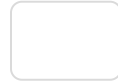


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Sudan: UN expert warns of child recruitment by armed forces

GENEVA (16 October 2023) – A UN expert today expressed concern about the increased risk of recruitment and use of children by armed forces and armed groups since the outbreak of conflict in Sudan between the Rapid Support Forces (RSF) and the Sudanese Armed Forces (SAF) earlier this year.

“Unaccompanied children and children from poor families are allegedly targeted by RSF in the outskirts of Khartoum, as well as in Darfur and West Kordofan, for recruitment into combat roles,” said Siobhán Mullally, the UN Special Rapporteur on trafficking in persons, especially women and children.

Girls have also reportedly been abducted from Khartoum to Darfur for sexual exploitation, including sexual slavery. “The deteriorating humanitarian situation and lack of access to food and other basic services make children, especially unaccompanied and separated children on the streets, easy targets for recruitment by armed groups,” Mullally said.

Responding to claims that children may join armed groups as a survival strategy, the Special Rapporteur recalled that the consent of a child (defined as any person under the age of 18) is legally irrelevant and that it is unnecessary to prove the use of force. “The recruitment of children by armed groups for any form of exploitation – including in combat roles – is a gross violation of human rights, a serious crime and a violation of international humanitarian law,” she said.

The expert expressed concern about allegations of a failure to facilitate humanitarian access to children and respect the work of all humanitarian agencies and their humanitarian partners. A recent update on the situation in Sudan by the Global Protection Cluster reported that 72 humanitarian offices and assets had been attacked or looted and 19 humanitarian workers had been killed as of October 2023.

Mullally called on all parties to the conflict to return to peace talks and reach a comprehensive ceasefire agreement that would allow for the safe delivery of humanitarian assistance and ensure accountability for alleged violations.

“Urgent action is needed to address these pressing concerns and take effective measures to prevent child trafficking and provide effective protection to child victims and children at risk, in particular displaced, unaccompanied and separated children, refugee children and children with disabilities,” the Special Rapporteur said.

The expert has been in contact with both the RSF and Sudanese authorities.

ENDS

Ms. Siobhán Mullally (Ireland) was appointed as [Special Rapporteur on trafficking in persons, especially women and children](#) by the UN Human Rights Council in July 2020, to promote the prevention of trafficking in persons in all its forms, and to encourage measures to uphold and protect the human rights of victims. She is also the Established Professor of Human Rights Law and Director of the Irish Centre for Human Rights at the School of Law, University of Galway. Prior to her appointment as Special Rapporteur, she was a member of the Council of Europe Group of Experts on Action against Trafficking in Human Beings (GRETA), elected as President of GRETA from 2016-2018 and as 1st Vice-President from 2014-2018.

ecoi.net description:

According to the UN Special Rapporteur on trafficking in persons, Siobhán Mullally, children are increasingly targeted by the paramilitary Rapid Support Forces (RSF) for recruitment

Country:

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[OHCHR – UN Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights](#) (Author)

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