



EMERGING CHALLENGES February 2018

South Sudan is an unsolved conflict

Many children are recruited by South Sudan armed forces and the armed opposition groups becoming child soldiers, despite numerous commitments to stop. “The continued recruitment and use of children by the military and opposing armed groups point to the utter impunity that reigns in South Sudan, and the terrible cost of this war on children”, said [Mausi Segun](#), Africa director at Human Rights Watch. “There is a chance to reverse the tide if the region follows through on its promise to impose sanctions on individual violators of human rights. A failure to do so would discredit the region’s commitment to stop the abuses in South Sudan.” For this reason, during a consultative session on 27 January 2018 of the 30th African Union Summit, where the UN and the IGAD also participated, it has been said in a statement that the “time has come for sanctions on the spoilers of peace in South Sudan”.

The civil war has forced nearly four million people from their homes, and it has had an acute impact on children. More than 2.300 children, have been reported, killed or injured, a million are malnourished, two million are out of school and one in ten dies by age 5. In December 2017, UNICEF [estimated that](#) more than 19.000 children had been recruited and associated with armed groups since the war started up from an estimated 16.000 in late 2015.

The South Sudan conflict began on December 2013 with fights between the ethnicities of Dinka and Nuer respectively led by the President Kiir and the Deputy Machar. Despite the August 2015 Peace Agreement (ARCSS), war continued with abuses against civilians, including the recruitment and use of child soldiers and combats spread to previously stable areas (Equatoria and Western Bahr el Ghazal), as government forces waged a harsh counterinsurgency campaigns to root out rebel groups.

AU Commission Chairperson Moussa Faki Mahamat and UN Secretary General Antonio Guterres have made several statements on the need for sanctions following the recent violations. IGAD also released a strongly worded communiqué on 27 January 2018 on its readiness to “take all necessary measures, including targeted sanctions against individual violators and spoilers”. However, there is scepticism over

whether the AU, IGAD and the UN will actually impose sanctions in South Sudan, given the longstanding divisions within these organisations over the sanctions issue.

It is very important that the international community takes a decision as soon as possible and continues to tackle the conflict, because this conflict could spill over and so the recruitment of children.

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