

"Universal Soldier" or **Education as the Weapon of Russia In the Occupied South of Ukraine** **Monitoring report for January–March 2024**



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TRANSITION

Transition Promotion Program



The Centre for Civic Education “Almenda” (CCE “Almenda”) is a non-governmental organisation registered in Yalta in 2011. Until 2014, the organisation’s priority area of activity was human rights education. In 2014, due to the occupation of Crimea, the organisation was forced to move to Kyiv. Currently, the organisation’s priority is to ensure the systematic collection of accurate, timely, verified data on grave violations against children in situations of armed conflict.

In preparing its monitoring reports, the CCE “Almenda” is guided by the principles of objectivity, reliability and timeliness.

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INTRODUCTION

Having occupied a part of the territory of Ukraine, the Russian Federation (hereinafter referred to as the RF) has taken control of absolutely all spheres of life, acting through the occupation authorities under its control. The RF pays special attention to children and young people, as President Putin has openly acknowledged: *"Russia needs to gain a foothold in the new territories not only militarily and politically, but also by working with people so that they understand the benefits of being part of the Russian Federation."*¹ To achieve this goal, the RF is pursuing a deliberate policy of destroying Ukrainian identity and militarising children who remain in the occupied territories of Ukraine. Russia's actions are aimed at the complete assimilation of the population of the occupied territories and the formation of children's desire to support the armed forces of the RF, including voluntary enlistment in the Russian army when they reach the appropriate age.

Actions recorded during the monitoring period that are committed in the temporarily occupied territories (hereinafter referred to as TOT) directly or through the occupation authorities controlled by Russia constitute violations of:

- Article 26 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, which states that education shall be directed to the full development of the human personality and to the promotion of respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms. Education 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 addresses the issue of education;
- Article 20 of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, which states that any propaganda for war shall be prohibited by law;
- Article 29 of the Convention on the Rights of the Child, which states that the education of the child shall be directed to the preparation of the child for responsible life in a free society in a spirit of understanding, peace, tolerance, equality of men and women and friendship among all peoples, ethnic, national and religious groups, and indigenous people;
- Articles 38 and 39 of the Convention on the Rights of the Child, which regulate the protection of children in time of war;

1 <https://absatz.media/news/20325-putin-rossii-nuzhno-zakrepitsya-na-novyh-territoriyah>, archive: <https://archive.ph/W8KCN>



- Article 50 of the Convention relative to the Protection of Civilian Persons in Time of War (Fourth Geneva Convention), which prohibits the Occupying Power, inter alia, from enlisting children in formations or organizations subordinate to it;
- Article 51 of the Convention relative to the Protection of Civilian Persons in Time of War (Fourth Geneva Convention), which provides that the Occupying Power may not compel protected persons to serve in its armed or auxiliary forces. No pressure or propaganda which aims at securing voluntary enlistment is permitted.

METHODOLOGY

This monitoring report covers the period from 1 January to 31 March 2024.

Areas of research: destruction of Ukrainian identity, militarisation of children in the occupied territories, involvement of children in actions aimed at supporting Russia's armed aggression against Ukraine, assimilation of the population of the occupied territories, destruction of the Ukrainian education system.

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

The monitoring report is based on information gained from:

- ▶ state authorities of Ukraine;
- ▶ reports of civil society organisations;
- ▶ open sources of the temporarily occupied territories, namely:
 - information posted on the official websites and official pages in social networks (including VKontakte) 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;
 - publications of local media in the temporarily occupied parts of Kherson and Zaporizhzhya regions, the Autonomous Republic of Crimea and the city of Sevastopol;
 - information published in social media



LIMITATIONS

The monitoring report does not cover the territory of the occupied Luhansk and Donetsk regions.

For this study, the authors used only sources available to them. Work with sources and analysis of information lasted until 19 April 2024. Information and messages that could not be verified as of the date of publication of this monitoring report were not included in it

To prepare this monitoring report, the authors used data found on the social network VKontakte. This is due to the fact that after Russia's full-scale invasion of Ukraine, most of the information from the occupation authorities was published on this social network. Thus, it is now virtually the only possible source of access to obtain the necessary information. The use of Russian sources and sources from the temporarily occupied territories is based on the same considerations.

