

RECRUITMENT OF MINORS IN MILITARY SERVICE AND ARMED FORCES IN SUDAN

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1. List of Abbreviations

CAR	Central African Republic
CIA	Central Intelligence Agency
GAIC	Globalisation, Accessibility, Innovation and Care
JEM	Justice and Equality Movement
JEM/Peace Wing	Justice and Equality Movement – Peace Wing
SLM-MM	Sudan Liberation Movement-Minni Minnawi
SLA/AW	Sudan Liberation Army/Abdul Awid
SLA/Free Will	Sudan Liberation Army/Free Will
SLA-Historical Leadership	Sudan Liberation Army – Historical Leadership
SLA-Mother Wing	Sudan Liberation Army – Mother Wing
SLA-Unity	Sudan Liberation Army - Unity
SPLM-N	Sudan Liberation Movement - North
OPAC	Optional Protocol on the Involvement of Children in Armed Conflict
PDF	Popular Defense Forces also referred to as Paramilitary Defense Forces
RSF	Rapid Support Forces
SAF	Sudanese Armed Forces
UN	United Nations
UNAMID	African Union/United Nations Hybrid Operation in Darfur
UNICEF	United Nations Children’s Fund
UNHCR	United Nations High Commission for Refugees
UNOCHA	UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs
US	United States

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3. Background

This research focuses on the recruitment for military service and military activities of underaged youth originating from Darfur, the South-western region of the Republic of Sudan.

It discusses the legal provisions and practices on the ground of the recruitment of under aged children in military service in armed forces in Sudan, especially relating to Kalma camp.

This report focuses on the period 2013 – 2015 when the Republic of Sudan was implementing Operation Decisive Summer in Darfur.

This research is the result of a literature review and of interviews with experts, including international experts.

The Research Network “Globalisation, Accessibility, Innovation and Care” carries out research in the North, East and North Africa region.

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4. Introduction

The Republic of Sudan was during the colonial era under Anglo-Egyptian rule (a condominium). Sudan split in 2011, when South Sudan gained independence, following a referendum. It is located in the North of Africa, bordering Egypt, Libya, Eritrea, Ethiopia, South Sudan, Central African Republic (CAR) and Chad. It also borders the Red Sea.

Sudan has a long history of violent conflict, including in Darfur, where a bloody conflict broke in 2003. Tens if not hundreds of thousands of people were killed in the civil war between the Government of Sudan and its allied militia, and other armed rebel groups in Darfur in the period between 2003 and 2005.

A hybrid UN – AU commanded force UNAMID was established to restore peace under Security Council resolution 1769.¹ The peacekeeping troops in Darfur have struggled to fulfil their mandate, as they became targets of attacks from various armed groups in Darfur (CIA factbook).² In 2017 UNAMID handed over command to the Sudanese government.

The region of Darfur is comprised of three states: South Darfur, West Darfur and North Darfur. In recent times the number of IDPs and refugees from South Sudan, Eritrea and other places has further increased in Darfur, the Southern states of Sudan.



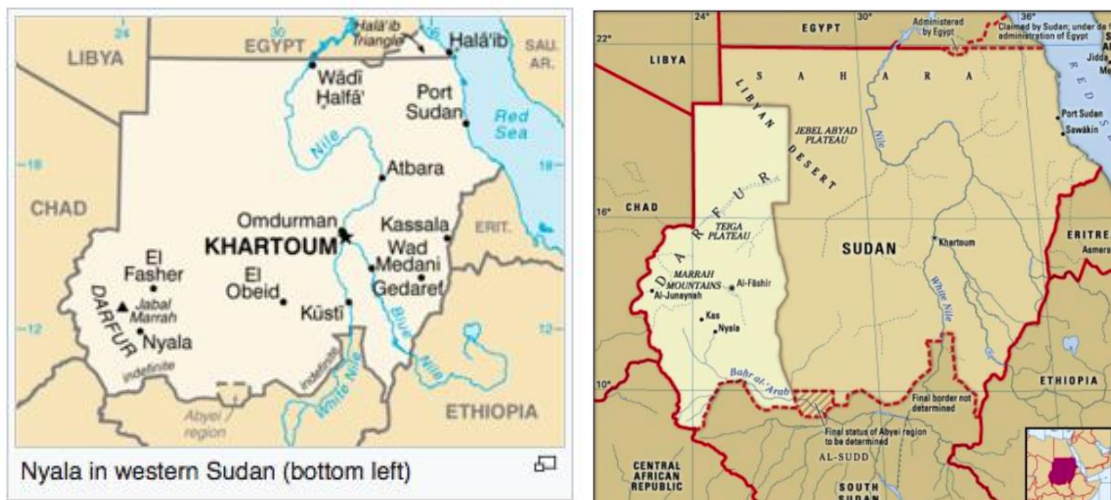
¹ UN Security Council. 2007. Resolution 1769. 31 July 2007. [http://www.un.org/en/ga/search/view_doc.asp?symbol=S/RES/1769\(2007\)](http://www.un.org/en/ga/search/view_doc.asp?symbol=S/RES/1769(2007)) (Retrieved 17 October 2017).

