

## For Immediate Release

### **Gratitude to South Africa and President Ramaphosa for supporting the UN resolution on the return of Ukrainian children**

**Johannesburg, South Africa, 3 December** - On December 3, the United Nations General Assembly, with 91 votes, approved the resolution “Return of Ukrainian Children”, demanding the immediate, safe, and unconditional return of all Ukrainian children who have been forcibly transferred or deported by Russia since 2014. The Ukrainian Association of South Africa are grateful to the South African government and President Cyril Ramaphosa for the support of the resolution.

The proposed UN resolution will facilitate the return of Ukrainian children through the use of the UN Secretary-General’s good offices. It also obliges Russia to provide the names of all the Ukrainian children and ensure their immediate, safe, and unconditional return. Importantly, it sets a clear requirement for Russia to end the practice of forcible transfer, deportation, separation from families, and changes to children’s personal status, including citizenship, as well as to stop their indoctrination.

The South African government and President Ramaphosa have been constant in demanding that Ukrainian children return as an important confidence-building measure for a long-lasting just peace for Ukraine.

*"The rights of children should not be a bargaining tool in any conflict,"*- said Mathu Joyini, permanent representative of South Africa to the UN, when explaining South Africa's vote in support of the resolution.

*"This decision shows South Africa's leadership in promoting children's rights globally. We are enormously grateful to the South African government, President Ramaphosa, and to all South Africans who for years have marched in support of Ukrainian deported children, prayed for their return, and written letters to parliamentarians and the government. We truly believe this resolution will help bring at least some of the children back home,"* says Kateryna Alosyna, UAZA President.

The return of Ukrainian children had a wide support of South African society [thirteen South African human rights NGOs](#) called for the return of Ukrainian children, the children’s rights experts from South Africa and Ukraine have produced a [policy brief that included UN Resolution as one of the recommendations](#) and [Archbishop Thabo Makgoba sent a letter in support of the South Africa’s vote for the resolution](#).

*"In the many arguments to find the means to end to this terrible conflict, it is imperative that we do not for a moment lose sight of the moral obligations of leadership in considering the impact on the lives of citizens, especially the innocent and defenceless, and assessing the path to peace,"* – Archbishop Thabo Makgoba wrote.

The unlawful deportation was documented in over [19,546](#) Ukrainian children, though the actual number is believed to be several times higher of at least 200,000. Russia has returned only [1,859](#) to date.

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