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Russia Returns 3 Ukrainian Children With Qatari Mediation

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@malvovabelova

Russia has returned three Ukrainian children and one disabled young man to their families with the help of Qatari mediators, the Kremlin's children's rights commissioner Maria Lvova-Belova said Thursday.

Lvova-Belova said the children, including two boys, ages 8 and 15, and a 6-year-old girl, had been living with relatives in Russia. "The boys' mothers are waiting for them in Ukraine. The girl stayed with her great-aunt after her mother passed away, while her father lives in Ukraine," she wrote on Telegram.

Lvova-Belova added that a young man with a disability was also repatriated.

She posted a photo from the Qatari Embassy in Moscow showing the children, their guardians and a man in a wheelchair, with all faces blurred except for a Qatari diplomat and an unidentified woman.

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Lvova-Belova said that so far, 26 children from 18 families have been reunited with relatives inside Russia, while 115 others have returned to Ukraine or other countries.

Kyiv rejects Moscow's framing of the returns as "child exchanges," insisting Ukraine has not abducted Russian children since the war began.

Since mid-2023, Qatar has helped mediate the return of dozens of Ukrainian children taken to Russia and occupied territories.

Lvova-Belova and President Vladimir Putin remain wanted by the International Criminal Court for the suspected unlawful transfer of Ukrainian children into Russia, an act prosecutors classify as a war crime. Russia, which does not recognize the ICC, has dismissed the charges.

Ukraine accuses Moscow of deporting more than 19,000 children since the start of the full-scale invasion, a claim Russia denies.

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