the evidence. Assessment of the educational measures as a component of persecution requires further consideration of severity and cumulative effect, discriminatory targeting, and the required contextual and mental elements.

Citizenship and personal status

113. Under human rights law, the imposition of Russian citizenship and alteration of civil-status records engage Articles 7 and 8 of the CRC. Conditioning access to health care, education, and social benefits on citizenship additionally engages Articles 24, 28, and 26, respectively, as well as the prohibition of discrimination in Article 2. When children are placed in guardianship or adoption, Articles 20 and 21 are engaged. The Human Rights Committee has also recognized, under Article 24 of the ICCPR, a child's entitlement to special measures of protection in circumstances involving falsification of civil status and delayed restoration of identity.¹²⁹
114. Under the law of occupation, Article 50(2) prohibits the occupying power from changing the personal status of children in any case. Article 45 of the Hague Regulations prohibits compelling inhabitants to swear allegiance to the hostile Power. Article 47 of GC IV provides that no change introduced into the institutions or government of the territory, and no annexation, deprives protected persons of the benefits of the Convention; the purported conferral of Russian nationality as a consequence of occupation or annexation accordingly does not deprive the children concerned of the Convention's protections.¹³⁰

¹²⁸ Geneva Convention (IV), *supra* note 79, at Article 51(1); ICRC, *Commentary on the Fourth Geneva Convention*, *supra* note 61, at Article 51, para. 3308.

¹²⁹ Convention on the Rights of the Child, *supra* note 79, at Articles 2, 7–8, 20–21, 24, 26, 28; *Mónaco de Gallicchio, on her behalf and on behalf of her granddaughter Ximena Vicario v. Argentina*, *supra* note 95, at paras. 10.3–10.5.

¹³⁰ Geneva Convention (IV), *supra* note 79, at Articles 47, 50(2); Hague Convention (IV), *supra* note 84, at Article 45.

115. Under ICL, the alteration of personal status is not itself an enumerated offense. It is capable of constituting a component of persecution, and it is relevant to the deportation and forcible transfer offenses already the subject of proceedings, since it bears on the permanence of the transfer and on the intention with which it was effected.¹³¹
116. *On the present record*: the instruments imposing citizenship and conditioning services upon it are documented. Further evidence concerning their implementation in respect of children—including the circumstances in which citizenship was imposed and civil-status records were altered—would assist assessment under ICL. For persecution, the relevant inquiry includes the severity of any deprivation, discriminatory targeting, and the contextual and mental elements required by Article 7; for deportation or forcible transfer, the evidence must establish the elements of the particular offense, including unlawful and forcible displacement where applicable.

Youth organizations and structures

117. Under human rights law, incorporation of children into military-patriotic structures engages Articles 12, 14, 15, 29, and 30 of the CRC, together with Article 27 of the ICCPR. Where the structures concerned displace participation in the cultural and linguistic life of the child's own community, the rights of children belonging to national and linguistic minorities are engaged in addition to the general protections concerning education and freedom of conscience.
118. Under the law of occupation, the second sentence of Article 50(2) provides that the occupying power may not, in any case, enlist children in formations or organizations subordinate to it. The prohibition is not qualified by consent, by parental agreement, or by military necessity, and it is not confined to formations forming part of the armed forces.¹³² Its application to Yunarmiya, the Movement of the First, the cadet classes, and the Voin therefore turns principally on two questions: whether each relevant structure is subordinate to the occupying power, and whether children have been enlisted in it within the meaning of the provision. The federal establishment, funding, and direction of these structures is documented; the mechanism by which children in the occupied territories are enrolled, and the degree of subordination of each entity to the occupation authorities, are matters requiring specific evidence.
119. Under ICL, Article 8(2)(b)(xxvi) applies to conscription or enlistment of children under fifteen into the national armed forces, or their use to participate actively in hostilities. The conscription documented in the occupied territories applies upon reaching eighteen. Cadet classes, which may enroll children from the first grade, would fall within the provision only where the evidence establishes that they were conscripted or enlisted into the national armed forces, or were used to participate actively in hostilities; affiliation with, supervision by, or subordination to the armed forces would not by itself satisfy that requirement. Enrollment in youth structures may otherwise be assessed as a component of persecution.

