

Russia Agrees to Free 4 Ukrainian Children with Qatar's Mediation – Washington Post

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Ukrainian war refugees protest with placards in front of Russia's Embassy to Romania, in Bucharest.

Daniel Mihalescu / AFP

Russia has agreed to release four Ukrainian children to Ukraine with the mediation of Qatar, The Washington Post [reported](#) Monday, citing an anonymous government official familiar with the matter.

Thousands of Ukrainian children have been moved to Russia since the start of Moscow's 20-month war on its neighbor. The four children are the first to be returned as part of the small Gulf nation's negotiation efforts, marking a major development in one of the most sensitive issues of the war.

“All parties agreed they found their [the Ukrainian children’s] parents, documents all matched [and] they could be reunited,” the official said.

In a statement, Qatar's foreign ministry [confirmed](#) the release of two Ukrainian children.

Two of the children are back with their relatives and two others are expected to reunite with their families in the coming days, The Washington Post cited its source as saying.

The official who spoke with The Washington Post identified the reunited children as a 2-year-old boy and a 7-year-old boy. The 2-year-old was said to have reunited with his mother, while the 7-year-old, whose mother was arrested and remains in custody in Russia, was reunited with his grandmother.

The two other children, a 9-year-old boy and a 17-year-old girl, are expected to return to their Ukrainian families this Wednesday.

Related article: [Activists Map Deported Ukrainian Children in Russia](#)

Russian officials estimate that more than 700,000 Ukrainian children have [arrived](#) in Russia since Moscow invaded its neighbor in early 2022.

Ukraine says around 20,000 Ukrainian children have been deported to Russia during the war, with many believed to have been placed in institutions and foster homes.

Russia has returned fewer than 400 of them, according to the Ukrainian government's "Children of War" database.

Kyiv says the deportations are a systematic effort to erase the children's Ukrainian identity. Moscow maintains that it removed the children from areas of conflict to ensure their safety.

The International Criminal Court (ICC) in March issued an arrest warrant for President Vladimir Putin and his children's rights commissioner on war crimes charges for the "unlawful deportation" of Ukrainian children.

The Kremlin has dismissed the ICC warrant as legally "void" since Russia does not recognize the Hague-based court's jurisdiction.

Qatar's prime minister and foreign minister Sheikh Mohammed bin Abdulrahman bin Jassim al-Thani visited Ukraine and Russia this summer. In Kyiv, Ukraine's prime minister [thanked](#) Qatar for its role in facilitating the return of Ukrainian children.

Qatar had negotiated with Moscow on Kyiv's behalf for several months about the Ukrainian children, according to The Washington Post's reporting.

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