² CIA Factbook. Online. <https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/geos/su.html> (Retrieved 17 October 2017).

US President Bill Clinton first imposed sanctions on Sudan, and these were extended after the genocide taking place in Western Darfur. In October 2017 US President Trump eased the economic sanctions to Sudan (The Economist, 6 Oct 2017).³

In subsequent years, fighting between the Government and armed groups continued.

UNHCR estimates that the number of IDPs in Darfur is now over 2,5 million in 2015 (UNHCR, 2015). Kalma is a refugee relocation camp in Darfur, located 17 kilometers outside of Nyala, the capital city of Southern Darfur. It is estimated that there were over 90,000 residents in the camp in 2007. The population of the camp has been displaced from their homesteads to the camp, as a result of the conflict in Darfur.



Source: Encyclopaedia Britannica: historical region of Darfur

The UN Security Council regularly reports on the situation of children in armed conflict in Sudan. Its latest report was released in 2017 and provides good insights. Nevertheless the team compiling the report had challenges in collecting and documenting information. Concerned that it has only been able to highlight a tip of the iceberg, it expresses concern over the grave situation and the impact of the civil war on children:

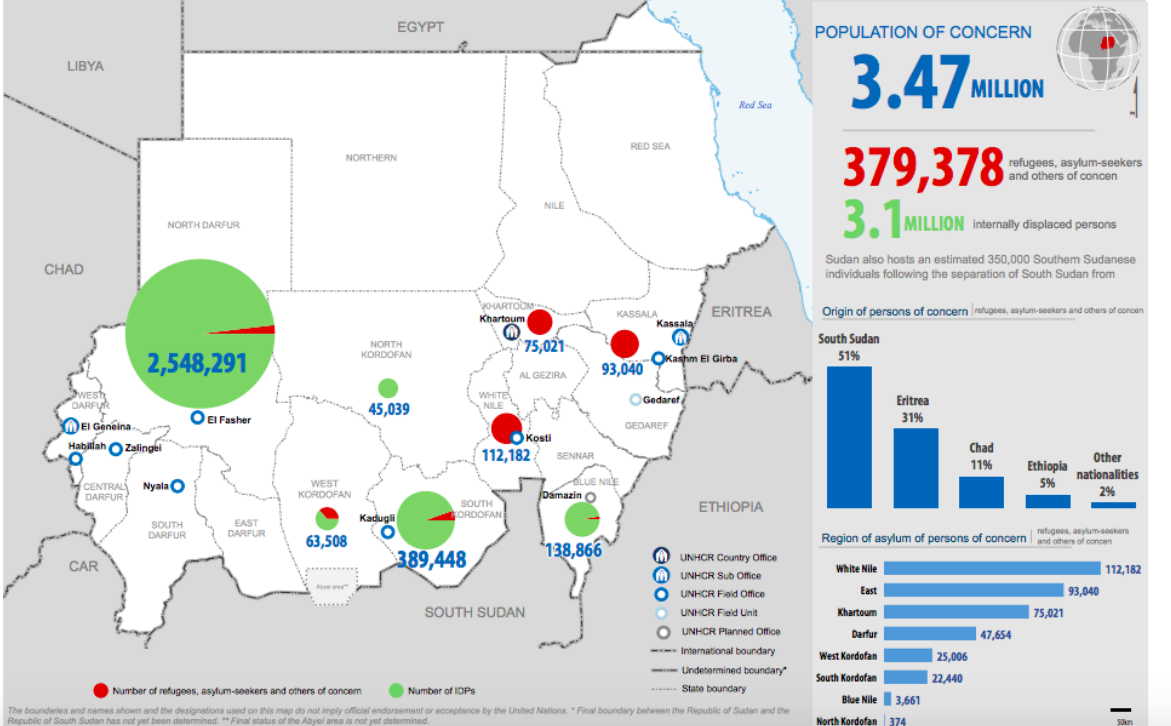
Throughout the reporting period, the country task force received allegations of grave violations committed by all parties to the conflict that could not be verified owing to restrictions of movement, the lack of access to conflict-affected areas and the mobility of some of the armed groups. Data presented in the present report do not therefore represent the full impact of the conflict on children.⁴

³ The Economist. 2017. Why America has lifted sanctions on Sudan. Available at: <https://www.economist.com/blogs/economist-explains/2017/10/economist-explains-7> (Retrieved 17 October 2017).

