

Monitoring report

«UNIVERSAL SOLDIER»

or Education as the Weapon of Russia
In the Occupied South of Ukraine



for July–September 2025

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The Centre for Civic Education “Almenda” (CCE “Almenda”) is a non-governmental organisation registered in Yalta in 2011. Until 2014, its main area of work was human rights education. In 2014, following the occupation of Crimea, the organisation was forced to relocate to Kyiv. Today, its key focus is the systematic collection of accurate, timely and verified data on grave violations against children in situations of armed conflict.

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INTRODUCTION

Following the beginning of the temporary occupation of Ukrainian territories, the Russian Federation (hereinafter – RF) established total control over all spheres of life in the occupied areas and, through the occupation administrations it created, has been systematically imposing its own political, cultural, religious, and educational narratives. Particular attention has been given to children and young people. Through formal and non-formal education, summer “recreational” programmes, leisure and cultural events, the occupation authorities deliberately eradicate Ukrainian identity among minors and prepare them for service to the aggressor state.

Open-source monitoring for the period of July–September 2025 records the continuation of a large-scale campaign of militarisation and indoctrination of Ukrainian children in the temporarily occupied territories (hereinafter – TOT). The summer period, traditionally intended for children’s rest and recreation, was used by the RF for intensive military training of minors: children underwent firearms, tactical, and engineering training in camps under the supervision of RF military personnel, took part in paramilitary games together with participants in the war against Ukraine, visited military facilities, and met with so-called “heroes of the special military operation”. At the same time, from 1 September 2025, the TOT saw the introduction of new unified Russian history textbooks, the start of retraining programmes for teachers to ensure the “correct” delivery of Russian narratives, and the intensification of the policy of forced passportisation, accompanied by public ceremonies of pledging allegiance to the RF.

Under the guise of “patriotic education”, “recreation”, and “educational trips”, Ukrainian children are being systematically taken to the RF and to the TOT of the Autonomous Republic of Crimea, where they undergo ideological indoctrination, are instilled with a Russian identity, exposed to the glorification of Russian soldiers, and taught to perceive Ukraine as a hostile state.

The content, scale, and systematic nature of such activities indicate a deliberate policy of assimilation and Russification of Ukrainian children, preparing them for service in the armed forces of the aggressor state, which constitutes a gross violation of the norms of international humanitarian law.

The actions recorded during the monitoring period may be considered violations of:

- **Article 26** of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, which stipulates that education shall be directed to the full development of the human per-



sonality and to the strengthening of respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms, and 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 guarantees the right to education;
- **Article 20** of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, which provides that any propaganda for war shall be prohibited by law;
- **Article 29** of the Convention on the Rights of the Child, which states that a child's education shall be directed to the preparation of the child for responsible life in a free society, in the spirit of understanding, peace, tolerance, equality, and friendship among all peoples, ethnic, national, and religious groups;
- **Articles 38 and 39** of the Convention on the Rights of the Child, which regulate the protection of children in situations of armed conflict;
- **Article 50** of the Fourth Geneva Convention relative to the Protection of Civilian Persons in Time of War, which prohibits the occupying power from enlisting children in formations or organisations subordinate to it;
- **Article 51** of the Fourth Geneva Convention, which prohibits the occupying power from compelling protected persons to serve in its armed or auxiliary forces, as well as any pressure or propaganda aimed at securing voluntary enlistment.

METHODOLOGY

This monitoring report covers the period from 1 July to 30 September 2025.

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

Research areas: the militarisation of children in the occupied territories, indoctrination and the eradication of Ukrainian identity, the involvement of minors in actions aimed at supporting the RF's armed aggression against Ukraine, and the destruction of the Ukrainian education system.

Sources of information:

The report is based on open-source information, including:

- official communications from Ukrainian public authorities



- reports and publications by civil society organisations
- open sources from the temporarily occupied territories, namely:
 - information posted on the official websites and social-network pages (including the «VKontakte» network) of the so-called «ministries/departments/education departments of the temporarily occupied territory»;
 - information posted on the websites of general-education schools in the temporarily occupied territories;
 - publications by local media in the temporarily occupied parts of Kherson and Zaporizhzhia Oblasts, the Autonomous Republic of Crimea, and the city of Sevastopol'
 - information published on social networks.
- official statistical data of the Russian Federation.

LIMITATIONS

The report does not cover the territories of the temporarily occupied parts of Luhansk and Donetsk Regions.

For this report, the authors used only sources available to them. The work with sources and the analysis of information continued until 15 October 2025. Information and reports that could not be verified as of the date of publication were not included in the report.

In preparing this report, the authors used data found on the social network VKontakte. This is due to the fact that, following the full-scale invasion of Ukraine by the RF, most information from representatives of the occupation authorities has been published specifically on this platform, which has effectively become the only accessible source of relevant data. For the same reason, the report also includes materials from Russian media and resources of the temporarily occupied territories.

The information presented in this report is intended to document the crimes of the RF and to counter the disinformation it spreads.



ABBREVIATIONS

DOSAAF – the Voluntary Society for Cooperation with the Army, Aviation, and Navy (a Soviet-era organisation, known in Russian as ДОСААФ)

RF – Russian Federation

SMO – “special military operation”, a term used in Russia to describe the full-scale invasion of Ukraine

TOT – temporarily occupied territories of Ukraine

I.

INDOCTRINATION





THE BEGINNING OF THE NEW SCHOOL YEAR UNDER OCCUPATION

Monitoring reveals a clear trend: in the 2025–2026 academic year, the occupation authorities are not only maintaining the existing mechanisms of Russification but also deepening them through the introduction of new textbooks, new modules in curricula, teacher retraining, and “patriotic” activities aimed at displacing Ukrainian cultural and educational content.

From September 2025, the occupation authorities announced an increased focus on the teaching of Russian history, achieved by reducing the number of hours allocated to social studies. According to the statement of the so-called Minister of Education and Science of Zaporizhzhia Region, Oleksandr Kalyagin, the programmes must be fully aligned with the federal standards of the RF so that “children remember their history and the contribution of their ancestors”, which in effect means the continued imposition of Russian historical narratives on Ukrainian children.

Monitoring shows a clear trend: in the 2025–2026 academic year, the occupation authorities are not only maintaining the existing mechanisms of Russification but also intensifying them through the introduction of new textbooks, new modules in school curricula, teacher retraining,¹ and “patriotic” activities aimed at eradicating Ukrainian cultural and educational content. Since September 2025, the occupation authorities have announced a stronger emphasis on teaching Russian history by reducing the number of hours allocated to social studies. According to the statement of the so-called Minister of Education and Science of Zaporizhzhia Region, Oleksandr Kalyagin, the curricula must be fully synchronised with the federal standards of the RF so that “children remember their history and the contribution of their ancestors”,² which in practice means the continued imposition of Russian historical narratives on Ukrainian children.