¹³¹ Rome Statute, *supra* note 3, at Articles 7(1)(d), 7(1)(h), 7(2)(d), 7(2)(g); ICC, *Elements of Crimes*, *supra* note 3, at Articles 7(1)(d), 7(1)(h).

¹³² Geneva Convention (IV), *supra* note 79, at Article 50(2); ICRC, *Commentary on the Fourth Geneva Convention*, *supra* note 61, at Article 50, paras. 3271–73. The Commentary states that the prohibition extends to voluntary and compulsory enlistment, encompasses organizations regardless of their function or purpose, and admits no exception or derogation. It further explains that an organization need not be military: sports, cultural, and social organizations can fall within Article 50(2) where subordinate to the occupying power.

120. *On the present record:* the existence, funding, and federal direction of these structures are documented through official and other sources, and their operation in occupied Ukrainian territory, including participation by Ukrainian children, is also established. These movements operate throughout the Russian Federation and were not created exclusively for children in the occupied territories, and evidence bearing on their operation in respect of Ukrainian children specifically would be required to support the discriminatory element of persecution. Evidence of the enrollment mechanism, and of the institutional relationship between each structure and the occupation authorities, is required for Article 50(2).

Training, camps, and clubs

121. Under human rights law, the provision of weapons handling, tactical exercises, and drone operation to children as part of educational or organized training engages Article 29 of the CRC. Where participation in camps entails separation from parents against their will or otherwise results in arbitrary or unlawful interference with family life, Articles 9 and 16 may also be engaged.
122. Under the law of occupation, the delivery of practical military preparation within a compulsory school system, and within structures established by the occupying power, engages Articles 43 and 50 and, where directed toward future service, the second sentence of Article 51(1). Where children have been removed from the occupied territories to camps in the Russian Federation, Article 49 of GC IV and the corresponding rules governing deportation and forcible transfer are also engaged, subject to the circumstances of the removal.
123. Under ICL, military training does not itself constitute an enumerated offense unless it amounts to conscription or enlistment within Article 8(2)(b)(xxvi) or to use in hostilities. Where children under fifteen are used to gather information or to perform other conflict-related functions, the “using them to participate actively in hostilities” limb may be engaged, and this warrants specific inquiry.
124. *On the present record:* the existence of the camp network and the content of its programs are documented in aggregate. Establishing any criminal offense requires identification of individual children, of the training they received, and of those responsible for its delivery.

The conscription pathway

125. Under human rights law, pre-conscription registration from sixteen and conscription at eighteen can engage the Optional Protocol, which requires that recruitment below eighteen be neither forced nor coerced and prohibits compulsory recruitment below that age.
126. Under the law of occupation, Article 51 prohibits the occupying power from compelling protected persons to serve in its armed or auxiliary forces. The prohibition carries no age threshold, and it applies with equal force to those who attained majority under occupation. Article 47 preserves protected-person status notwithstanding the conferral of Russian nationality.
127. Under ICL, Article 8(2)(a)(v) and Article 8(2)(b)(xv) apply to compelled service, and the corresponding grave breach appears in Article 147. The Elements of Crimes for both offenses require compulsion by an act or threat. Sustained militarized education, propaganda, administrative pressure, and threats may be relevant context in determining whether subsequent service was genuinely voluntary or compelled, but such measures alone do not establish either offense.

128. *On the present record:* the legal framework imposing conscription is documented. Establishing a war crime of compelled service or participation requires evidence concerning the persons subjected to the conduct, their relevant status, the circumstances of their conscription or service, and the acts or threats alleged to constitute coercion. Further investigation should prioritize persons who were exposed to the measures described in this report as children and subsequently became subject to Russian military-service requirements after reaching eighteen, as these cases may permit examination of the relationship between childhood militarization and later compelled service. The position of those who have participated in hostilities against Ukraine raises further questions which this report does not address.

