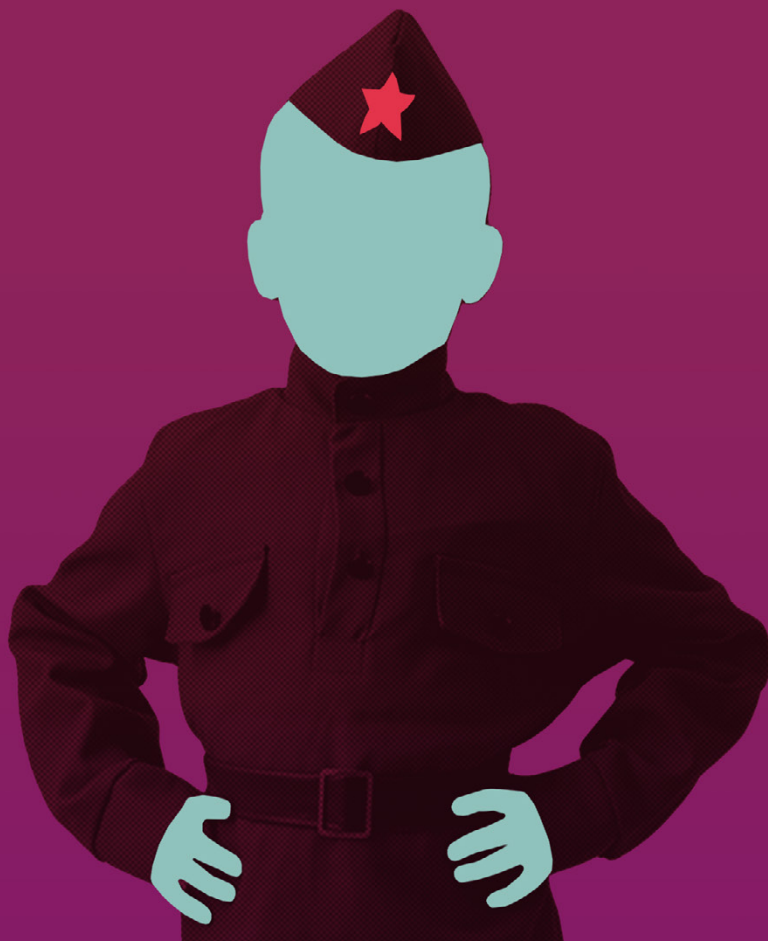


MONITORING REPORT

**"UNIVERSAL SOLDIER"**

**or education as a weapon of Russia  
in the occupied south of Ukraine**



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The Centre of Civic Education "Almenda" (CCE "Almenda") is a nongovernmental organization registered in Yalta in 2011. Until 2014, the organization's priority was an education in the field of human rights. In 2014, due to the occupation of Crimea, the organization was forced to move to Kyiv. Today, the organization's priorities are to ensure the systematic collection of accurate, timely, verified data on brutal violations committed against children in situations of armed conflict.

The CCE "Almenda" is guided by the principles of objectivity, reliability and timeliness in the preparation of its monitoring reports.

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# SUMMARY

Education continues to be used as a tool of propaganda, as a tool for the destruction of Ukrainian identity and the militarization of children and youth in the occupied territories. With the beginning of the school year, children in the occupied territories have a significant influence on consciousness through formal education. Before the start of lessons in schools, the Russian national anthem must be played and the Russian flag must be raised. Mandatory lessons of «Conversations about important things» were introduced, aimed at raising a Russian patriot and designed to present children with a distorted version of history.

On the territory of the occupied Crimea, children from kindergarten age are involved in such events as military and patriotic games. For example, on September 20, the team of Kindergarten No. 88 took part in the final of the military-patriotic game «Rubezh» in Sevastopol.

In order to strengthen control over education and to effectively use it as a propaganda tool, the Russian Federation plans to introduce uniform general education programs in schools. On September 12, the State Duma Committee on Education supported the draft law on the introduction of unified programs.