UNIFIED TEXTBOOKS

From 1 September 2025, schools in the TOT began teaching using new unified history textbooks (World History and History of Russia) for grades 5–7, aimed at shaping a “patriotic worldview.”

For grades 10–11, these textbooks have been in use since 2023 and include chapters on the so-called “Crimean Spring” and the “Special Military Operation”. Formally, the transition is planned to take place over two years (2025 – grades

1 <https://zonews.ru/news/s-1-sentjabrja-v-rossii-nachnetsja-masshtabnaja-perepodgotovka-uchitelej-istorii>, archive <https://archive.ph/wip/vws6r>

2 <https://tass.ru/obschestvo/24119723>, archive <https://archive.ph/eCrDn>



5–7, 2026 – grades 8–9).³ However, since the updated history textbooks have already been included in the federal list, regions are permitted to implement them in full earlier than officially scheduled.

For example, in occupied Sevastopol, a full transition took place immediately: in August 2025, more than 59,000 copies for grades 5–9 were delivered to schools,⁴ while the so-called “Ministry of Education, Science and Youth of the Republic of Crimea” announced the purchase of 122,838 new textbooks for grades 5–7.⁵

In the TOT of Kherson Region, reports from August 2025 also indicate the delivery of new-format textbooks for grades 5–9.⁶

The presentation of the new unified textbooks was personally attended by the President of the RF, Vladimir Putin, who stated that this was “an extremely important task for preserving national memory and ensuring continuity between generations”.⁷

In connection with the introduction of these textbooks, the RF Minister of Education, Sergey Kravtsov, announced a large-scale retraining programme for history teachers to ensure the “correct” teaching in accordance with the unified textbooks.⁸

For more details on the implementation of the new textbooks and other changes in the educational process, see the article [Education as a Tool of Russian Propaganda: What Awaits Learners in the TOT from 1 September 2025](#).

In addition to the main school textbooks, the beginning of the 2025–2026 academic year saw the presentation of a new publication, *The Military History of Russia*, prepared by the Russian Military-Historical Society and edited by Vladimir Medinsky. The textbook is published in three volumes: for grades 6–7 (Ancient Rus – late 17th century), for grades 8–9 (18th – early 20th century), and for grades 10–11 (from the events of the First World War to the present day, including the invasion of Ukraine). The publication is synchronised with the main school history course and intended **for students of Suvorov, Nakhimov, and cadet schools and classes, for those who plan to pursue a military career, and for anyone interested in the military history of Russia**.⁹ Despite its specialised focus, the

3 <https://tass.ru/obschestvo/24854601?ysclid=mev59k9b3w43596905>, archive <https://archive.ph/wip/ISxg2>

4 https://vk.com/wall-177557250_31845, archive <https://archive.ph/wip/zeBPI>

5 <https://t.me/minobrKrima/13123>, archive <https://archive.ph/wip/2v40z>

6 <https://newskherson.ru/other/2025/08/28/85042.html>, archive <https://archive.ph/wip/sOg06>

7 <https://e-cis.info/news/566/128389>, archive <https://archive.ph/wip/BPX6N>

8 <https://zonews.ru/news/s-1-sentjabrja-v-rossii-nachnetsja-masshtabnaja-perepodgotovka-uchitelej-istorii>, apxib <https://archive.ph/wip/vws6r>

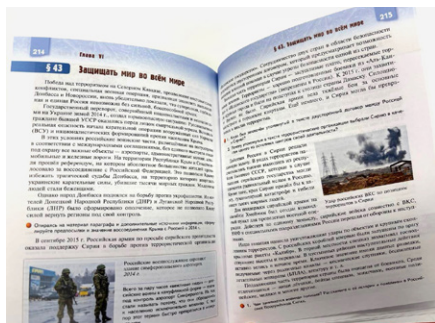
9 <https://lugansk.bezformata.com/listnews/uchebnik-po-voennoj/141939774/>, archive <https://archive.ph/wip/VzOqr>



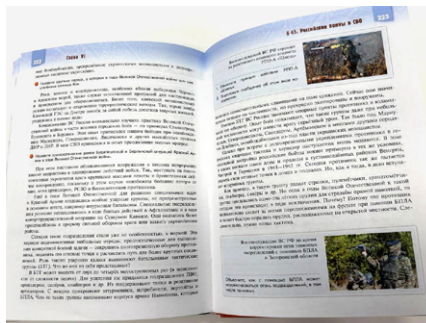
RF Minister of Education, Sergey Kravtsov, stated that “the Ministry of Education has approved the textbook *The Military History of Russia* and **recommends it to all schools in the country, not only military ones**. Moreover, together with the Russian Military-Historical Society, **professional development courses will be organised for history teachers based on this textbook**”.¹⁰ Its introduction into general education schools enables the occupation authorities to use it as a tool of militarisation and Russification: through lessons on “military glory” and “patriotic traditions”, children are taught to perceive war as a normal state and to view the Russian soldier as a model to emulate.



In the image: Vladimir Medinsky at the presentation of the textbook “*The Military History of Russia*”, which he edited. Moscow. Source – <https://www.kp.ru/daily/27657/5041864>, archive – <https://archive.ph/wip/qcFwI>



In the images: pages from the textbook “*The Military History of Russia*”, edited by Vladimir Medinsky. Source – <https://tvrbc.news/111187>, archive – <https://archive.ph/wip/t6IXR>





TEACHER TRAINING

In July, in the TOT of Zaporizhzhia Region, training sessions for teachers were conducted as part of a professional development programme¹¹ and an “educational event aimed at building an effective team”. The participants included teachers from schools and universities, as well as representatives of the occupation “Ministry of Education and Science of Zaporizhzhia Region”. Educators were instructed on how to “correctly” convey to students information about the “values of Russian statehood”, were introduced to the so-called “historical facts” about Novorossiia and Ancient Rus, and were taught to **“expose the fakes of Ukronazi propaganda”** – for example, the claim that the hryvnia, a bar of gold or silver, allegedly first appeared on Russian soil.¹²

Another area of teacher preparation involves their participation in the course “Prevention of the Spread of Neo-Nazi Ideology among Children and Young People”, developed by the All-Russian Public and State Educational Society “Znanie” (from the Russian for “Knowledge”). The course introduces methods and tools for working with children to identify pro-Ukrainian attitudes. For more details, see the report [“How Russia Erases Ukrainian Identity under the Guise of Combating Extremism”](#).