The information presented in this report is intended to document the crimes of the Russian Federation and to combat the disinformation it spreads.



MILITARISATION

Formal education

The educational process introduced by Russia in educational institutions in the TOT includes activities of a "patriotic" nature, which are actually aimed at militarising children. In particular, Russian servicemen taught children lessons of "courage", demonstrated weapons and taught children how to use them. Whereas representatives of Russian security and law enforcement agencies held career guidance lectures to promote service in their agencies.

Examples.

TOT of the Autonomous Republic of Crimea and the city of Sevastopol

On January 25, an exhibition of samples of small arms of the Russian Federation was held for junior and senior pupils of Bakhchisaray district.²

In January, Simferopol secondary school No. 12 held a masterclass for 8th grade pupils on making trench candles for the military involved in the so-called "special military operation", i.e. the war against Ukraine.³



2 https://vk.com/wall-217363296_2420, archive: <https://archive.ph/wip/TsgPV>

3 <https://t.me/minobrKrima/4863>, archive: <https://archive.ph/wip/qZQED>



On 25 January, the Tavriya School-Gymnasium No. 20 named after St. Luka of Simferopol hosted an event as part of the series of meetings "Marshals of Victory — Heroes of the special military operation".⁴

TOT of the Kherson region

On 23 January 2024, the Henichesk Medical College hosted a propaganda conference "Opening our eyes"⁵ with more than 100 participants, ranging from students to public figures and Russian military personnel, who discussed the "inhuman crimes of the Ukrainian Nazis".⁶

In early February 2024, representatives of the Russian Ministry of Internal Affairs held a career guidance session at a school in the village of Blahodatne, where they introduced children to the procedure for joining and serving in the Russian Ministry of Internal Affairs.⁷

Also in February, soldiers of the Russian National Guard held a "Lesson of Courage" at Kostyantynivka School No. 1 to promote service in the Russian National Guard military formation.⁸

On 13 February 2024 representatives of the Criminal Investigation Department and inspectors of the Golopristsansky Department of the Ministry of Internal Affairs of the RF met with pupils of the Bekhtery School to talk about service in the Russian police.⁹

TOT of the Zaporizhzhya region

In January 2024, Vadym Martovyi, Russia's only frontline bell ringer with the call sign "Dobry", who took part in the war against Ukraine, spoke to teachers and children at School No. 2 in Zaporizhzhya Oblast. Promoting service in the Russian army, he told the children about his "combat path", his awards, and the movement "Youth Army" [Russian — "Yunarmiya"], romanticising and glorifying military events.¹⁰

4 https://vk.com/wall-156168685_1970, archive: <https://archive.ph/wip/xtZk2>

5 Hereinafter, the Russian names of conferences, movements, events, programmes, slogans, etc. are translated. The names of kindergartens and military games are transliterated, and the English translation is given in brackets where appropriate.

6 https://t.me/VGA_Kherson/17607, archive: <https://archive.ph/CQNH3>

7 https://t.me/Skadovsk_MO/9349, archive: <https://archive.ph/wip/WhGZr>

8 <https://zp-news.ru/society/2024/02/09/282414.html>, archive: <https://archive.ph/wip/2iIMf>

9 <https://t.me/depobrkherson/4684>, archive: <https://archive.ph/fVQVT>

10 <https://t.me/obrzp/18174>, archive: <https://archive.ph/wip/W8lgj>



Activities

In the TOT, Russia implements a policy of militarisation of children, starting from the earliest preschool age. During the monitoring period, **kindergartens hosted events** dedicated to the so-called "Defender of the Fatherland Day", aimed at familiarising children with the daily routine of a soldier in the army. Children performed military songs, demonstrated their ability to perform tasks at a military training ground, skills in shooting and throwing grenades, overcoming obstacle courses, and marching training, etc.

Examples include the following activities.

