

**Commission on Security & Cooperation in Europe:  
U.S. Helsinki Commission**

**“Saving Ukraine’s Children”**

**Committee Staff Present:**

**Janice Helwig, Senior Policy Advisor, Commission on Security and  
Cooperation in Europe**

**Participants:**

**Mykola Kuleba, Director, Save Ukraine and former Presidential  
Commissioner for Human Rights;  
Dmytro Filipenko, International Government and Donor Relations Director,  
Save Ukraine;  
James S. Gordon, M.D., The Center for Mind-Body Medicine**

**The Briefing Was Held From 2:31 p.m. To 3:40 p.m. via videoconference,  
Janice Helwig, Senior Policy Advisor, Commission on Security and  
Cooperation in Europe, presiding**

**Date: Wednesday, December 14, 2022**

HELWIG: (In progress) – briefing on “Saving Ukraine’s Children.” Today we’re going to hear from an excellent panel who are doing just that, working in Ukraine to save children. As we start, I would like to mention that any of you online are welcome to put questions in the chat box at any time. If you click on the three dots at the bottom of your screen, then you can just type your question into the chat box.

So with that, let’s get started. Ukraine’s children are suffering serious injury and trauma due to Russia’s genocidal war on Ukraine. According to the United Nations, almost two-thirds of the country’s children have been displaced. Thousands have been injured and, although UNICEF has said that more than 1,000 children have been killed, that number is likely much, much higher, as there’s no reliable way to verify how many civilians have been killed, particularly in the most decimated areas of Ukraine like Mariupol where, just to give one example, Russian forces bombed a theater housing hundreds of civilians, despite clear markings that children were present.

Since the beginning of the war, international and nongovernmental organizations have worked to evacuate children from these war zones, including some of our panelists today, who have rescued about 70,000 children since February, many of them from orphanages and with special needs. Prior to the war, Ukraine had the largest number of children in institutional care in Europe, as many as 100,000.

In addition to the immediate dangers of war, the effects of war on children could have lasting consequences. Many Ukrainian children have witnessed unimaginable violence, including the murders of their own parents or family members. They have had to endure the stress of being under almost constant bombardment, in fear for their safety. Others have experienced hunger, cold, and weeks spent hiding in wet, frigid basements without daylight or fresh air and without sanitation or health care. This constant stress takes a heavy toll on the youngest victims of war.

Moreover, disruptions to education may be never fully recovered. In this regard, I would like to recognize the Ukrainian government’s exceptional campaign to keep children linked to their schools by mobilizing the remote learning infrastructure built up during the COVID-19 pandemic, as well as the many European countries which have opened their schools to Ukrainian refugee children.

Ukrainian children are also being forcibly taken to Russia and put up for adoption into Russian families in an apparent effort to assimilate them, a practice that genocide scholar Timothy Snyder has said could be considered genocide under the 1948 Genocide Convention. The U.S. State Department has said it has reliable information that Russian authorities have deliberately separated Ukrainian children from their parents during so-called filtration procedures, and abducted others from orphanages before putting them up for adoption inside Russia, and estimated that the number may be as high as 260,000.

Disgustingly, Russian propaganda cynically portrays its adoption of Ukrainian children as an act of generosity that gives new home to helpless minors. Russian state media show local

officials hugging and kissing newly arrived Ukrainian children and handing them Russian passports. Ukrainian orphans and unaccompanied minors are also vulnerable to falling prey to human traffickers. Thousands of displaced children in Ukraine have been unaccompanied, either because they were evacuated from state care or because they lost their parents or caretakers in the war, making them more vulnerable to falling prey to human traffickers.

As refugees, they need to be securely tracked and transferred into national child protective systems, so they do not fall prey to human traffickers or otherwise disappear. Particularly at the beginning of the war, many children simply passed through borders and may have gone missing. I look forward to hearing from our panelists how they're working to addressing these issues and support Ukrainian children.

And with that, I will introduce our panelists.

We will hear first from Mr. Mykola Kuleba, who is the director of the NGO Save Ukraine, which was established in 2014 to provide assistance to vulnerable populations in the war zone in Ukraine. Currently, Save Ukraine is providing assistance to orphans, children with disabilities, and low-income families affected by the war in Ukraine, and is conducting evacuation operations of children. Previously, Mr. Kuleba served as the commissioner for children's rights in the office of the president of Ukraine.

Then we will hear from Mr. Dmytro Filipenko. He's the international government and donor relations director of Save Ukraine and is responsible for raising awareness about Save Ukraine's activities. Mr. Filipenko has many years of experience working with international NGOs and also with the Ukrainian government.

Then we will hear from Dr. James S. Gordon, M.D. He is the founder and CEO of the Center for Mind-Body Medicine, which has been helping the people of Ukraine to heal from the psychological trauma and stress of war. Dr. Gordon is a clinical professor of psychiatry and family medicine at Georgetown Medical School and chaired the White House Commission on complementary and alternative medicine policy under President's Clinton and G.W. Bush. He is also the author of the book "Transforming Trauma: The Path to Hope and Healing."