In 2025, the shortage of teaching staff in the temporarily occupied territories remains acute.¹³ To address it, Russia is actively implementing the “Rural Teacher” (Russian; Zemsky Uchitel’) programme, funded from the federal budget. From 2025, payments to participants in the programme have been doubled, reaching 2 million roubles for teachers who agree to work in the TOT.¹⁴ At the same time, in some regions, teachers are not required to have a full pedagogical education – a secondary specialised or incomplete higher education is sufficient. During the monitoring period, “Rural Teachers” appeared for the first time in the TOT of Kherson Region,¹⁵ while in the TOT of Zaporizhzhia Region¹⁶ and the TOT of Crimea,¹⁷ participants in this programme had already started teaching earlier. Given the number of open vacancies, their presence is likely to increase throughout the academic year.¹⁸

11 <https://t.me/obrzp/35326>, archive <https://archive.ph/wip/8DIRy>

12 <https://t.me/obrzp/35239>, archive <https://archive.ph/wip/mGlgT>

13 <https://sevastopol-news.com/society/2025/05/14/460775.html>, archive <https://archive.ph/wip/xt3Yk>

14 <https://rutube.ru/video/private/ed933c0eedd472cfbbad9c8316cd13e7/?p=uc1878Dc8-hQd5zrxTYFwQ>, archive <https://archive.ph/wip/X4xWT>

15 https://t.me/SALDO_VGA/10492, archive <https://archive.ph/wip/fZBqz>

16 <https://zonews.ru/news/shest-zemskih-uchitelej-rabotajut-v-shkolah-zaporozhskoj-oblasti/>, archive <https://archive.ph/wip/Zz2M0>

17 <https://krippo.ru/index.php/14-moduli/3279-65>, archive <https://archive.ph/wip/gOGGh>

18 <https://zemteacher.apkpro.ru/vacancies?regionId=88&>, archive <https://archive.ph/wip/yOTtk>



FORCED PASSPORTISATION

In the temporarily occupied territories of Ukraine, Russia is actively pursuing a policy of forced passportisation, including among minors. Under the guise of ceremonial events and “educational” initiatives, the occupation authorities instil in children a sense of belonging to a “unified Russian state” and impose loyalty to the aggressor. These events are organised with the participation of representatives of security forces, occupation administrations, and pro-Kremlin youth movements, turning the process of receiving a passport into a tool for demonstrating political control.

Public passport presentation ceremonies are held regularly, typically as part of the **“We Are Citizens of Russia”** programme, which is implemented as part of the Russian national project “Youth and Children”. The programme is designed to consolidate children from the TOT within Russia’s legal, cultural, and ideological space.

Some examples of events held for children from the TOT of Crimea and the city of Sevastopol include:

- **In July**, in the temporarily occupied city of **Sevastopol**, **18 schoolchildren received passports** on the “Day of Family, Love, and Fidelity”. The ceremony was attended by Andrey Khoroshilov, **a participant in the so-called “special military operation”**, and **Anna Molchanova, head of the local branch of the “Movement of the First”**. Children were publicly urged to “develop, work, and defend the interests of the Motherland”, once again demonstrating how the theme of citizenship is used to instil military-patriotic values.¹⁹
- **In September 2025**, the occupation authorities held a “ceremonial passport presentation” at the Artek International Children’s Centre. The event was organised with the support of the RF Ministry of Education and the Ministry of Internal Affairs for the Republic of Crimea. During the ceremony, **34 children**, including those from the TOT, received their first Russian passports **from a participant in the so-called “special military operation”**.²⁰

Some examples of events held for children from the TOT of Kherson Region include:

- **In August**, in the temporarily occupied city of Henichesk, the occupation authorities held a public ceremony to demonstratively present passports to schoolchildren. The event was attended by representatives of the occupation

19 <https://t.me/mypervie92/5974>, archive <https://archive.fo/wip/XDfE1>

20 https://vk.com/wall-122681115_9135, archive <https://archive.ph/wip/dtRC2>



administration and Russian law enforcement agencies, who emphasised the children's "duty to be worthy citizens of Russia", to obey the laws of the occupying state, and to respect its symbols.²¹

Some examples of events held for children from the TOT of Zaporizhzhia Region include:

■ In August 2025, in the temporarily occupied town of Melitopol, an official passport presentation ceremony was held to mark the Day of the State Flag of the Russian Federation. Passports were presented by representatives of Russian security forces – police and justice colonels from the RF Ministry of Internal Affairs and the Investigative Committee in Zaporizhzhia Region. The event was also attended by representatives of the pro-Kremlin youth movement "Movement of the First", who use such occasions to "foster patriotism" and instil loyalty to the occupation regime. During the ceremony, participants performed the song "Russia Is Us!" about "unity and pride in Russia", which reinforced the propagandistic effect and turned the act of receiving a passport into an element of ideological ritual.²² A similar ceremony took place in the temporarily occupied town of Berdyansk.²³ The so-called "Day of the Reunification of the Donetsk People's Republic, Luhansk People's Republic, Zaporizhzhia and Kherson Regions with the Russian Federation" served as yet another occasion for a demonstrative passport ceremony, during which children took an oath of allegiance to Russia and pledged to defend it.²⁴



In the image: the so-called Acting Head of the Migration Department of the Main Directorate of the Ministry of Internal Affairs of Russia in Zaporizhzhia Region, Police Colonel Oleg Stupishin, presents a Russian passport to a minor. August 2025, TOT of Melitopol, Zaporizhzhia Region. Source - https://t.me/mypervie_zp/5548, archive <https://archive.ph/wip/517DY>.

21 <https://herson.bezformata.com/listnews/hersonskoy/149990570/>, archive <https://archive.ph/wip/EhmU8>

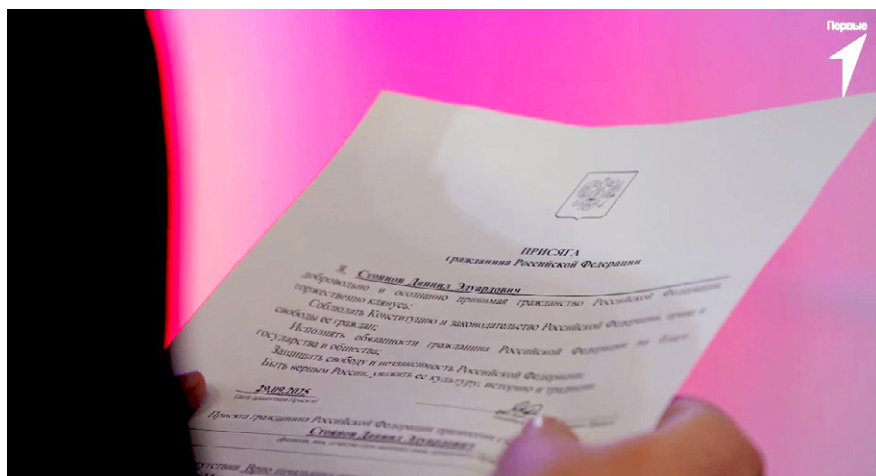
22 https://t.me/mypervie_zp/5548, archive <https://archive.ph/wip/517DY>

23 https://t.me/mypervie_zp/5555, archive <https://archive.ph/hrRPp>

24 https://t.me/mypervie_zp/5861, archive <https://archive.ph/wip/RTKzY>



In the image: representatives of the occupation security forces of Zaporizhzhia Region together with minors who were presented with Russian passports. August 2025, TOT of Berdyansk, Zaporizhzhia Region. Source – https://t.me/mypervie_zp/5555, archive <https://archive.ph/hrRpp>.