TOT of the Autonomous Republic of Crimea and the city of Sevastopol

In January 2024, a regional stage of the staged song contest "For the Glory of the Fatherland!" was held in Nakhimovsky district for kindergartens No. 48, 67, 68, 103, in which children performed Russian military and "patriotic" songs.¹¹





In February, children from kindergarten No. 20 in Sevastopol also performed Russian songs with military and "patriotic" themes. According to the preschool's official social media page, the children won the patriotic competition "Songs in a Soldier's Overcoat", and children in the photo are wearing military uniforms.¹²

TOT of the Kherson region

In kindergarten No. 17 "Teremok" in Henichesk, the event was held under the name "One Day in the Army"/"Future Defenders"¹³



TOT of the Zaporizhzhya region

In the kindergarten No. 1 "Topolyok" in Molochansk, a similar event was held under the name "Brave Soldiers". According to the organisers, it was held in honour of, among others, members of the so-called "special military operation".¹⁴

12 <https://ok.ru/group/67883505680437/photos>, archive: <https://archive.ph/wip/b8Zlg>

13 <https://t.me/depobrherson/4927>, archive: <https://archive.ph/oHP3X>

14 <https://t.me/obrzp/18617>, archive: <https://archive.ph/wip/T2RM6>

Activities dedicated to the "Day of the Defender of the Fatherland" were also held in schools on the TOT. The main purpose of such events is to form a positive attitude towards the RF Armed Forces, along with conducting the initial military training for children.

Examples include the following activities.

TOT of the Autonomous Republic of Crimea and the city of Sevastopol

A training session on "Military Ranks and Insignia in the RF Armed Forces" was held in the school of Travneve village, Dzhankoy district, the Autonomous Republic of Crimea.¹⁵



In occupied Crimea, in Klepininskaya school named after the 51st Army, an event "I will serve in the army" was held for 5th grade pupils, during which children completed tasks such as "Cipher", "Shootout", "Disguise" and others.¹⁶

TOT of the Kherson region

In January, the school in Nizhniy Sirogosk held a "month of civil and patriotic education" dedicated to the "Defender of the Fatherland Day", during which representatives of the military registration and enlistment office introduced children to the peculiarities of recruitment and contract service in the Russian army, enrolment to the military universities and military specialties.¹⁷

TOT of the Zaporizhzhya region

In Melitopol's secondary school No. 15, representatives of the Russian National Guard and the RF Investigative Committee held a "lesson of courage" dedicated to

15 https://vk.com/wall-217363296_2418, archive: <https://archive.ph/wip/PtQAe>

16 https://vk.com/wall-214910068_194716, archive: <https://archive.ph/wip/g4Cun>

17 https://t.me/Genichesk_ru/8824, archive: <https://archive.ph/wip/NkxJG>



the "Defender of the Fatherland Day", telling students about the tasks performed by special forces units and the procedure for entering the departmental higher educational institutions.¹⁸

In the city of Melitopol, officers of the RF Investigative Committee organised an excursion for children from the Melitopol Regional Centre for Social and Psychological Rehabilitation of Children to the Melitopol Historical Park "Russia — My History".¹⁹



The occupation authorities do not neglect to influence the most vulnerable group — **children deprived of parental care** — in order to militarise them. For example, an exhibition of Russian small arms was held for children from the Chernyshevsky orphanage in the village of Chernyshevo in the Razdolnensky district of the TOT of the Autonomous Republic of Crimea as part of the federal project "Youth Army. Mentoring" project.²⁰

Similar militaristic activities were held at the level of higher education. In particular, the Sevastopol State University of occupied Crimea held an event "Come on, guys!", during which students, in particular, performed assembling/disassembling an assault rifle, weight lifting, tug-of-war, gladiatorial fights.²¹ The Bakhchisaray College of Construction and Transport also held a military sports event, where children performed drill songs, assembling and disassembling a machine gun, shooting, and putting on a gas mask.²²

