

ICC issues arrest warrant against Putin as part of US-NATO propaganda campaign for regime change

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On Friday, the International Criminal Court (ICC) in The Hague issued arrest warrants for Russian President Vladimir Putin and Maria Lvova-Belova, Russia's commissioner for children's rights, for alleged war crimes.

The move is transparently political. It takes place as the US and NATO powers are orchestrating a massive escalation of the war against Russia over Ukraine, and amidst ever more open statements from government officials that the aim of the war is regime change in Moscow.

The specific allegations filed against Putin and Lvova-Belova are listed under Article 8 of the Rome Statute, adopted in 1998, which includes “grave breaches of the Geneva Conventions” and “other serious violations” of international law. The arrest warrants specifically allege “the war crime of unlawful deportation of population (children) and that of unlawful transfer of population (children) from occupied areas of Ukraine to the Russian Federation.”

The official filing of warrants were approved by judges in the ICC and announced by Karim A. A. Khan, a British lawyer and the ICC's chief prosecutor. It follows months of propaganda, spearheaded by the Biden administration, alleging “crimes against humanity” and “genocide” on the part of the Russian government.

While the existence of the warrants was made public, the supposed evidence underlying them was not. The specific claims of the “unlawful deportation” of children have been promoted in the US media, including the *New York Times*, based on unsubstantiated allegations by the Biden administration and the Ukrainian government.

One often cited study, published by Yale University in February, claims that 6,000 children have been transported to Russia. The institute that conducted the study is part of the US government-backed “Conflict Observatory,” which was established for the purpose of producing war propaganda. The initial \$6 million in funding for the “observatory” was provided by the State Department's “Bureau of Conflict and Stabilization Operations,” which states that its mission is to “anticipate, prevent, and respond to conflict that undermines US national interests.”

For its part, Russia has acknowledged the movement of populations from the war-ravaged eastern portions of Ukraine to Russia, including children primarily from orphanages. It has noted that anyone—including teachers and childcare workers—who continues to work in areas under Russian control are in danger of being accused as collaborators and killed by far-right Ukrainian forces.

As with the previous charges of war crimes, the US-led campaign is characterized by a staggering level of hypocrisy. By any objective standard, every US administration in recent memory is guilty of crimes far worse than any that have been alleged against Putin: From the nuclear obliteration of two Japanese cities at the end of the Second World War; to the leveling of North Korea between 1950-1953, to the point where not a single building was left standing; to the mass slaughter and pyrochemical incineration that was the US-led Vietnam War; through the thirty years of unending and expanding war that followed the dissolution of the Soviet Union.

The state leading the campaign for war crimes charges against Putin is responsible for torture at Abu Ghraib in Iraq, the bombing of wedding parties and

other civilian gatherings in Afghanistan, the Guantanamo Bay prison, and drone assassination.

Since the issue of the mistreatment of children is raised in the arrest warrants, we should recall the infamous statement by then US ambassador to the United Nations, Madeleine Albright, who declared in 1996, in reference to half a million dead children from US-backed sanctions against Iraq, “We think the price is worth it.”

The United States does not even recognize the jurisdiction of the ICC out of concern that it could at some point be used to indict and prosecute American government officials. While the Rome Statute, under which the warrant against Putin has been issued, was signed by Bill Clinton, he never sent it to the Senate for ratification. In 2002, as his lawyers were drawing up memoranda intended to justify “preemptive war” and torture, President George W. Bush informed the UN that the US no longer intended to ratify the statute.

In 2020, the Trump administration announced that it was placing economic sanctions and travel restrictions on ICC investigators after they began looking into charges of war crimes, including torture, rape and sexual violence, by the US military in Afghanistan and at CIA torture centers in Eastern Europe. The ICC’s new prosecutor, Khan, dropped the investigation of US torture in 2021, shortly after he was appointed.

The central purpose of the warrants is to fuel the propaganda offensive for an enormous escalation of the US-NATO war against Russia. It is clearly timed to coincide with the visit of Chinese President Xi Jinping to Moscow, starting on Monday, which has the stated aim of discussing a proposal for a negotiated settlement to the war, including an immediate cease-fire.

The US and NATO powers, however, do not want an end to the war but its expansion. On Friday, US National Security Council spokesman John Kirby told reporters that “we certainly don’t support calls for a cease-fire.” Amidst a catastrophic loss of life by Ukrainian forces, the US and its European allies are flooding the country with advanced weaponry in preparation for a major offensive within the next two months.

The charges of war crimes are part of an effort to brand the Putin government as an outlaw regime, justifying a war for regime change, which has as its aim the dismantling of Russia.

New York Times, which functions as a channel for US intelligence agencies, wrote in its article on the warrants (“Arrest Warrant From Criminal Court Pierces Putin’s Aura of Impunity”) that they put “Mr. Putin in the same ranks as Omar Hassan al-Bashir, the deposed president of Sudan, accused of atrocities in Darfur; Slobodan Milosevic, the Serbian leader imprisoned for abuses during the Balkans war; and the Nazis tried at Nuremberg after World War II.”

The message is that whatever the immediate impact of the charges, they are intended as a signal, not only to Putin but also to Xi, that the war will be escalated until Putin ends up with a similar fate as Milosevic.

The US and NATO powers are presently discussing behind the scenes plans for the introduction of NATO troops into the conflict. The propaganda over war crimes and “genocide” could be used to blame Russia for any provocation or manufactured incident that would be used as a justification.

None of this implies support for the Russian invasion of Ukraine or the actions of the Putin government, which represents a faction of the Russian oligarchy. The invasion of Ukraine was a reactionary and bankrupt response of this oligarchy to Russia’s encirclement by the US and NATO. But the United States systematically provoked the war and now, more than one year after it began, is preparing a massive and catastrophic escalation.



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