So with that, I will turn it over to Mr. Kuleba for his comments.

**KULEBA:** Thank you so much. Dear participants, friends, colleagues, I am CEO of Save Ukraine, the biggest network of NGOs and volunteers who rescued more than 70,000 women and children from combat zones for – during these nine months of war. I plan to start my speech with information about forcible children's deportation, but I can't stay silent about the terrifying latest news, as Minister Libinets, Ukrainian Parliament Commissioner for Human Rights, informed today.

The occupiers are torturing Ukrainian children and have even set up separate torture chambers for this. One such case was in Balakliya in Kharkiv region, the boy was liberated. The boy was kept in the torture chamber for 90 days. He was cut with a knife, parts of his body were burned with a red-hot iron, he was taken to a firing squad several times, which shot over his

head in a mock execution. At the same time, there was a cell for children in one of the torture chambers in Kherson.

This is a damp room with softened, conditioned things – (inaudible) – on the floor. Childrens were kept who, according to the occupiers, had put up resistance. They were given water only once every two days. They particularly did not feed them. They used psychological pressure. They said that their parents gave them up. So it appears that Russian forces are punishing Ukrainian children who support Ukraine, whether by having pro-Ukrainian information on their cellphones, expressing solidarity with Ukraine, or otherwise supporting their homeland.

Just imagine who we are dealing with, people who torturing children. With the start of Russia's war against Ukraine, this disturbing information about the deportation of Ukrainian children to Russia began to resurface. The first cases were reported back in 2014. With the beginning of the full-scale war, this phenomenon quickly became overwhelming massive – Russians have been kidnapping Ukrainian children since 2014 under the guise of an evacuation. The kidnapped children were later brainwashed. And now they wield weapons against their fellow Ukrainians, manipulated in the fighting of Russia's side.

As of December 12, according to the Ukrainian state portal діти війни or Children of War, Russians deported 13,124 children. However, Russian media report a horrifying number of 712,000 deported Ukrainian children. The occupiers are kidnapping Ukrainian children to the Russian Federation under the guise of an alleged evacuation and leisure. International humanitarian law classifies such actions as a war crime. Deportation and forcible transfer of persons is a crime against humanity under Article 7 of the Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court.

Ukraine and the international community should take very measure possible to develop mechanisms for the return of Ukrainian children forcibly deported to the Russian Federation. Our children must return home. There is every reason to believe that such abduction of children has been planned. First of all, the kidnapping of Ukrainian children is controlled by Russia at the highest state level. On October 26th, Maria Lvova-Belova, the Russian president's commissioner for children's rights, announced that she had adopted a boy kidnapped from Mariupol. That's right, an ombudsman shows the entire civilized world how to allegedly adopt kidnapped – illegally adopt kidnapped children from another country, with no repercussions whatsoever. Also, according to her words, during that period 350 orphans from the east of Ukraine have been placed to foster families in 16 regions of Russia.

Secondly, the fact that the deportation campaign was planned in advance is also confirmed by the fact that Ukrainians, including children, were taken to filtration camps before being distributed to the regions of Russia. After going through the filtration, they would find themselves in Russia. And the process of their legalization, forced assimilation, in the Russian environment would begin. Especially through the procedures of establishing guardianship and consequential adoption. As a matter of fact, the Russian president simplified the process of granting Russian citizenship to Ukrainian children. And unsurprisingly, their process of adoption was simplified as well.

Back in July, Russia acknowledged the kidnapping of more than 2,000 orphans from Ukraine during the first five months of full-scale war. However, Russian authorities called this kidnapping an evacuation to their territory. To encourage ordinary Russian to adopt forcibly removed children, they offered a one-time payment of maternity capital and state aid. This is 20,000 rubles, approximately \$300 U.S., per year for each adopted child, and about 150,000, it's approximately \$2,000 for a child with a disability for a year. A child older than seven years, adoption of siblings too.

It's known that over 1,000 children, Ukrainian children deported from demolished Mariupol were given up for adoption in the Krasnodar region of Russia alone. The Department of Family and Childhood Affairs of the Krasnodar region reports that the children who were kidnapped from the city destroyed by the Russian military will now live in Tyumen, Irkutsk, Kemerovo, and Altai Krai of Russian Federation.

There is another proof that the deportation was meticulously planned. This entire time, propaganda related to Ukrainian children has been actively distributed in Russia. And the message – (speaks in a foreign language) – it's like “childhood the return.” It's being spread among Russian. This title embodies the essence of deportation, the return of, allegedly, lost Ukrainians Russian under their geocidal idea of one nation proclaimed by Putin.

There are reports of propaganda series about children from Donbas adopted in Russian families being aired in Russia. The series mentioned that over 150,000 minors were allegedly evacuated from Donetsk and Luhansk region. Geographically, deportations took place a lot of places. Ukrainian children were kidnapped from all temporarily occupied regions of Ukraine – Kharkiv, Chernihiv, Zaporizhzhia, and Kherson region. At the same time, under the guise of evacuation from bombing, the forcible deportation of children from the Ukrainian territories occupied by Russia prior of 24 February also began.