18 <https://t.me/melitopoladmin/8263>, archive: <https://archive.ph/dEg9b>

19 <https://t.me/melitopoladmin/7911>

20 https://t.me/crimean_patriot/6164, archive: <https://archive.ph/wip/wPCky>

21 https://vk.com/wall-105538113_7457, archive: <https://archive.ph/wip/FoVMa>

22 https://vk.com/wall-217363296_2553, archive: <https://archive.ph/wip/6x9bH>



Games

In addition to mandatory events dedicated to Russian holidays, Russia engages children in military-patriotic games, using the competitive nature and prize money to encourage them. The organisers define the purpose of such competitions as "promoting the spiritual, moral, civil and patriotic education of the younger generation, **preparing them for military service**".²³

For younger children, a military-patriotic game called "**Zarnichka**" (Small Summer Lightning) is held, which includes drill training, "ready for work and defence" standards, an obstacle course and "knowledge of history".²⁴ A similar game for older children is called "**Zarnitsa**" (Summer Lightning).

Examples of such events are as follows.

TOT of the Autonomous Republic of Crimea and the city of Sevastopol

In February 2024, the zonal and regional stages of the Zarnichka and Zarnitsa games took place, with Verkhorichenskaya, Zaliznychnaya, Turgenevskaya, Dolinenskaya, Tenistovskaya, Glazovskaya schools taking part.^{25,26,27}



23 https://vk.com/wall-214910068_192539, archive: <https://archive.ph/wip/O5ksO>

24 https://vk.com/wall-153744445_21983, archive: <https://archive.ph/wip/S9rLy>

25 https://vk.com/wall-214910068_195089, archive: <https://archive.ph/wip/pJ3Xn>

26 https://vk.com/wall-214910068_195158, archive: <https://archive.ph/wip/KGN08>

27 https://vk.com/wall-217363296_2592, archive: <https://archive.ph/wip/R9kOj>



TOT of the Zaporizhzhya region

Soldiers of the Russian National Guard train children to take part in the municipal stage of the Zarnitsa 2.0 military sports game, with the next such meeting taking place on 21 March 2024 at Mirny secondary school No. 6.²⁸

Another tool for the militarisation of children is the military sports game **"Pobeda"** (Victory).

Facts of its conduct.

TOT of the Autonomous Republic of Crimea and the city of Sevastopol

On 27 February 2024, the last of the three military sports games "Pobeda" among senior school-age children ended, in which the team of "Youth Army soldiers" from school No. 4 of Feodosia took part.²⁹



28
PZEUo

<https://melitopol-news.ru/society/2024/03/25/73796.html>, archive: <https://archive.ph/wip/>

29

https://vk.com/wall-214910068_195110, archive: <https://archive.ph/wip/vVioH>



On 23 February 2024 in Feodosia, the awards ceremony for the participants in the all-Russian military sports game "Victory 2023 — One for All!" was held at the Specialised School No. 2 named after Ulyanov. It was attended by the head of the pre-prescription training department of military tactical games and competitions "Krympatriot Centre" Sergey Gavrilchuk,³⁰ who is also the head of the regional branch of the "Youth Army" of Crimea and is included in the sanctions lists of the EU, Ukraine and Switzerland for organising events that promote military education and prepare young people for military service in the Russian army.^{31,32}

In addition to these, other types of military-patriotic games and events are held in the TOT.

TOT of the Autonomous Republic of Crimea and the city of Sevastopol

The regional stage of the all-Russian children and youth festival **"Voroshilov Sharpshooter"**, the results of which were announced in March, was attended by children aged 14-15 in nine teams from Sevastopol's educational institutions: schools No. 9, 13, 18, 27, 48, 54, Sevastopol Polytechnical Lyceum, and School Ecotech+. As part of these competitions, children demonstrated their skills in handling weapons at various stages: shooting from a standing position and from a stop (distance of 10 metres) with an MP-512 air rifle.³³



30 https://vk.com/wall-217363296_2551, archive: <https://archive.ph/Fif2M>

31 https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/PDF/?uri=OJ%3AL_202302875&fbclid=IwAR05WU2jWbwJPH-ftbvhe-Ho1LOwokBudRD2bqTwxyUYIFJD8fv-LMsgaqq

32 <https://drs.nsd.gov.ua/actions/personal>, archive: <https://archive.ph/wip/7YKjZ>