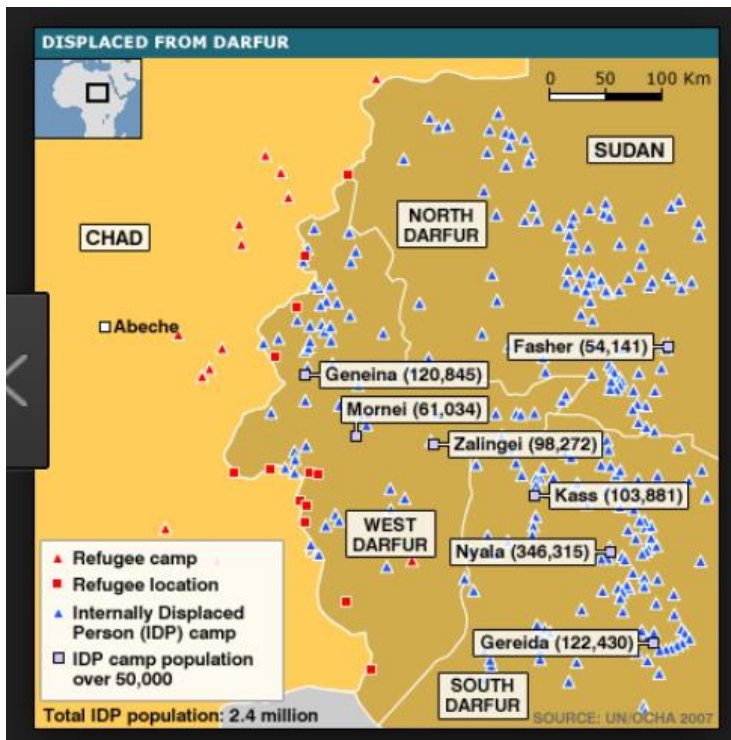
⁴ UN Security Council. 2017. Report of the Secretary-General on children and armed conflict in the Sudan. 6 March 2017. S/2017/191. Available at: http://www.un.org/ga/search/view_doc.asp?symbol=S/2017/191&Lang=E&Area=UNDOC (Retrieved 17 October 2017).

SUDAN

Refugees, asylum-seekers, IDPs and others of concern to UNHCR by State
as of 30 November 2015



Source: UNHCR, November 2015 (SUD_RefIDPs_151130.pdf)



Source: OCHA, 2007

5. Military branches operating in Sudan

The following types of military and armed forces can be distinguished in Sudan:

5.1. Sudanese Armed Forces (SAF)

This is the principle military organization of the Government of Sudan. In 2016, the Sudanese Armed Forces (SAF) were composed of Land Forces, Navy (includes Marines), Sudanese Air Force (Sikakh al-Jawwiya as-Sudaniya), Rapid Support Forces, Popular Defense Forces.⁵

5.2. Popular Defense Forces (PDF) also referred to as Paramilitary Defense Forces

The PDF established by the 1989 Popular Defence Forces Act. The PDF is formally part of the Sudanese military (as created under the Sudanese law and falling under its responsibility), It is defined as a semi-military formed from Sudanese citizens. The PDF was established as an Islamic militia, closely connected with the National Islamic Front. The PDF currently operates as a reserve force for the Sudanese Armed Forces.

5.3. Rapid Support Forces (RSF)

The Rapid Support Forces (RSF) fall under the Sudanese security and intelligence forces, but their military operations fall under the SAF. The Janjaweed (Islamist militia) have been integrated in the RSF. In 2014 the RSF was reconstituted from the Janjaweed which terrorized civilians in Darfur during the Darfur crisis, and was integrated in the SAF, "as part of the government efforts to disarm civilians and tribal militias in the region"⁶.

5.4. Tribal Arab militia rebel groups

These are armed rebel groups with an ethnic allegiance, and under authority of the tribal leadership. The Arab militia have been fighting with SAF and RSF against the civilian population and opposition groups.

5.5. Opposition groups

In Darfur these are: (i) Justice and Equality Movement (JEM); (ii) Sudan Liberation Movement-Minni Minnawi and (iii) SLA/AW.

⁵ CIA. World Factbook. Available at: <https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/geos/su.html> (Retrieved 17 October 2017).

⁶ Sudan Tribune. 2017. UNAMID handed over its former bases to Darfur militia: rebel groups. Available at: https://www.sudantribune.com/spip.php?iframe&page=imprimable&id_article=63468 (Retrieved 17 October 2017).

6. Conscription in Sudanese Armed Forces

The Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child on the Involvement of Children in Armed Conflict (OPAC) was ratified by Sudan in 2005.⁷ The Optional Protocol stipulates that anyone under the age of 18 cannot be used in conflicts or recruited into armed groups. Governments may accept volunteers from the age of 16, but they cannot compulsorily recruit anyone under 18. The Optional Protocol came into force in February 2002 and has been ratified by 132 Member States. Over 80 States Parties have deposited declarations prohibiting recruitment below the age of 18.

