

Forum:Human Rights Commission

Issue: Addressing the issue of child soldiers in South Sudan
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1. **Introduction**

Child soldiers in general holds the meaning of children in the military who are related with military associations, for example, state military and non-state outfitted gatherings. From the beginning of time and in numerous societies, youngsters have been engaged with military battles. Child soldiers in South Sudan usually range from 18 years and younger. Though precise statistics are tough to decide because of uncertainty, UNICEF approximated that 19,000 adolescents in South Sudan have been employed into armed militaries and units by both sides in the disagreement. Under both intercontinental and South Sudanese national law, the compulsory or voluntary employment of individuals beneath the age of 18, whether as a participant of a fixed army or of an unceremonious armed force, is forbidden and illegal.

Throughout South Sudan as well as in immigrant sites exterior of the nation, there are a number of adolescents and minorities who departed or fled from these equipped militaries but gained no aid or support and have not been through a psychotherapy programme. Varying on the age, the boys who leave the camps are either used as gatekeepers, disinfectants, or are taught to fight. As for the girls they are often taken as "wives", and frequently return in their communities with their families. South Sudan child soldiers are recognized to be used in all possible ways that an adult soldier would be used for. Children are given and trained on how to use attack ransacks, involve in straight forward warfare (as spies), and aid as cooks for troops amongst other actions.

For eras, South Sudanese citizens have agonized war corruptions and human rights manipulations while living throughout ethnologically factionalized and ruthless civil wars, revolutions, and inter-tribal battles. Employment and use of children as fighters and soldiers have been guarantees of these struggles and conflicts.

1. **Definition of Key Terms**

Child Soldiers:

Denotation: Child soldiers are children under the age of 18 who are conscripted by a national or non-governmental supplied assemblage and are used as troopers, chefs, human armors, envois, or moles.

Connotation: Child soldiers in South Sudan has become an ongoing issue that causes children to enter into the army.

SPLA

Denotation: The South Sudan People's Defense Forces, previously the Sudan People's Liberation Army, is the army of the Nation of South Sudan. It was originated as a revolutionary movement versus the government of Sudan in 1983.

Connotation: The SPLA has recruited over 2 thousand child soldiers since the beginning of the civil war in South Sudan.

UNICEF

Denotation: The United Nations Children's Fund is a United Nations agency responsible for providing humanitarian and developmental aid to children worldwide.

Connotation: UNICEF has had a large impact by providing child soldiers with rehabilitation, education lesson once released.

Armed Forces

Denotation: A countries navy, army and air force, people who are in the armed forces are called Troops or service members.

Connotation: Child soldiers are being recruited into the armed forces and are being used as cooks, moles and human shields.

Human Rights Watch

Denotation: Human Rights Watch is an international non-governmental organization that conducts research and advocacy on human rights.

Connotation: The Human Rights Watch has conducted interviews with previous child soldiers allowing to share their stories with the world.

Minorities

Denotation: The state of not being old enough to have the full rights of an adult.

Connotation: Child Soldiers that are being recruited by the army in South Sudan are minorities.

Recruitment

Denotation: the action of enlisting new people in the armed forces.

Connotation: South Sudan has been recruiting child soldiers into the army since the beginning of the North-South Sudan war in 1983.

1. **General Overview – Background information**

**Rise of the Conflict**

Before the current civil war in South Sudan, children have been recruited into the military due to the North-South Sudanese conflict and have been let out in 2005, until the civil war began again in 2013, causing South Sudan to once again recruit child soldiers. The civil war in South Sudan began on December 15 2013, where militaries who were faithful and loyal to President Salva Kiir and ex Vice President Riek Machar, are currently the rebellious organizer, fought in the capital of South Sudan, Juba. As the warfare and conflict spread, both sides aimed and murdered citizens. 2.2 million persons have been exiled, many from communities or cities that were burned and embezzled. Since losing many people both parties realized the need for young soldiers, and subsequently that point children with the ages of 18 and under were and currently still are being recruited to be a part of these forces for reasons such as troopers, chefs, human armors, envois, or moles

**Effect of being a Child Soldier on Health**

Psychological distress is the main and biggest impact that child soldiers are unprotected to circumstances of horror and dreadfulness during the act of war and involvements that may be left enduring impacts in. Other impacts such as posttraumatic stress disorder (PTSD). Severe losses, and disturbances in their lives lead to high rates of depression and anxiety child soldiers. Other factors such as Ethical and religious impacts. The involvement of meaninglessness from the nearby world, or, sadder still, wickedness may cause adolescents to endure loss of sense in their building of themselves in their world. They may have to alter their ethical structure and lie, steal, and more.