In the occupied territories of Kherson and Zaporizhzhia regions, educational institutions are being integrated into the Russian education system. In the same way, the lessons of «Conversations about important things» are introduced in schools, the Russian flag is raised and the Russian national anthem is played, teaching takes place in the Russian language according to Russian textbooks and methodical recommendations. The occupation authorities plan to send kindergarten teachers to so-called «retraining» to improve the transition of all educational institutions to Russian standards.

In order to replace Ukrainian identity with Russian, children from the occupied territories of Kherson and Zaporizhzhia regions are, as before, taken deep into the occupied territory (to the Crimea) and to the territory of Russia under the pretext of recreational recreation.

Collectively, all these actions of the occupation authorities are aimed at destroying the Ukrainian identity of children in the occupied territories, forming a loyal attitude towards the military actions unleashed by Russia on the territory of Ukraine, and motivating children from the occupied territories to voluntarily join the armed forces of the Russian Federation.

These actions of Russia violate the following international norms:

- Article 26 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, which establishes that education shall be directed to the full development of the human personality and to the strengthening of respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms. It shall promote understanding, tolerance and friendship among all nations, racial or religious groups;
- Article 13 of the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, which also raises the issue of education;
- Article 20 of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, which stipulates that any propaganda for war must be prohibited by law;
- Article 29 of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child, which indicates that the child's education should be aimed at preparing him for a conscious life in a free society in the spirit of understanding, peace, tolerance, equality of men and women and friendship between all peoples, ethnic, national and religious groups, as well as persons from the indigenous population;
- Articles 38, 39 of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child, which regulate the protection of children in conditions of war;
- Article 50 of the Convention Relative to the Protection of the Civilian Population in Time of War (Fourth Geneva Convention), which prohibits the occupying power, in particular, from including children in the lists of formations or organizations under its control, as well as Article 51, which prohibits the promotion of service in the army of the country that occupied the territory.

## METHODOLOGY

This monitoring report covers the period from 1 September to 30 September 2022.

Fields of research are the following: the militarization of children in the occupied territories, involvement of children in actions aimed at supporting the so-called special operation in Ukraine, destruction of Ukrainian identity, assimilation of the population of the occupied territories, destruction of the Ukrainian education system.

Geography: temporarily occupied territories of the Autonomous Republic of Crimea and the city of Sevastopol, the Kherson and Zaporizhzhia regions.

Monitoring is based on the information from the following sources:

- governmental bodies of Ukraine;
- reports of non-governmental organizations;
- open sources of temporarily occupied territories, namely:
  - information posted on official websites and official pages in social networks (including VKontakte network) of the so-called Ministry of Education of the temporarily occupied territory;
  - official statistical data of the Russian Federation;
  - information posted on the websites of secondary schools in the temporarily occupied territories;
  - local mass media publications of the temporarily occupied part of the Kherson, Zaporizhzhia regions, the Autonomous Republic of Crimea and the city of Sevastopol;
  - information published in social networks.

## LIMITATIONS OF THE METHODOLOGY:

In this research, the authors used only the sources available to them.

Work with sources and analysis of information continued until 15 October 2022.

Information and reports that could not be verified as of the date of publication of the monitoring report were not included in it.

While preparing the report, the authors used data from the Vkontakte social network. This is due to the fact that after the full-scale invasion of the Russian Federation on the territory of Ukraine, most of the information of the representatives of the occupation authorities was published in this social network, and thus, the search there is actually the only possible source of access to it.

The information is presented in the report to record the crimes of the Russian Federation and combat disinformation spread by it.

# TEMPORARILY OCCUPIED TERRITORIES OF THE AUTONOMOUS REPUBLIC OF CRIMEA AND THE CITY OF SEVASTOPOL

In occupied Crimea, formal and informal forms of education continue to be used as a tool to destroy Ukrainian identity, militarize children, and build support for the war waged by the Russian Federation against Ukraine. Since the beginning of the school year, formal education has played a leading role in this process, since school attendance is mandatory for all children living in the occupied territory.