33 https://vk.com/wall-202830610_4639, archive: <https://archive.ph/wip/aF0aH>



TOT of the Kherson region

On 3 February 2024, the all-Russian Youth Army movement, which is under sanctions by Ukraine, the EU, the US, Canada and Switzerland, held a basic military training event for schoolchildren in Henichesk, where children were "immersed in the world of military equipment" and were shown how to assemble and disassemble the AK-74M assault rifle.³⁴



In March 2024, representatives of the Youth Army movement organised a military and patriotic masterclass in Henichesk. As part of it, instructors taught everyone how to handle different types of weapons and provide first aid in emergency situations.³⁵

TOT of the Zaporizhzhya region

In January 2024, Russian servicemen held master classes for activists of the Youth Army movement and school children at the site of Kamianka-Dniprovska School No. 3.

³⁴ <https://t.me/depobrherson/4509>, archive: <https://archive.ph/wip/OrufV>

³⁵ https://vk.com/wall-145460148_173577, archive: <https://archive.ph/wip/PZgt6>



Despite the imposition of sanctions on the militant organisation Youth Army, its activities are gaining momentum, with more and more Ukrainian children remaining in the TOT being attracted to its ranks. In particular, during the monitoring period, children were **inducted into the Youth Army in all TOT** – in the village of Konstantynivka, Zaporizhzhya region,³⁶ in the town of Henichesk, Kherson region,³⁷ in Sevastopol³⁸ and Simferopol³⁹ in Crimea.

The project **"Eaglets of Russia"**, created last year, is also actively gaining momentum. As of February 2024, 284 classes in the TOT schools of Kherson region are implementing the Eaglets of Russia project, and 5,722 primary school pupils have already become Eaglets.⁴⁰ There are about 12,000 Eaglets in Sevastopol.⁴¹

Teaching children to fly UAVs



Russia involves children in training in the assembling and operation of unmanned aerial vehicles (UAVs), which are widely used for military purposes, including in the war against Ukraine. At the end of March 2024, the so-called head of the Union of Crimean Border Guards, Oleksandr Dyachenko, announced his intention to train children to fly UAVs. He noted that schoolchildren will be taught to do so in the Simferopol military sports base, and that in addition to diving and maritime training, children will be trained in various military specialities.⁴²

36 <https://t.me/YugMolodoj/12543>, archive: <https://archive.ph/wip/kkMJr>
 37 <https://t.me/YunarmiaHerson/314>, archive: <https://archive.ph/wip/22KpD>
 38 https://vk.com/wall-203851768_1902, archive: <https://archive.ph/wip/tHbIU>
 39 https://t.me/crimean_patriot/6201, archive: <https://archive.ph/wip/wQIRL>
 40 <https://t.me/depobrherson/4504>
 41 https://vk.com/wall-177557250_24306, archive: <https://archive.ph/wip/Qn7S9>
 42 https://vk.com/wall-116028735_240676, archive: <https://archive.ph/wip/ObOpD>



On 13 January 2024, the so-called South Coastal Zonal Centre for Military-Patriotic and Military-Sports Education of the Volunteer Society for Cooperation with the Army, Aviation, and Navy (hereinafter referred to using its Russian abbreviation DOSAAF) of the Republic of Crimea in the TOT of the town of Yalta, under the guidance of a teacher of additional education, the DOSAAF has already trained children in safety when handling unmanned aerial vehicles. Practical exercises were also conducted on a drone flight simulator. In the shooting range and firearms training class, the boys practised shooting from three positions as well as disassembling and assembling a Kalashnikov rifle.⁴³





INDOCTRINATION

Actions

In addition to measures aimed at militarising children and preparing them for military service in the RF Armed Forces, Russia is trying to erase children's Ukrainian identity in the TOT by using indoctrination tools. In particular, during the monitoring period, the following mass actions were recorded:

- "Letter to the Defender of the Fatherland",
- "Letter to the Front",
- "Letter to the Soldier",
- "Parcel to the Soldier".

