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## **UN: Children Still Drawn Into War in Sudan**

By Reuters

UNITED NATIONS—Children are still being abducted, killed, raped and pressed into warfare as soldiers by armed groups in Sudan—including the country's army—despite peace deals in the south and west, the United Nations reported on Tuesday.

Other groups abducting and recruiting children for war in the country's western Darfur region included the government-backed Janjaweed militias and the rebel Sudan Liberation Army, Secretary-General Kofi Annan said in the report to the Security Council.

In southern Sudan, the report accuses the former rebel Sudan People's Liberation Army, or SPLA—now the region's official army—of killing and recruiting children as soldiers, along with the national army—the Sudanese Armed Forces.

The report blames the Sudanese Armed Forces and Janjaweed militias for sexual violence against children in Darfur.

There were no reports of armed groups sexually abusing children in southern or eastern Sudan from the May-July period covered by the report, Annan said.

His report was based on confirmed incidents but gave no numbers.

“The numerous armed forces and groups that are parties to the conflict in the Sudan have a long history of using children for military purposes,” the report said, calling on all such groups to end the abuse of children in war.

“The current peace processes in Darfur and southern Sudan offer a real opportunity for the leaders of the Sudan to end the practice of recruitment and use of children once and for all,” Annan said.

Sudan, a vast northeast African country, has a long history of conflict in its south and east as well as western Darfur.

A peace agreement was signed in January 2005 to end two decades of civil war in the south but has yet to be implemented. It requires the Sudanese Armed Forces to leave the south by 2007 and to be replaced by SPLA troops.

A separate peace accord was signed for Darfur in May 2006 but did not include all warring rebel factions and has also remained largely unimplemented.

The 3-year-old conflict there erupted when the Arab-dominated government sought to put down a revolt by mostly non-Arab rebels. It armed the mainly Arab militias known as Janjaweed as proxy fighters, who went on to wage a campaign of rape, plunder and murder of the indigenous population.

There is no peace agreement in eastern Sudan and access to that region is difficult, ``which has translated into a critical lack of information on child rights violations in the east for this report," Annan said.

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