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SUDAN (Tier 2)

The Government of Sudan does not fully meet the minimum standards for the elimination of trafficking but is making significant efforts to do so. The government demonstrated overall increasing efforts compared with the previous reporting period, considering the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on its anti-trafficking capacity, if any; therefore Sudan remained on Tier 2. These efforts included increasing investigations, prosecutions, and convictions; identifying child trafficking victims among militia members; and providing training on the illegality of recruitment or use of children as soldiers in civilian protection and military forces. However, the government did not meet the minimum standards in several key areas. Insecurity hindered Sudan's ability to accurately report on anti-trafficking efforts for this reporting period. Authorities continued to conflate human trafficking with migrant smuggling, hindering law enforcement efforts. For the fourth consecutive year, the government did not disseminate or implement SOPs, developed in partnership with an international organization, for victim identification and referral to care for child trafficking victims. The government has yet to investigate or prosecute any officials for forced recruitment or use of child soldiers.

PRIORITIZED RECOMMENDATIONS:

- Ensure all identified trafficking victims are referred to appropriate protective services.
- Increase training for security and judicial officials on distinguishing human trafficking from other crimes such as migrant smuggling and kidnapping for ransom.
- Ensure authorities do not inappropriately penalize trafficking victims for crimes committed as a direct result of being trafficked.
- Increase efforts to investigate and prosecute traffickers, including complicit officials in forced recruitment or use of child soldiers, and seek adequate penalties for convicted traffickers, which should involve significant prison terms.
- Coordinate with civil society and international organizations to disseminate and implement SOPs for victim identification and referral to care for child trafficking victims and develop SOPs for adult trafficking victims.
- Provide sufficient staff and resources to the National Committee to Combat Human Trafficking (NCCHT).
- Implement and dedicate adequate resources to the 2021-2023 national anti-trafficking action plan.
- Partner with civil society, international organizations, and the private sector to establish additional shelter options for trafficking victims.
- Develop a data collection and information management system in collaboration with international organizations to more effectively organize law enforcement data.
- Draft and finalize a standalone smuggling law to enhance judicial officials' ability to prosecute migrant smuggling crimes separate from human trafficking crimes.

PROSECUTION

The government increased anti-trafficking law enforcement efforts. The 2014 Anti-Human Trafficking Law, as amended, criminalized sex trafficking and labor trafficking. The law prescribed between three and 10 years' imprisonment for base offenses involving adult male victims and between five and 20 years' imprisonment for offenses involving adult female and child

victims or involving additional aggravating circumstances; these penalties were sufficiently stringent and, with respect to sex trafficking, commensurate with the penalties prescribed for other serious crimes, such as rape. Article 14 of the Sudan Armed Forces Act of 2007 criminalized the recruitment of children younger than 18 years old by state armed forces, the enslavement of civilians, sexual slavery, and coercing civilians into prostitution, and prescribed penalties between three years' imprisonment and death.

Authorities continued to conflate migrant smuggling and human trafficking crimes; thus, the government's reported data likely included cases that did not involve trafficking elements in line with the international law. The government reported investigating 46 cases, compared with 26 cases in the previous reporting period. The government reported prosecuting 126 cases, involving an unknown number of suspects, compared with eight cases in the previous reporting period. The government reported convicting 54 traffickers compared with convicting 32 traffickers in the previous reporting period. One additional case resulted in an acquittal. In prior years, insufficient sentencing of traffickers weakened deterrence and was not in line with penalties required by the country's anti-trafficking law.

The Ministry of Interior's Counter Trafficking Unit was responsible for anti-trafficking law enforcement and could provide services to identified trafficking victims, including maintaining one shelter, which was reportedly in need of repairs. The government did not report providing anti-trafficking training to law enforcement, prosecutors, or judges. Authorities continued to conflate human trafficking, migrant smuggling, and kidnapping for ransom, which impeded accurate assessment of Sudan's anti-trafficking law enforcement data. Experts noted the lack of a standalone migrant smuggling law impeded judicial officials' efforts to prosecute migrant smugglers separately from human traffickers. The government collaborated with INTERPOL in an investigation which led to the arrest of a notorious trafficker.