In the image: the text of the oath taken by minors when receiving Russian passports. September 2025, TOT of Zaporizhzhia Region. Source – https://t.me/mypervie_zp/5861, archive <https://archive.ph/wip/RTKzY>.

RUSSIFICATION PROGRAMMES

The indoctrination and Russification of Ukrainian children are carried out not only through sending minors to summer camps but also within the framework of a number of Russian projects that operate year-round⁶ for example, “**More Than a Journey**”, “**University Sessions**”, “**Cultural Map 4+85**”, and others.

Under the “**University Sessions**” programme, **7,533 children** from the temporarily occupied territories of Ukraine were taken to Russia in 2025. During the previous years (2022-2024), **30,985 Ukrainian children** participated in this



Russification programme.²⁵ The de facto aim of the initiative is the integration of Ukrainian children into the RF educational system and their encouragement to pursue higher education in Russian universities.

For more details on the programme, see the analytical report [“The ‘University Sessions’ Programme as the Instrument for the Destruction of Ukrainian Identity and the Indoctrination of Children and Youth from the Temporarily Occupied Territories”](#).

During the reporting period, children from the TOT were taken to Moscow,²⁶ Tomsk,²⁷ Grozny,^{28 29} the Republic of Dagestan,³⁰ Stavropol,³¹ and other cities and regions of the Russian Federation.

Among the lectures delivered to participants of the “University Sessions” programme was “Service to the Fatherland: From Generation to Generation”,³² which aimed to impose a Russian identity on young people through the study of Russia’s history “from Ivan the Terrible to the present day”, to justify the war against Ukraine as an act of “liberation” and “denazification”, and to glorify participants of the war against Ukraine by placing them on a par with heroes of the Second World War. The lecture employs propaganda clichés about **“denazification and demilitarisation”**, **refers to the occupied Ukrainian regions as “liberated” and “returned to Russia”**, and uses religious motifs to justify self-sacrifice, quoting the Gospel words about love that **“lays down one’s life for one’s friends” in the context of the war against Ukraine**. Through the study of the “weapons of victory” and the history of Russian military formations, children **are being prepared for possible service in the Russian army**.

Under the guise of educational and cultural trips organised through the **“More Than a Journey”** programme, participants from the TOT are systematically immersed in Russian historical and militaristic narratives. For example, in July 2025, schoolchildren from the TOT of Zaporizhzhia Region were taken to Moscow and the Moscow Region to visit the **Victory Museum, Patriot Park**, the **Main Cathedral of the Russian Armed Forces**, and the pavilion **“Russia – My History”**, where the cult of war and the glorification of both Soviet and modern Russian soldiers are promoted. The children are also involved in propaganda programmes such as

25 <https://zonews.ru/news/universitetskie-smeny-za-tri-goda-sobrali-desjatki-tysjach-rebja-istoricheskij>, archive <https://archive.ph/wip/1q7eT>

26 <https://t.me/obrzp/35282>, archive <https://t.me/obrzp/35282>

27 <https://t.me/obrzp/35203>, archive <https://archive.ph/wip/HGqio>

28 <https://t.me/obrzp/35055>, archive <https://archive.ph/wip/omn2E>

29 https://t.me/mypervie_zp/5211, archive <https://archive.ph/GBqXn>

30 <https://t.me/obrzp/34652>, archive <https://archive.ph/wip/9MSpP>

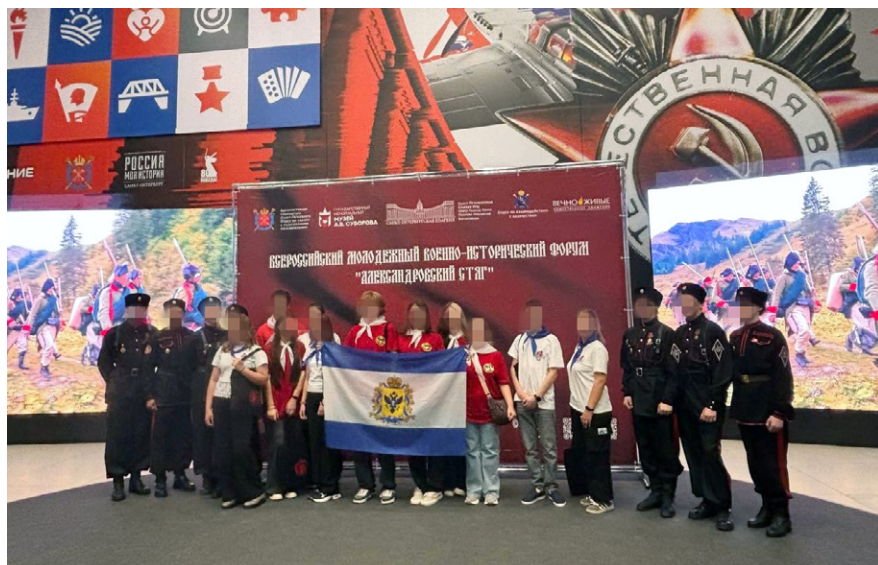
31 https://t.me/mypervie_zp/5234, archive <https://archive.ph/G9KMB>

32 <https://t.me/universmeny/381>, archive <https://archive.ph/wip/j6JoX>



“1,418 Steps to Victory”, which instil in them an imposed sense of belonging to the so-called “the Russian people as a nation of victors”.³³

The occupation authorities are also taking Ukrainian children from the TOT to Russia under other programmes. For example, in July, pupils from Novotroitske School No. 2 in the TOT of Kherson Region were taken to St Petersburg to participate in a military-historical forum. At the **Alexander's Banner Youth Military-Historical Forum**, the children wrote essays on “historical topics” and took part in “various competitions”.³⁴ Such events foster in children from the TOT a sense of attachment to Russian history and culture, presenting Russia as “our country”, which constitutes assimilation and a violation of children's right to preserve their national identity.