VII. Basis for Investigation

129. The practices documented in this report engage obligations under IHRL, the law of occupation, and ICL. These bodies of law operate at materially different standards, and international criminal responsibility requires proof at a standard considerably higher than that applicable to the findings of monitoring bodies or to the responsibility of States. The assessment that follows distinguishes between them accordingly.
130. Human rights obligations are engaged by legislative and administrative measures as such. The instruments establishing the Russian education system in occupied territory, the curriculum requirements, the citizenship measures, and the framework governing military-patriotic organizations are on the public record. Mandated bodies have already reached findings concerning several of these practices under applicable human rights instruments.
131. The law of occupation is engaged by the same measures. The 2026 Moscow Mechanism Report concluded that the Russian Federation has unlawfully transformed the education system, compelled children to participate in formations subordinate to the occupying power, altered their personal status and identity, and applied prohibited pressure to swear allegiance, and that these practices may amount to the crime against humanity of persecution.¹³³
132. International criminal responsibility requires proof of defined elements in respect of identified conduct and identified individuals, at a standard considerably higher than that applicable to the findings of monitoring bodies or to the responsibility of States. The documented practices provide a substantial basis for serious and comprehensive investigation directed at establishing those elements. The documentation assembled to date has been produced largely for monitoring and advocacy purposes and without access to occupied territory; converting it into evidence capable of supporting criminal proceedings is a distinct exercise, and one that has not yet been undertaken at the scale the conduct warrants. Its use in criminal proceedings would require further evidentiary development, including verification, attribution, and linkage evidence¹³⁴ where necessary.
133. Persecution on national grounds provides the framework best able to capture the conduct cumulatively and in context, rather than as a series of isolated measures, and accordingly warrants particular investigative attention. The individual offenses address discrete acts and each requires

¹³³ OSCE, Moscow Mechanism Report, *supra* note 8, at Executive Summary.

¹³⁴ Linkage evidence refers to evidence that establishes causal and participatory links between the prohibited conduct and those most responsible for it.

elements that isolate one measure from the sequence of which it forms part. Persecution permits measures to be assessed cumulatively and in context, and can encompass conduct significant principally by reason of its combination, repetition, and duration: the reshaping of curricula, the imposition of citizenship, the integration of children into structures subordinate to the occupying power, the normalization of military service, and the pathway toward conscription. The post-war prosecutions of Germanization policies are instructive in this respect, not because the historical and contemporary situations are identical, but because they illustrate the evidentiary significance of examining child removal, alteration of identity, suppression of familial and national ties, re-socialization, and integration into the occupying State's institutions as interconnected components of a broader assimilative policy.

134. Investigation directed at that characterization would benefit from attention to four matters in particular:
 - the identification of individual children affected and of the measures applied to each;
 - evidence of coercion in individual cases, including from children who have been returned and from families who have left the occupied territories;
 - documentation establishing the relationship between the youth organizations, cadet structures, and training centers and the authorities of the occupying power, and the mechanism by which children are enrolled in them; and
 - evidence bearing on whether and how these measures operate in respect of Ukrainian children specifically, which is material to the discriminatory element.
135. Two further matters warrant investigation on their own terms: whether children under fifteen have been used to gather information or perform other conflict-related functions amounting to active participation in hostilities, which bears on Article 8(2)(b)(xxvi); and the position of the cohort subjected to these measures as children who have since attained majority and become subject to Russian military-service requirements, including those who have been conscripted.
136. Three further matters require documentation before the questions raised in the course of this work can be addressed. The first is the harm caused to affected children. This encompasses the long-term psychological, social, developmental, and educational consequences of these practices in identified cases, and the harm arising from the erosion or transformation of Ukrainian national identity, including the severance of family, community, and linguistic ties. Documentation should draw on children who have been returned, on families who have left the occupied territories, and on relevant academic research and expert assessment. It should extend to the foreseeable consequences of the conduct where these have materialized, including conscription into the armed forces of the occupying power, participation in hostilities, injury, death, and capture. Evidence of this kind bears on the severity element of persecution, on the gravity of the conduct, and on the categories of harm for which reparation may be sought.
137. The second is the institutional structures through which the practices are implemented, including lines of authority, sources of funding, and decision-making processes, together with the functions held by identified officials within them. Documentation should distinguish the levels at which the practices operate: those who design or authorize the relevant policies; those who administer the institutions, camps, educational structures, and youth movements through which they are delivered; those who organize or facilitate particular programs; and those who implement the measures directly. Establishing the relationship between identified individuals and identified

conduct at each of these levels, together with evidence bearing on the mental element, is a precondition for any assessment of individual criminal responsibility and of the modes of liability that may apply. That assessment cannot be undertaken before the underlying conduct and the persons responsible for it have been identified, and it will differ according to the forum in which proceedings are brought.