**Conflict at current time**

At current times, child soldiers are still being used in South Sudan however, not as much as previous years. Apart from that more child soldiers are being released every month. Since the beginning of 2020 more than 15 soldiers have been released. Currently over 900 soldiers are already registered for release. More and more child soldiers are being released frequently due to the end of the civil war that ended during 2020 which was taking place in South Sudan. From 2001, around 16,000 children were discharged by the SPLA, including an estimated 600 girls. A number of child soldiers who are being released are able to get help, they are being provided with help, getting a chance to rebuild their lives, start new lives, get physical and mental help, as well as education. However, not all child soldiers who are being released are able to rebuild their lives with or without help. A large number of them don’t have the chance to have someone help them through this process.

1. **Major Parties Involved and Their Views**

**UNICEF**

The United Nations Children’s Fund (UNICEF) has had a large and major impact on the issue of child soldiers in South Sudan and it still currently is creating change. Since the beginning of the conflict UNICEF has interview and are still currently interviewing former child soldiers who were a part of the military in South Sudan. UNICEF has provided them with multiple different platforms to be able to tell their stories and explain the struggles and difficulties that they have been facing and are still currently facing. UNICEF has asked for backing from several countries to help release these child soldiers. UNICEF has created a three-year reintegration program that costs 2,000$ per child, which will provide psychosocial support and a dedicated social worker, family tracing and reunification, education services and other vital services to help child soldiers rebuild their lives after being released.

**Human Rights Watch**

A group that is a part of the Human Rights Watch questioned more than two dozen existing and previous child soldiers from the former Western Equatoria and Unity federations in South Sudan in November and December of 2017. Through these interviews the Human Rights Watch found that commanders-in-chief from both government militaries and rebellious groups have been kidnapping, holding, and forcing children, some as young as 13, into their ranks since the fighting parties signed the Agreement on the Resolution of the Conflict in South Sudan (ARCSS) in August 2015. The parties involved in the conflict once again promised to discharge and demobilize any child soldiers that were recruited or registered by their group to UNICEF by the end of January 2018. However, they have not followed through on this commitment, causing all parties to keep their child soldiers.

**SPLA**

The Sudan People's Liberation Army (SPLA) which was recently changed in 2018 to The South Sudan People's Defense Forces (SSPDF). The SPLA other armed units in South Sudan are narrated to have employed children into their positions succeeding the outburst of civil war in 2013. This has been sentenced as a break of worldwide laws, which have been approved by the South Sudanese government. The SPLA and other equipped units in the south supposedly continued to service child soldiers. From 2001, around 16,000 children were discharged by the SPLA, including an estimated 600 girls. There stayed, however, amongst 2,500 and 5,000 adolescents in the SPLA. Statements specified that the SPLA often employed and re-recruited child soldiers. According to children previously related with the SPLA, between 400 and 500 boys and girls were being qualified in SPLA military camps around Rumbek in February 2004. Re-recruitment into the SPLA sustained to take place well into 2004, particularly in Western Upper Nile and Equatoria.

**South Sudan**

South Sudan has been recruiting child soldiers into the military and armed forces ever since the beginning of the North-South war in Sudan in 1983. Since 1983 child soldiers have been coming in and out the armed forces, most of the child soldiers have been released in 2005. However, South Sudanese armed forces such as SPLA re-recruited child soldiers in 2013 due to the start of the civil war in South Sudan, and they have been in the army every since. South Sudan child soldiers are recognized to be used in every way that a grownup soldier would be used. Children are prearranged and skilled how to use assault scours, participate in straight forward combat (as spies), and serve as cooks for troops amongst other doings.

1. **Timeline of Events**

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| **Date**  | **Event**  |
| 1983 | Sudan used child soldiers originally during Sudan’s North-South war between the nation.  |
| 1983-2005 | Thousands of children were being released from the SPLA and other armed groups after Sudan’s 1983-2005 north-south war ended. |
| 2001  | During the year 2001, over 16,000 children were released and demobilized by the SPLA, including an estimation of 600 girls. |
| December 15, 2013  | Current conflict began where South Sudan started using child soldiers  |
| 2013  | The SPLA began recruiting child soldiers for the second time after the start of the South Sudanese civil war.  |
| 2014  | Multiple interviews were made with 101 children related or once related with armed forces and groups from Dinka, Nuer and Shilluk clans, mostly from the three states of Unity, Jonglei and Upper Nile.  |
| August 2015  | A peace agreement was signed between President Salva Kiir’s government and the opposition headed by former Vice President Riek Machar to end fighting and finally offer the relief of child soldiers.  |
| January 2020  | UNICEF has pulled for $4.2 millions to backing the freedom of 2,100 kids related with equipped militaries and equipped units and the extension of the rehabilitation programme for previously and newly freed children in South Sudan. |
| **February 26, 2020**  | 15 more child soldiers have been released who were associated with armed forces and armed groups in South Sudan.  |

1. UN Involvement, Relevant Resolutions, Treaties and Events:

**Report of the secretary general on children and armed conflict (A/74/845-S/2020/525)**

This event highlighted and gave numbers and statistics of how many child soldiers are still apart of armed forces and how many child soldiers have been released and well as their progress in rebuilding there lives.

