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Russian Children Form Human ‘89’ to Mark Anniversary of Unrecognized Annexation of Ukraine

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Vkontakte

Russia marked the third anniversary of its annexation of four partially occupied Ukrainian regions with patriotic events involving schoolchildren, kindergartners and public employees, the state youth agency Rosmolodyozh said Tuesday.

According to the agency, around 1.6 million people took part in more than 13,000 commemorations held under the slogan “Thank You, #WeAreTogether.”

The phrase echoes President Vladimir Putin’s words on Sept. 30, 2022, when he said “We’re now stronger because we’re together” when declaring the annexation of Ukraine’s Donetsk, Luhansk, Zaporizhzhia and Kherson regions.

Russia’s territorial claims are rejected by Kyiv and not recognized under international law.

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Rosmolodyozh said the anniversary program included meetings with Russian soldiers returning from Ukraine, video links with residents of occupied territories and humanitarian aid drives for veterans' families.

Video accompanying its statement showed young people arranged into the number "89," a reference to Russia's official tally of its federal subjects following the 2022 annexations.

The same number formation was shown by the Kremlin-affiliated volunteer platform #WeAreTogether, operated by the Putin-founded All-Russia People's Front (ONF).

Images published by the Ostorozhno Novosti news outlet showed students in several cities being made to form a human "89."

It remained unclear how many of the events at schools and state institutions were voluntary.

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