138. The third is evidence directed at the elements themselves. For each practice, what is required is evidence capable of establishing the material and mental elements of the potential offenses, and evidence bearing on severity, cumulative effect, and discriminatory targeting in identified cases. The elements requiring proof are identified in the assessment; what is presently absent is evidence directed at them rather than further analysis of the applicable law.
139. A fourth matter concerns the contextual element. Article 7 requires that the enumerated acts be committed as part of a widespread or systematic attack directed against a civilian population, pursuant to or in furtherance of a State or organizational policy. Documentation should accordingly be directed at the indicators from which that element may be established: the successive legislative and regulatory instruments through which the practices were introduced and extended; the institutional structures created to deliver them and the budgetary allocations made to those structures; the geographic reach of the measures across the occupied territories and the consistency of their application; the scale of participation and its progression over time; the involvement of federal as distinct from local authorities; and the degree of coordination between the education, youth policy, and defense administrations. The incremental development of the framework, recorded at paragraph 63, is relevant in this respect, and material of this kind is largely obtainable without access to occupied territory.
140. In relation to the cohort referred to above, information held by the OPG concerning persons who were children at the commencement of the occupation and who have since served in the Russian armed forces, including those captured or who have surrendered, would materially assist the assessment of the conscription pathway.

VIII. Accountability and Deterrence

141. The mechanisms considered here serve two distinct purposes. Deterrence mechanisms are forward-looking, operating to prevent further violations and to alter the calculations of those responsible: fact-finding and documentation mandates, monitoring by Council of Europe bodies, targeted restrictive measures, and arrangements for the structural preservation of evidence. Accountability mechanisms are retrospective, establishing individual criminal responsibility or the responsibility of the State for violations already committed. Several instruments serve both purposes.

The position in respect of Ukraine

142. *The ICC* has issued arrest warrants relating to the unlawful deportation and unlawful transfer of children, founded on Articles 8(2)(a)(vii) and 8(2)(b)(viii) of the Rome Statute.¹³⁵ Those provisions address removal, with the consequence that conduct relating to the education system,

¹³⁵ ICC, *Situation in Ukraine: ICC judges issue arrest warrants*, 17 March 2023, founded on Rome Statute arts 8(2)(a)(vii) and 8(2)(b)(viii), [icc-cpi.int](https://www.icc-cpi.int); Rome Statute, *supra* note 3.

the youth organizations, military-patriotic programming and training, and measures affecting citizenship and identity is not presently charged before any forum. The warrants have yet to be executed, while Ukraine's accession to the Rome Statute alters the complementarity position and increases the significance of domestic proceedings.¹³⁶ As a State Party, Ukraine's proceedings now operate within the framework of the Statute rather than alongside it, with the consequence that domestic investigation and prosecution of these practices bear directly on the assessment of admissibility. The declaration made under Article 124 concerns war crimes alleged to have been committed by Ukrainian nationals and does not affect the conduct examined in this report. The Court can convict and order reparation, but requires custody of an accused and charges reaching the conduct in question.

