

ICC Issues Arrest Warrant For Putin Over Alleged Ukraine War Crimes

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President Vladimir Putin and Russian children's rights commissioner Maria Lvova-Belova. kremlin.ru

The International Criminal Court (ICC) on Friday [issued](#) an arrest warrant for Russian President Vladimir Putin over the “unlawful deportation” of Ukrainian children during Moscow's invasion of its neighbor.

The Hague-based court also issued an arrest warrant for Russian presidential children's rights commissioner Maria Lvova-Belova on similar charges.

Both Putin and Lvova-Belova “bear individual criminal responsibility” for facilitating the forced transfer of children from Russian-occupied areas of Ukraine to Russia since the start of the invasion of Ukraine in February 2022, the court said in a press release published on its website.

Related article: [UN Investigators: Russian Deportation of Ukrainian Children a 'War Crime'](#)

"There are reasonable grounds to believe that each suspect bears responsibility for the war crime of unlawful deportation of population and that of unlawful transfer of population from occupied areas of Ukraine to the Russian Federation, in prejudice of Ukrainian children," the statement said.

The court's shock notice came hours after other news with the potential to significantly impact Russia's war on Ukraine, including a Moscow visit from Chinese leader Xi Jinping and more fighter jets for Kyiv's forces.

More than 16,000 Ukrainian children have been deported to Russia since the Feb. 24, 2022, invasion, according to Kyiv, with many allegedly placed in institutions and foster homes.

ICC prosecutor Karim Khan told AFP that Putin was now liable for arrest if he set foot in any of the court's more than 120 member states.

He said the arrest warrants were "based upon forensic evidence, scrutiny and what's been said by those two individuals."

"The evidence we presented focused on crimes against children. Children are the most vulnerable part of our society," said Khan.

The ICC's announcement comes one day after a UN investigation [determined](#) that Russia's forced transfer and deportation of Ukrainian children to areas under its control amounted to a war crime.

Russia is not a member of the ICC, and it was unclear how the ICC planned to enforce the warrant.

Kremlin spokesman Dmitry Peskov [called](#) requests to comment on the ICC's move "outrageous and unacceptable," given that Russia is not a member of the ICC.

"Russia, just like a number of different countries, does not recognize the jurisdiction of this court and so from a legal point of view, the decisions of this court are void," Peskov told reporters.

Lvova-Belova said she planned to keep doing her job no matter what sanctions are imposed.

"First of all, it's great that the international community appreciated the work to help children in our country, that we don't leave them in the war zone. ... There were sanctions from all countries, even Japan, against me; now there is an arrest warrant. I wonder what will happen next — well, we keep working," the RBC news website [quoted](#) her as saying.

Former Russian President Dmitry Medvedev, who is now the deputy chairman of Russia's Security Council, took a more crude route in rejecting the ICC's move.

"No need to explain where this paper should be used," Medvedev [tweeted](#) in reference to the warrant, adding a toilet paper emoji.

War-battered Ukraine welcomed the ICC announcement, with President Volodymyr Zelensky hailing the "historic decision."

U.S. President Joe Biden called the ICC's issuance of an arrest warrant "justified."

The move "makes a very strong point," he told reporters at the White House, while noting that the United States is not a member of the ICC.

The ICC is a court of last resort for crimes that countries cannot or will not prosecute, war crimes and crimes against humanity.

ICC prosecutor Karim Khan launched an investigation into alleged war crimes and crimes against humanity in Ukraine just days after Russia's invasion.

The arrest warrant against Putin marks only the second time in history that the ICC has indicted a sitting head of state, with the first such instance being the then-leader of Sudan Omar al-Bashir in 2009.

Russia denies allegations of war crimes by its troops. Experts have said it is unlikely it would ever hand over any suspects.

AFP contributed reporting.

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