The government did not report any investigations, prosecutions, or convictions of government officials complicit in human trafficking crimes; however, corruption and official complicity in trafficking crimes remained concerns, inhibiting law enforcement action. Authorities did not report the results of investigations into allegations of sexual exploitation and abuse – which may have included aspects of sex trafficking to include transactional sex – by officials from the Commission of Refugees and General Intelligence Services. Experts noted some law enforcement and border officers were complicit in or otherwise profited from trafficking crimes specifically related to exploiting migrants along Sudan's borders. In the previous reporting period, an international organization reported on the abduction and detention of a girl on a Sudanese Armed Forces (SAF) base in sexual slavery for an extended period, which met the legal standards for recruitment and use of a child soldier by the SAF; the government did not report any updates on the case. The government has yet to investigate or prosecute any officials for forced recruitment or use of child soldiers.

PROTECTION

The government decreased already inadequate efforts to identify and protect victims. The government did not report comprehensive victim identification data. It did report identifying 12 potential trafficking victims, three men and nine women, compared with identifying 633 potential victims during the previous reporting period. Due to a dearth of training and ongoing conflation between migrant smuggling and human trafficking, the government did not always distinguish trafficking victims from other crime victims. The government did not report whether it referred any potential victims to services. The government reported it could provide food, psycho-social services, and basic medical services at two government-run shelters; however, it did not report how many victims received services. Officials reported existing shelters were in dire need of refurbishment and a dearth of trained mental health professionals to provide care to trafficking

victims. The lack of shelters adversely affected the country's ability to protect victims once identified.

For the fourth consecutive year, officials did not report disseminating or implementing child trafficking victim identification SOPs developed in 2018 in partnership with an international organization. The government did not have SOPs for victim identification and referral to care for adults. The government's past denial of sex trafficking occurring within Sudan, coupled with authorities' inconsistent screening of vulnerable populations, likely resulted in the arrests and detention of women whom traffickers compelled into commercial sex. The government conducted screening for child soldiers among local militia members integrating into the armed forces as part of the Juba Peace Agreement. The government identified 39 children and referred them to services. The government did not provide foreign trafficking victims with legal alternatives to their removal to countries where they would face retribution or hardship.

PREVENTION

The government maintained efforts to prevent trafficking. The NCCHT led the government's anti-trafficking efforts, including implementation of the 2021-2023 NAP. The NCCHT, which included subcommittees in the states of Gedaraf, Kassala, North and West Darfur, and Northern State, convened regularly. Officials noted a lack of human and material resources – as well as a limited presence outside of the capital – hindered the NCCHT's ability to execute its mandate. Officials noted they lacked the resources necessary to adequately investigate trafficking cases.

The government reported it conducted awareness raising workshops and programs on human trafficking for civil society members. Additionally, trafficking was covered in primary and secondary school curricula. The government reported it ran a hotline but did not provide information on the hotline's purpose or utility. Ministry of Labor inspectors were responsible for providing oversight of recruitment agencies, but they did not report investigating or sanctioning fraudulent recruiters during the reporting period. Sudan's Domestic Workers Act of 2008 provided a legal framework for employing and registering domestic workers with limited labor rights and protections; however, the government did not report registering or protecting any domestic workers under the law during the reporting period. The government did not report providing anti-trafficking training for its diplomatic personnel. Officials did not report efforts to reduce the demand for commercial sex.