**Children and armed conflict. (S/RES/1261):**

This resolution focused on prohibiting forced conscription of children under the age of fifteen to be in the armed forces to be involved or participated in war crimes and armed forces. The result of this specific resolution was that it was adopted.

**Selected working group on children and armed conflict (S/2019/92):**

This letter is from the chair of the working group to the secretary general providing an update with the facts and statistics on the child soldiers that are still currently in South Sudan.

**Framework for mainstreaming protection rights and wellbeing of child soldiers. (S/RES/2427):**

This resolution highlights and talks about the importance, relevance and understating of helping and allowing child soldiers to rebuild there lives, providing them with safety, medication, all equipment needed, it emphasizes on the importance of this matter as well as the importance of the safety of these child soldiers who are both being demobilized and who are still recruited in the armed forces.

1. Evaluation of Previous Attempts to Resolve the Issue

It is important to note and highlight that the United Nations has not had or discussed any resolution directly about the situation of the child soldiers in South Sudan specifically. However, the UN does have many resolutions and actions can be drawn in relation to this matter. The United Nations has spoken out against this topic in certain occurrence. The United Nation Security Council has spoken out and created a resolution that the use of soldiers under the age of fifteen years old are considered to be child soldiers and is prohibited. However, this resolution did not pass it was adopted. Despite the United Nations speaking out publicly against the use of child soldiers not only for South Sudan but for many different countries such as The Dominican Republic of Congo, Yemen Afghanistan and more there has yet to be made a resolution which passed highlighting that using child soldiers should be prohibited and illegal.

It is important to note that not many resolutions have been made about this topic, most resolutions highlight and identify the importance of protecting these child soldiers from entering armed forces, protecting child soldiers after existing armed forces and militaries by helping them build a future, provide them with the right medical care needed such as repairing psychological issues, mental and physical health issues by visiting therapist, rehabilitation centers and doctors frequently. The rest of the resolutions also don’t highlight a direct and straight forward resolution that could be done or have been done in order to prevent the issue of child soldiers in South Sudan.

1. Possible Solutions

A possible solution for this issue might be in collaboration with the United Nations and UNICEF to provide Rehabilitating for the children that have been affected by war. During the direct charitable response to victims of war and in the longer-term attempts to rebuild health facilities after war, there are attempts by both local and international performers to care for children’s needs for health care. Physical and psychological rehabilitation and therapy is introduced to variable degrees depending on the resources available. Sometimes these are insignificant or nonexistent. There have been many efforts to help the psychological influences of war on children. Few have been evaluated. Some efforts at rehabilitation of war-affected children include social healing moving toward education in the Culture of Peace. This is an approach to primary prevention of recurrence of war. This could be done by making sure every kid that is demobilized and exited from the military sees a health specialist at least three times a week slowly decreasing according to the healing process.

A second possible solution that could be done in order to prevent and or decrease this issue is by making war less damaging to children. This could be done by Applying international humanitarian laws in collaboration with the United Nations regarding the protection of children in war. The Geneva Conventions and the Convention on the Rights of the Child deal with protection of war-affected children with regards to food, clothing, medicine, education, and family reunions as well. In addition, they are intended to protect children from ethnic cleansing and employment into armed forces and military groups. This will bring the recruitment of child soldiers to a minimum, it will also cause an improvement in the situation allowing not only child soldiers to come to a minimum in South Sudan but in other countries as well.

1. Guiding Questions
2. What are child soldiers?
3. Why does South Sudan use child soldiers?
4. When did South Sudan begin using child soldiers?
5. What are child soldiers being used for?
6. How many child soldiers have been released and how many are currently still held?
7. What damages does being a child soldiers have on the children?
8. What are the organizations that helped the release of child soldiers?
9. How does South Sudan recruit these child soldiers?
10. What has the UN discussed about the issue of child soldiers?
11. What has UNICEF done to help these child soldiers?
12. Appendices and useful links

<https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC2080482/#:~:text=Psychological%20suffering.,anxiety%20in%20war%2Daffected%20children.>

The above link is helpful as it will provide you with the different negative impacts of war on child soldiers.

<https://www.hrw.org/news/2015/12/14/south-sudan-terrifying-lives-child-soldiers>

the above link is useful as it provides statistics, numbers and general background information about child soldiers in South Sudan.

<https://www.hrw.org/report/2015/12/14/we-can-die-too/recruitment-and-use-child-soldiers-south-sudan>

the above link is helpful as it provides information about the recruitment as well as the use of child soldiers in South Sudan.

<https://borgenproject.org/south-sudan-child-soldiers/#:~:text=South%20Sudan%20child%20soldiers%20are,for%20troops%20among%20other%20activities.>

The above link is useful as it provides a history and background information and statistics as well as facts and numbers on child soldiers in South Sudan.

<https://www.hrw.org/news/2018/02/05/south-sudan-warring-parties-break-promises-child-soldiers>

the above website is useful as it provides information with detail about interviews that have been conducted with former child soldiers showing the effects and damage.

1. Contact Info

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