143. *The ICJ* has found a violation in respect of school education in the Ukrainian language in Crimea, in proceedings that did not extend to compensation.¹³⁷ Proceedings under the Genocide Convention continue to concern Ukraine's request for a declaration that it did not breach the Convention, together with counter-claims admitted by the Court in December 2025. As the CRC contains no compromissory clause, no further avenue before the Court is presently available and the existing finding is of value as an established fact rather than as a route to remedy.
144. *The ECtHR* has established administrative practices of suppressing the Ukrainian language in schools, of indoctrination in education, and of transferring children to the Russian Federation and facilitating their adoption there.¹³⁸ Findings of administrative practice, as distinct from findings on isolated incidents, establish the systematic character of the conduct. Temporal jurisdiction extends only to 16 September 2022 and does not reach measures adopted subsequently. These findings are of evidentiary value in establishing the systematic character of the conduct; the Court cannot address measures adopted after 16 September 2022, and execution falls to the Committee of Ministers.
145. *United Nations human rights mechanisms* have assembled an extensive record. The Commission has concluded that the deportation and forcible transfer of children, together with their enforced

¹³⁶ Ukraine deposited its instrument of ratification of the Rome Statute on 25 October 2024, the Statute entering into force for Ukraine on 1 January 2025, when it became the 125th State Party, [icc-cpi.int](https://www.icc-cpi.int). Ukraine deposited a declaration under Article 124 by which, for seven years following entry into force, it does not accept the Court's jurisdiction over crimes under Article 8 where the crime is alleged to have been committed by its nationals, [coalitionfortheicc.org](https://www.coalitionfortheicc.org). Ukraine had previously accepted jurisdiction by declarations under Article 12(3).

¹³⁷ ICJ, *Application of the International Convention for Suppression of Financing of Terrorism*, *supra* note 117, at para 369 and *dispositif*, finding violations of Articles 2(1)(a) and 5(e)(v) of the latter Convention in respect of the implementation of school education in the Ukrainian language in Crimea; further holding that the relevant legislative and other practices constituted a pattern of racial discrimination because they applied to children of Ukrainian ethnic origin whose parents wished them to be instructed in Ukrainian, did not merely concern individual cases, and appeared intended to produce structural change in the educational system.

¹³⁸ European Court of Human Rights, *Ukraine and the Netherlands v. Russia*, *supra* note 10 (establishing administrative practices of suppressing the Ukrainian language in schools from 11 May 2014 to 16 September 2022; indoctrinating schoolchildren from 24 February to 16 September 2022; and transferring Ukrainian children to the Russian Federation and facilitating their adoption there from June 2014 to 16 September 2022); European Court of Human Rights (Grand Chamber), *Ukraine v. Russia (re Crimea)*, App nos 20958/14 and 38334/18, 25 June 2024, hudoc.echr.coe.int.

disappearance, amount to crimes against humanity.¹³⁹ These mandates produce authoritative findings but have no enforcement mechanism. Their principal value is accordingly evidentiary. In the existing reporting arrangements, the Russian armed forces are listed in the annexes to the Secretary-General's annual report on children and armed conflict for killing and maiming and for attacks on schools and hospitals, but not for recruitment and use, notwithstanding verified use of children in the same period.¹⁴⁰ Their value would be extended by verification of the militarization and indoctrination record to the standard presently applied to removal, and by application of the existing recruitment and use criterion on the evidence already available.

146. *Universal jurisdiction and national proceedings* reach the administrative and operational level at which these practices are implemented. Personal immunities will ordinarily preclude proceedings against those already named in existing warrants,¹⁴¹ and in the near term such proceedings are more likely to yield structural investigation and evidence preservation than trial. The joint investigation team coordinated through Eurojust investigates core international crimes and, since March 2026, has placed additional focus on the illegal transfer and deportation of Ukrainian children; participating States conduct their own national investigations and share evidence through it. CIED preserves and analyzes evidence of such crimes for use by participating authorities.¹⁴² Within Ukraine, the OPG has issued notices of suspicion concerning the organization of a military-patriotic youth movement involving approximately 6,000 children.¹⁴³ These proceedings reach the administrative and operational level and are most likely to yield structural investigation and evidence preservation; what would advance them is transmission of case files structured to the requirements of the jurisdictions most likely to act.
147. *Provision for compensation* is still being built. The Register of Damage receives claims under categories covering the forcible transfer or deportation of children and loss of access to education;

¹³⁹ UN, Report of the Independent International Commission of Inquiry on Ukraine, UN Doc. A/HRC/61/61, 12 March 2026; “*I am still looking for my daughter: ” crimes against humanity committed by Russian authorities against children from Ukraine*, UN Doc. A/HRC/61/CRP.8, 12 March 2026, ohchr.org; the mandate was most recently extended on 31 March 2026 by Human Rights Council resolution 61/29; Committee on the Rights of the Child, *Concluding Observations*, *supra* note 88; OSCE, Moscow Mechanism Report, *supra* note 8.