These actions were similar in content: school-age children wrote letters, drew pictures and collected parcels for Russian soldiers participating in the war against Ukraine. **The actual purpose of such actions was to impose feelings of belonging to Russia on children, to perceive Russian servicemen as "our own" and to glorify them, to form "patriotism" towards the aggressor country.**

Children from all the TOTs covered by the monitoring report were involved in the actions.

TOT of the Autonomous Republic of Crimea and the city of Sevastopol

At Vasilevskaya Secondary School, the so-called advisor to the principal on education, **Edie Eshmurzaeva**, and students of the 5th grade joined the All-Russian action "Letter to the Defender of the Fatherland", in which children prepared greeting cards and letters to the Russian military fighting against Ukraine.⁴⁴

TOT of the Kherson region

In the Aleshkinsky district of Kherson region, since 1 February 2024, all educational institutions have been running an all-Russian youth military-patriotic action "Letter to the Defender of the Fatherland" dedicated to the so-called Day of Military Glory on 23 February. The organisers of the action say that its aim is to support the soldiers of the so-called "special military operation".⁴⁵

44 https://vk.com/wall-214910068_191433, archive: <https://archive.ph/wip/K1dDE>

45 <https://t.me/depobrherson/4870>, archive: <https://archive.ph/wip/alkMa>



In Skadovsk school No. 3, pupils took part in the action "Letter to a Soldier" dedicated to the so-called "Defender of the Fatherland Day".⁴⁶

Students of Hryhorivska school in Chaplynka district joined the action "Let's Stand Up" to support the Russian army in the so-called "special military operation", in which children demonstrated a sign of support for the military in a video.⁴⁷

TOT of the Zaporizhzhya region

On the eve of the Defender of the Fatherland Day, Kostyantynivka Secondary School No. 1 joined the patriotic action "Parcel to a Soldier" as part of the all-Russian action "We do not abandon our people".⁴⁸

Another type of action in which children from TOT were massively involved was in support of Putin during the Russian presidential election. Under the title "**I pride myself on my president**", children in the TOT of the Autonomous Republic of Crimea and the city of Sevastopol recorded video messages with words/poems in support of Putin, similar in nature and content. By participating in such actions, **children actually become involved in political activities, and the perception of the president of the occupying state as "their own" is imposed on them.**

46 https://t.me/Skadovsk_MO/9737, archive: <https://archive.ph/wip/snl2j>

47 <https://t.me/depobrherson/4513>, archive: <https://archive.ph/wip/wym45>

48 <https://t.me/obrzp/18521>, archive: <https://archive.ph/wip/pZFWz>



The pupil's self-government of the Zaliska school of the TOT of the Autonomous Republic of Crimea took part in the republican action "I am proud of my president", in which children said they were proud of the leader of the occupying state: "Our president is our pride!".⁴⁹

The president of the pupil's self-government and the head of the primary branch of the "Movement of the First" of the Perevalnenska School named after Fedorenko of the TOT of the Autonomous Republic of Crimea took part in the action "I am proud of my president".⁵⁰

In the TOT of Kherson and Zaporizhzhya regions an action called "**Anthem with the President**" was carried out, during which members of youth movements unfurled the flag and sang the anthem of the Russian Federation.⁵¹

In addition to these actions, there were also public events attended by representatives of youth movements and organisations.

TOT of the Kherson region

Members of the Youth Army moment from Henichesk took part in events dedicated to the Russian presidential election, as part of which they:

- organised an exhibition and a military-patriotic masterclass to get acquainted with models of weapons;
- sang the song "Katyusha" together with international observers;
- took part in the flying of the largest Russian flag in the Kherson region.⁵²



Active propaganda **activities were carried out even before the day of the full-scale invasion of Ukraine**, which Russia disguises as a so-called "special military operation".

