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TRAFFICKING AND FORCED RECRUITMENT OF CHILD SOLDIERS ON THE CHAD/SUDAN BORDER

A Waging Peace Briefing – 6 June 2008

Waging Peace has collected testimonial evidence claiming that Darfuri refugees as young as nine have been trafficked and forcibly recruited into armed groups (in particular the Darfuri rebel group JEM, as well as Chadian rebel groups and the Chadian army) operating in Eastern Chad.

This widespread forced recruitment has been taking place in open daylight in camps, on a much more widespread scale and with greater violence than ever before and with the tacit approval of the Chadian Government who has at the very least done nothing to put an end to this.

Two leaders in the camps decided to speak out and were filmed talking about the trafficking and forced recruitment of children as soldiers. The two leaders explained that other leaders in the camp have been kidnapping and then selling boys to the armed groups operating in the vicinity of refugee camps. The children are usually boys, aged mostly between 9-15.

This recruitment is taking place everyday, in full view of the CNAR (Chadian Government body in charge of refugees) and Chadian armed forces, who turn a blind eye to what is going on, and despite the presence of EU troops deployed in Chad and CAR to provide protection to refugees.

While exact numbers are not available, the UN estimated in 2007 that between 7,000 and 10,000 child soldiers had been forcibly recruited in Eastern Chad alone. The number is now thought to be much greater.

I- BACKGROUND

The recruitment of child soldiers in Chad and Sudan has been known since 2004. Between 2004 and 2006, the main parties involved in the forced recruitment of child soldiers were the Sudanese Government-backed Janjaweed, SLA/Minawi and Chadian rebel groups.

On 29 August 2007, the UN Secretary-General published his report on Children and Armed Conflict in the Sudan. The document cited credible reports that the Sudan Armed Forces, JEM/Peace Wing, the SLA/Minawi, the SLA/Wahid, the SLA/Peace Wing, and the SLA/Abdul Gasim, Sudanese government-aligned Popular Defense Forces (PDF), Janjaweed, and Sudanese central reserve police recruited child soldiers. The UN report also cited recruitment of child soldiers by Chadian rebel forces operating inside Sudan.

In response to concerns about refugee protection, UNICEF discussed the issue with SLA/Minawi and SLA/Wahid and in June 2007, UNICEF signed an action plan with SLA/Minawi that committed the group to identify locations of child soldiers. The UNHCR has also contracted with the government of Chad to provide more gendarmes for each camp and has undertaken extensive campaigns to educate refugees and rebels alike about the civilian nature of the camps and the dangers of militarization. Unfortunately, these initiatives have failed to lead to a decrease in the forced recruitment of child soldiers in the region.

The evidence collected by Waging Peace builds on existing knowledge of this phenomenon, but adds new worrying details.

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The recent forced recruitment is on a larger scale and much more aggressive than it ever was at its previous height in 2005-2006. The trafficking element is also new and represents an extremely worrying development.

Indeed, until 2006, displaced Darfuris generally sympathised with Darfuri rebel groups, and there was some support for their cause in the camps. In recent months though, Darfuri refugees have felt extremely frustrated at the continued fighting and most no longer share rebel groups' desire for a continued uprising, since this is not contributing to an improvement of the situation.

Waging Peace was also told by refugees and humanitarian organisations working in the camps that child soldiers were being forcibly recruited by more parties than ever before, both in Eastern Chad and Darfur. The parties forcibly recruiting child soldiers include the by the Sudanese and Chadian Governments, militias, Chadian and Darfuri rebel groups and in particular by the Justice and Equality Movement. The rebel faction JEM is a staunch ally of the Chadian government, acting as a proxy force against Chadian rebel groups in return for safe harbour, material and financial support.

Children as young as nine are reported to have been recently trafficked and used as child soldiers, which is much younger than children previously recruited (generally aged between 15 and 18).

Finally, this trafficking and forced recruitment is taking place in broad daylight despite the recent deployment of EU peacekeepers to the border area.

II- RECOMMENDATION

To all Chadian and Sudanese rebel groups operating on the Chad/Sudanese border, in particular the Justice and Equality Movement:

- Immediately demobilize all child soldiers and end the trafficking, recruitment and use of children under the age of 18.
- Ensure that all commanders and members of the armed group refrain from recruiting fighters in IDP and refugee camps in Chad and Darfur.
- Investigate and hold to account all commanders involved in the recruitment of child soldiers in IDP and refugee camps in Chad and Darfur.
- Allow international humanitarian observers to conduct inspections in military camps and installations.
- Cease immediately all military offensives and engage in peace talks.