The main destinations of deportation were not border regions. The Russian authorities made conscious decision to resettle deported children into the territories thousands of kilometers away from Ukraine. And a few words about the danger of this illegal adoption procedure. As a result, the adopter can change not only the child's first and last name, but even a date of birth. This means that it will be very difficult for us to personify and identify our children in the future.

After the adoption of this absurd law, Ukrainian children will be adopted according to a simplified procedure, and their documents will be destroyed, which is a sign of the genocide of the Ukrainian people and a violating of the Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court. And adoption is, according to the laws of the Russian Federation, a secret. If the adopter keeps the adoption secret, then it will be incredibly challenging to find where our child is. Ukraine does not have the exact information on how many children were forcibly transported by Russia.

And of course, the aggressor country does not respond to Ukrainian official requests for clarification of information about Ukrainian children. These days, Russia is conducting an active state campaign to promote the adoption of forcibly deported Ukrainian children, with the aim of their integration into the Russian community. And the head of Chechnya, Ramzan Kadyrov,

personally boasted that he had taken in problematic teenagers from Ukrainian orphanages. Kadyrov now threatens to place deported Ukrainian children into military patriotic education.

Why Russians are doing this? First, they are trying to compensate for their demographic losses. For every Russian soldier killed, seven to eight Ukrainian children were kidnapped. Second, destruction of the Ukrainian ethnic groups. Instead of killing Ukrainian children they are abducted and reeducated. Third, illustrating propagandist narratives for the ordinary Russians, one nation. We are rescuing children from Ukrainian Nazis. And fourth, brainwashing children in order to send them to the next war in Ukraine. The 18-20-year-old soldiers from the so-called Donbas Republics are currently fighting on the Russian side. Eight years ago, they were 10- or 12-years old children who were brainwashed by Russia and the occupation authorities. And we have video proof of this.

Save Ukraine team organizes special operation to return Ukrainian children who were forcibly deported to the Russian Federation. These children are from towns of Izyum and Kupyansk, Kharkiv region. Those cities were occupied by Russian army at the beginning of March. The occupiers essentially kidnapped the children allegedly for rest and recover to the city of Gelendzhik, Russia. The children had to be returned to their families in two weeks. However, this didn't happen. The management of institution where the children are being held refuses to return the children to their families. It is known at the moment that children are being forcibly detained in the city of another Russian Federation. The children's mother have asked Save Ukraine to help rescue the child from Russian captivity.

I can't tell you a lot about this rescue operations, because it's very dangerous for our team, and for these children, and for this mother. We are planning next special operation. And just now we provide special operations about rescuing of these children. And in the end, so far this morning our group has taken three more girls from one of the city, and another almost 20 children going from another region. And among them is the children whom parents are military. It's very hard for these parents to go to Russian Federation and take these children back. And these children are hostages. And we need strong support. And please stand with us.

I am so grateful that you praying for us and staying with us in this time. And we will win together. Thank you so much.

HELWIG: Thank you. And I can tell. And I can tell you that the Helsinki Commission does stand with you.

So with that, Mr. Filipenko.

FILIPENKO: Thank you, Janice.

Hello, friends. I just wanted to share with you a little bit more details about the work Save Ukraine doing to save, to rescue, children and families with child – and families with children, and the way we are doing this. So next slide, please. Yes.

So the way Save Ukraine is conducting its activities is the following. We have 24/7 hotline, which was supported and launched with kind support and aid provided by USAID. We have more than 28 operators working there 24/7 receiving the calls. And as you can see, it's about 325 calls per day. After receiving the call, our professional logistic teams develop operations about extracting and transporting evacuees to the safer places. Since the beginning of the war, thanks to our partners and our supporters, and the U.S. government, we have now more than 60 cars, including ambulances, armored vehicles, armored buses, and more than 300 professionals conduct evacuations every day.

So after receiving the call from relatives or directly from those who require evacuation, our team extracts the family or even the orphanage from the combat zone, and bring them to one of our evacuation points, where they can receive initial health assistance, where they – where we do assessment of their needs and the scale of trauma they have. And after that, next slide, please, we evacuate them to one of our 15 hubs. In these hubs, families and children can stay up to several days, where we conduct more grounded assessment and actually help people either to find place where to live with relatives, with friends. But there are many of those who lost everything and don't have nice relatives nor friends where to stay.

And in this case, we suggest them and we invite them to one of our programs, our long-going programs that Save Ukraine developed by itself. Also, during the evacuation, we have a special program, a so-called life pack. It's a life pack that contains everything needed for more than three days of life for children, and includes power bank and tablet, food, hygiene, everything is needed for three to five days for every child. And every child rescued from the war zone receive this life pack.

