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2.7.2. Child soldiers

Sudan acceded the Optional Protocol on the Involvement of Children in Armed Conflict in 2005, is party to the International Labour Convention on the Worst Forms of Child Labour and has domestic legislation prohibiting the recruitment of children under the age of 18.[563](#) The Armed Forces Law of 2007 sets the age of recruitment at 18, and provides for a penalty of up to five years' imprisonment for the offense. [564](#)

Both parties to the conflict continued to resort to forced recruitment of children during the reporting period,[565](#) 'particularly in the Darfur and Kordofan regions' and 'often under highly coercive conditions'.[566](#)

In 2025, Ayin Network, noted that 'local leaders played an important role in the recruitment of children'.[567](#) It also collected reports of recruitment of children under the age of eighteen by the SAF under the popular mobilisation scheme, with the involvement of Islamist groups allied to the SAF.[568](#) Both the RSF and the SAF were reported to having used child soldiers for social media propaganda, including to encourage child recruitment.[569](#)

For information related to recruitment, including forced recruitment, of adults see section [2.2. Conscripts, draft evaders, forced recruitment to armed groups](#).

○ (a) Recruitment of minors by the RSF and allies

In January 2026, UN OHCHR reported on forced recruitment, including children, by the RSF in West Darfur, and military training of children by the RSF in El Geneina.[570](#) In March 2025, over 300 children were reported to have undergone military training by the RSF in El Geneina.[571](#)

In August 2025, the Colombian independent online media La Silla Vacía published an article on Colombian mercenaries training children and youth in an RSF training camp south of Nyala, South Darfur. A Colombian mercenary reported having been asked to be an instructor in a RSF training camp where between 1 000 and 3 000 Sudanese were trained, including children of 10, 11 and 12 years old.[572](#) Another Colombian mercenary sent to Nyala with the RSF was quoted by the Guardian as saying 'the

camps had thousands of recruits, some adults, but mostly children – lots and lots of children. These are children who have never held a weapon. We taught them how to handle assault rifles and machine guns, RPGs [rocket-propelled grenades]. After that, they were sent to the front. We were training them to go and get killed’.⁵⁷³ The involvement of Colombian mercenaries with the training of children recruited by the RSF in Sudan was also reported by Le Monde.⁵⁷⁴

The RSF continued recruiting children in parts of Darfur, including in West Darfur (e.g., in Ban Jadeed, Saraf Jidad, El Geneina, and Kulbus) and along ethnic community lines (such as the Eringa community and the Gimir).⁵⁷⁵ In October 2025, the ACHPR FFM, reported that the RSF ‘adopted a systematic pattern of recruiting children to engage in active combat’ and noted that the RSF had recruited children in various locations across Central Darfur State, as well as in South Darfur.⁵⁷⁶ In December 2025 young men, including minors, were allegedly kidnapped and forcibly recruited by the SPLM-N and the RSF in South Kordofan (in Rashad, Abu Karshola and Al-Abassya Tagali localities).⁵⁷⁷ The RSF reportedly recruited *shamassa* (children of the sun), or street children, in Omdurman since the onset of the war.⁵⁷⁸

○ (b) Recruitment of minors by the SAF and allies

In a speech of 5 January 2024, the then SAF Assistant-Commander in Chief, Yasser El-Atta, stated that the SAF ‘will train even young children to defend themselves, their people and their land’.⁵⁷⁹ SHRH and Ayin Network noted instances of recruitment of children by the SAF for intelligence gathering.⁵⁸⁰ In 2024, the UN FFM noted having received ‘credible allegations’ of children patrolling with the SAF in Zalingei (Central Darfur) and Nyala (South Darfur) in 2023, as well as reports of children recruited by the SAF as *mustanfareen* (‘volunteers/mobilised’) through popular mobilisation in Khartoum, River Nile, Kassala, Gedaref, Sennar, and Red Sea states. UN OHCHR received reports of forced recruitment of children by the SAF in May 2025 in South Kordofan and in August 2025 in North Kordofan.⁵⁸¹

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Sudan Human Rights Hub and Ayin Network, Child soldiers in Sudan: the future at stake, 24 December 2012, [url](#); Sudan, The Armed Forces Bill, 2007, [url](#), art. 14(1)(d), 178(2).

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Bellingcat, Viral child soldiers on TikTok: the 'Disney Stars' of Sudan's civil war, 20 February 2026, [url](#)

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- [575](#)

UN OHCHR, Human Rights Situation in the Sudan 1 January to 30 June 2025, 19 September 2025, [url](#), para. 29; UN OHCHR, Situation of human rights in the Sudan, A/HRC/61/24, 13 January 2026, [url](#), para. 41

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UN OHCHR, Situation of human rights in the Sudan, A/HRC/61/24, 13 January 2026, [url](#), para. 42