

ATHENA

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MSc Course

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Nina

Timmermans

AS

Karim Khan

International Criminal
Court (ICC) prosecutor



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Context:

It is February 2025. I am International Criminal Court (ICC) prosecutor Karim Khan, delivering the closing statement in the trial of Vladimir Putin, who stands accused of committing war crimes and genocide during the Russia-Ukraine war.

Honourable judges,

Ever since the 24th of February 2022, 25.000 Ukrainian children have been torn away from their families by Vladimir Putin. These children will never see their mothers, fathers, or grandparents ever again. Under the guise of saving orphaned children, Mister Putin has been illegally transferring Ukrainian children to Russia, to adopt them and bring them up as Russian. This is both a war crime and an act of genocide.

What makes this crime even more horrifying is the fact that **most** of these children were not orphans at all. Rather, these children were **separated** from their parents. These children were told that they weren't wanted by their parents; they were given Russian citizenship and were adopted by Russian families; they were used for Russian propaganda. Many ended up in re-education camps inside Russia. As of today, these children have not seen their families in three years. Three years; in which Olena took her first steps; in which Bodhan lost his two front teeth; in which Kateryna turned fifteen.

All things their parents have missed.

And, they will never see each other again.

Honourable judges, there is overwhelming evidence that Vladimir Putin is responsible for these crimes. He is responsible for the war crime of unlawful deportation or transfer of children from occupied areas of Ukraine to the Russian federation, under Article 8 of the Rome Statute.

Moreover, these crimes committed by Mister Putin also constitute a genocide, for genocide, under Article 6, means any acts committed with the intent to destroy, in whole or in part, a national group.

Whether or not they had parents, raising Ukrainian children of war as Russians was an attempt to erase the identity and culture of Ukraine and its citizens, and thus falls under the crime of genocide.

And keep in mind, it is not adult civilians that Putin has ordered to deport and raise. No, these are children. Children who receive special protection under the Geneva convention and who are not equipped to take care of themselves. This makes this egregious violation of international law even more horrific.

Mister Putin bears individual criminal responsibility for the aforementioned crimes, for having committed these acts jointly with and through others, and for his failure to exercise control properly over civilian and military subordinates who committed the acts, and who were under his effective authority.

This is why, honourable judges, I stand before you one last time to tell you, and the world, that Vladimir Putin is **guilty** of committing the war crime of illegal deportation of Ukrainian children from occupied areas of Ukraine to the Russian federation and genocide, and he must be held accountable for this.

I urge the court to give Vladimir Putin a term of **life** imprisonment due to the extreme gravity of the crimes he has committed.

Justice **needs** to be served for Olena, Bodhan, Kateryna, **and** the thousands of other innocent children and families whose lives have been torn apart.

Thank you.