Going further, next slide, please, I would like to tell you about our separate programs. So after the needs assessment in one of our hubs, as I mentioned before, and depending on the scale of psychologic trauma, we escort, we invite evacuees to one of – to our Hope and Healing Centers. Hope and Healing Centers, it's – the capacity of our two Hope and Healing Centers is up to 400 people. It's mostly children with mothers.

About 70 percent of those residents of our Hope and Healing Centers are children. And in these Hope and Healing Centers, we provide them with psychological assistance, with rehabilitation, with integration into the community. And these families, children and mothers, they can stay in our Hope and Healing Center from three up to nine months, depending on the scale of trauma and depending upon details from rehabilitation.

As you all know, this war brought up the issue of sexual abuse. And there are many examples from Bucha, Irpin, Hostomel. And for those victims of sexual abuse, Save Ukraine has launched sexual abuse survivor centers. It's a specific rehabilitation center for women and children, and unfortunately this center has enough work to do during this war.

Also, there is another category of people, elderly people left alone, and who are not able to look after themselves, and who don't have nicer kids nor relatives, but still require assistance, including medical assistance, including psychological assistance. And for this category of

people, Save Ukraine has launched elderly care home program. The center that helps elderly people with rehabilitation and with medical assistance. Next slide, please.

Another program, which is one of our major programs in Save Ukraine, is the Forthome Program. As you can see from the slide, we developed and we produced one Forthome per day. It's a shelter. It is fully equipped with everything needed, including kitchen, including restroom, including a small bedroom. And also, which is very important, is accessible and developed for people and children with disabilities. As I said before, we install one shelter, one Forthome, per day. And after the rehabilitation in our Hope and Healing Center, those families who lost their homes, who lost everything and don't have any means for further existence, we invite them – we provide them with possibility to live in this Forthome, at least for one year.

We take on us all responsibility with food, with medical assistance, with everything they need. And these houses, tiny houses, are installed in local communities, mostly in western Ukraine. Some of them, about a dozen of these Forthomes, were installed in Bucha and Irpin for those families who are restoring their apartments, restoring their homes. And after they would finish that work, these Forthomes will – new families will be moved into these Forthomes.

Another very important program for us is community centers. It's actually one of our focuses in Save Ukraine. And we are also very grateful for our partners, USAID, who supported the launch of first community center in Kyiv. So far, we have – by today, we have 30 community centers working in different regions of Ukraine. And the approach of these community centers is to provide services for internally displaced families.

Provide services such as education for children who, as all of you know, after COVID, after the war, and destruction of our critical energy infrastructure – we don't have electricity – and children are not able to follow education process as appropriate. But in these community centers they receive educational assistance, psychological assistance, leisure. So mothers bring children in the morning and take them back in the evening, having time to find a job and to deal with other urgent issues.

I can tell you even more about our programs, but please visit our site, our website, for more details. And please support us with everything we do. We really require your assistance. Thank you for such a long speech. Thank you.

HELWIG: Thank you, Dmytro.

So, Dr. Gordon.

GORDON: Thank you, Janice. And I just want to acknowledge Mykola and Dmytro for the extraordinary work that they're doing. You're hearing a little bit of it. I had a chance to be with them and to work with children and adults in one of their Centers for Hope and Healing. And –

FILIPENKO: Actually, the name of Hope and Healing Center is developed by James after his visit to our rehabilitation center ended. Thank you.



GORDON: Thank you. And Janice, thank you so much for getting us together and having us here.

Mykola, as you were speaking, tears came to my eyes as you were talking about what's been happening most recently to children in Ukraine. And I want to acknowledge that and acknowledge that this work with traumatized children is very profound work for those of us who are doing it, whether it's Mykola and Dmytro and their really wonderful staff, some of whom I met, or whether it's others who are coming – as I and my team are – from the U.S. to work with them. It's very profound. It's very moving. It's very disturbing. And so I appreciate the efforts that you're making to do whatever you can to bring the children back, as well as what we're doing.

What I want to talk about is give you all a little bit of a feeling for what's happening – Francois, could I have the next slide, please – what's happening to the children. And I use this drawing as an example, because for me it summarizes so much of what's going on. This was done by 8-year-old Sofia, a little girl in Irpin, which is the next-door community to Bucha where so many people were killed and so many terrible things happened. Now, Sofia had left Irpin and sort of was able to escape and had just come back when I met her. And if you look, actually, it's on my left, there's a drawing of a little child on the ground and the red is blood that the child is covered with. And you can see a weapon and a bullet that has killed that child. You can see the X's in the child's eye(s). And that's a Russian soldier now covered up. Behind the Russian soldier is a Ukrainian soldier. This is what Sofia told me. And the Ukrainian soldier was able to kill the Russian soldier.

But after a few moments, as Sofia and I were sitting there and looking at her drawing, she did something else. She drew in what looks like a plane overhead and then she covered the Russian soldier with the red of blood. And what she said to me, essentially, is that you can never be sure the Russian soldiers are dead. You can never be sure the threat is over. And this is what – whether the child has actually been kidnapped or whether the child has been tortured or whether the child, like the majority of Ukrainian children, has simply watched the violence and experienced the fear, every child, I would venture to say, in Ukraine is uncertain about what's going to happen next and is in fear.

