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Moscow Returns 9 Ukrainian Children With Qatar's Mediation

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Russian authorities returned nine Ukrainian children to their families with the help of Qatari mediators, the state-run TASS news agency reported Thursday, coming a day after Ukraine handed over two children to their families in Russia.

Maria Lvova-Belova, Russia's presidential children's rights commissioner, said that eight of the returned Ukrainian children had been living with relatives in Russia. One 16-year-old was brought from the Alyoshkinsky orphanage in Russian-occupied Kherson after his brother successfully applied for legal guardianship, according to TASS.

On Wednesday, footage from the Qatari Embassy in Moscow showed a Russian father describing the "long period of uncertainty" he endured following the death of his son's mother in Ukraine. "Of course, I would have liked [the reunification] to go faster," he told reporters, while his son nodded when asked if he had missed his father.

Since July 2023, Qatar has facilitated the return of dozens of Ukrainian children taken to

Russia or occupied territories. Kyiv accuses Moscow of unlawfully deporting over 19,000 Ukrainian children since the full-scale invasion began —allegations that Moscow denies.

Russia says that 15 children from 10 families have been reunited with their relatives in Russia, while 87 children from 69 families have been reunited with their relatives in Ukraine. Kyiv disputes Moscow's description of the process as a "child exchange," emphasizing that Ukraine has not kidnapped or detained Russian children.

Last year, the International Criminal Court issued arrest warrants for Russian President Vladimir Putin and Lvova-Belova, accusing them of illegally deporting children from Ukraine.

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