



**Tom Lantos Human Rights Commission**

**Ukraine: Abducted Children and Mechanisms for Accountability**

**Wednesday, March 25, 2026**

**2:00 – 4:00 p.m.**

**2255 Rayburn House Office Building**

**Co-Chair James P. McGovern**

**As delivered**

Good afternoon and welcome to this hearing of the bipartisan Tom Lantos Human Rights Commission.

Today we return to a topic Co-Chair Smith and I explored four years ago this month in a hearing titled “Accountability for Russia’s War Crimes and Aggression against Ukraine.”

With the war now in its fifth year, much of what we see has not changed. Ukrainian territory remains occupied by Russian forces. Soldiers still die in combat. Civilians are killed and suffer.

A UN Independent International Commission of Inquiry has concluded that Russia has committed war crimes and crimes against humanity against the people of Ukraine.

“No peace without justice,” said Frederick Douglass of an American freedom struggle. The people of Ukraine are in one too. They also know that a just and lasting peace demands accountability.

At our 2022 hearing, David Crane proposed an international tribunal to address Russian crimes in the conflict. Last June, one was established. His advocacy worked. Dr. Crane is here again to tell us how the Special Tribunal for the Crime of Aggression against Ukraine will work and how the U.S. can support it.

In addition, Ukraine is pursuing a Genocide Convention case at the International Court of Justice. And in 2023, the International Criminal Court issued arrest warrants for Russian President Vladimir Putin and another official for the unlawful deportation and transfer of Ukrainian children to Russia.

That is the other topic of this hearing: abducted children – a heart-rending issue of abiding interest to Americans and others around the world.

First Lady Melania Trump has been a vocal advocate working for the return of Ukrainian children, with success. The United States is invested in this cause.

Some 20,000 children have been transferred to Russia, of which 2,048 have been returned, according to Ukrainian government figures. Today’s witnesses will update these figures and help us to understand the scope and scale of Russia’s crimes. It shocks the conscience.

Each of these numbers represents a young person suffering terrible psychological trauma. We have reports of Ukrainian children being adopted by Russian families; of Russians indoctrinating Ukrainian youth with “ideological training, paramilitary drills, and religious instruction”; and of separated families being forced to organize their own efforts to find one another. Most children face very limited paths to return.

We've seen this evil before. Chinese authorities sending Tibetan children to colonial boarding schools. American and Canadian officials doing the same to indigenous children. It always leaves a stain.

We seek recommendations for what Congress and the U.S. government can do to bring these children home and get them the psycho-social support they will need.

One thing we should not do is abet Russia's crimes.

But, shockingly, it appears we are.

This morning, the Yale Humanitarian Research Lab released a report that the Russian oil giants Gazprom and Rosneft have been complicit in the trafficking of Ukrainian children. Camps owned or sponsored by these companies or their subsidiaries are where these children are subject to "re-education" and pro-Russia indoctrination.

Any yet, just two weeks ago, President Trump rewarded Gazprom and Rosneft by temporarily lifting U.S. sanctions on Russian oil to cover his rear end for the price spikes caused by his illegal war of choice with Iran.

This means that the U.S. government is *aiding* Russian entities complicit in the abduction and abuse of Ukrainian children.

This means anyone – even Americans – who consumes Russian oil is *subsidizing* this war crime.

This is outrageous. It is offensive. It must stop. We demand accountability not only of Russian officials but of our own government.

The harm done to these children is immeasurable. The agenda for justice and accountability is clear. As Americans, we should be doing everything we can to support that agenda. That includes demanding that our own government stop helping the bad guys and stand firmly behind the Ukrainian people's right to freedom and dignity.

The spirit of the Ukrainian people inspires us. Amidst the destruction they hold their heads high with aspirations for their sovereignty, dignity and freedom. It is in solidarity with this spirit that we hold this hearing today.

I look forward to the testimony.