Next, please.

This is a picture. I'm there with Sofia and her brother with the drawings. This is in a park in Irpin. It's a lovely little park, and the chestnut trees are there, and it's just in the – in the middle of what has been a scene of slaughter.

Next slide.

These are some of the figures about the trauma that's come to children in Ukraine. I think Janice said this earlier, somewhere around 60 percent, maybe a little bit more, of Ukrainian children have been forced from their homes. And if any of you has had the experience even of moving from a home, a place where a child has become comfortable, just think about that and

multiply that by a thousand about losing your home because it's not safe to be there, and you don't know where you're going, and you don't know if you'll ever get back. The statistics about 3 million children are at potentially risk of, quote, "mental disorders," unquote, that's – perhaps that's true. I would say, though – and the children who have left Ukraine have high rates of psychological distress, and you can read the figures for yourself. But I think the bottom line is what I've bolded at the bottom of this slide: Every child in Ukraine and all Ukrainian children who have left are experiencing some level of distress. That doesn't mean they all should be psychiatric patients. I don't mean that at all. I mean, this is the state of being, the normal state of children in Ukraine, and we have to address it as a population-wide issue and challenge. And I'll come back to that in a minute.

Next.

This is – this is in Lviv and this is Oleksandr, who fled Mariupol, one of the sites of the most damage to children and adults and to everything in the city. And he's on his way to Poland, but what's most on his mind – and I don't know how well you can see it – is the grave of his cousin, which is marked by a cross in this drawing. So it's that kind of red piece in the middle. So this is – to my point, this is what's on his mind. He's a thousand kilometers away or more. He's on his way out of the country. Most of his family is safe. His older sister happens to be fighting with the Ukrainian army.

Next, please.

And this is Angelina. And I visited with her in her home, and this is the basement where she spent 10 days in with her family. And you can see perhaps on the side of her house it was shelled and the car was shelled and friends were – friends were killed and neighborhoods were destroyed. I put her up here to remind us that the recovery from trauma is not primarily about doctors like me, psychiatrists like me treating children; it's about creating a whole culture of recovery and giving the young people an opportunity to participate in that recovery. And I think that's something we all aim to do, and that that itself – and this is true of Angelina, who's working on a hotline and one of those hotlines that is reaching people who are still under and particularly children still under Russian occupation.

Next, Francois, please.

This is the Center for Mind-Body Medicine. We have what may be the world's largest, most effective evidence-based program for working with population-wide psychological trauma and stress. And we are creating a healing community and a community of healers. This is not about case finding. Yes, to be sure, there are children who will need the services of very skilled professionals and individual therapy.

Our experience – next slide – in many places – or, next slide please – many places around the world, and you can see them here. In Kosovo during and after the war, where I first began to work with the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe. And Israel, Gaza, Haiti, many places in the United States, in Jordan with Syrian refugees, and Central Asian republics now, and South Sudan, and now in Ukraine. But this is a population-wide challenge. This is

public health. This is education. This is mobilizing a whole community. It is not primarily about treating individuals; that everyone is affected, the entire country is affected, and all of its children are.

Next, please, Francois.

This is a randomized controlled trial of our work with war-traumatized children in Kosovo. This was – we published 25 studies in peer-reviewed journals on our model of self-care, mutual support, and community building. Important thing is how many of these kids who originally qualify for the diagnosis of post-traumatic stress disorder, anxiety, depression, fear, difficulty concentrating, nightmares, flashbacks, social isolation, emotional numbing, 82 percent of the kids who began 12-week-long groups suffering in that way in a region where 80 percent of the homes were destroyed and 20 percent of the high school kids lost one or both parents. Over 80 percent of those kids no longer qualified for the diagnosis after 12 sessions of learning how to understand and take care of themselves, and sharing their pain and their experience with other children and a leader. And those gains were maintained at three months' follow-up. This is a great result. We have obtained similar results, particularly in Gaza, which has had five major wars in the last 15 years.

But what's also important – and this is very important and one of the reasons we're looking to save Ukraine as a major partner – is this work in Kosovo was done by rural high-school teachers. And we can train people. We are training people who are intelligent, committed to helping the children and the families in their communities, and willing to get supervision and mentorship that they can do an amazing job. And this is what we saw in Kosovo and what we've seen repeatedly all over in many places, on three continents as well as here in the United States.

Next, please.

This is an article from The New York Times about our work just talking about how effective it is.

Next, please.

We are moving ahead. And I suppose people can have access to these slides if they -if they like. We're moving ahead in Ukraine. We've already begin training 270 people online, mostly psychotherapist and other community leaders, to do the work in Ukraine. We're continuing to work with those 270. We have 800 people on the waiting list and we have major partners, several of whom were introduced to me by Save Ukraine. We're ready, willing, and eager to bring several thousand more people for training.

Next, please.