## FORMATION OF RUSSIAN IDENTITY IN UKRAINIAN CHILDREN

From the beginning of the 2022-2023 school year in occupied Crimea, the Russian national anthem and the Russian flag must be raised before the start of classes in schools. According to Volodymyr Konstantynov, head of the occupying State Council of Crimea:

*«Undoubtedly, this will become an important component of patriotic education of children. The special attention is traditionally paid to it in Crimea.»<sup>1</sup>.*

1 [source](#)

Since September, special lessons «Conversations about important things» have been held in educational institutions, which are mandatory. The introduction of weekly lessons «Conversations about important things» was discussed in the previous monitoring report «Universal Soldier» for August 2022. The purpose of these lessons, among other things, is «educating a [Russian] citizen.»

On September 5, classes on the topic «We are Russia. Possibilities are the future.» were held in the State Autonomous Educational Institution of Vocational Education of the city of Sevastopol «Institute of Education Development». It was stated that the event is aimed at «**education of patriotism** as a valuable and meaningful attitude towards the Motherland, **expressed in civic identity** and social creation» in the notification about the event.

On September 12, the second lesson from the series «Conversations about important things» on the topic «Our country is Russia» was held in educational institutions of Sevastopol. The main topic of the lesson was «*formation of civic identity and pride for one's country (it is about Russia, – editor)*»<sup>2</sup>.

2 [source](#)



Similar events take place in health centers for children from occupied Crimea and other occupied regions of Ukraine. For example, in the children's health center «Alye parusa» in Yevpatoria, the event «Conversations about important things» was held for children from the occupied Crimea and the occupied territory of the Luhansk region. During the conversation, among other things, the children were told about love for Russia, which they should treat as their Motherland, about readiness to defend the Motherland, and about the All-Russia Young Army Military Patriotic Social Movement.<sup>3</sup>

3 [source](#)

The program «Zemsky Uchitel» continues to operate, according to which teachers from Russia move to the territory of occupied Crimea to teach



in educational institutions. Teachers, participants of this program, who deliberately move to the occupied territory, are the ones who share and spread Russian propaganda narratives and participate in the destruction of the Ukrainian identity of children in the occupied territory. For example, teachers from Voronezh, Bryansk, Chelyabinsk and Yekaterinburg came to Sevastopol to teach under the program.<sup>4</sup>

4 [source](#)

The replacement of the Ukrainian identity with the Russian one takes place also through extracurricular activities. For example, various contests are organized aimed at forming patriotic feelings and associating oneself with the Russian Federation on the territory of the occupied peninsula, such as, for example, the contest of photo and video works «Why I love Russia».<sup>5</sup> Another method used by Russia is to encourage students to visit cultural institutions in order **to create in young people a desire to associate themselves with Russian culture and the Russian nation**. For this purpose, the Russian authorities issue to young people between the ages of 14 and 22 a «Pushkin Card» with a balance of 5,000 rubles, which can be spent on tickets to a museum, theater, cinema (only for Russian films), an exhibition, the Philharmonic and visits to other cultural institutions. It should be noted that the list of institutions and cultural events on which card funds can be spent is determined by the Russian Federation.

5 [source](#)

## MILITARIZATION OF CHILDREN

The Russian Federation continues to militarize children, starting from pre-school age.



Children, winners of the city's outfit and song competition «Victory Spring» took part in the event dedicated to the Day of Educators and all employees of pre-school institutions On September 27. The children were dressed in the uniform of the «Yunarmy».<sup>6</sup>

6 [source](#)

On September 20, the final of the military-patriotic game «Rubezh» started in Sevastopol. In the finals, teams from 20 educational institutions of the city competed for the title of the best youth army squad for 3 days. The municipal stages of the game lasted from February to May – more than 4,000 students from 59 educational institutions of the city took part in them. Teams competed in a uniform and song competition, assembled and disassembled a Kalashnikov assault rifle, took part in a military-historical competition.<sup>7</sup>

7

[source](#)

260 children became the finalists of the game. At the final stage, the participants competed in mastery of commanding techniques and knowledge of Russian history. The winners of the final will represent the city at the All-Russian stage of the game.

