



Statement from the Central and East European Coalition (CEEC) on The Abduction of Ukrainian Children

The Central and East European Coalition (CEEC)—representing over 20 million Americans of Central and East European heritage— was profoundly alarmed at the Trump administration’s temporary discontinuation of the tracking of Ukrainian children kidnapped by invading Russian forces.

We appreciate the administration’s efforts to restore “short term” funding to this effort, but long-term funding is essential.

Since mid-March 2022, Russia has [forcibly transferred](#) almost 20 thousand¹ Ukrainian children to areas under its control, assigned them Russian citizenship, [forcibly adopted them](#) into Russian families, and created obstacles for their reunification with their parents and homeland. The numbers could actually run into the hundreds of thousands.

One hope to which grieving families could cling was a U.S.-based program at the Yale School of Public Health Humanitarian Research Lab (HRL) that tracked those children. It had collected a tremendous amount of critical data on these children's whereabouts. The move to freeze funding led to fears that such data and tracking could be discontinued, lost, deleted, or the safety of these kidnapped children jeopardized.

In a statement regarding President Trump’s March 19th phone call with Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy, Secretary of State Marco Rubio said the two leaders had discussed “the children who had gone missing from Ukraine during the war, including the ones that had been abducted. President Trump promised to work closely with both parties to help make sure those children were returned home.”

We certainly hope this is true.

[Attached is a letter](#) dated March 20, 2025, from Senators Grassley, Klobuchar, and others addressed to Secretary of State Marco Rubio expressing the same concerns. We call on the administration to prioritize the welfare of these Ukrainian children so cruelly abducted by Russian forces. to restore and maintain long term funding and intelligence operations to locate them, and to return them to their distraught families in Ukraine.

¹ Russian authorities have claimed that over 700,000 Ukrainian children have been transferred by mid-2023, and Ukraine's ombudsman on children's rights believes that the actual number of abducted children may be in the hundreds of thousands

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