These – we're expecting to continue with these emergency trainings, which are basic self-care skills, basic – giving people, including very young children, the understanding and the experience that they can change how they feel, that they have that capacity. One of the worst

things about trauma and of traumatized children in Ukraine is they feel like Sofia – there’s no control, everything is out of control, we can’t do anything to help ourselves. And we can – in places like the Centers for Hope and Healing, the community centers, we can train the staff to teach the children that they can help themselves.

Next, please.

We have many partners in addition to Save Ukraine in Ukraine, and our goal is to fully train and mentor a minimum of 3,000 in Ukraine. I hope it actually – the need is far greater than that.

Next, please.

This is a copy of my book, a nice – which describes the method that we use. It’s all about teaching very basic, simple self-care skills that have a profound effect on our biology and our psychology. And the book, which is being translated into Ukrainian and Polish and several – a number of other languages, it can be a very helpful guide if we leave the book with the people. And children down to the age of 10 or 11 are very capable of reading and using this book.

Next, please.

And this is contact information for me. You’re welcome to get in touch with me at The Center for Mind-Body Medicine. And thank you. Thank you, my friends from Save Ukraine, Mykola, Dmytro. And thank you, Janice, for bringing me here.

HELWIG: Thank you very much, Dr. Gordon.

For those of you online, I would just like to remind you to please type any questions you have in the chat box, the three little dots on the far right-hand corner. I’m going to take the prerogative as the moderator and ask the first question.

You’ve all talked about the scale of the trauma. Dr. Gordon, you actually said pretty much all children in Ukraine. And obviously Ukraine is a large country, so we’re talking about literally millions of children, so obviously we’re talking about an enormous scale of need. Can any of you talk a bit more about, given that scale, what can the international community do in the short term and also in the long term? Should addressing trauma be part of, for example, a post-conflict reconstruction plan? What kinds of things should we be looking at?

GORDON: Mykola, do you want to begin and then I can jump in or –

KULEBA: I mean, you can start; then I –

GORDON: OK. So, you know, I think it’s an important question. I think the thing is, first of all, to understand exactly what you’re saying, and the first lady of Ukraine, Madame Zelenska, clearly understands and is advocating for mental health. Second is to understand the scope, that it really is true. And all you have to do is talk with the kids or talk with the parents. I

talked with one of the – sort of Ukraine’s remarkable intellectuals in Lviv, saying, I’m not in a combat zone, my daughter’s not, but neither of us is normal. And they look normal, just like – it’s not – so this is an enormous problem and it has to be regarded as a public health problem, and organizations like ours and Save Ukraine have to be funded to be able to provide these services on a mass scale. It’s not about just having a certain number of psychologists or psychiatrists or social workers. No, it’s about training massive numbers of people in the community to work with these kids. And the benefit, the added benefit, aside from the kids, is to the people who are being trained. Many veterans, for example, are coming back and they want to find something – I talked to a veteran, Ukrainian veterans. They want to find something useful to do, and this is something that can give people an opportunity to rebuilding the country.

I think – just one other thing, and I’ll turn it over to Mykola – is this is a war on innocents, this is a war on children, this is a war on the future and it is a genocidal war, and so everybody has to be mobilized to see these children. These are the future of the country, and the children who have been in Russia and who will hopefully be brought back, especially, but they don’t need to be set aside as a special group. The whole idea is to bring them together and work with them as part of the whole population. So this is not about psychopathology; this is about a whole population that has experienced extraordinary trauma.

KULEBA: Thank you, James, and it’s really war on children, and all children traumatized. And I want to point your attention on data. Half children’s population – half of children’s – are not in Ukraine. As I told, more than 10 percent were deported and kidnapped Russia Federation; 10 percent in occupation, in occupied territories; minimum 30 percent were escaping abroad. And that 50 percent who stays in Ukraine under these shellings, every day constant shellings so far. And every day they hear alarms ring, they have to go to basements or somebody sitting under the shellings in different cities or in combat zones. And the impact of this war, it’s horrible. We really cannot imagine what happened. When this war will finish, it will stop; after, we will win, but just now we have to act, we have to do something with all the kids to protect them and to heal from this huge trauma. That’s why when we setting up our services in local communities, number one, it’s a rescue from danger; number two, it’s a trauma healing; and number three, it’s community centers which support and strengthening family and give them different type of support, it’s legal, psychosocial support, health support especially, to save children’s life and to minimize this trauma during this war.

GORDON: One of the things that’s coming to me as you talk that I think is really important for everybody to understand is this is a misconception people have: Oh, you have to wait till the war’s over and then it will be post-traumatic healing. No, the time to begin is now and to give kids the tools and the support that they need to deal with the ongoing stress and trauma.

KULEBA: Thank you, Jim. It could be late. If we’ll wait, in one month or one year, it could be late, when child will have serious, serious problem.