The team of Kindergarten No. 88 also participated in the final of the military-patriotic game.<sup>8</sup>

8

[source](#)



The military-patriotic game «Rubezh» aims to «educate future defenders of the Motherland.» Also, during the event, the children honored Russian military who died during the so-called «special operation».





The ceremonial opening of the Honor Guard «Generations' Memory Watch - Post No. 1» took place on September 15, in the Simferopol district, on the territory of the Memorial to the victims of fascism «Krasny Concentration Camp».<sup>9</sup>

9

[source](#)





On September 16, the employees of the «Krympatriot Center» opened a mobile mobile exhibition «Thank God that we are Cossacks!» in Yevpatoria. The exhibition is to be exhibited in 7 cities of the Crimea, the employees of the «Krympatriotcentr» have drawn up a schedule for visiting it by schoolchildren, students of technical schools and colleges.<sup>10</sup>

10

[source](#)



## TRANSITION TO UNIFIED GENERAL EDUCATION PROGRAMS

On September 12, the State Duma Committee on Education supported the draft law on the introduction of uniform general education programs in schools<sup>11</sup>.

11

[source](#)

The main points of the draft law:

- The Ministry of Education will develop the federal main general education programs;
- programs will be approved by March 1, 2023, and schools will pass to them by September 1, 2023;
- The Ministry of Education will place state orders for the development of textbooks and manuals and approve the author's collective, and exclusive rights to textbooks will belong to the country;
- federal work programs on the Russian language, literary reading, and the surrounding world will become mandatory in elementary school, and in middle and high school - on Russian language, literature, history, social science, geography, and life sciences;
- the draft law introduces the mandatory federal work program of education and the federal calendar plan of educational work.

Such changes are evidence of increased control over education by the state and its use to spread pro-government narratives.

## MANIPULATION OF HISTORICAL EVENTS AND HEROIZATION OF WAR

Children are encouraged to participate in activities aimed at forming an attitude towards war as a heroic event worth being proud of. In particular, Crimeans are invited to participate in the «Heroes Alive» project and tell about the exploits of family members of World War II participants.<sup>12</sup>

12

[source](#)

In addition, in September, the annual «Victory Dictation» action took place – a historical dictation on the events of World War II. The purpose of the event is patriotic education of youth.<sup>13</sup>

13

[source](#)





Also, open lessons dedicated to the events of the Crimean War of 1853-1856 were held in Crimean schools in September. The events of the war are presented in a distorted comparison with the events of our time.

*«Then the «collective West» — Great Britain, France, Turkey, and the Italian Kingdom of Sardinia — entered the confrontation with Russia for the first time. Therefore, it is sometimes called the “zero world” [...] Today, the events of the confrontation between Russia and the West are especially relevant,» Volodymyr Konstantynov says<sup>14</sup>.*

14 [source](#)

*«You can't trust the West, you can't make friends with it. It is possible to contact him only from a position of strength. You cannot turn your back on this partner. Will definitely hit. You can't show weakness when dealing with him. He is ready to respect our interests only if he feels our strength behind them,» – Volodymyr Konstantynov says<sup>15</sup>.*

15 [source](#)

At the same time, children continue to be involved in actions supporting Russia's war against Ukraine. Participants of the 10th shift of «Artek -

School of New Opportunities» wrote letters to Russian soldiers fighting on the territory of Ukraine. Students of schools in occupied Sevastopol and Crimea continue to participate in the «Letter to a Soldier» campaign.<sup>16</sup>

16

[source](#)



# OCCUPIED TERRITORIES OF ZAPORIZHZHIA AND KHERSON REGIONS

## INTEGRATION OF EDUCATIONAL INSTITUTIONS INTO THE RUSSIAN EDUCATION SYSTEM

In September, the educational process based on Russian programs began in the occupied territories of Zaporizhzhia and Kherson regions.

