

Statement of the Riigikogu On Returning to Ukraine the Children Deported by Russia

Having declared the actions committed by the Armed Forces of the Russian Federation as well as its political and military leadership during the phase of the military aggression against Ukraine which began on 24 February 2022 as an act of genocide against the Ukrainian nation;

pointing out that the deliberate and systematic deportation of children from Ukraine to Russia and Belarus since 2014, and in particular after 24 February 2022, is a war crime and genocide under international law;

noting that the aim of Russia and Belarus is to destroy the Ukrainian nation and identity by killing, wounding, traumatising and relocating Ukrainian children;

having in mind the Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide, the (4th) Geneva Convention relative to the Protection of Civilian Persons in Time of War of 12 August 1949 as well as the Protocol Additional to the Geneva Conventions of 12 August 1949, and Relating to the Protection of Victims of International Armed Conflicts (Protocol I) of 8 June 1977;

acknowledging the work of the International Criminal Court in fighting against impunity, in particular the arrest warrants issued on 17 March 2023 against Vladimir Putin and Russia's Commissioner for Children's Rights Maria Lvova-Belova on charges of illegal deportation and resettlement of Ukrainian children;

underlining that, under international law, all states have an obligation to cooperate in order to prevent, end and punish genocide, crimes against humanity and war crimes, and prosecute the perpetrators of such acts,

the Riigikogu:

- strongly condemns the deliberate and systematic deportation of children from Ukraine by Russia and Belarus in violation of international law;
- condemns Russia's decision to grant citizenship to Ukrainian children under a simplified procedure, with the aim of forcibly changing their identity and assimilating them into Russia's society;
- demands that Russia and Belarus release the children deported from Ukraine and ensure their safe return to Ukraine;
- calls on all states to assist in the return to Ukraine of the children deported to Russia and Belarus and to cooperate in this effort;
- supports the 10-point peace plan proposed by President of Ukraine Volodymyr Zelenskyy, which includes the return of the persons deported to Russia and Belarus;
- acknowledges the establishment of an international coalition focusing on the return of deported children, the first meeting of which took place in Kyiv on 8 December 2023, and

- supports unconditionally the fight against impunity and the work of the International Criminal Court in bringing war criminals to justice.

Lauri Hussar
President of the Riigikogu

Tallinn, 20.02.2024