FILIPENKO: I would like to complement and maybe talk a little bit about potential solution for this issue. I totally agree that we could not wait until the time when we will win this war and we should act immediately. I want to thank our international partners, U.S. government,

for the support in United States are providing to Ukrainian government. And we totally understand that all that support received by Ukrainian government is now focused on military operations and defense of our territories, on health for our soldiers, but we are also very grateful for humanitarian assistance of the international community, and it's really very needed, but unfortunately, it doesn't resolve the problem, the longstanding problem with rehabilitation. So I'm talking about potential solution. Maybe there could be created some niche for a nongovernmental sector such as our organization, for example, that is focusing on trauma healing, on rehabilitation, on continuous support for children with education and psychological support. So maybe there could be found some solutions for U.S. government to support Ukrainian local organizations or international organizations to work with trauma healing, with rehabilitation processes for children and for families with children, as an idea.

HELWIG: Thank you, Dmytro. And I think that actually just answered one of the questions that I see online which you directed your answer to the United States but I think it's equally applicable to the question, which is, what more can the international community, including the EU and EU parliamentarians, do? So I think that's the same answer for all of us.

Another question that we have online has to do with reunification, family reunification. Mykola, you talked about when children are adopted in Russia that they lose their identity and then therefore very difficult to find. Of course, also, we have children who either have lost their immediate family, perhaps their parents, during the war but may have more extended family – aunts, uncles, grandparents. We have children who were in state care or foster care but may have relatives still living. What should and could the international community be doing to make any kind of records or try to facilitate family reunification. I know this was something that of course was done quite extensively after World War II in connection with the Holocaust. So perhaps, is there some kind of a registry or something that needs to be done in this case?

KULEBA: Everything could be helpful because we have no access to Russian territories. We are doing what we can do after liberation of territories, Ukrainian territories. We receiving information from these mothers, and we help them to go there and to receive international passports to organize these teams to agree with – on all the way to destination where childrens are to help financially because its vulnerable families. They live more than half year on the constant shelling in occupation. Like just now they are free, but they are free from children because Russia has kidnapped their kids.

That's why all information about a child – where they are, about his family – if you know something, please, we ask people inform us, register this, to record this, and to give us, to give general prosecutor office. Maybe later we will be able to find children because just now it's very hard, but we – why we are here, too – to raise awareness about this because we talking every day with a lot of people and people say we never heard about this. We did not know that it happen now in Ukraine, or how many children were kidnapped and deported, how many were adopted in Russian Federation because we understand that, with this 700,000 children, a lot of them are with their families, but how many of them were separated in Russian Federation? How many of this parents in filtration camps? How many of these children are in orphanages? We have no – any information.

And we ask international community to help us to find, to initiate with aggressor to – because it's international law, and we understand that after I told you that a number one person in Russian Federation who should protect children's right – against these rights. She break this international law and she is bravely reporting that, oh, I adopted kidnapped child. How could it be possible? But it's possible for them. That's why any support very helpful for us because it is our children. It's our generation. We really – we don't want lose this generation. We want to help them because they will rebuild our country.

HELWIG: As a follow-up question, may I ask about – you said half the children are outside of Ukraine, and of course some of those were unaccompanied minors that, you know, left when they were fleeing the war.

What kind of programs are in place to track children who are unaccompanied that are in the refugee flows to make sure that they don't go missing or fall prey to traffickers; that they can come home to their families?

KULEBA: It is our call to international community because it's different countries, different legislations. It's very hard to – like to have one model of how to react on these cases because we have different cases in different countries. For example, Germany, Italy, Poland – I don't want to tell about Russian anymore because it's so too different world, different planet, yeah – but about developed countries and their legislation, and it more about Ukrainian government who collaborate with the government of that countries and trying to deal with each case to return back these children, to find relatives, to send relatives to help these kids because it's very different cases. They are very different situations.

FILIPENKO: I totally agree with Mykola that, depending on the country, we have different legislation. I know also that in Ukraine our government's minister of foreign affairs is doing a great job by engaging Ukrainian and diplomatic institutions on all European countries and the United States, but they cannot do all the work by themselves. It's about, really, the cooperation with our international partners, who should understand what kind of problem we are facing with our next generation.

GORDON: I just want to say that – to add to this – I've worked fairly extensively in Poland, and I've been very impressed with the commitment of the Polish people, independent of the government, to take in the children, the mothers, the psychotherapists – the Ukrainian psychotherapists that we've been training who are in Poland, who are working with these children.

And I want to emphasize – I didn't earlier – that one of the primary groups we work with within Ukraine is psychotherapists and psychiatrists. What I'm saying, though, is that population-wide response is necessary in Ukraine and in these other countries.

HELWIG: Exactly.

GORDON: And of course, Mykola and Dmytro are right; everybody is – each country has different rules. But those countries should be encouraged to do exactly what you are asking:

to keep track of who the kids are and to make sure – and the services need to be fairly extensive. The kids, for example, in Poland who are learning Polish, the teacher was telling me, and the psychologists who were working with them, is these kids are very traumatized, and they've escaped because their dads are fighting in the war, or their dads are still in Ukraine. And maybe they're with their mother, or maybe they are on their own, but it's – and they're – every day – and if anybody has ever had a father, for example, who has been in the middle of a war, and you can't reach them, and they are – you don't know what's going to happen to them. That's a major source of stress for sure.