To ensure the educational process, Russian textbooks, manuals for students, methodical manuals and educational programs for teachers were transferred to schools. Parents of school-age children were offered the opportunity to receive a one-time payment in the amount of 10,000 rubles for each child who went to school.<sup>17</sup>

17

[source](#)

As of September 1, 91 schools and 62 kindergartens were opened in the occupied part of the Kherson region, 164 schools were opened in the occupied part of the Zaporizhzhia region<sup>18</sup>.

18

[source](#)

With the beginning of the school year, the first school bells were rung with the raising of the Russian flag. Education in schools will continue in Russian. Schools are guarded by armed men, the occupation administration explains these measures as the need to ensure the safety of children.

The «United Russia» party gave school kits and backpacks with Russian symbols to children from low-income families. According to the statement of the occupation administration of the Kherson region, 5,000 first-graders of the Kherson region received the kits.<sup>19</sup>

19

[source](#)



It is planned to organize «retraining» for teachers of kindergartens and other educational institutions to ensure the process of integration of Russian standards into the educational space of the occupied territories.<sup>20</sup>

20 [source](#)

Additional hours of history were introduced in the schools of the Kherson region. The main goal of these lessons is the «*denazification of history*»<sup>21</sup>. De facto additional lessons are aimed at spreading Russian propaganda narratives among children.

21 [source](#)

The resettlement of teachers from Russia to the occupied territories continues to teach Ukrainian children in schools and to facilitate the transition of education to Russian standards.<sup>22</sup>

22 [source](#)

In the same way, pressure continues on teachers who refused to teach in schools in the occupied territories according to Russian standards and continue to work remotely in Ukrainian schools, and on students who attend Ukrainian schools online. In September, two secondary school teachers<sup>23</sup> and two high school students were arrested in Berdyansk, and in Kakhovka, on September 10, the director of school No. 1, Viktor Pendalchuk, was kidnapped<sup>24</sup>. The teachers were detained for several days and released, the director was released at the beginning of October.<sup>25</sup>

23 [source](#)

24 [source](#)

25 [source](#)

## DESTRUCTION OF UKRAINIAN IDENTITY

The destruction of Ukrainian and the establishment of Russian identity continues in the occupied territories. The Russian Federation supplies books, including children's literature, by Russian authors to the libraries of the regions.<sup>26</sup> Russian symbols continue to be brought to the regions<sup>27</sup>, Soviet monuments are restored, for example, the bas-relief «Soldiers of Suvorov in battle» in Kherson has been restored. Russian symbols continue to be brought to the regions, Soviet monuments are restored, for example, the bas-relief «Soldiers of Suvorov in battle» in Kherson has been restored.<sup>28</sup> Ukrainian museums are being destroyed, for example, the museum of anti-terrorist operation was liquidated in the Kherson region<sup>29</sup>.

26 [source](#)

27 [source](#)

28 [source](#)

29 [source](#)

The organization of «recreational recreation» for children in the occupied Crimea and on the territory of the Russian Federation is one of the main tools of identity replacement. According to reports from the occupation authorities, children receive social, psychological and medical assistance during their vacation. Special cultural events are also organized for children.<sup>30</sup>

30 [source](#)

In September, 53 children from Skadovsk went on such a vacation to Karbadino-Balkaria. On September 15, the children who were on a health vacation in Pskov returned to the Kherson region.<sup>31</sup>

31

[source](#)

It is planned to send children who are in the front-line territories to study at children's health camps in Russia. It is impossible to determine the exact number of Ukrainian children who are currently in health camps on the territory of Russia or in the occupied Crimea, because messages about the displacement of children are contained in various groups on social networks, and sometimes they are published after the children have returned to the occupied territory.