In the image: children from the TOT of Kherson Region at the Alexander's Banner Youth Military-Historical Forum, holding the flag of the Kherson Oblast (occupation authorities). July 2025, St Petersburg, Russian Federation. Source: – <https://t.me/depobrherson/14151>, archive <https://archive.ph/wip/TqUhP>

Thus, under the guise of “patriotic education” and “preserving historical memory”, the occupation authorities are in fact carrying out the **ideological integration of Ukrainian children into the Russian cultural and historical space**, deepening the process of Russification and justifying the ongoing aggression through militarised interpretations of the past.

33 <https://t.me/YugMolodoj/25735>, archive <https://archive.ph/wip/F2R8N>

34 <https://t.me/depobrherson/14151>, archive <https://archive.ph/wip/TqUhP>

2. MILITARISATION





The monitoring period coincided with the summer “recreation campaign”, which the RF actively uses to militarise children during out-of-school time. The occupation authorities continue to systematically involve minors in activities aimed at preparing them for military service.

According to the occupation administrations, the so-called recreation campaign in the TOT of Crimea covered **181,000 children**,³⁵ while around **4,000 children** from the TOT of Kherson Region³⁶ and another **4,000 from** the TOT of Zaporizhzhia Region³⁷ were subjected to the same forced “recreation” programme organised by Russia.

Thus, during the summer, children from the TOT were involved in paramilitary games and taken to militarised camps both within the RF and in the TOT.

PARAMILITARY CAMPS AND TRAINING PROGRAMMES

Some examples of activities organised for children from the TOT of Crimea and the city of Sevastopol include:

- In July 2025, children from the TOT of Kerch who are members of the “Young Army” (Russian: “Yunarmia”, also widely referred to as the “Youth Army”) movement and attend the Russian military-patriotic centre “Sivash” were taken to the “Iskrennost” (“Sincerity”) camp in the temporarily occupied town of Mariupol, Donetsk Region. The children participated in the fourth session of the field training camp “Patriot”, organised by the occupation authorities with the involvement of the “Young Guard of United Russia”. At the opening of the camp session, the so-called head of the Guardianship and Custody Department of the occupation administration of Mariupol, **Valeriy Onatskyi**, addressed the children, stating:

“...you are creating a chain of generations who today oppose ‘Nazi’ Ukraine, who oppose the collective West... you are all here for the greatness and the future of our Motherland... (note – this refers to Russia. The narrative of ‘Nazi Ukraine’ is entrenched in Russian history textbooks and in the RF’s ‘Strategy for Countering Extremism’; it is used to ideologically indoctrinate children and as a pretext for persecuting those with pro-Ukrainian views)”.³⁸

35 <https://monm.rk.gov.ru/articles/dff423b6-153a-45a5-a701-fd208e5c23c0>.

archive <https://archive.ph/MHlWx>

36 <https://khogov.ru/news/okolo-1500-detej-iz-hersonskoj-oblasti-otpravilis-v-detskie-lagerya>,

archive <https://archive.ph/wip/FMssz>

37 <https://tass.ru/obschestvo/24888221>, archive <https://archive.ph/wip/T4DZ4>

38 https://vk.com/video-213181913_456432548?t=2m8s&ref_domain=yastatic.net, archive

<https://archive.fo/wip/m91uN>



In the images: screenshots from a video of the speech by the so-called Head of the Guardianship and Custody Department of the Mariupol occupation administration, Valeriy Onatskiy, at the opening of the field training camp "Patriot" for children from the TOT of Crimea. Temporarily occupied Mariupol, Donetsk Region, July 2025.

Source – <https://surl.li/ewbpav>, archive <https://archive.fo/wip/m91uN>



The organisers of the field training camp "Patriot", held at the "Iskrennost" camp, stated that this project **"continues to instil in children a sense of responsibility, respect for history, and readiness to defend their Motherland"** (note – referring to Russia).³⁹

It is worth noting that during the summer period, 700 children from the TOT,⁴⁰ including children with disabilities,⁴¹ attended the **"Iskrennost"** camp in temporarily occupied Mariupol, Donetsk Region. Children with disabilities and orphans are among those under the close attention of representatives of the occupation authorities, particularly Valeriy Onatskiy, who is responsible for facilitating the documentation of children planned for transfer to, or already taken to, Russia. It is important to note that in March 2022, Onatskiy was involved in the deportation of 112 minors from the TOT of Mariupol, for which he was sanctioned by Ukraine.⁴²

39 <https://t.me/mariupol24tv/96883>, archive <https://archive.ph/wip/CzK3T>

40 <https://t.me/mariupol24tv/100417>, archive <https://archive.ph/wip/zMgzg>

41 <https://mariupol-news.ru/society/2025/08/03/120454.html>, archive <https://archive.ph/wip/mEwKn>

42 <https://www.president.gov.ua/documents/4152025-55397>, archive <https://archive.ph/yDoml>



At the end of July 2025, in the temporarily occupied town of Bakhchysarai, the **Crimean Patriot Centre (“Krympatriottsentr”)**, responsible for the “patriotic” upbringing of young people, organised a **five-day camp for pre-conscription youth**. The event, organised by the occupation authorities, was presented as “an opportunity for young people to prepare for military service, improve their physical fitness, and strengthen their willpower”. The camp programme included **practical training in basic military skills, lectures on “military-patriotic education” and the history of wars, as well as meetings with veterans and participants of the so-called “special military operation”**. The children were dressed in military uniforms bearing the insignia “Armed Forces of Russia”.⁴³ The organisers stated:

“We are proud of their eagerness to learn and their readiness to serve our society and state,” they stated, effectively emphasising the main purpose of such activities: **instilling in children obedience to the occupation regime and readiness to serve in the army of the aggressor state.**⁴⁴



In the images: minors dressed in military uniforms and holding weapons during training at a five-day pre-conscription camp organised by the Crimean Patriot Centre. July–August 2025, TOT of the Autonomous Republic of Crimea.

Source – https://t.me/crimean_patriot/8980, archive <https://archive.ph/wip/KTINB>, https://t.me/crimean_patriot/8990, archive <https://archive.ph/2zxlm>



43 https://t.me/crimean_patriot/8980, archive <https://archive.ph/wip/KTINB>

44 https://t.me/crimean_patriot/9025, archive <https://archive.ph/Tb6FG>



■ In July 2025, at the “Gorny” children’s recreation camp near the TOT of Sevastopol, the occupation authorities organised a paramilitary relay event for younger groups. Children competed in **quickly putting on military gear, overcoming obstacle courses, loading magazines, shooting air rifles, throwing knives at targets, and throwing anti-tank and hand grenades.**⁴⁵ In addition, the camp implemented a separate educational programme titled “Young Warrior”, which trained 435 children⁴⁶ and included drone operation lessons, tactical military-sports games, and activities such as the “Shield and Sword” game.⁴⁷ The programme is carried out with the participation of so-called “SMO” combatants and supported by the so-called Department of Education and Science and the so-called Department of Internal Policy of the occupation administration of Sevastopol as part of the grant project “School of Future Commanders. Follow the Heroes!”⁴⁸



In the images: children holding objects resembling an assault rifle and an anti-tank cumulative grenade during a paramilitary relay event at the “Gorny” children’s recreation camp. July 2025, near the TOT of Sevastopol. Source – https://vk.com/album-122681115_307828432, archive <https://archive.ph/wip/84ZU5>.



