Resolution on human rights violations in the context of the forced deportation of Ukrainian civilians to and the forced adoption of Ukrainian children in Russia

2022/2825(RSP) - 15/09/2022 - Text adopted by Parliament, single reading

The European Parliament adopted a resolution on human rights violations in the context of the forced deportation of Ukrainian civilians to and the forced adoption of Ukrainian children in Russia.

The text adopted in plenary was tabled by the EPP, S&D, Renew, Greens/EFA, ECR groups and Members.

Russia relaunched an unprovoked, unjustified and illegal war of aggression against Ukraine on 24 February 2022. It has committed massive and grave violations of human rights and war crimes from the beginning of its full-scale invasion of Ukraine.

The large-scale forced deportation of Ukrainian civilians to Russia has been identified by international organisations such as the OSCE and the UN as one of the most serious violations of international humanitarian law committed by Russia in its war of aggression against Ukraine.

The Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights of the United Nations (OHCHR) verified the existence of so-called ‘filtration’, involving large-scale, compulsory, punitive, and abusive security screening that has resulted in numerous human rights violations against Ukrainian citizens. Ukrainian civilians were effectively interned as they waited to undergo this process, which varied in duration from a few hours to almost a month. During ‘filtration’, Ukrainian citizens are subjected to detailed interrogation, body searches, sometimes involving forced nudity, and torture. Ukrainian citizens who ‘fail’ the ‘filtration’ process are detained and transferred to Russian detention centres and penal colonies, and are at risk of grave harm, including torture and ill treatment, or are forcibly disappeared.

Credible reports have documented children being separated from their families when the accompanying adult did not pass the ‘filtration’ process. The Ukrainian Ombudsman, on 3 September 2022, claimed that more than 200 000 children had already been forcibly taken to Russia with the intention of making them available for adoption by Russian families and could verify the circumstances of the forced deportation of 7 000 Ukrainian children. The Russian authorities are deliberately separating Ukrainian children from their parents and abducting others from orphanages, other children’s institutions and hospitals before putting them up for adoption inside Russia.

Ukraine has created the ‘Children of War’ portal to allow the parents of lost, displaced and deported children to share all available data. However, once children are in the Russian-occupied territories or in Russia itself, the process of leaving or reuniting with their guardians is incredibly complex.

Russia has also simplified the procedure for granting Russian citizenship to Ukrainian citizens, including children without parental care, and for Ukrainian children’s adoption by Russian families, thereby further complicating their return to Ukraine and facilitating the process of enforced assimilation of Ukrainian children.

Parliament condemned in the strongest possible terms Russia’s war of aggression against Ukraine, as well as the active involvement of Belarus in this war, and demanded that Russia immediately terminate all

military activities in Ukraine and unconditionally withdraw all forces and military equipment from the entire internationally recognised territory of Ukraine. Parliament expressed its undivided solidarity with the people of Ukraine, fully supports Ukraine's independence, sovereignty and territorial integrity within its internationally recognised borders and underlines that this war constitutes a serious violation of international law.

Parliament called on Russia to:

- provide information about the names, whereabouts and well-being of all Ukrainians detained or deported, and allow and enable the safe return of all Ukrainian civilians, including children, in particular those who were forcefully deported to the territory of the Russian Federation or to the Ukrainian territories currently occupied by the Russian Federation, by establishing safe channels of communication and travel;

- fully abide by its obligations and stop systematic 'filtration' operations, that it halt all ongoing biometric data collection and retention processes, delete illegally collected data and ensure that civilians can leave in safety and under international supervision to Ukrainian-controlled territory if they so choose;

- abandon any attempts at Russification and at depriving Ukrainians of their national identity;

- immediately grant international organisations such as the OHCHR and UNICEF access to all Ukrainian children who have been forcefully deported to the Russian-occupied territories and Russia and to ensure the safety and well-being of Ukrainian children while in Russia and in the Russian-occupied territories, and to protect them from the dangers arising from the war and its consequences.

Members called for the immediate creation of an EU Child Protection Package to protect and assist children and young people fleeing the war in Ukraine, which would entail safe passage, protection from violence, abuse, exploitation and trafficking, as well as emergency relief, family reunion efforts and long-term rehabilitation support.

Parliament called on the Member States to support via their diplomatic missions in Russia the issuance of temporary travel documents enabling Ukrainian citizens who are trapped in Russia without their identity or travel documents to leave the country if they wish to, and provide temporary shelter in the EU if necessary. It urged Russia to abandon its passportisation policy and allow Ukrainians to keep their original identification documents.