

Biopolitics of war

Forced deportation of Ukrainian children

Solidarity Collectives

2 December 2025

Almost fifty years ago Michel Foucault, in his lectures, formulated the concept of biopolitics — where power is no longer merely the “right to kill,” but a form of power over life in the broadest sense.

The biopower of the modern state is not limited to punitive or prohibitive functions; it monitors birth and death rates, mandates vaccinations, enforces quarantines and mobilization measures.

The state seems to promise the protection of life — but in doing so, it gains the right to govern that life, penetrating the private sphere: sexuality, family, and child-rearing. For this reason, it becomes the most dangerous form of power, transforming into a weapon under totalitarian regimes.

Thanks to a Yale University study conducted as part of the Bring Kids Back UA campaign, we currently know of 19,546 children who have been forcibly transferred or deported to the territory of the Russian Federation — but the actual number of children cannot be calculated under conditions of occupation and active hostilities.

The forced deportation has continued since October 2014.

This is a textbook example of biopolitics in a totalitarian style: under the pretext of “rescue” or “evacuation,” the child becomes an object of state policy — their life is planned, altered, and utilized, as if they are not a person but a tool. In essence, it is the colonization of the future.

“The Russian Aerospace Forces and aviation under the direct control of President Putin’s office transported several groups of children from Ukraine on military transport aircraft under the Russian Federation flag between May and October 2022. At least 208 of the 314 identified children were given up for adoption or placed under guardianship by Russian citizens. Approximately half of these 314 children have siblings, whose names have also been entered into the adoption database. There is evidence of ‘at least one case’ where four biological siblings were separated during illegal adoption,” — the Yale study states.

Some of these children are placed in camps, shelters, or orphanages, where they are subjected to psychological pressure and indoctrination. Their names, ages, and places of birth are changed in official documents, complicating identification and repatriation.

Moreover, a new, “regime-imposed” identity is instilled — a conscious practice of colonial assimilation.

Russia often masks its aggression as “anti-fascist struggle,” invoking liberation rhetoric, but the practice of deportation, forced Russification, and erasure of children’s identities is no humanitarian mission. It is an act of imperial violence, justified by the logic of biopolitics.

This is the same mechanism that implemented sterilization, euthanasia, and mass killings of the “unfit” in Nazi Germany, as well as the repressions, ethnic deportations, and distribution of children from “unreliable” families into state-run institutions in Stalinist USSR.

All modern leftist movements stand for the rights of the vulnerable, and children’s rights are not just a “humanitarian” issue — they are a question of political control over the future and the very possibility of being. The progressive global system, which for years has only “condemned,” in fact accepts this biopolitical logic.

Leftist critique must go beyond declarations, moratoriums, and resolutions: to begin with, we must start calling things by their names and recognize that the only reliable protection of childhood freedom is horizontal solidarity within civil society — and support for armed resistance to the imperial regime.

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