SAF officials continued to staff the Child Rights Unit (CRU) (established in 2019), which led the government's child protection efforts in conflict areas. The government reported the CRU provided training focused on the rights of the child in conflict – including sensitization on the illegality of recruitment or use of children as soldiers – to civilian protection and military forces. The government inspected SAF units and Juba Peace Agreement signatories to ensure there were no cases of child soldier recruitment and use, but did not report inspecting Rapid Support Forces (RSF). The government reported it ceased work to finalize the military's training manual on child rights, including child soldier prevention and referral. The Sudanese Joint Chiefs of Staff continued to issue and disseminate command orders directing military officials to follow the government's ban against recruiting or using individuals under 18 years of age in support or combat roles.

TRAFFICKING PROFILE:

As reported over the past five years, human traffickers exploit domestic and foreign victims in Sudan, and traffickers exploit victims from Sudan at home and abroad. Traffickers exploit

homeless children in Khartoum – including Sudanese and unaccompanied migrant children from West and Central Africa – in forced labor for begging, market vending, and in sex trafficking. Business owners, informal mining operators, community members, and farmers exploit children working in brick-making factories, gold mining, collecting medical waste, street vending, and agriculture; victims endure threats, physical and sexual abuse, as well as hazardous working conditions with limited access to education or health services. Criminal groups exploit Sudanese women and girls – particularly IDPs or those from rural areas – in domestic work and in sex trafficking.

Due to regional instability and conflict, there are more than 3.7 million IDPs and 1.1 million refugees in Sudan – populations with increased vulnerability to human trafficking. Observers reported armed groups forcibly recruited Ethiopians in refugee camps in Eastern Sudan. Observers reported concerns that government officials from the Commission of Refugees and General Intelligence Service were potentially sexually exploiting refugees – including newly arrived Ethiopians – in Sudan. Additionally, due to the government’s refugee encampment policy which restricts refugees from moving freely within the country, some refugees utilized migrant smugglers inside Sudan, which further increased their risk of exploitation. Additionally, reports alleged corrupt RSF officials financially benefited from their role as border guards and took a direct role in human trafficking. In past years, the non-governmental armed groups Sudanese People’s Liberation Movement-North (SPLM-N) al-Hilu and SPLM-N Malak Aga conscripted child soldiers from refugee camps in South Sudan and brought them into Sudan. The Sudanese Alliance recruited and used child soldiers in Darfur. An international organization reported there were at least 300 child soldiers in Darfur being used by unidentified armed groups.

Sudan is a primary transit point for irregular migrants and refugees from the Horn of Africa seeking to reach Europe. Large populations of Eritrean, Ethiopian, other African asylum-seekers, as well as some Syrians – all populations vulnerable to trafficking – resided in Khartoum while planning to travel to Europe. Sudanese traffickers compel Ethiopian women to work in private homes in Khartoum and other urban centers. Well-organized and cross-border criminal syndicates force some Ethiopian women into commercial sex in Khartoum by manipulating debts and other forms of coercion. Attempting to escape conflict and poverty, many East African victims of trafficking initially seek out the services of migrant smugglers, who coerce the migrants into forced labor or sex trafficking. Egyptian government forces allegedly exploit some Sudanese migrants in forced labor in Egypt. Sudanese transiting the Sinai on their way to Israel are at risk of kidnapping and exploitation by Bedouins and at further risk of trafficking when they arrive in Israel.

Due to the years of conflict in South Sudan, the South Sudanese refugee population in Sudan was more than 800,000 in March 2023; many of these refugees remain vulnerable to forced labor and sex trafficking. In 2018, an international organization documented cases of traffickers exploiting West and Central African nationals – primarily from Chad, Mali, and Niger – arriving in Sudan via irregular migratory routes.

Darfuri armed groups exploit some migrants in forced labor or sex trafficking. Smugglers linked to the Rashaida and Tabo tribes abduct Eritrean nationals at border crossings, extort them for ransom, and subject them to abuse, including trafficking. Other cross-border tribes also force abductees to perform domestic or manual labor, and abuse them in other ways, including exploiting them in forced labor or sex trafficking.