45 https://vk.com/wall-122681115_8873, archive <https://archive.ph/wip/zoXFS>

46 https://vk.com/wall-122681115_8810, archive <https://archive.ph/Pgjvl>

47 https://vk.com/wall-122681115_8843, archive <https://archive.ph/wip/y9pZR>

48 https://vk.com/wall-122681115_8845, archive <https://archive.ph/wip/4XLBW>



Another example of militarisation was the “Young Army Summer – 2025” organised by the Crimean branch of DOSAAF in the temporarily occupied Yalta as part of the programme **“A Sacred Duty – to Defend the Motherland”**. Over the course of three summer months, children were engaged in physical and military-applied training, attended lectures, and were shown documentary materials about Russian military higher education institutions to encourage enrolment.⁴⁹ The same organiser – DOSAAF of the Republic of Crimea – also held the military-sports competition “The Fighter’s Path”,⁵⁰ the field training camp “No One but Us!”,⁵¹ and other events aimed at providing military training for children and instilling in them a sense of duty to defend Russia as their “Motherland”.

Some examples of activities organised for children from the TOT of Zaporizhzhia Region:

In July 2025, around **one hundred teenagers** from the temporarily occupied areas of Zaporizhzhia Region took part in the third interregional session **“Time of Young Heroes”**, held by the “Warrior” (“VOIN”) Centre in Volgograd (RF).⁵² In total, this session involved **850 teenagers aged 14–17** from the TOT of Ukraine, as well as from various regions of the RF. Under the supervision of the Centre’s **instructors, most of whom are members of the Russian armed forces, minors underwent firearms, tactical, and engineering training, and learned the basics of communications, drone use, tactical medicine, and Russia’s national security**. Such “work with the younger generation” is carried out **on the instruction of the President of the RF, Vladimir Putin**, and, according to the organisers, aims to “cultivate readiness to defend Russia”. The joint participation of Ukrainian children alongside their Russian peers further promotes conditions for their assimilation and Russification. Over the summer of 2025, four such sessions were held for a total of 3,400 teenagers.⁵³



In the images: teenagers in military uniforms holding weapons during the “Time of Young Heroes” session organised by the “Warrior” Centre. July 2025, Volgograd, RF. Source – <https://t.me/YugMolodoj/25780>, archive <https://archive.ph/wip/TkvGy>.

49 https://vk.com/wall-196982714_1934, archive <https://archive.ph/wip/zKNGO>

50 https://vk.com/wall-196982714_1932, archive <https://archive.ph/wip/dfsjsx>

51 https://vk.com/wall-196982714_1899, archive <https://archive.ph/wip/DjZAS>

52 <https://t.me/obrzp/35044>, archive <https://archive.ph/wip/LBFmg>

53 <https://t.me/YugMolodoj/25780>, archive <https://archive.ph/wip/TkvGy>



In the images: teenagers in military uniforms holding weapons, as well as activities during the “Time of Young Heroes” session organised by the “Warrior” Centre. July 2025, Volgograd, RF. Source – <https://t.me/obrzp/35031>, archive <https://archive.ph/wip/1n4ki>





The occupation authorities publicly highlight the results of their militarisation of children in the TOT, including at the highest official level. In September 2025, one of the participants of the “Warrior” Centre programme, a minor from the TOT of Zaporizhzhia Region, K. Topolnytska, took part in a meeting with the President of the RF, Vladimir Putin, in Vladivostok (RF). During the meeting, she stated that **she planned to enrol in a Russian military university and that it was the “Warrior” camp that had helped her choose her future military profession.**⁵⁴



In the image: minors, including those from the TOT, who are participants of the “Warrior” Centre programmes, together with the President of the RF, Vladimir Putin, and Russian military personnel. September 2025, Vladivostok, RF. Source – https://t.me/mypervie_zp/5650, archive <https://archive.ph/wip/QjjJR>.

- From 20 July to 2 August 2025, under the slogan of “patriotic upbringing”, schoolchildren from the TOT of Zaporizhzhia Region were also taken to the training base of the Training Centre of the Special Forces Airborne Troops Foundation “Preobrazhensky”. The organisers of the camp stated that the children “took up combat duty”, receiving training from active officers of the RF, and listed the objectives as “career guidance”, fostering “unity” with Russians, and “meetings with heroes of the ‘SMO’”. At the same time, the organisers declared their goal as follows:

*“Perhaps **some of these boys and girls**, ten years from now, **will wear shoulder straps with three stars** and say to new recruits: ‘My journey began at Preobrazhensky’”.*

54 https://t.me/mypervie_zp/5650, archive <https://archive.ph/wip/QjjJR>



Evidence of military training is confirmed by children's own testimonies. Twelve-year-old Maksym from the TOT of Melitopol said: *"The rifle turned out to be heavier in my hands than in the video game tank!"*⁵⁵

It is worth noting that earlier, **33 teenagers from the TOT of Donetsk Region who underwent training at the "Preobrazhensky" Centre "decided on their future profession – to defend the Motherland" (meaning Russia).**⁵⁶



In the images: children dressed in camouflage uniforms are shooting various types of weapons and loading them with ammunition under the supervision of an instructor during their stay at the Training Centre of the Special Forces Airborne Troops Foundation "Preobrazhensky", July–August 2025. Source: <https://surl.li/thwimd>, archive: <https://archive.ph/wip/LeFPf>



55 <https://t.me/obrzp/35201>, archive <https://archive.ph/wip/s3oFA>

56 <https://strana7ya.ru/#about>, archive <https://archive.ph/wip/rEhQu>



In the images: children holding weapons together with an instructor during the celebration of Russian Airborne Troops Day. Training Centre of the Special Forces Airborne Troops Foundation “Preobrazhensky”, RF, August 2025. Source: <https://surli.cc/enbhiq>, archive: <https://archive.ph/wip/AuFh4>

For more details, see the article [“How Russia is turning Ukrainian children into soldiers for its army”](#).