¹⁴⁰ UN, *Report of the Secretary-General on children and armed conflict*, UN Doc. A/80/723–S/2026/357, 17 June 2026, covering January to December 2025, un.org. In 2025 the United Nations verified 1,899 grave violations against 781 children in Ukraine, including the use of 24 children as informants or to carry out other conflict-related activities.

¹⁴¹ ICJ, *Arrest Warrant of 11 April 2000 (Democratic Republic of the Congo v. Belgium)*, Judgment, 14 February 2002, ICJ Reports 2002, p. 3, paras 51–61, <https://www.icj-cij.org/case/121>. The immunities recognized in that case attach to Heads of State, Heads of Government, and Ministers for Foreign Affairs. They do not extend to other officials, whose position falls to be assessed on ordinary principles.

¹⁴² Eurojust, *Joint Investigation Team continues work with added focus on illegal transfer of Ukrainian children*, 20 March 2026, eurojust.europa.eu; Europol, *Europol and partners track down 45 forcibly transferred Ukrainian children*, 20 April 2026, europol.europa.eu. On national structural investigations, including under Criminal Code of the Republic of Lithuania, arts 100(2) and 102, see International Bar Association Human Rights Institute, *Universal Jurisdiction: Good Practice Guide for Law and Policymakers* (2025) ibanet.org.

¹⁴³ OPG, *Russia Militarizes Ukrainian Children in the Occupied Territories: Seven Persons Served with Notices of Suspicion*, 30 October 2025, gp.gov.ua. The figures are those of the prosecuting authority. Command responsibility is available under the Criminal Code of Ukraine, art 31-1, introduced by Law No. 4012-IX and in force from 24 October 2024, in respect of conduct from that date, zakon.rada.gov.ua.

the International Claims Commission will decide claims once operational, and a compensation fund remains to be established.¹⁴⁴ Harms relating specifically to the alteration of identity, indoctrination, and longer-term developmental effects may not be fully captured by categories directed to forcible transfer or deportation and loss of access to education. Provision for compensation remains open, and what would secure recognition of the harms examined here is their express inclusion in the claims categories while those categories are still being settled.

148. The mechanisms described above preserve and analyze evidence and support national investigations. Frameworks capable of converting that documentation into case files prepared for an identified forum exist, however, for one crime alone: in respect of aggression, the International Centre for the Prosecution of the Crime of Aggression, also hosted at Eurojust, coordinates six national investigations and is preparing a case-building package for transfer to the Special Tribunal.¹⁴⁵ No comparable investigative structure presently exists in respect of crimes affecting children, including the broader practices of militarization and indoctrination examined in this report.

Comparative experience

149. *Criminal accountability and reparation before the ICC.* In *Lubanga*, the conviction for enlisting and conscripting children under fifteen and using them in hostilities was followed by a reparations order, liability fixed at USD 10 million, and delivery through the Trust Fund for Victims to some 2,500 beneficiaries, 2,100 of them former child soldiers.¹⁴⁶ The sequence is instructive, as are the constraints encountered: the convicted person was found indigent and the award funded from voluntary contributions.
150. *Reparation before the ICJ.* In *Armed Activities on the Territory of the Congo*, Uganda was ordered to pay USD 325 million in five annual installments, USD 225 million of it for damage to persons.¹⁴⁷ Unable to establish the number of children recruited, the figures before it ranging from 600 to more than 30,000, the Court awarded compensation within a global sum rather than

¹⁴⁴ Register of Damage for Ukraine, Claim Categories A2.8 ('Forcible Transfer or Deportation of Children') and A4.2 ('Loss of access to education'), rd4u.coe.int; Convention establishing an International Claims Commission for Ukraine, opened for signature at The Hague on 16 December 2025, providing for temporal jurisdiction from 24 February 2022 with express provision for later amendment extending it to 20 February 2014, coe.int.