UNICEF is active in promoting the Optional Protocol in Sudan and claims it helped “push through the Federal Child Act for Sudan’s northern states which was finally passed in December 2009 by the National Assembly. The Child Act of 2009 explicitly prohibits the recruitment and use of children in armed conflict.”⁸

In 2007 national military service became compulsory in Sudan.⁹

⁷ UN Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child on the involvement of children in armed conflict, New York, 25 May 2000, see for ratification: https://treaties.un.org/pages/viewdetails.aspx?src=ind&mtdsg_no=iv-11-b&chapter=4&lang=en (Retrieved 17 October 2017).

⁸ UNICEF. Undated. Factsheet. Children Associated with Armed Groups and Forces Central Africa. Available at: https://www.unicef.org/wcaro/FactSheet100601Final_E_100603_.pdf (Retrieved 17 October 2017).

⁹ Sudan: Military service including age of conscription, gender, length of service, recruitment practices and training, exemption conditions and alternative service options, penalties for refusing military service, and treatment of family members of those who refuse military service (2001-2007), Research Directorate, Immigration and Refugee Board of Canada, Ottawa. 28 February 2007. Available at Refworld. UNHCR in: <http://www.refworld.org/docid/469cd6bfc.html> (Retrieved 17 October 2017).

7. Age of conscription and policy on recruitment by SAF and EDF

In terms of the age of conscription up to 2007, the UNHCR RefWorld sets out the following picture:

Information on the age of conscription for military service varied among the sources consulted by the Research Directorate. According to the Europa World Year Book 2006 and the United States (US) Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) World Factbook, persons between the ages of 18 to 30 years are liable for national military service (Europa World Year Book 2006 2006, 4095; US 8 Feb. 2007). However, the Child Soldiers Global Report 2004 indicates that under Sudan's National Service Act of 1992, persons between the ages of 18 to 33 years must submit to national military service (Coalition to Stop the Use of Child Soldiers 17 Nov. 2004; Denmark 2001, 68). (UNHCR RefWorld)¹⁰

A distinction is made between different branches of the armed forces. The analysis concludes that at the time of writing (2007) recruitment of child soldiers was reported in relation to the Paramilitary Defense Force (PDF) (from 17 or 16 years of age onwards):

The report also indicates that the compulsory recruitment age is 17 years for the regular armed forces and 16 years for the paramilitary Popular Defence Force (PDF), while there is no minimum age for the reserve forces and for persons volunteering in the regular armed forces (Coalition to Stop the Use of Child Soldiers 17 Nov. 2004). Country Reports on Human Rights Practices indicate that persons aged 17 to 19 were required to undergo military service (8 Mar. 2006, Sec. 5)¹¹

In addition it was also reported that the Sudanese government itself would be recruiting

News and human rights sources consulted by the Research Directorate indicate that the Sudanese government is also believed to recruit children for military training (UN 2 Feb. 2007; ibid. 17 Aug. 2006; ibid. 1 July 2005; US 8 Mar. 2006; Coalition to Stop the Use of Child Soldiers 17 Nov. 2004).¹²

At present the CIA Factbook reports that a 1 to 2 year national service for the Sudan military forces was enacted in, for the age group 18-33. A requirement that completion of national service was mandatory before entering public or private sector employment has been cancelled in 2012.

In May 2015, the UN Special Representative for Children and Armed Conflict held consultations with the leadership of JEM, SLA/AW and SLA/MM.¹³ The three leaders signed a joint statement to protect children in Darfur and take responsibility for the promotion of

¹⁰ Research Directorate, Immigration and Refugee Board of Canada, Ottawa. Ibid.

¹¹ Ibid.

¹² Ibid.

¹³ The consultation meetings were held in Austria. They had been organized by UNAMID. They were held under the auspices of the Austrian Study Centre for Peace and Conflict Resolution.

their rights.¹⁴ In November 2016 SPLM-N signed an action plan to prevent child recruitment into their forces.

The military forces and various armed groups operating in Sudan are - formally - committed to end child recruitment. The key question is to what extent this stated commitment and obligation under the law has translated on the ground.

¹⁴ UN Report, 2017.

8. Situation in Darfur (period 2013 – 2015)

The UN Secretary-General report on Children and Armed Conflict in Sudan (Un Security Council, 2017), covering the period from 1 March 2011 to 31 December 2016, describes the situation that emerged in 2013:

The period under review was marked by several significant developments, including the eruption of armed conflict in Southern Kordofan and Blue Nile States, during which a new armed group, SPLM-N, emerged, the failure to resolve the status of the Abyei Area, which fuelled tensions, the creation of the Rapid Support Forces in 2013 and the launch by the Government in 2014 of Operation Decisive Summer, the aim of which was to eliminate all armed opposition groups in the Sudan. These developments affected children and resulted in grave violations against them. According to the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, as at December 2016, there were up to 3.2 million internally displaced persons in the Sudan, including 2.6 million in Darfur. Children made up 60 per cent of the internally displaced persons in Darfur.¹⁵

