

# Ukraine Says 12 Children Returned From Russian-Occupied Territory

By [AFP](#)

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A dozen Ukrainian children who were being held in Russian-occupied territory have been returned to parts of the country controlled by Kyiv, a regional official said Friday.

Kyiv has accused Moscow of abducting almost 20,000 children from parts of the east and south of Ukraine, while many more have found themselves living under Russian control after troops invaded in February 2022.

"Twelve children were returned to territory controlled by Ukraine," Kherson region Governor Oleksandr Prokudin said on Telegram.

Three boys and nine girls — ages 2-17 — were transferred from parts of the southern Kherson region that are under the control of Russian forces.

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Kyiv has made returning the children to Ukrainian-controlled territory one of its top diplomatic priorities.

Moscow has said it moved some Ukrainian children away from their homes or orphanages that were close to the fighting for their own protection.

But Russian authorities have also been accused of effectively abducting some of the children by putting them up for permanent adoption with Russian families.

The International Criminal Court issued an arrest warrant for Russian President Vladimir Putin and his children's rights commissioner Maria Lvova-Belova last year over the allegations.

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