

Russia Repatriates 38 Children of Islamic State Suspects from Syria

By [AFP](#)

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Children in camp for displaced people in north-west Syria. **Juma Muhammad / IMAGESLIVE via ZUMA Press Wire / TACC**

A Russian delegation in Syria on Thursday took 38 children from families of suspected Islamic State (IS) group members for repatriation, a Kurdish official and AFP correspondents said.

Kurdish authorities in northeast Syria handed over the children, "most of whom are orphans," to the Russian delegation, Kurdish foreign affairs official Khaled Ibrahim told a press conference in the city of Qamishli.

The children were taken from the Kurdish-run Al-Hol and Roj camps to the regime-controlled Qamishli airport, where they boarded a plane under heavy Russian security, AFP correspondents said.

The Kurdish administration holds thousands of Syrians and foreigners with alleged IS ties in

its custody, after spearheading a U.S.-backed campaign that stripped the Islamist group of its last territory in Syria in 2019.

Foreign fighters are held in jails, while women and children with ties to the group live in overcrowded camps.

The Russian repatriations follow a similar move by France, which announced Thursday it had repatriated 40 children and 15 women from camps in Syria.

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"Bringing home these children will ensure they can start to recover from their experiences and begin a normal life," said Beat Rohr, Save the Children's interim country director in Syria, following the French announcement.

Syria's Kurds have repeatedly urged the international community to repatriate foreign nationals held in overcrowded camps.

But their calls have largely fallen on deaf ears with only limited numbers, mostly children, allowed to return as home countries fear security threats and a domestic political backlash.

Nearly 4,500 Russians went to fight alongside IS, according to Russian authorities, and Moscow was the first to organize returns from Syria and also Iraq.

At least 341 Russians, many of them orphans, were repatriated between 2018 and late 2021, following the first returns of women and children spearheaded by Chechen President Ramzan Kadyrov.

Islamic State is a terrorist group banned in Russia.

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