The political situation in Darfur was increasingly tense, as armed opposition groups JEM, SLM/MM and SLA/AW did not sign the Darfur Peace Agreement (also known as Doha Agreement) in 2011. The Darfur Peace Agreement was signed by the Government of Sudan with the Liberation and Justice Movement. It established a compensation fund for victims in Darfur and allowed the Government of Khartoum to appoint a Vice President to govern Darfur and established some agreement on a referendum to determine the future of Darfur. This was the same year that South Sudan gained its independence after a referendum. The Darfur Peace Agreement, which was rejected by the three armed opposition groups created a deadlock:

A number of armed groups active in 2011 signed the Doha Document. However, JEM, SLA/AW and SLM/MM, which did not, remained militarily active during most of the reporting period. A political stalemate persisted between the Government and the three armed groups. Meanwhile, the security situation remained tense in Darfur with clashes between parties to the conflict and aerial bombardment by the Sudan Armed Forces.¹⁶

The Government of Sudan responded decisively by initiating Operation Decisive Summer. In 2013, the Janjaweed were transformed into the RSF and subsequently integrated under SAF military command from 2015 onwards so as to assist the operation in Darfur:

In August 2013, in preparation for the launch of Operation Decisive Summer, the Government created an auxiliary force, the Rapid Support Forces, the members of which were mostly recruited from the Rizeigat tribe, many of whom formerly belonged to the Border Guards and, to a lesser extent, the Central Reserve Police. The Rapid Support Forces took an increasing role in operations against armed groups and reportedly committed gross violations

¹⁵ UN Security Council. 2017.

¹⁶ Ibid.

of international human rights and humanitarian law. In January 2015, the Rapid Support Forces, which had been operating under the command of the National Intelligence Security Services, became part of the regular government forces through a constitutional amendment. In April 2015, the Rapid Support Forces were placed under the command of the Presidency. In January 2017, the Parliament passed the Rapid Support Forces Act, integrating those forces into the Sudan Armed Forces.¹⁷

At the end of 2013, Sudan began Operation Decisive Summer, resulting in displacement, increased violence against children and a victory of government forces over militia rebel groups in Darfur.

Operation Decisive Summer, which was launched at the end of 2013, marked a turning point in the period under review. The Sudan Armed Forces, supported by the Rapid Support Forces, launched a series of air and ground offensives, which intensified armed confrontations between government forces and armed groups. The Operation resulted in increased numbers of civilian casualties and population displacement, and coincided with an increase in grave violations against children. By 2016, government forces had retaken control of a number of areas formerly held by armed groups, particularly in Darfur.¹⁸

During the period 2013 – 2015 the situation in Darfur became extremely tense and it became increasingly dangerous for civilians. Air bombings threatened villages, and on the ground houses were burnt, looted and violence was inflicted on the local population:

During Operation Decisive Summer, the Sudan Armed Forces and the Rapid Support Forces launched air and ground offensives against areas controlled by SPLM-N, which resulted in civilian casualties, including children, displacement and the destruction of key infrastructure, such as schools, hospitals and marketplaces.¹⁹

The UN reports that the conflict further escalated in 2014, putting the civilian population further at risk and resulting in attacks on villages, and severe human rights violations against the local population, including against children:

The conflict escalated in 2014, coinciding with Operation Decisive Summer and the deployment of the Rapid Support Forces to Darfur, where they conducted a series of offensives against armed groups in South and North Darfur States. Attacks on civilians, the burning of villages, looting and large-scale human rights violations, including against children, were reported during that period. The first phase of the Operation left the armed groups weakened, and, by the end of 2014, the Sudan Armed Forces, supported by the Rapid Support Forces and tribal militias, controlled large portions of territory across Darfur. In the same period, JEM moved to South Sudan where it engaged in the conflict alongside SPLA. The Justice and Equality Movement reportedly suffered heavy losses at the Nihara battle in South

¹⁷ Ibid.

¹⁸ Ibid.

¹⁹ Ibid.

Darfur State in April 2015, leading the Government to announce that it had defeated the group. In May, SLA/MM also suffered heavy losses in North Darfur State. As at December 2016, JEM had completely withdrawn to South Sudan. In the second half of 2015 and in 2016, the Government focused its military efforts on dislodging SLA/AW from Jebel Marra, which caused significant new displacement.²⁰

Other reports, dubbing the period 2013-2015 a 'silent war' in Darfur which has received little international attention, describe the intense pressure on the civilian population, and how farmers were targeted in the unfolding violence upon villages:

Just as in 2014, 2015 witnessed a steady increase of violence in Darfur. The UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) reported the new displacement of 41000 from east Jabal Mara in February 2015 alone, as they tried to escape from government air strikes. OCHA reported that the number was likely to be higher as it was unable to reach some areas for its assessment. At the end of 2015, OCHA reported that the total number of IDPs in Darfur was two and half million of which the 233,000 had been displaced in 2015 alone.