49 https://vk.com/public214910068?w=wall-214910068_195492, archive: <https://archive.ph/wip/gV2c2>

50 https://vk.com/wall-214910068_197868, archive: <https://archive.ph/wip/UGiaS>

51 <https://t.me/YugMolodoj/14265>, archive: <https://archive.ph/wip/4DHUw>

52 <https://t.me/YunarmiaHerson/379>, archive: <https://archive.ph/wip/NlFAI>



TOT of the Zaporizhzhya region

On 24 February 2024, activists of the Volunteer Company and the Youth Army held an action: they displayed a large St George's ribbon on the second anniversary of Russia's attack on Ukraine.⁵³

On the same day, activists of the YugMolodoj and the Youth Army movements in Melitopol symbolically displayed the Russian flag.⁵⁴

It should be noted that YugMolodoj youth movement continues to expand its activities in the TOT, opening new branches, in particular in the TOT of Novobohdaniivka,⁵⁵ Obilne⁵⁶ and Svitlodolynske⁵⁷ villages in Zaporizhzhya region.

On all the TOT, mass events and actions involving children were held to commemorate the day **of the so-called reunification of Crimea with Russia**, which is in fact an occupation of the territory of Ukraine. Through such events, using slogans about "returning home", "to our native harbour", etc., **in the minds of children, a substitution of concepts is actually initiated, and a positive attitude towards the occupying state is imposed on them.**

TOT of the Autonomous Republic of Crimea and the city of Sevastopol

School activists, together with the deputy head teacher responsible for the educational process, prepared a flash mob "Crimea-Russia. Forever", during which children, against the backdrop of the Russian tricolour flag and with Russian symbols, talk about the importance of and support for the so-called reunification of Crimea with Russia.⁵⁸

On 1 March, before the 10th anniversary of the so-called "Day of Reunification of Crimea with Russia", more than 1,700 children from all regions of Russia together with their guides gathered at the Artek camp for the flash mob "10 Years at Home". Artek campers created inscriptions dedicated to the anniversary of the so-called "return" of Crimea.⁵⁹

53 <https://t.me/YugMolodoj/12993>, archive: <https://archive.ph/wip/0kz37>

54 <https://t.me/YugMolodoj/12999>, archive: <https://archive.ph/wip/seekW>

55 <https://t.me/YugMolodoj/12849>, archive: <https://archive.ph/wip/c1v2w>

56 https://vk.com/wall-217752220_1473, archive: <https://archive.ph/wip/7T3kj>

57 https://vk.com/wall-217752220_1482, archive: <https://archive.ph/wip/0tZ9e>

58 https://vk.com/wall-214910068_195350, archive: <https://archive.ph/wip/hlR9u>

59 <https://artek.org/press-centr/news/10-let-doma-artekovcy-ustroili-fleshmob-k-yubileyu-vossoedineniya-kryma-s-rossiyay/>, archive: <https://archive.ph/SPWfr>



As part of the events dedicated to the so-called "Day of Reunification of Crimea with Russia", pupils of the Luhovska School of the Leninsky District participated in the exhibition of drawings "Crimea and Russia Forever".⁶⁰



TOT of the Kherson region

The Azovsk school in Henichesk district hosted a flashmob "10 years together with Russia", during which children danced with Russian flags.⁶¹

TOT of the Zaporizhzhya region

A flashmob dedicated to the so-called "Day of Reunification of Crimea with Russia" was held at Berdiansk Secondary School No. 2.⁶²

60 https://vk.com/feed?section=notifications&w=wall-214910068_195613, archive: <https://archive.ph/wip/ZaoHN>

61 <https://tavraia.tv/news/society/fleshmob-v-chest-10-letiya-krymskoj-vesny-proshel-v-azovskoj-shkole/>, archive: <https://archive.ph/wip/6Gfy4>

62 <https://t.me/obrzp/19025>, archive: <https://archive.ph/wip/40HKB>



Activists of the youth movement "YugMolodoj" in the TOT of Zaporizhzhya region held a quiz "Crimea is Russia" in honour of the so-called "Day of Reunification of Crimea and Sevastopol with Russia", during which participants competed in "knowledge of the history" of the events of the so-called "Crimean Spring".⁶³



New patriotic movement for preschool children

In addition to the existing indoctrination tools, the occupation authorities are creating and implementing new ones. During the monitoring period, **a new patriotic movement "Young citizens of Sevastopol" was created in the TOT of Sevastopol for children of the senior preschool age.** According to representatives of the occupation authorities, the creation of this movement is aimed at **"developing children's moral and patriotic qualities, fostering a sense of patriotism (note: towards Russia), and a careful attitude to the heroic past of their hometown and country"**. According to the organisers, the new movement will be a tool for engaging preschoolers in patriotic activities, interacting with children's NGOs, and the first step in a multi-level system of so-called patriotic education aimed at de facto militarisation and indoctrination of Ukrainian children living in the TOT. The militaristic organisation "Youth Army" takes an active part in the initiation of children into the movement, as well as in their further work, which is likely to become the next stage of "patriotic education" of children at school.



