



European Court decides to hold a hearing on Ukrainian children from Crimean childcare institutions officially unaccounted for since 2014

The European Court of Human Rights has decided to hold a hearing on 22 September 2026 in the case **Ukrainian Helsinki Human Rights Union on behalf of ten Ukrainian children v. Russia** (application no. 6719/23).

The case concerns ten Ukrainian children who were living in childcare institutions in Crimea in 2014 when Russia asserted jurisdiction over the peninsula. According to the association (UHHRU) acting on their behalf, Russian nationality was imposed on the children and they were put up for adoption and may have been adopted. There has been no information on their whereabouts since 2014, despite the Ukrainian authorities' repeated requests. UHHRU allege that this effectively amounts to the children's enforced disappearance.

UHHRU requested a public hearing under Rules 54 § 5 and 59 § 3 of the Rules of Court, citing the exceptional gravity and public importance of the case, which has also generated much media interest, as well as the need for factual and legal clarifications.

The decision to hold a hearing has been published on the [Court's website](#) today. Any potential third-party interveners have four weeks from today to request taking part in the hearing.

The allegations in this case took place against the background of the events in Crimea in 2014, which were examined in the Court's 2024 judgment [Ukraine v. Russia \(re Crimea\)](#). See also here for the [FAQ](#) on Inter-State cases.

Principal facts and complaints

The application was lodged by the Ukrainian Helsinki Human Rights Union (UHHRU) on behalf of ten minors, born between 2009 and 2013, who are Ukrainian nationals by birth.

In 2014 the children were wards of the Ukrainian State living in childcare institutions in Crimea. At the time they were aged between one and five years old.

According to UHHRU, after Russia had asserted jurisdiction over Crimea on 27 February 2014, over 4,000 children deprived of parental care were automatically declared Russian citizens. Despite the Ukrainian Government's requests, Russia refused to transfer the children to the Ukrainian authorities and initiated adoption procedures.

Relying on Article 5 (right to liberty and security) of the European Convention on Human Rights, UHHRU complains about the Russian authorities' keeping the children in institutions after establishing effective control over Crimea, concealing information on their whereabouts and including them in Russian adoption or foster placement systems. They allege that certain applicants have possibly already been adopted, and that this altogether amounts to the children's enforced disappearance.

Relying on Article 8 (right to respect for private life) of the European Convention, UHHRU argues that the arbitrary change of the children's citizenship, their listing on adoption websites, which was carried out by the Russian authorities in the context of the ongoing war in Ukraine, failed to respect and protect their social identity as Ukrainian nationals.

Procedure

The application was lodged with the European Court of Human Rights on 14 January 2023.

On 8 February 2023 the Court received a request for an interim measure under Rule 39 of the Rules of Court, in which UHHRU argued that there was an imminent risk that the applicants could be adopted, and that this was being facilitated by the Russian authorities. On 14 February 2023 the Court [decided to refuse the request](#) on the basis that it related to events (the potential adoption of the applicants) after 16 September 2022, the date on which the Russian Federation ceased to be a Party to the Convention.

At the same time, the Court decided to grant the case priority, anonymity, and confidentiality under Rules 41, 47 § 4 and 33 § 2 of the Rules of the Court.

On 25 March 2025 the Government of the Russian Federation were [given notice](#) of the application with questions from the Court. The Court asked the parties [additional questions](#) on 23 March 2026.

UHHRU have submitted their observations, as have the organisations and the Ukrainian Government which have been granted leave to intervene as third parties. The Russian Government have not submitted any observations.

On 7 July 2026 a Chamber of the Court decided to hold a hearing on the admissibility and merits of the case on 22 September 2026.

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The European Court of Human Rights was set up in Strasbourg by the Council of Europe member States in 1959 to deal with alleged violations of the 1950 European Convention on Human Rights.