2015 also witnessed the continuation of RSF violations and government air strikes on civilian villages in Darfur. There was a particular focus by the government on attacking the farming lands of villagers in central and south Darfur. This included burning crops and looting livestock threatening famine in the areas. Since last November, several aid agencies have announced their inability to continue to provide of dietary support to over 122,000 IDPs in Darfur due to the escalation of the violence. In December OCHA reported that persistent attacks on 34 civilian villages in Kutum locality in North Darfur during only one week of December 2015 were estimated to have affected over ten thousand civilians.²¹

Posts from July 2015 on YouTube report 100.000 people had reached Kalma camp at that time and were living in dire conditions.²²

²⁰ *ibid.*

²¹ Sudan Democracy First Group. 2016. Dismantling IDPs Camps in Darfur, a New Crime in a Saga of Calamity. January 2016.

<http://www.democracyfirstgroup.org/dismantling-idps-camps-in-darfur-a-new-crime-in-a-saga-of-calamity/> (Retrieved 17 October 2017).

²² <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=zVji5KHGcQ>

9. Recruitment of Child soldiers

In the UN Report of the Secretary General on Children and Armed Forces in Sudan (2016), a broad range of military and armed forces were listed as recruiting or using children in Darfur during the period from 1 March 2011 to 31 December 2016:

Government security forces, pro-government militias, the Justice and Equality Movement (JEM), the Sudan Liberation Army/Minni Minawi (SLA/MM), the Sudan Liberation Army/Abdul Wahid (SLA/AW) and the Sudan People's Liberation Movement-North (SPLM-N) were listed as parties that recruit or use children. Armed groups that were no longer active had been removed from the annexes. The SLA/Free Will, JEM/Peace Wing and SLA-Peace Wing were removed in 2013 and the SLA-Historical Leadership, SLA-Mother Wing (Abu Gasim) and SLA-Unity were removed in 2014.²³

The UN Security Council reported serious violations against children in Darfur in the 2011 – 2016 period. Moreover it reports a series of recruitment of children in all of the different military forces and armed militia.

- *A total of 105 cases of the recruitment and use of children were documented in Darfur, as follows: 45 in 2011, 31 in 2012, 18 in 2013, 6 in 2014, 4 in 2015 and 1 in 2016.*
- *Approximately 90 per cent of those cases occurred between 2011 and 2013.*
- *It is important to note that, in 2014, fighting declined and that armed actors were concentrated in certain areas, such as Jebel Marra, which the country task force could not access.*
- *Furthermore, JEM and SLA/MM reportedly suffered heavy losses during Operation Decisive Summer and ceased to be active in Darfur from the second half of 2015.*
- *The decline in fighting also coincided with an upsurge in the use of children in tribal clashes fuelled by disputes over land and natural resources in 2013 and 2014.*
- *It was not always possible to attribute responsibility for such recruitment and use, and approximately one third of the total cases were perpetrated by unidentified armed men.*
- *In cases in which perpetrators were identified, approximately half were committed by government forces with a total of 63 cases: 21 in 2011, 17 in 2012, 18 in 2013, 3 in 2014 and 4 in 2015.*
- *No cases were documented in 2016.*

²³ UN Security Council. 2017. Ibid.

- *Of the violations committed by government forces, 19 (approximately one third) were committed by the Border Guards between 2011 and 2013, 14 by the Popular Defence Forces and 9 by the Central Reserve Police, both of which were actively recruiting in 2011 and 2012, and 7 by the police, in 2011.*
- *With regard to the Sudan Armed Forces, the country task force verified 14 cases over the reporting period. It is believed that some of the children participated in military operations while others were used in support functions, such as guarding checkpoints. For example, in July 2015, a 17-year-old boy reported that he had joined the Sudan Armed Forces in January 2014 and participated in the fighting between JEM-Abbas and the Sudan Armed Forces in June 2014. In August 2015, two armed boys in military uniforms were observed guarding checkpoints outside Nyala, which are usually guarded by the Sudan Armed Forces and the Rapid Support Forces. In addition, children were observed with the Sudan Armed Forces and other government forces, wearing uniforms and/or carrying guns.*
- *In 2014, an estimated 37 children were seen carrying guns in a market in Ed Daein, East Darfur State. In 2013, 12 boys wearing military uniforms were seen in vehicles of the Sudan Armed Forces in Jebel Moon, West Darfur State, during a handover ceremony from an outgoing to an incoming field commander of the Sudan Armed Forces. A number of allegations were also attributed to the Rapid Support Forces. For example, in March 2014, eyewitnesses reported the presence of boys between the ages of 15 and 17 during a parade of the Rapid Support Forces in Nyala. In August 2015, six armed boys dressed in Rapid Support Forces uniforms were observed in the market of Duma village, South Darfur State.*
- *With regard to armed groups, the country task force verified 11 cases (7 in 2011, 3 in 2012 and 1 in 2016) of the recruitment and use of children, 5 of which were attributed to SLA/AW, 4 to JEM, 1 to SLA/MM and 1 to the Liberation and Justice Movement (LJM).*
- *The decrease in documented cases can be explained by insecurity and access challenges.*
- *Moreover, from late 2014, JEM and SLA/MM were less active in Darfur, and JEM moved to South Sudan, where it supported SPLA.*
- *Nevertheless, allegations of child recruitment by those groups were received. For example, in Umm Barru, North Darfur State, between February and March 2015, a mobilization campaign by SLA/MM allegedly took place, during which an alleged 246 boys were recruited and transported to a military camp. The presence of JEM in South Sudan coincided with the documentation of 61 cases of the*