KULEBA: And we are so grateful European countries, United States, Canada, and other countries who hosted our families, our women and children during this horrible war. It's so important – and protected them.

Yeah, we can hear sometimes of cases where child are separated, unaccompanied – about unaccompanied children, but it's a several situation, and yeah, sometimes it's a risk for a child, for a woman, yeah, because it's millions of Ukrainian refugees all over the world. But a lot of families so grateful that they found a place to live, to be safe for this time during the war, especially wintertime, because a lot of children and families living in bomb shelters with no food, no water, with bad condition of life. Just today, my team from Kherson region called me and told Nikolai (sp) we found children who didn't, like, wash –

FILIPENKO: Were not washed.

KULEBA: Who were not washed for one month, yeah, because no water, and they – shellings everywhere. It's unbelievable.

HELWIG: This actually leads to one more question, which is it's winter now in Ukraine, and of course we've all been seeing the attacks on infrastructure, water shortages, electric shortages, heating shortages, energy, food.

What do you expect in the near term? What is this impact on children of the winter, and what can the international community do to help children get through the winter?

KULEBA: It's horrible, I think. If to understand better we can state one day on the air where is temperature minus – very cold – and we understand what is this to live months in these circumstances. That's why we launch a new project of winterization program for Kherson region, and for combat zones, especially it's warming tents with generator, with food, with everything, yeah – hot water with the heaters to help them survive in the wintertime.

That is why it's our call to United States, to European countries, to all the world, please help Ukrainian children survive in this winter, and we will win. I believe this. We will win in this horrible war. But we have to save our kids.

FILIPENKO: I totally agree with Mykola. I just wanted to complement that of course the influence, the impact of the war during the winter is incredible. And yes, we are talking about the lack of access to education, about without electricity children cannot be educated – get



a(n) education, even online. So during COVID it was at least possible for online education, but now, without electricity, it's almost impossible.

But the biggest problem is actually – yes, it's survival. Survival will educate our kids. They are very clever – (laughs) – they will catch up everything. But survival with heating and with electricity, it's a crucial importance. There is none.

We have already addressed our request to our international partners. There are a lot of partners helping us with generators, but you can understand this scale of need, of requests – it's not enough.

GORDON: One thing I would suggest to – in response to your question is that, for people who are watching this – particularly people in the United States, but anywhere – to imagine what it's like in sub-zero weather with no heat, no water coming in. What a – just imagine for yourselves what it would be like.

There is also continual shelling where you are worried about family members. The amount of pressure and the amount of the threats to survival are very, very significant for every child. So we need to imaginatively enter that space, that living space of those children.

And then we need to understand that the other thing that is coming out in the midst of this incredible danger and hardship is how beautiful the Ukrainian people are, how they've come together, and they really are setting an example for the world, both in their seriousness of their commitment to democracy to begin with, and in their courage, and in their willingness to take care of one another.

And what Save Ukraine is doing is just an amazing example of that and similar kinds of things – perhaps not on that scale or as dramatic – are happening throughout Ukraine. So we need to learn from the Ukrainians, and we need to understand that they are part of our community. They are us, and we are them. And that should govern and shape our response to them.

And in the case of what's going on this winter and how children are suffering through the winter, that needs to – that needs to penetrate into anyone who has any access to funding, or to diplomacy, who can affect the situation in any way – or access to funds. And what is needed, once again, to repeat, are programs that really support all the children in Ukraine; that enable groups like our group – our joint partnership – and others to mobilize the psychotherapists, the social workers, but also the teachers, the leaders of women's groups, the veterans, and the kids themselves to provide support and healing because one of the most terrible things about trauma is the feeling of being isolated and alone, and not supported from outside. So that is going to be crucial through this winter and beyond.

HELWIG: Thank you, Gordon. That's a – that's a very good summary.

I think we are about out of time. Would anyone like to have one last word?

KULEBA: Yeah, I just want thank you for this meeting, for these possibilities, for any support. And I totally agree with you, James, that it doesn't matter what organization, but we just want to save children's lives, who want to be happy, who want to live normal life.

It's hard to understand what happen with them in my country, especially my family's refugees because they cannot believe, under the shellings and see it in the bomb shelters, but a lot of families live there in combat zones, and there's not any support.

And sometimes asking why social services cannot help and work. We have no social services in combat zones. We have the families who survive, and we have militaries who protect our land and who are fighting for our children and for our families. And we have a lot of volunteers who are fighting for our kids, too – a lot of organization. And your support – critical. Without this, we will not be able to survive. That's why any support – if you know any organization, please help. Help. Help, please, because Ukraine should survive. Ukraine must win as soon as possible, and rebuild our country, rebuild the lives of millions of Ukrainian children.

Thank you so much.

FILIPENKO: Thank you.

GORDON: Thank you.

HELWIG: Thank you. Thank you all.

[Whereupon, at 3:40 p.m., the briefing ended.]