

**Testimony of Representative Michael McCaul (TX-10)**  
**“The Abduction of Ukrainian Children by the Russian Federation”**  
**Senate Appropriations Committee Hearing**  
**December 3, 2025**

Thank you, Chairman Graham, for holding this deeply important hearing, and thank you for inviting me to speak today.

This is an issue I have followed closely since the very first days of Russia’s full-scale invasion. And despite everything we’ve seen over the last three years, the systematic abduction of Ukrainian children remains one of the least understood and least discussed crimes of this war.

We know that at least 20,000 children have been taken. That is the number we can verify.

But every expert I’ve spoken with believes the true figure is far, far higher. Children have been taken from occupied towns, from shelters, even from hospitals. Parents have been misled into believing their children were being evacuated to safety, only to learn later they had been transported into Russia or Russian-controlled territory.

Just yesterday, I met with Ukraine’s Ambassador, Olha Stefanishyna, who shared with me a video from Save Ukraine, featuring several of these children and survivors describing exactly what happens after they are taken — being forbidden from speaking Ukrainian, forced to sing the Russian national anthem and undergo reeducation indoctrination, ordered to memorize propaganda, told their own parents and their own country are “the enemy,” that NATO and the United States were aggressors, and conditioned to see Russia as their new home and identity. It’s an attempt to re-engineer an entire generation. Hearing it directly from these young voices makes the scale and cruelty of this crime impossible to ignore.

The documentary *Children in the Fire* shows footage of a child being taken into a prison where adults use electrodes to shock them under their fingernails and genitals.

These children face treatment that no child should ever endure.

It is evil in its purest form.

And as a father of five, I cannot begin to imagine the pain of having one of my children taken from me—stolen away by a foreign power with no way to reach them, no way to know if they are safe, no way to bring them home.

Imagine how Americans would feel if a hostile power abducted tens of thousands of our children—our sons and daughters—and placed them in indoctrination camps.

We know exactly how we would feel.

We would fight every single day, without pause and without compromise, to bring them back home.

And that is exactly what the people of Ukraine are doing.

I’m grateful for Chairman Graham’s leadership, and I fully agree: any peace settlement—any—must include the unconditional return of every abducted child. There is no wiggle room on that.

Like the Chairman, I have met with survivors of this horror. A few months ago, I sat down with a young man who had been abducted before he even turned 18 and sent to a Russian “camp.” He told me about the torture he witnessed. He described how children were forced to sit through hours of political indoctrination. He saw kids—kids—taken away and pushed toward the frontlines.

And yet, despite all of that, he escaped.

He survived.

He found the strength and courage to tell his story to the world.

Meeting him left a profound impression on me. It reminded me that even in the darkest places, human resilience endures. His bravery should inspire us to match it with action.

This is not history. This is not something from the archives of the 20th century.

This is happening right now.

It is barbaric.

And it must end.

I'm especially grateful for the First Lady's advocacy efforts, whose compassion and relentless advocacy have brought global attention to these crimes. She has given these children something they desperately need—hope.

But hope alone is not enough.

We must act.

Russia has already set aside \$7 billion in its 2026–2028 budget for its so-called “youth and children” national project—which is simply a formalized program for militarizing and indoctrinating the next generation.

In occupied territories, Ukrainian children are forced to use textbooks filled with lies about NATO and the West.

For many kids, these propaganda materials are the only education they have ever known.

This is part of a deliberate strategy—one designed to weaken Ukraine today and weaken the United States and our allies tomorrow.

We cannot allow this to continue.

This is not only a national security imperative for the United States; it is a moral imperative for the free world.

And history will judge every one of us by whether we confronted this evil or allowed it to take root.

Thank you again, Mr. Chairman, for holding this hearing and for keeping this issue where it belongs—at the center of our conscience and our policy.