



Children Ravaged by Sudan's War Peace Process Should Give Priority to Ending Abuses and Building Future with Children and Adolescents

March 25, 2003, New York and Nairobi--- Sudan's children, who have never known peace during the last two decades, suffer widespread rights abuses, including assault, rape, forced displacement, forced starvation, forced underage recruitment, slavery, killing and burning of villages, schools, churches and hospitals, according to the Watchlist on Children and Armed Conflict.

In a 34-page report on Sudan, the Watchlist detailed current violations and the accumulated effect of abuses committed by both the government of Sudan and armed opposition groups, of which the principal group is the Sudan People's Liberation Movement/Army (SPLM/A). Watchlist is a nongovernmental consortium that documents the harmful impact of armed conflict on children and adolescents.

The report coincided with renewed efforts hosted by Kenya to bring an end to the civil war in Sudan, and urged the warring parties and governments supporting the negotiations to ensure that the peace process succeeds.

"While much of the world turns its attention to the invasion of Iraq, it's crucial that the international community redouble efforts to end the agony of Sudan," said Julia Freedson, Coordinator of the Watchlist. "The parties meeting in Kenya should halt violations against children and other civilians, and commit themselves to restoring security, education, health services and normalcy to the millions who are vital to Sudan's future."

The civil war in southern Sudan has displaced some 4.4 million people. Children constitute as much as 75 percent of this population in some areas, the Watchlist reported. Many of those who live in the north lack access to medical care, education, clean water and other important services.

"The effects of war on children in Sudan are both direct and indirect, ranging from outright violence, to neglect and exclusion from fundamental services," said Kathleen Hunt, a Watchlist steering committee member.

In south Sudan, more than 50,000 children have been orphaned due to the civil war, and another 170,000 have no information about their biological parents. Thousands of children have been forcibly recruited for use by both the Sudanese government and opposition forces.

Watchlist urged the government and opposition forces to make the protection of children's security and rights a top priority in the negotiations toward peace and peace-building in Sudan. "We're urging the international community to support the deployment of independent human rights

monitors under United Nations authority to focus on attacks on villages, medical facilities, schools, and feeding centers, as well as any new cases of abduction and slavery," said Kathy Vandergrift, a Watchlist steering committee member. "These monitors should report regularly to the U.N. Security Council."

In calling for a halt to the recruitment of child soldiers, Watchlist also urged UNICEF and other agencies to continue and expand disarmament, demobilization and reintegration programs for boys and girls even before a final peace settlement is achieved.

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