■ **360 young people**, including **children from the TOT of Zaporizhzhia, Donetsk and Luhansk Regions**, as well as **participants from Belarus**,⁵⁷ took part in **the military-patriotic training camp “Gvardeets-2025” (“Guardman-2025”)**, held in August 2025 in the city of Penza (RF) at the local branch of the **Military Academy of Logistics Support**.⁵⁸ The camp programme included **intensive military training** based on modern Russian standards, featuring **tactical, firearms, and drill exercises**, as well as sports competitions and creative contests. Significant attention was given to **“patriotic upbringing”** and **fostering teamwork among participants**.⁵⁹ It is worth noting that the opening ceremony was attended by deputy representatives of the President of the RF in the Volga Federal District and “Heroes of Russia” – participants in the so-called “SMO”. The internal regulations prohibited participants from using smartphones or other internet-enabled devices and from leaving the camp premises without the permission of the camp commander.⁶⁰

57 <https://penza.bezformata.com/listnews/v-penzu-na-sbori/149246447/>, archive <https://archive.ph/wip/znDY5>

58 <https://t.me/obrzp/35298>, archive <https://archive.ph/lowwh>

59 <https://penza.bezformata.com/listnews/sbori-gvardeetc/149229033/>, archive <https://archive.ph/wip/CFSht>

60 <https://proektypfo.ru/?id=6553&download=1>, archive <https://archive.ph/oDKa5>



In the images: a Russian self-propelled mortar carrying participants of the military-patriotic camp "Gvardeets-2025", as well as teenagers from the TOT of Zaporizhzhia Region holding the flag of the so-called Zaporizhzhia Oblast (occupation authorities). Penza, RF, August 2025. Source – <https://vk.com/albums-220041297>, archive <https://archive.ph/wip/kUaxi>

For more details, see the article [“‘Gvardeets’: how Russia makes soldiers out of children’](#).



Some examples of activities organised for children from the TOT of Kherson Region:

- In July 2025, twenty-five teenagers were taken to the TOT of Crimea to participate in **military-sports training camps** organised by the so-called **Youth Centre “Patriot”** together with the **Cossack Centre “Vityaz”** (“Knight”) and supported by the occupation **“Ministry of Youth Policy of the Kherson Region”**. The programme included **pre-prescription training** with elements of **Cossack military tradition and tactical exercises** such as archery, spear and knife throwing, sword and whip drills, training in the use of gas masks, and first aid. The sessions also involved Young Army cadets and representatives of Russian youth movements, including “Young South” (“Yug Molodoj”), “Young Guard of United Russia”, “Volunteers of Victory”, and the military-patriotic centre “Warrior”, among others.⁶¹



In the images: children from the TOT of Kherson Region holding Russian army field rations, with the flag of the so-called Kherson Region (occupation administration) in the background. TOT of Crimea, July 2025. Source – <https://vk.com/albums-220041297>, archive <https://archive.ph/wip/kUaxi>



61 <https://t.me/m2mxo/3520>, archive <https://archive.ph/wip/ghvDI>



Also in July, a career guidance programme was held for members of the “Movement of the First” with the participation of the Russian National Guard (Rosgvardiya). More than forty teenagers from the occupied Henichesk and Novotroitske districts took part in physical training, lectures, and workshops aimed at fostering “discipline, team spirit, and unity with the Russian Federation”. The children were also presented with a booklet titled “Connection of Generations”, which contains stories about the “heroes of the Great Patriotic War” and participants of the so-called “SMO”, drawing parallels between the wars and portraying the latter as equivalent to wartime heroes.⁶²

MILITARISTIC GAMES

The RF and representatives of the occupation authorities are actively involving children from the TOT in all-Russian military-patriotic games, including “Zarnitsa 2.0”, which has brought together more than three million participants from across Russia, including the occupied territories of Ukraine.⁶³

Teenagers from the TOT went through qualifying, municipal, regional, and district stages,^{64 65} before reaching the all-Russian final in Volgograd.⁶⁶

At the final competition, the children underwent tests in firearms, tactical and engineering training, garrison service, sapping, and completing a combined march. The “army” commanders were participants in the war against Ukraine – veterans of the so-called “SMO”, including seven “Heroes of Russia”. **In a video, children from the TOT state that they want to be like their commanders, participants in the war against Ukraine**, which demonstrates the effects of ideological indoctrination and the creation of a “heroic” image of Russian military personnel.⁶⁷ The award ceremony took place on Mamayev Kurgan near the monument “The Motherland Calls!”, symbolically linking the children to Russian military history.⁶⁸

Such militarisation, presented as “patriotic education”, cultivates in children from the TOT a readiness to serve in the armed forces of the aggressor state, normalises war and violence, and facilitates their assimilation through joint participation in military games alongside their Russian peers.

62 <https://bloknot-herson.ru/news/rosgvardiya-i-dvizhenie-pervykh-formiruyut-novoe-p-1878573>, archive <https://archive.ph/wip/BuZ4a>

63 https://t.me/zarnitsa2_0/1317, archive <https://archive.ph/wip/YuDfY>

64 <https://t.me/mypervie92/5886>, archive <https://archive.ph/wip/sAS20>

65 https://vk.com/wall-196982714_1780, archive <https://archive.ph/wip/SO5pN>

66 https://t.me/mypervie_zp/5736, archive <https://archive.ph/wip/VX1P4>

67 https://t.me/mypervie_zp/5776, archive <https://archive.ph/wip/6tA0r>

68 https://t.me/mypervie_zp/5754, archive <https://archive.ph/wip/wSCDe>



In the images: minors from the TOT of Zaporizhzhia Region participating in the all-Russian stage of the militaristic game “Zarnitsa 2.0”. September 2025, Volgograd, RF. Source – https://t.me/mypervie_zp/5754, archive <https://archive.ph/wSCDe>



In addition to taking children to military-patriotic camps and involving them in militaristic games, the leisure activities of children and young people in the temporarily occupied territories are also permeated with militaristic propaganda.