The first members of the movement "Young citizens of Sevastopol" were children from kindergarten No. 40 of the Sevastopol TOT,⁶⁴ headed by Anna Kozachukhina.⁶⁵ The movement actively involves children from various educational institutions, mainly pre-schools. Thus, a solemn event "Initiation into young citizens of Sevastopol" was held for children of kindergarten No. 92, with the participation of "Youth Army soldiers".⁶⁶

The educational centre "Kozacha Bay" named after the 810th Guards Marine Brigade hosted a solemn ceremony of initiation into the ranks of "young citizens of Sevastopol" for children in pre-school groups. The event was timed to coincide with the so-called 10th anniversary of Sevastopol's accession to the Russian Federation.⁶⁷



As of mid-March 2024, **four thousand children** of the TOT of Sevastopol became members of the movement "Young citizens of Sevastopol".⁶⁸ The involvement of pre-school children in the movement is ongoing.

64 https://vk.com/wall-122681115_6808, archive: <https://archive.ph/wip/byFbd>

65 <https://www.rusprofile.ru/id/7531094>, archive: <https://archive.ph/wip/OuDxW>

66 https://vk.com/wall-202625487_5688, archive: <https://archive.ph/wip/jpdsA>

67 <https://ok-kazachya.edusev.ru/about/news/2741913>, archive: <https://archive.ph/xtMJz>

68 <https://crimea-news.com/society/2024/03/15/1324489.html>, archive: <https://archive.ph/HJwJq>



New project "Under the flag of a great power"

Another project launched by the militarist organisation "Youth Army" in the TOT of Sevastopol is called "Under the flag of a great power".^{69,70} It has been officially implemented since 1 February 2024 by the School of Future Commanders of the Regional Branch of the All-Russian military-patriotic public movement, "Youth Army" in Sevastopol with the support of the Presidential Grants Fund.⁷¹ From 1 February to 30 September 2024, the theoretical part (classes on maritime history) and the practical part (maritime training) will be held. At the end of the training period, the participants will go on a sea voyage, during which they will hold "patriotic", "memorial", and sports events at the anchorages.⁷²

As part of the project "Under the flag of a great power", children were taught about the "modern exploits of Black Sea sailors under the Russian flag": participation in the so-called "special military operation" and the "merits" of the 810th Marine Brigade (Sevastopol). The project's teacher, who conducts classes for children, notes: *"Children learn a lot of new and interesting things about the victories of the Black Sea sailors under the flag of a great power (note – this refers to Russia), about the liberation of Sevastopol in 1944, about the role of the Black Sea Fleet in ensuring peace and order in Sevastopol and Crimea during the Russian Spring (note – this refers to the occupation of Crimea in 2014), about the modern exploits of the marines in the area of the special military operation (note – this refers to the war against Ukraine)."*⁷³



69 <https://президентскиегранты.рф/public/application/item?id=84208edc-d126-4eae-8658-6853ffe61989>, archive: <https://archive.ph/wip/UStTZ>

70 <https://nts-tv.com/programms/aktualnoe-intervyu/znakomstvo-s-morskim-delom-i-razvitiie-patriotizma--49673/>, archive: <https://archive.ph/nYtID>

71 https://vk.com/wall-122681115_6806, archive: <https://archive.ph/wip/3j5qc>

72 https://vk.com/wall-122681115_6620, archive: <https://archive.ph/wip/s5Yjf>

73 https://vk.com/wall-122681115_6787, archive: <https://archive.ph/wip/2I6sC>

