The Moscow Times
30 YEARS
INDEPENDENT NEWS FROM RUSSIA

Over 160 Displaced Kursk Residents Returned From Ukraine, New Human Rights Official Says

June 01, 2026



Yana Lantratova. **Sergei Kiselev / Moskva News Agency**

Russia has returned over 160 residents of the southwestern Kursk region more than a year after driving out occupying Ukrainian forces from border areas, the Kremlin's new human rights ombudswoman said Monday.

"Through the direct efforts of the Human Rights Commissioner's office, we have successfully secured the return of 165 Kursk residents," Yana Lantratova was quoted as saying by the state-run news agency TASS.

Sixteen of those returned are children, Lantratova added.

In April, Lantratova's predecessor, Tatiana Moskalkova, had claimed that the last Kursk residents still in Ukrainian captivity had been returned as part of a prisoner-of-war exchange that month.

However, Lantratova said her office was verifying the exact number of Kursk residents still held in Ukraine, with plans to meet her Ukrainian counterpart Dmytro Lubinets "in the near future."

More than 150,000 people in the Kursk region were ordered to evacuate towns and villages near the border after Ukrainian forces launched a surprise incursion in August 2024. Ukraine was forced to retreat in 2025 after Russian forces, backed by North Korean troops, launched a successful counteroffensive.

Regional officials estimated that more than 350 Kursk residents were killed and nearly 800 remained missing as of May 2025.

Ukraine has had thousands of its own civilians held in Russian-occupied territory since the 2022 invasion.

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