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Total of 2K Ukrainian Children Now Returned From Russian Occupation – Zelensky

By AFP

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AP Photo / Michal Dyjuk

Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky said Tuesday that 2,000 Ukrainian children had been brought back from Russia and Russian-occupied land since the start of the war, but that thousands more remained "captive."

Since Russia invaded Ukraine in February 2022, Moscow has been accused of forcibly transferring around 20,000 children from parts of Ukraine seized by its army.

The International Criminal Court in 2023 issued an arrest warrant for Russian leader Vladimir Putin and his children's rights commissioner "for the war crime of unlawful deportation" of children.

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Kyiv says Russia has indoctrinated them, forced many to adopt Russian citizenship and tried to scrub them of their Ukrainian identity — accusations supported by testimony from Ukrainians who managed to leave Russian occupation.

"Today, we have achieved a significant result — two thousand Ukrainian children have been brought home from under Russia's control," Zelensky said in a post on social media.

"The road ahead remains long and difficult. Thousands of Ukrainian children are still held captive by Russia, becoming victims of its crimes every day," he added.

Russia does not hide the fact that it took children under its control, but says it did so for their own safety, moving them away from the frontline and is willing to return them in cases where relatives come forward and can be verified.

Various intermediaries including the Gulf states and lately, U.S. First Lady Melania Trump, have been working to secure their return in small groups throughout the war.

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