recruitment and use of children by JEM in refugee settlements in South Sudan, of which 55 occurred in 2014 and 6 in 2015. According to the Panel of Experts on the Sudan, large-scale recruitment and use of children by JEM in South Sudan took place in 2015 (see S/2016/805). These children reportedly received military training, including in combat and handling weapons, in JEM camps in South Sudan. During a visit to the Sudan in March 2016, my Special Representative for Children and Armed Conflict was given access to 21 children who had been detained by the National Intelligence Security Services since April and August 2015 for their association with JEM. The children, who had been captured by the Rapid Support Forces in South Darfur State, were recruited by JEM in Southern Kordofan State and South Sudan and used in combat in Darfur and South Sudan. Some of them reported that they had been abducted by JEM.

- *In 2013, the country task force witnessed an upsurge in the use of children by communities for fighting in tribal clashes. For instance, in December 2013, a United Nations team conducted a field mission to Sereif, North Darfur State, and interviewed 25 boys who said that they had participated in clashes between the Beni Hussein and Abbala tribes over gold mines. The trend continued in 2014 when, for example, children were observed carrying weapons alongside tribal militias in the North Darfur State localities of Kabkabiyah, Saraf Omra and Sereif.*
- *In addition, children were also reportedly armed to serve as sentinels to guard villages and deter attacks by other tribes.*
- *Such use of children decreased from late 2014, coinciding with the engagement by the African Union-United Nations Hybrid Operation in Darfur (UNAMID) with key tribal leaders. (Ibid., emphasis added MvR; author added bullet points.)*

The list provides documented evidence that children were recruited by the different parties to the conflict, including the SAF, PDF, SRF, and armed groups, including opposition groups and ethnic militia. Such recruitment has been documented for the period 2013-2015 in Darfur. Although at present it is difficult to assess the nature and extent of such recruitments, the list provides an explanation of the fear for recruitment among youth of over 15 years of age in camps in (Southern) Darfur. Given the fluid nature of the situation it may not always have been clear to youth whether the recruitment was by SAF, EDF, RSF or other parties involved in the conflict. Given the complex situation on the ground, it is also conceivable that pressure was felt from different sides, including threat of recruitment by government forces, as well as pressure of recruitment by ethnic groups, based on the need to demonstrate allegiance.

In addition to fear for recruitment, youth may have been fearful for the consequences of the war after Operation Decisive Summer was launched. The UN Security Council reports

serious violations and killings affecting children in Darfur, and casualties reportedly increased from 2012 to 2015:

In Darfur, 971 children were killed (369) and maimed (602) during the reporting period. From 2012, child casualties increased, with 71 cases in 2011, 119 in 2012, 189 in 2013, 197 in 2014, 196 in 2015 and 199 in 2016. The trend coincided with the launch of Operation Decisive Summer. Attributing responsibility has been challenging, particularly in the light of the lack of access and ongoing hostilities. The majority of child casualties occurred during armed confrontations between government forces and armed groups and as a result of aerial bombardments. Incidents involving unexploded ordnance were also a significant cause of child casualties, with a total of 304 children affected, 84 of whom were killed and 220 maimed. In most instances, unexploded ordnance were found by children, who mistook them for toys or tampered with them. The intensification of tribal clashes also affected children. In addition, allegations were also received of child casualties during aerial bombardment by the Sudan Armed Forces.²⁴

It is conceivable that the reporting of child casualties may have produced collective trauma²⁵ and prompted a flee and flight response as a way of escaping what they may have considered as inescapable recruitment in one of the war factions. Such fears may have been compounded by the continued pressure that the Government of Sudan would close down the camps. For instance, in a blog entry on 6th January 2016, the following observations are made of what may happen if the camps would indeed be closed:

Outside the camps they will confront a vast, chaotic, immensely destructive maelstrom of violence, chiefly that orchestrated by Khartoum's regular Sudan Armed Forces and the regime's primary Arab militia ally, the Rapid Support Forces (RSF).²⁶

In other words, it is conceivable that youth would fear the possibility of being pressured for recruitment, in the unfolding chaos that could have arisen if the camps would indeed have been closed.

Speculation aside, abductions were already a practice in the unfolding chaos in Darfur. The UN Security Council reports the following cases of abductions by armed groups and military units:

The country task force documented the abduction of 56 children between the ages of 8 and 17 in Darfur, 1 of whom was abducted in 2011, 6 in 2012, 15 in 2013, 13 in 2014 and 21 in 2016. Of those abductions, 26 were attributed to the Sudan Armed Forces, the Rapid Support Forces and pro-

²⁴ UN Security Council. 2017.

