Ukraine confers the Order of Princess Olga (First Class) on US First Lady Melania Trump

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News

Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky conferred the Order of Princess Olga, First Class, a state decoration, on US First Lady Melania Trump. The presidential decree (No. 1079/2026) was published on the Ukrainian President's website on 4 November 2026. It cites her 'significant personal contribution to humanitarian support for Ukraine', her human-rights and charity work, and her efforts to bring home Ukrainian children taken to Russia. She helped broker a local, temporary ceasefire in Russian-occupied Oleshky (Kherson region) so that aid could enter and civilians could leave; nearly 800 people were evacuated. In August 2025 she had written a personal letter to Russian President Vladimir Putin, which opened a channel to negotiate the return of children. Note: this is not Ukraine's 'highest' award – the highest honour is the title 'Hero of Ukraine'. The Order of Princess Olga is a state order for women; 'First Class' is the highest of its three classes.

Key facts for the exam

Point	Details
Award	Order of Princess Olga, First Class
Conferred by	President Volodymyr Zelensky (decree)
Announced	4 November 2026

Point	Details
Reason	Humanitarian aid; return of children; Oleshky ceasefire
Oleshky	Russian-occupied town, Kherson region, left bank of the Dnipro
Order instituted	15 August 1997; three classes; for women
Ukraine's highest honour	Title 'Hero of Ukraine'
Capital of Ukraine	Kyiv

Background

- Princess Olga (10th century) ruled Kievan Rus' as regent for her young son Svyatoslav after her husband Igor was killed in 945. She was among the first Rus' rulers to be baptised a Christian (at Constantinople) and was later venerated as a saint. Kievan Rus' is regarded as the shared historical root of today's Ukraine, Belarus and Russia.
- Polity/history: Ukraine declared independence from the Soviet Union on 24 August 1991. Russia annexed Crimea in 2014, and the full-scale Russian invasion began in February 2022. The removal of Ukrainian children to Russia during the war is a major humanitarian issue.
- Geography: the Dnipro is Ukraine's longest river; it flows north to south into the Black Sea. In its lower course Kherson city lies on the right bank and Oleshky on the left bank – here the river itself forms the front line.
- India–Ukraine: when the war began in 2022, 'Operation Ganga' brought home about 22,500 Indians on 90 flights via Romania, Hungary, Poland and Slovakia (EAM Jaishankar in the Rajya Sabha, 15 March 2022). India's position on the war is 'dialogue and diplomacy'.

Tamil Nadu link: There is no direct Tamil Nadu link to this news. The closest link: many Tamil Nadu students studying medicine in Ukraine came home under 'Operation Ganga' in 2022.

Frequently asked questions

What is this news about?

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What are the key facts to remember for the exam?

Award: Order of Princess Olga, First Class; Conferred by: President Volodymyr Zelensky (decree); Announced: 4 November 2026; Reason: Humanitarian aid; return of children; Oleshky ceasefire.

What is the background to this news?

Princess Olga (10th century) ruled Kievan Rus' as regent for her young son Svyatoslav after her husband Igor was killed in 945. She was among the first Rus' rulers to be baptised a Christian (at Constantinople) and was later venerated as a saint.

Practice questions (with answers)

1. Princess Olga, after whom the Ukrainian order is named, ruled which medieval state as regent?

A) Grand Duchy of Lithuania

B) Kingdom of Poland

C) Byzantine Empire

D) Kievan Rus'

Answer: D – Explanation: Kievan Rus' – she ruled for her son after Igor was killed in 945, and was baptised at Constantinople.

2. Oleshky, where a local ceasefire let civilians leave, lies on the left bank of which river?

A) Danube

B) Dniester

C) Dnipro

D) Volga

Answer: C – Explanation: Dnipro – Ukraine's longest river, draining into the Black Sea. Kherson city is on the opposite bank.

3. Which is the highest state honour of Ukraine?

A) Title 'Hero of Ukraine'

B) Order of Courage

C) Order of Merit

D) Order of Danylo Halytsky

Answer: A – Explanation: The title 'Hero of Ukraine'. The Order of Princess Olga (1997) is a three-class order for women, not the highest.

4. Operation Ganga (2022), which rescued Indians incl. TN students from Ukraine, did NOT fly from which country?

A) Romania

B) Hungary

C) Poland

D) Belarus

Answer: D – Explanation: Belarus – Russia's ally. Flights left from Romania, Hungary, Poland and Slovakia; about 22,500 Indians returned.

5. In which year did Ukraine declare independence from the Soviet Union?

A) 1989

B) 1991

C) 1993

D) 1994

Answer: B – Explanation: 1991 (24 August); the Soviet Union dissolved in December that year.

Sources: Kyiv Independent; AFP via CP24; United24 Media; Business Today. © Shanmugam IAS Academy.