¹⁴⁵ International Centre for the Prosecution of the Crime of Aggression against Ukraine, established at Eurojust in July 2023, with participating prosecutors from Ukraine, Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania, Poland, and Romania, eurojust.europa.eu; on CICED, launched in February 2023 following an amendment of the Eurojust mandate, *see* eurojust.europa.eu. The Special Tribunal for the Crime of Aggression against Ukraine, established by agreement between Ukraine and the Council of Europe signed on 25 June 2025, is likewise confined to the crime of aggression.

¹⁴⁶ ICC, *Prosecutor v. Thomas Lubanga Dyilo* (Judgment pursuant to Article 74 of the Statute) ICC-01/04-01/06-2842, Trial Chamber I, 14 March 2012, icc-cpi.int; Order fixing the amount of reparations, ICC-01/04-01/06-3379-Red, 15 December 2017, setting the convicted person's liability at USD 10,000,000, confirmed on appeal, ICC-01/04-01/06-3466-Red, 18 July 2019. On implementation and beneficiary numbers *see* Trust Fund for Victims, *The Lubanga Case*, trustfundforvictims.org. *See also* *Prosecutor v. Bosco Ntaganda* (Judgment on the appeals) ICC-01/04-02/06-2666-Red, 30 March 2021, icc-cpi.int.

¹⁴⁷ ICJ, *Armed Activities on the Territory of the Congo (Democratic Republic of the Congo v. Uganda)* (Reparations), Judgment of 9 February 2022, ICJ Reports 2022, p. 13, awarding USD 325,000,000 payable in five annual installments of USD 65,000,000 from 1 September 2022, of which USD 225,000,000 for damage to persons, with compensation for the recruitment and deployment of child soldiers awarded as part of that global sum, icj-cij.org.

declining to do so on evidentiary grounds. This establishes that uncertainty as to aggregate figures need not preclude an award.

151. *Regional human rights protection.* In *Catan and Others*, the Grand Chamber found that the suppression of Moldovan-language schooling by *de facto* authorities in Transnistria violated the right to education, held the Russian Federation responsible by virtue of its continued support to those authorities, and awarded just satisfaction to individual applicants.¹⁴⁸ Education policy implemented through a subordinate administration may therefore be attributed to the supporting State.
152. *National proceedings and the restoration of identity.* In Argentina, the systematic appropriation of children of the disappeared gave rise both to convictions and, separately, to an institutional framework for identity restoration comprising a national genetic data bank, a State body empowered to order testing, a grandparentage index, and a judicial power to obtain genetic material non-invasively where an adult declines.¹⁴⁹ More than one hundred identities have been restored. The two tracks developed in parallel, and it was the second that enabled reunification.
153. *Preservation of evidence for future proceedings.* The International, Impartial and Independent Mechanism (IIIM) for Syria was established to collect, consolidate, preserve, and analyze evidence and to prepare case files for national, regional, and international jurisdictions, thereby addressing the recurrent gap between documentation and prosecutable material.¹⁵⁰ The contrasting experience in Yemen, where the Group of Eminent Experts was discontinued in 2021, indicates that mandated fact-finding may not continue indefinitely.¹⁵¹
154. In each of these examples, an institution assembled the record and supplied it to the forum concerned, and findings were operationalized where that occurred.

¹⁴⁸ European Court of Human Rights (Grand Chamber), *Catan and Others v. the Republic of Moldova and Russia*, App nos 43370/04, 8252/05, and 18454/06, 19 October 2012, finding a violation of Article 2 of Protocol No. 1 by the Russian Federation, hudoc.echr.coe.int. On the period required for implementation *see* strasbourgobservers.com.