²⁵ Kidane, S. & Van Reisen, M. 2017. M. Collective Trauma from Sinai Trafficking: A Blow to the Fabric of Eritrean Society. In: Human Trafficking and Trauma in the Digital Era (eds. Van Reisen and Mawere). Langaa. Bamenda. Available at: https://www.researchgate.net/publication/316991728_Collective_Trauma_from_Sinai_Trafficking_A_Blow_to_the_Fabric_of_Eritrean_Society (Retrieved 18 October 2017)

²⁶ Reeves. 2016. Blog. Available at: <http://sudanreeves.org/2016/01/05/a-massive-catastrophe-looming-in-darfur-forcing-the-displaced-from-camps-in-darfur-is-a-relude-to-camp-dismantling-january-5-2016/> (Retrieved: 17 October 2017).

government militias, 3 to JEM, 1 to SLA/AW and 26 to unidentified armed elements.

As mentioned in section A, some of the 21 children released from National Intelligence Security Services detention reported to my Special Representative for Children and Armed Conflict that they had been abducted by JEM in Southern Kordofan State and South Sudan, from their homes or while they were performing domestic chores.²⁷

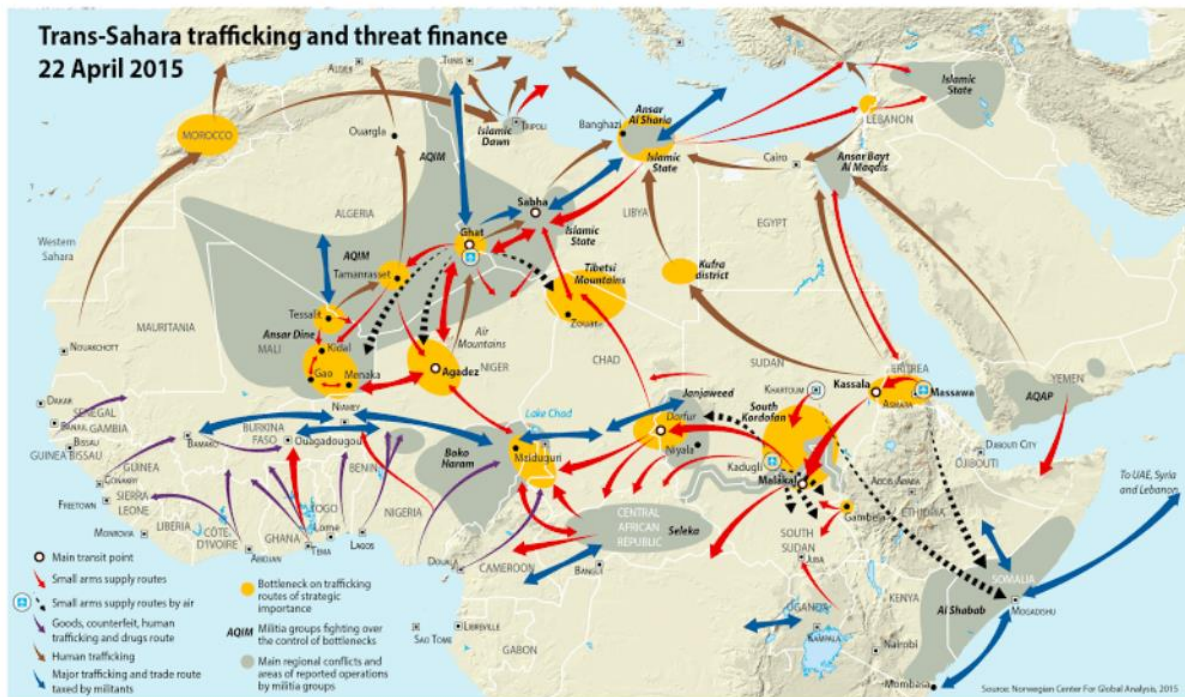
Children were forced through such abductions to integrate in the armed groups/military forces.

²⁷ UN Security Council. 2017. Ibid.

10. Trafficking Routes

The route described from Darfur to El Geneina, along the border of Chad to Libya is a well known and described route for migrants and refugees. Especially since the area North West from Dongola has been (allegedly) policed by the RSF, this route has developed.²⁸ The route had been established in 2015.

The Norwegian Centre for Global Analysis provided the following chart of the route through Chad (dated 22 April 2015):



²⁸ Plaut, M. 2016. Will EU aid back the feared Janjaweed's attacks on Eritrean refugees? 30/08/2016 Available at: <https://martinplaut.wordpress.com/2016/08/30/will-eu-aid-back-the-feared-janjawees-attacks-on-eritrean-refugees/> (retrieved 18 October 2017)

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