

PRESS RELEASE

CHAMBER HEARING ON UKRAINIAN CHILDREN FROM CRIMEAN CHILDCARE INSTITUTIONS OFFICIALLY UNACCOUNTED FOR SINCE 2014

ECHR 228 (2026) 22.09.2026

Issued by the Registrar of the Court



The European Court of Human Rights is holding a **Chamber hearing** today **Tuesday 22 September 2026 at 9.15a.m.** in the case of **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.

After the hearing the Court will begin its deliberations, which will be held in private. Its ruling in the case will, however, be made at a later stage. A recording of the hearing will be available this afternoon on the Court's internet site (www.echr.coe.int).

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 any of those 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 and 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 AND COMPOSITION OF THE COURT

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

On 25 March 2025 the Court decided to [give notice of the application](#) to the Government of the Russian Federation and invited them to answer specific questions. The Court asked the parties [additional questions](#) by letters of 26 March 2026.

UHHRU and the intervening Ukrainian Government have submitted their observations, as have a number of non-governmental organisations which have been granted leave to intervene as third parties. The Russian Government have not submitted any observations.

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 on the admissibility and the merits was published on the [Court's website](#) on 10 July 2026.

The following organisations were granted leave to intervene in the written and oral proceedings as third parties: International Partnership for Human Rights ("IPHR"), Yale School of Public Health Humanitarian Research Lab ("HRL"), International Bar Association's Human Rights Institute (IBAHRI), Regional Centre for Human Rights, Information Centre for Human Rights (ZMINA), Public Interest Journalism Lab and Centre of Civil Education "Almenda".

The Government of Ukraine decided to intervene in the written and oral proceedings as a third party.

The case will be heard by a Chamber, composed as follows:

Lado **Chanturia** (Georgia), *President*,
Lorraine **Schembri Orland** (Malta),
Faris **Vehabović** (Bosnia and Herzegovina),
Anja **Seibert-Fohr** (Germany),
Ana Maria **Guerra Martins** (Portugal),
Anne Louise **Bormann** (Denmark),
Sebastian **Rădulețu** (Romania), *judges*,
András **Jakab** (Austria),
Corinna **Wissels** (the Netherlands), *substitute judges*,

and also Hasan **Bakırcı**, *Section Registrar*.

REPRESENTATIVES OF THE PARTIES

Government of the Russian Federation

The respondent Government have not replied to the request for information about the persons who would appear on their behalf at the hearing and are not present at the hearing. In the absence of sufficient cause for the failure of the respondent Government to appear, the Chamber decided to proceed with the hearing, being satisfied that such a course was consistent with the proper administration of justice (Rule 65 of the Rules of Court).

Applicants

Serghiy **Zayets**, and Camilla **Alonzo**, *Counsel*,
Jessica **Gavron** and Ramute **Remezaite**, *Advisers*.

THIRD PARTIES

Government of Ukraine

Marharyta Sokorenko, *Agent*,
Andrii Luksha and Oleksii Yakubenko, *Advisers*.

IPHR and HRL

Alexandre Prezanti, *Counsel*,
Simon Papuashvili and Dmitry Gurin, *Advisers*.

IBAHRI

Helena Kennedy LT KC, *Counsel*,
Eleonora Scala, *Adviser*.

Regional Centre for Human Rights, Information Centre for Human Rights (ZMINA), Public Interest Journalism Lab and Centre of Civil Education “Almenda”

Kateryna Rashevskaya, *Counsel*.

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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.