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Key Takeaways:

- **Russia continues preparations to deport tens of thousands of Ukrainian children to summer camps across occupied Ukraine and Russia, including to areas of Crimea that are unsafe.**
- **Russia is systematically torturing Ukrainian prisoners of war (POWs) and civilians held in Russian detention.**
- **Kremlin-linked and federally-funded youth organizations and educational initiatives continue to facilitate the indoctrination of Ukrainian children.**
- **Russia is installing Russian veterans of the war in Ukraine in occupation administrations as part of a wider initiative to militarize occupied Ukraine and strengthen Russian governance over occupied areas.**
- **The wife of a deceased Kherson Oblast occupation deputy launched a youth program aimed at encouraging high birth rates and Russian family values in occupied Kherson Oblast.**

Russia continues preparations to deport tens of thousands of Ukrainian children to summer camps across occupied Ukraine and Russia, including to areas of Crimea that are unsafe. The Kherson Oblast occupation administration reported on April 28 that it plans to send 600 children from occupied Henichesk Raion to summer camps in the Adygea Republic throughout Summer 2025 for “recreation and rest.”[1] ISW previously observed reports of children from occupied Kherson Oblast, specifically from occupied Henichesk Raion, arriving at the Lan and Gornyi children’s camps in Kamennomostskii, Adygea Republic between 2022-2024, suggesting that these camps may have agreements with Kherson Oblast occupation authorities.[2] Kamennomostskii is nearly 500km from occupied Henichesk. The Adygean Ministry of Labor previously claimed that Ukrainian children will experience “culture and the way of life of our Motherland” while at summer camps in Adygea—strongly emphasizing the fact that Russia uses such summer camps to indoctrinate Ukrainian children and propagate pro-Russian values.[3] Russian First Deputy Education Minister Alexander Bugayev stated on April 27 that about 53,000 Ukrainian children will “spend their summer holidays” at Russian summer camps throughout occupied Ukraine and the Russian Federation, likely including camps in Adygea Republic.[4] Summer camps on the coastline in occupied Crimea are likely to be physically unsafe for children, however, due to the lasting results of a December 2024 crash of Russian oil tankers in the Kerch Strait.[5] Crimea occupation head Sergei Aksyonov recently claimed that over 23,000 children from occupied Ukraine and Russia will attend over 380 summer camps in occupied Crimea in

Summer 2025, despite concerns from Russian activists about persistent fuel contamination of beaches, including those near children's camps.[6] The deportation of Ukrainian children to Russia under the guise of participation in summer camps, regardless of the duration of their stay, is likely a violation of international law.[7] Russia, as the occupying power, is furthermore required to safeguard the health of occupied populations (particularly vulnerable populations such as children) and will be in violation of this responsibility if it sends children to unsafe areas that could pose health risks to children.[8]

Russia is systematically torturing Ukrainian prisoners of war (POWs) and civilians held in Russian detention. The Ukrainian Media Initiative for Human Rights (MIHR) published a report on April 29 detailing how Russia has used Soviet-era torture practices, including beatings, humiliation, electric shocks, and dog attacks, against Ukrainian POWs and civilian prisoners.[9] MIHR based the report on the testimonies of 138 freed Ukrainian POWs who the Russians detained in 2022-2025. The report notably coheres with a UN Office of the High Commissioner on Human Rights (UN OHCHR) assessment from October 2024 that assessed that Russian authorities have subjected Ukrainian POWs to torture, ill-treatment, and inhumane conditions “in a widespread and systematic manner.”[10] The UN OHCHR report also noted that it is highly likely that the Russian military command is aware of the treatment of Ukrainian POWs and that Russian state entities may be coordinating the use of torture. UN High Commissioner on Human Rights Volker Türk noted that there is significant coordination on the poor treatment of the POWs and prisoners among various Russian entities, specifically the Russian Federal Security Service (FSB) and the Russian Federal Penitentiary Service (FSIN).[11] Russia's abuse of Ukrainians in detention is notably not exclusive to POWs. The Ukrainian Ombudsman's Office confirmed on April 28 that Russia is illegally detaining almost 16,000 civilians in occupied territories and at least 1,800 civilians in Russia, and it is likely that Russian agents are torturing many of these detainees.[12] Russia recently returned the body of Ukrainian journalist Viktoriya Roshchyna, whom Russia detained while she was investigating Russian detention centers in occupied Ukraine, with “extensive damage to the coronary arteries” and missing organs, a sign that Russian authorities were trying to obfuscate evidence of torture.[13]

