

Trafficking in Persons Report 2007

SUDAN (Tier 3)

Sudan is a source country for men, women, and children trafficked internally for the purposes of forced labor and sexual exploitation. Sudan is also a transit and destination country for Ethiopian, and possibly Filipina, women trafficked for domestic servitude. Sudanese women and girls are trafficked internally for domestic servitude. The terrorist rebel organization, Lord's Resistance Army (LRA), continues to harbor small numbers of Sudanese and Ugandan children in the southern part of the country for use as cooks, porters, and combatants; some of these children are also trafficked across borders into Uganda or the Democratic Republic of the Congo. Sudanese children are unlawfully conscripted, at times through abduction, and utilized by armed rebel groups - including SLA, Janjaweed militia, the camel police, and Chadian opposition forces - in Sudan's ongoing conflict in Darfur; the Sudanese Armed Forces and associated militias also continue to unlawfully conscript and exploit young children in this region. Militia groups in Darfur, some of which are linked to the government, abduct women for short periods of forced labor and to perpetrate sexual violence. Forcible recruitment of adults and particularly children by virtually all armed groups involved in Sudan's concluded north-south civil war was commonplace; thousands of children still associated with these forces await demobilization and reintegration into their communities of origin. There were confirmed reports of unlawful child recruitment by the SPLA, the Sudanese Armed Forces, and the White Army between May and July 2006 in the states of Khartoum, Jonglei, and Bahr al-Ghazal; some of these children were used in armed conflict.

In addition to the exploitation of children by armed groups during the two decades-long north-south civil war, thousands of Dinka women and children were abducted and subsequently enslaved by members of the Missiriya and Rezeigat tribes during this time. An unknown number of children from the Nuba tribe were similarly abducted and enslaved. A portion of those who were abducted and enslaved remained with their abductors in South Darfur and West Kordofan and experienced varying types of treatment; others were sold or given to third parties, including in other regions of the country; and some ultimately escaped from their captors. While there have been no known new abductions of Dinka by members of Baggara tribes in the last two years, inter-tribal abductions, as are historically common among East African tribes, continue in southern Sudan and warrant further investigation.

The Government of National Unity (GNU) does not fully comply with the minimum standards for the elimination of trafficking and is not making significant efforts to do so. Combating trafficking in persons through prevention efforts, victim assistance, and law enforcement measures was not a priority for the government in 2006. To improve its anti-trafficking efforts, the government should take steps to provide protective services to all types of trafficking victims found within the country; demobilize all child soldiers from its ranks, as well as those of aligned militias; and make a much stronger effort, through a comprehensive policy approach that involves all vested parties, to identify, retrieve, and reintegrate abductees.

Prosecution

The government's anti-trafficking law enforcement efforts were negligible; it did not investigate or prosecute any suspected trafficking cases during the reporting period. Sudan is a large country with porous borders and destitute hinterlands; the national government has little ability to establish authority or a law enforcement presence in many regions. Sudan's criminal code does not prohibit all forms of trafficking in persons, though its Articles 162 through 164 criminalize abduction, luring, and forced labor. The Interim National Constitution prohibits slavery and forced labor. No trafficker has ever been prosecuted under these articles. In 2006, the Government of Southern Sudan (GoSS) debated a comprehensive Children's Act that prohibits the sale or exchange of children, as well as the recruitment of child soldiers under the age of 18. Also in 2006, the National Assembly passed the Child Protection Act, which prohibits the recruitment or enlistment of soldiers under the age of 18; the act awaits approval by the Council of Ministers.

Protection

The government's efforts to protect victims of trafficking were minimal and focused only on the demobilization of child soldiers, excluding all other categories of trafficking victims. It also failed to address funding and capacity gaps in its own entities involved in combating trafficking. Over the past year, the GNU decreased its cooperation with humanitarian workers in the Darfur region on a broad spectrum of issues, including human trafficking. The Committee for the Eradication of Abduction of Women and Children (CEAWC), established in 1999 to facilitate the safe return of abducted women and children to their families,

was not operational during the reporting period. Its most recent retrieval and transport missions took place in January-February 2006; since that time, neither the GNU nor the GoSS provided CEAWC with the necessary funding for the transport and reunification of previously identified abductees with their families. As a result, thousands of people continue to remain in prolonged situations of forced labor and sexual exploitation.

In May 2006, the GNU formally endorsed the interim national disarmament, demobilization and reintegration (DDR) program, nearly six months after the GoSS endorsed it. However, neither entity has passed required legislation formally establishing the National DDR Commission, or its Northern and Southern components - the Northern Sudan DDR Commission (NSDDRC), and the Southern Sudan DDR Commission (SSDDRC), respectively. The National DDR Commission met in December for the first time in 10 months. The Commissioner-General of the NSDDRC was formally appointed in December 2006; the commission posted representatives to all northern states soon after. According to the National Commission on Child Welfare, the NSDDRC demobilized 18 children serving in Northern Sudan, including Darfur, in 2006; this has yet to be confirmed by outside sources. In May, the President of Southern Sudan appointed the leadership of the SSDDRC; its membership, however, has not been constituted and it has not met. Because of delays in staff recruitment, there is no state-level representation. The SSDDRC, with the coordination of and assistance from UNICEF, demobilized 250 child soldiers, including girls, from the SPLA camp in Khorfulus in April; 211 child soldiers were demobilized in Julud in June, as well as some 242 child soldiers in Tonj in July. The SSDDRC continued to register child soldiers throughout the year and, at times, coordinated with the NSDDRC to trace and reunify them with their families.

Prevention

The government made no efforts to prevent future incidences of trafficking during the reporting period. Sudan has not ratified the 2000 UN TIP Protocol.