



**CHILDREN CONTINUE TO FACE ABUSES IN SUDAN**  
**WATCHLIST CALLS FOR URGENT ACTION**

*Contacts:*

*Kathleen Hunt, +1 917 332 8115 (New York)*

*Sarah W. Spencer, +254 (0) 721 885 916, [sarahwspencer@gmail.com](mailto:sarahwspencer@gmail.com) (Nairobi)*

**April 18, 2007, Nairobi and New York-** The protection and well-being of children in Sudan are at a critical juncture. While children in the South are enjoying improved security and access to services, those in Darfur face appalling levels of violence and abuse, according to the Watchlist on Children and Armed Conflict's latest report, *Sudan's Children at a Crossroads: An Urgent Need for Protection*. This report is released in the backdrop of a humanitarian crisis and rapidly deteriorating security situation in Darfur where thousands of children lack access to the most basic resources and face the threat of abduction, rape and other forms of sexual violence, armed attacks and forced displacement. Despite real progress achieved in southern Sudan, the region still lacks an adequate health infrastructure and qualified health personnel, with only one primary healthcare center for every 79,500 people.

"The Security Council and other international actors should not only remain seized of the issue of Sudan but must ensure that the protection of children is placed at the forefront of all efforts to bring peace and stability to Sudan," said Kathleen Hunt, Chairperson of the Watchlist, a global network of non-governmental organizations based in New York. "Though the situation in Darfur has received widespread public attention, it has done little to improve the protection of children there."

One of the key international tools to improve protection for children is the UN's Monitoring and Reporting Mechanism (MRM), which feeds timely information on violations to the Security Council and other UN agencies. "The goal of the MRM is not simply to track trends and identify areas where action is needed, but to prevent violations of the rights of children and end impunity for those who perpetrate

violence and abuse,” said Canada’s High Commissioner to Kenya, Mr. Ross Hynes. He further stated that Canada actively supports the implementation of this mechanism by providing US\$ 1.5 million to UNICEF.

However, restrictive government policies and administrative procedures have hindered access to information from Darfur, the East and other volatile regions in Sudan. “Information about abuses against Sudanese children is increasingly difficult to obtain,” said Sarah Spencer, Watchlist Interim Director. “Many organizations are concerned that sharing information will trigger retributive attacks against their staff and operations or beneficiaries. On top of this, the deteriorating security situation in Darfur and the unstable situation in the East has prevented many humanitarian actors from accessing severely vulnerable populations, documenting abuses and providing services. The Government of National Unity must ensure humanitarian agencies unrestricted and secure access to all areas of Sudan.”

*Sudan’s Children at a Crossroads* details violations against children for each of the six major categories identified by the United Nations Security Council. These violations include killing and maiming, rape and other forms of sexual violence, abduction, denial of humanitarian assistance, attacks on schools and hospitals, and recruitment and use of children by armed forces and groups. In addition, the report outlines various other violations that continue to be committed against children and their families, such as forced labor, displacement and trafficking.

In its report, Watchlist provides recommendations to key stakeholders to identify means to assist and support children affected by the decades of armed conflict in Sudan. “Genuine and sustained commitments by the Government of National Unity and the Government of Southern Sudan to protect and assist children are crucial. Generations of children in Sudan have suffered the effects of violent, protracted armed conflict. We must seize this opportunity to guarantee them a safe and healthy future,” Hunt added.

*Sudan’s Children at a Crossroads* is being released today at events in Nairobi, Kenya and at the United Nations headquarters in New York. For the full report please visit [www.watchlist.org](http://www.watchlist.org).

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