Kremlin-linked and federally funded youth organizations and educational initiatives continue to facilitate the indoctrination of Ukrainian children. Teenage participants of the “Movement of the First” youth activism organization from Podove, occupied Kherson Oblast, visited Grozny, Chechnya on April 28 as part of the “More than a Journey” program.[14] The visit included memorial activities to commemorate the Chechen War and Akhmat Kadyrov, the father of the current Chechen Republic Head Ramzan Kadyrov. The Russian “Youth and Children” project, which Russian President Vladimir Putin created in 2024, oversees and implements the “More than a Journey” program.[15] “Russian opposition outlet *Mozhem Obyasnit* published an investigation on April 22 that found that the “Youth and Children” project will provide Yunarmia (the Russian Young Cadets National Movement) with 800 million rubles in subsidies (nearly \$10 million) in 2025, dispersed via the “Movement of the First” organization.[16] *Mozhem Obyasnit* also found that Yunarmia will receive 1 billion rubles (\$12 million) in funding in 2025, the most it has received since the beginning of Russia's invasion of Ukraine.[17] The scale of Russian federal investment in militarization programs is noteworthy—all of these Russian organizations have active presences in Russia as well as in occupied Ukraine and militarize adolescents to prepare them for long-term service to the Russian state.[18] Russia uses these programs in occupied Ukraine to generate multi-generational buy-in for Russian rule

via curated military-patriotic indoctrination projects.[19]

Russia is installing Russian veterans of the war in Ukraine in occupation administrations as part of a wider initiative to militarize occupied Ukraine and strengthen Russian governance over occupied areas. Kherson Oblast occupation head Vladimir Saldo stated on April 30 that 680 Russian veterans of the war in Ukraine passed the first stage of testing for state and municipal service in the Kherson Oblast occupation administration via the “Heroes of Kherson” program.[20] The 680 candidates will undergo another round of testing, after which the top 10 scorers will receive jobs in the Kherson Oblast occupation administration, and the remaining portion will be placed in the personnel reserve. Saldo initially launched the “Heroes of Kherson” project in February 2025 as an oblast-level analogue to Putin’s “Time of Heroes” project, which aims to install veterans of the war in Ukraine in various Russian government positions.[21] Similar selection processes are ongoing in occupied Luhansk Oblast through the “Heroes of Luhansk” program, as ISW recently reported.[22] The installation of Russian veterans who are loyal to the Kremlin into occupation administrations in Ukraine will further militarize occupied Ukraine and additionally strengthen the Kremlin’s control over local governance.

The wife of a deceased Kherson Oblast occupation deputy launched a youth program aimed at encouraging high birth rates and Russian family values in occupied Kherson Oblast. Oksana Stremousova, the wife of Kirill Stremousov, a Kherson Oblast occupation deputy who died in a reported car crash in November 2022, launched the “Family Traditions Workshop” program in occupied Kherson Oblast on April 29.[23] Stremousova’s project is “aimed at promoting family values and large families” by engaging with high school students in occupied Kherson Oblast.[24] Stremousova’s focus on encouraging Ukrainian teenagers to plan on having large families aligns with other efforts on the part of the Russian occupation administration to stimulate population growth in occupied Ukraine.[25] Stremousova’s program also seeks to teach Ukrainian teenagers about Russian traditions and norms for family life, thereby acting as another tool of Russification in occupied Ukraine. Stremousova appears to be advocating for the creation of a pro-Russian society in occupied Kherson Oblast in which Ukrainian girls grow up to be mothers who focus on raising several children to be loyal to Russia, and where boys grow up to serve the Russian state either militarily or politically.[26]

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