¹⁴⁹ Tribunal Oral en lo Criminal Federal No. 6 de la Capital Federal, *Franco Rubén O. y otros s/sustracción de menores de diez años*, causa no. 1351, verdict of 5 July 2012, reasons of 17 September 2012, convicting nine defendants, including Jorge Rafael Videla and Reynaldo Bignone, in respect of 34 cases, and holding the acts to constitute crimes against humanity committed through a systematic and generalized practice of taking, retaining, and concealing minors, rendering uncertain, altering, or suppressing their identity, mpf.gob.ar. On the National Bank of Genetic Data, the National Commission for the Right to Identity, the grandparentage index, and the 2008 ruling of the Argentine Supreme Court permitting non-invasive collection of genetic material, *see* V. B. Penchaszadeh, *Genetics and human rights: two histories, restoring genetic identity after forced disappearance and suppression of identity in Argentina*, pmc.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov.

¹⁵⁰ IIIM, *supra* note 1.

¹⁵¹ The mandate of the Group of Eminent International and Regional Experts on Yemen was not renewed in October 2021, ohchr.org. On the continuing role of the Panel of Experts, and on the structure of the summer camps, the ages of the children involved, and the conditioning of assistance on enrollment, *see* the Final Report of the Panel of Experts on Yemen established pursuant to Security Council resolution 2140 (2014), UN Doc. S/2025/650, transmitted 15 October 2025 and covering 1 August 2024 to 31 July 2025: docs.un.org. The Houthi authorities are listed in the annexes to the Secretary-General's 2026 annual report for the recruitment and use of children, and agreed an action plan with the United Nations in 2022; the Panel nonetheless records an increase in recruitment thereafter.

155. In the present case, a substantial part of that work has already been done, namely by civil society. The documentation on which this report principally relies—the legislative and institutional mapping of military-patriotic youth policy, the analysis of textbooks and curricula, the monitoring of cadet classes and camps, the tracking of participation figures, and the archiving of Russian and occupation-side material before its removal—has been assembled by Ukrainian and international non-governmental organizations, in several instances over more than a decade and without access to the territories concerned. The Center for Civic Education “Almenda,” the RCHR, the Ukrainian Helsinki Human Rights Union, the Ukrainian Parliament Commissioner for Human Rights, the coalition “Ukraine. 5 AM,” Freedom House, Human Rights Center ZMINA, and Human Rights Center Viasna are among those whose work is cited throughout this report. That documentation is the reason an assessment of this kind can be undertaken at all. What remains is not to duplicate it but to build upon it: to supplement it where evidentiary standards require, and to connect it to the authorities and forums capable of acting on it.

IX. Conclusion

156. The conduct documented in this report is systematic, State-directed, and sustained over more than a decade. It engages obligations under IHRL and the law of occupation, and mandated international bodies have already made findings concerning aspects of the conduct, including in respect of education, language, identity, and the transfer of children.
157. Whether that conduct also gives rise to individual criminal responsibility is a separate question, requiring proof of the elements of a defined crime and the responsibility of particular individuals. The applicable evidentiary standard depends on the stage of criminal proceedings. The practices described provide a substantial basis for further investigation directed at determining whether the elements of specific offenses can be established. Persecution on national grounds provides the framework best able to capture the conduct cumulatively and in context, rather than as a series of isolated measures, and accordingly warrants particular investigative attention.
158. What that requires is not further legal analysis but a documentation effort commensurate with the scale of the conduct: the identification of individual children, evidence of coercion in individual cases, documentation of the institutional relationships through which the system operates, and material bearing on how these measures apply to Ukrainian children specifically. That effort is beyond the capacity of any single authority and will require the coordinated involvement of Ukrainian institutions, international organizations, and civil society.
159. What follows differs by actor. For Ukrainian investigative and prosecutorial authorities, the immediate requirement is collection directed at the evidentiary questions identified in this report, organized by the elements to be proved. For international partners and States, it is support for that collection, for the cooperation mechanisms through which evidence is shared, and for the preventive measures available without judicial proceedings. For international accountability mechanisms, it is the extension of existing mandates to the conduct examined here and the application of existing criteria on the evidence already available. For civil society and documenting organizations, whose work forms much of the record set out in this report, it is continued documentation with attention to the evidentiary standards that criminal proceedings require.
160. Children subjected to these measures since 2014 are now beginning to reach or have reached majority, while the structures and policies described in this report continue to operate in occupied

territory. The number of children within that system grows for as long as the occupation continues.