To the Chadian Government

- Ensure that all members of the Chadian armed forces and the CNAR (*Commission Nationale d'Accueil et de Réinsertion des Réfugiés* – National Commission for the Reception and Reintegration of Refugees) respect and comply with Chad's human rights obligations, including under the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC), the Optional Protocol to the CRC on the Involvement of Children in Armed Conflict and the African Charter on the Welfare of the Child.
- Take all necessary action to prevent the militarization of all refugee and IDP camps and to protect vulnerable displaced populations from forced recruitment into armed groups.

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- Investigate and prosecute all individuals involved in the trafficking and forced recruitment of child soldiers, including members of the Chadian armed forces and the CNAR.
- Work with the European Union peacekeeping force in Chad as well as humanitarian agencies including UNICEF, UNHCR, OCHA and ICRC to put an end to the recruitment of children under the age of 18 in Chadian refugee and IDP camps and demobilize existing child soldiers.
- Allow international humanitarian observers to conduct inspections in military camps as well as refugee and IDP camps
- Cease immediately all military offensives and engage in peace talks.

To the Sudanese Government

- Facilitate the continued deployment of UNAMID and put an end to delaying and obstructive measures which have hampered the adequate protection of civilians in Darfur.
- Cease immediately all military offensives, in particular the continued systematic bombing of villages in Darfur.
- Allow international humanitarian observers to conduct inspections in military camps and IDP camps.
- Demobilize all child soldiers recruited by the Sudanese Armed Forces and take steps to prevent the recruitment of child soldiers by all armed groups operating in Sudan.

To the UN Secretary-General

- Follow up on the visit to Chad of the Special Representative of the UN Secretary-General for Children and Armed conflict and ensure that the report of the mission is brought to the attention of the Security Council.
- Provide regular updates to the UN Security Council on the incidence of recruitment of child soldiers in Chad and Sudan and measures aimed at addressing the issue.

To the Special Representative of the UN Secretary-General for Children and Armed conflict

- Report back to the UN Security Council and the UN Secretary-General on the findings of your mission to Chad of 26-31 May 2008 and ensure that action is taken by all parties to end the forced recruitment and trafficking of child soldiers.

To the UN Security Council

- Issue a public statement condemning the trafficking and forced recruitment of children as soldiers by all armed groups operating in Eastern Chad and Darfur, and calling on the Sudanese and Chadian Government and the armed groups operating in the region to release child soldiers from their ranks.
- Support and take appropriate action in response to the recent mission to Chad of the Special Representative of the UN Secretary-General for Children and Armed conflict so as to ensure an end to the trafficking and forced recruitment of child soldiers.



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- Request a regular update from the UN Secretary-General on the incidence of recruitment of child soldiers in Chad and Sudan and measures aimed at addressing the issue.
- Facilitate regional peace talks in order to address the inter-related crises in Chad, Sudan and the Central African Republic. All groups involved in this crisis, in particular rebel groups, militias and Government forces must commit themselves to these talks and initiate strategies to ensure children caught up in the conflict, both child soldiers and others, are re-introduced to education at the earliest opportunity.
- Call on UN member states to provide the funds, equipment and manpower necessary to allow for the full deployment of UNAMID in Darfur and the adequate protection of civilians.
- Take all necessary measures – including targeted sanctions and an extension of the arms embargo to the whole of Sudan– to ensure the full deployment of UNAMID in Darfur and EUFOR in Chad and an end to the recruitment of child soldiers in IDP and refugee camps.

To EUFOR and UNAMID

- Actively protect refugee camps in Chad and Darfur from incursions by armed groups and work with local authorities and humanitarian organisations to put an end to the forced recruitment of child soldiers.

To the International criminal Court

- Investigate and prosecute individuals responsible for the trafficking and forced recruitment of child soldiers in camps in Eastern Chad and Darfur.

To the UK Government

- Facilitate regional peace talks in order to address the inter-related crises in Chad, Sudan and the Central African Republic.
- Encourage all necessary measures – including targeted sanctions and an extension of the arms embargo to the whole of Sudan – to ensure the full deployment of UNAMID in Darfur and EUFOR in Chad and an end to the recruitment of child soldiers in IDP and refugee camps.

For a transcript of the testimonies and interviews conducted by Waging Peace, and photo and video evidence, please contact Waging Peace Director Louise Roland-Gosselin. On louise.roland-gosselin@wagingpeace.info or 02072430300 (office) and 07971561035 (mobile).