For instance, at the **Patriot Youth Centre** in the temporarily occupied town of Henichesk (TOT of Kherson Region), a weekly initiative was launched in July 2025 – board game evenings for young people. One of these games, “**Special Operation on the Outskirts**”, invites participants to “**lead battalions**” and “**liberate**” Ukrainian cities (Kyiv, Odesa, Kharkiv, Luhansk, Sumy, and others) from the “**Nazi authorities**”.⁶⁹ The game’s banknotes are decorated with

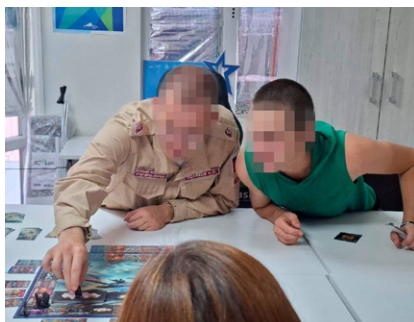
⁶⁹ <https://t.me/m2mxo/3463>, archive <https://archive.ph/wip/fMgDZ>



images of Putin, Lavrov,⁷⁰ and Surovikin,⁷¹ while the game elements feature the Z and V symbols – emblems of Russian aggression. According to the manufacturers, part of the proceeds from the game's sales is directed towards supporting Russian military personnel.⁷²



In the images: elements of the board game “Special Operation on the Outskirts”. Source – <https://www.wildberries.ru/catalog/285874547/detail.aspx>, archive <https://archive.ph/wip/oOhrO>



In the images: children from the TOT of Kherson Region playing the game “Special Operation on the Outskirts”. TOT of Kherson Region, July 2025. Source – <https://t.me/m2mxo/3463>, archive <https://archive.ph/wip/fMgDZ>

70 Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Russian Federation. Source – <https://mid.ru/ru/about/structure/minister>, archive <https://archive.ph/wip/POpRE>

71 a Russian military commander who, from 8 October 2022, served as the commander of the Joint Grouping of Forces in the Russian invasion of Ukraine. Source – <https://surl.li/xnkztf>

72 <https://www.wildberries.ru/catalog/285874547/detail.aspx>, archive <https://archive.ph/DXFFm>



Involving children in such activities shapes a distorted perception of war as a “game”, normalises violence, and fosters the view of Ukraine as an “enemy”. Through entertainment formats, the occupation authorities integrate propaganda narratives about the “liberation of Ukraine” and the “fight against Nazism”, gradually turning militarism into a routine element of children’s leisure and identity.

Another example of imposed leisure activities for children in the temporarily occupied territories was the project **“Dialogues with Heroes”**. One of the events under this project was held in July 2025 at the multimedia historical park **“Russia – My History” in the TOT of Zaporizhzhia Region**. The event involved Russian servicemen and representatives of the military-patriotic centre “Warrior”. During the meeting, children were told about the “heroic deeds” of participants in the so-called “SMO”, instilled with ideas of love for Russia as their homeland, and taught a sense of duty and responsibility towards it. In addition, participants were trained in tactical medicine and attended a lecture on the “prevention of extremism and terrorism”, which, as usual, was used to impose Russian propaganda narratives on children.⁷³

Such events are held regularly across all temporarily occupied territories.⁷⁴ Their purpose is to **glorify Russian servicemen** taking part in combat operations against Ukraine, to shape in children **the perception of Ukraine as a hostile state**, and to instil in them the notion of the **need to defend Russia**.⁷⁵ These events are typically organised with the participation of representatives of **Russian security forces** and under propaganda-themed titles such as **“I Serve the Motherland”**, **“Heroes of the Special Military Operation”**, and others.^{76 77 78}



In the image: children together with a Rosgvardiya (National Guard of Russia) officer. TOT of Zaporizhzhia Region, September 2025. Source – https://t.me/mypervie_zp/5619, archive <https://archive.ph/wip/LKZLi>

73 <https://t.me/YugMolodoj/25795>, archive <https://archive.ph/wip/HIKLi>

74 <https://t.me/goskommol/15754>, archive <https://archive.ph/wip/KmgZz>

75 https://t.me/znanie_zp/880, archive <https://archive.ph/wip/kGVVl>

76 https://t.me/mypervie_zp/5619, archive <https://archive.ph/wip/LKZLi>

77 https://vk.com/@znanie_kherson-cherez-zhivoi-dialog-k-preemstvennosti-pokolenii-seriya-patr, archive <https://archive.ph/wip/clVJw>

78 https://vk.com/@znanie_kherson-dialog-o-geroizme-shkolniki-hersonskoi-oblasti-stali-uchastn, archive <https://archive.ph/wip/L3Cfq>



Monitoring indicates that the RF systematically uses summer programmes in the TOT to militarise Ukrainian children under the guise of patriotic education. During these camps and gatherings, children are taught military skills, exposed to the glorification of Russian soldiers, and indoctrinated to perceive Ukraine as an enemy. Such practices are aimed at the gradual Russification and preparation of children to serve the aggressor state, in violation of international humanitarian law. Of particular concern is the **new Russian law “On Patriotic Education”** (under development at the time of writing this report),⁷⁹ which provides for compulsory military, civic, and moral-patriotic education. It is likely to further intensify the militarising impact on children and young people from the TOT, institutionalise the state’s role in promoting militarised ideals, and deepen the risks of assimilation and the involvement of minors in the armed conflict.

79 https://t.me/youngguard_youngarmy/14064, archive <https://archive.ph/wip/Rd48c>



CONCLUSIONS

Monitoring for the period of July–September 2025 records the continued implementation of Russia's large-scale and systemic policy of militarising and indoctrinating Ukrainian children in the temporarily occupied territories. During the summer of 2025 alone, more than **189,000 children** from the TOT participated in the so-called “recreational” programmes that, in reality, serve as instruments of militarisation and Russification. Over **7,500 children** were taken to the RF under the “University Sessions” programme, **3,400 teenagers** underwent military training at the “Warrior” centre, and more than **3 million children**, including those from the TOT, took part in the militaristic game “Zarnitsa 2.0”.

These figures demonstrate a comprehensive and well-coordinated approach by the occupation authorities to the assimilation of Ukrainian children. Russia simultaneously employs military-patriotic camps and training sessions led by Russian servicemen; militarised games involving participants of the war against Ukraine as “mentors”; forced passportisation ceremonies with public oaths of allegiance to the Russian Federation; the introduction of unified textbooks promoting the Russian version of history; retraining programmes for teachers to ensure “correct” instruction; Russification programmes disguised as educational and cultural trips; and the militarisation of children's leisure through board games depicting the “liberation” of Ukraine. This multi-level influence permeates all aspects of a child's life – from education to leisure, from summer recreation to the everyday school environment.

The documented actions of the occupation authorities constitute a gross violation of the Fourth Geneva Convention, which prohibits changing the national identity of children in occupied territories and involving them in the armed forces of the occupying power. They also breach the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child, which guarantees the right to preserve one's identity and protection from military exploitation. In particular, according to the updated 2025 ICRC Commentary on Article 50 of the Fourth Geneva Convention, the occupying power is prohibited from replacing existing education systems with its own administrative structures, introducing military education or propaganda in schools, changing the language of instruction, or enrolling children in any formations under its control – from youth organisations to armed forces (including through so-called voluntary enlistment).

The long-term consequences of such policies are especially concerning. Systematic militarisation instils in children a readiness to serve in the Russian armed forces, normalises war and violence, and fosters the perception of Ukraine as an “enemy”. Restoring the Ukrainian identity of these children after de-occupation will require long-term psychological and educational rehabilitation, while the scale of the damage inflicted will be measured in years.

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