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[Home](#) > [Research](#) > [Responses to Information Requests](#)

RESPONSES TO INFORMATION REQUESTS (RIRs)

[New Search](#) | [About RIR's](#) | [Help](#)

28 February 2007

SDN102445.E

Sudan: Military service including age of conscription, gender, length of service, recruitment practices and training, exemption conditions and alternative service options, penalties for refusing military service, and treatment of family members of those who refuse military service (2001 - 2007)

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In Sudan, national military service is compulsory (*Defense and Foreign Affairs Handbook* 2006, 1890; *Europa World Year Book 2006* 2006, 4095; US 8 Feb. 2007).

Age of conscription

Information on the age of conscription for military service varied among the sources consulted by the Research Directorate. According to the *Europa World Year Book 2006* and the United States (US) Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) *World Factbook*, persons between the ages of 18 to 30 years are liable for national military service (*Europa World Year Book 2006* 2006, 4095; US 8 Feb. 2007). However, the *Child Soldiers Global Report 2004* indicates that under Sudan's National Service Act of 1992, persons between the ages of 18 to 33 years must submit to national military service (Coalition to Stop the Use of Child Soldiers 17 Nov. 2004; Denmark 2001, 68). The report also indicates that the compulsory recruitment age is 17 years for the regular armed forces and 16 years for the paramilitary Popular Defence Force (PDF), while there is no minimum age for the reserve forces and for persons volunteering in the regular armed forces (Coalition to Stop the Use of Child Soldiers 17 Nov. 2004). *Country Reports on Human Rights Practices for 2005* indicates that persons aged 17 to 19 were required to undergo military service (8 Mar. 2006, Sec. 5).

News and human rights sources consulted by the Research Directorate indicate that the Sudanese government is also believed to recruit children for military training (UN 2 Feb. 2007; *ibid.* 17 Aug. 2006; *ibid.* 1 July 2005; US 8 Mar. 2006; Coalition to Stop the Use of Child Soldiers 17 Nov. 2004).

Gender

Information on the gender of national military service conscripts in Sudan varied among the sources consulted by the Research Directorate. Several sources indicate that military service is compulsory only for men in Sudan (US 8 Mar. 2006, Sec. 5; Coalition to Stop the Use of Child Soldiers 17 Nov. 2004; *Europa World Year Book 2006* 2006, 4095). However, a copy of the National Service Act for 1992, provided in a 2001 Danish Immigration Service fact-finding mission report on Sudan, indicates that "every Sudanese" between the ages of 18 and 33 years must submit to national military service (Denmark 1 Dec. 2001, 68). Information on whether amendments have been made to the National Service Act of 1992, or whether the Act is enforced, could not be found among the sources consulted by the Research Directorate within the time constraints of this Response.

Length of service

The CIA *World Factbook* and the *Defense and Foreign Affairs Handbook* state that the length of national military service in Sudan is three years (US 8 Feb. 2007; *Defense and Foreign Affairs Handbook* 2006, 1890). Other sources indicate that the national military service lasts for up to two years (*Europa World Year Book 2006* 2006, 4095; Coalition to Stop the Use of Child Soldiers 17 Nov. 2004; Denmark 1 Dec. 2001, 69). According to the National Service Act for 1992, provided in the 2001 Danish fact-finding mission report, the duration of the national service is two years; however, high school and university graduates are required to serve only 18 months and 12 months, respectively (ibid.; Coalition to Stop the Use of Child Soldiers 17 Nov. 2004).

Recruitment practices and training

Cited in a January 2007 United Kingdom (UK) report on Sudan, a February 2005 letter from the UK Foreign Commonwealth Office (FCO) indicates that the Sudanese government's recruitment or conscription practices involve "[t]he relevant authority put[ting] an advertisement in the local media calling for young people to sign up" (UK 18 Jan. 2007, 27). The January 2005 *Report of the International Commission of Inquiry on Darfur to the United Nations Secretary-General* notes that local tribal leaders and sheikhs help mobilize and recruit conscripts into the PDF forces (UN 25 Jan. 2005, 28). A senior commander of the PDF, cited in the report, stated that military training in each state takes place through central and local barracks and that basic training, including use of weapons and discipline, takes approximately two weeks (ibid.). According to the same report, PDF conscripts are eventually integrated into the regular Sudanese army (ibid.).

Country Reports 2005 indicates that, in 2005, the Sudanese government "forcibly" conscripted Sudanese citizens for national military service (US 8 Mar. 2006, Sec. 1.f). The report also notes that the PDF conscripted teenagers from government-run "reformation camps" established for "vagrant" children (ibid., Sec. 5). These conscripts reportedly experienced "hardship and abuse" during military service (ibid.).

A 15 May 2006 article in the Sudanese newspaper *Al-Watan* reports that, in May 2006, there were several demonstrations and riots as well as desertions of conscripts at national service camps. The article notes that the conscripts were protesting against alleged "mistreatment by the trainers and harshness of the training routine" (*Al-Watan* 15 May 2006). According to a 17 August 2006 United Nations (UN) report on children and armed conflict in Sudan, in May 2006, two recruits reportedly died during military training in Darfur.

Recruitment exemptions and alternative service options

Sudan's 1992 National Service Act, provided in the 2001 Danish fact-finding mission report, indicates that the following persons are exempt from national military service:

1. The officers, sub-officers, and soldiers of the Armed Forces, police forces and other regular forces.
2. The students of colleges and institutes preparing for graduation of armed forces officers, police forces or other regular forces, on condition that the student shall continue in his study until graduation; or he should report within 30 days of his cancellation of his study ... to the specified recruitment region authority. (Denmark 2001, 69)

Persons who are "medically unfit" are also exempt from service (ibid.). Information on whether these exemptions are still in effect could not be found among the sources consulted by the Research Directorate within the time constraints of this Response.

Information on alternative service options could not be found among the sources consulted by the Research Directorate within the time constraints of this Response.

Penalties for refusing military service

Desertion from Sudan's national service is punishable by a jail term of up to three years (SHRO June 2003; Denmark 2001, 73). Deserters could also reportedly be fined (ibid.). According to Sudan's 1992 National Service Act, provided in the 2001 Danish fact-finding mission report, those who fail to present themselves for recruitment, or try to avoid military service "through deceit, or by inflicting any harm to [themselves]" could face a two- to three-year jail term (ibid.; see also *The Des Moines Register* 24 Dec. 2005).

Several news and human rights sources consulted by the Research Directorate indicate that secondary students in Sudan are required to submit to national military service in order to obtain their secondary school certificate (UN 17 Aug. 2006; SHRO June 2003; Denmark 2001, 71; *The Des Moines Register* 24 Dec. 2005; US 8 Mar. 2006, Sec. 5). This certificate is required in Sudan for students to enroll in university (ibid.). An 11 May 2006 UN situation report on Sudan states that the country's students are required to enter military service for a minimum of 45 days in order to be accepted into a university.

The June 2003 issue of *The Sudanese Human Rights Quarterly*, a publication of the Sudan Human Rights Organization (SHRO) - Cairo, indicates that persons who refuse to enter the national service may also be prevented from obtaining official identity documents, such as travel documents, identity papers, and driver's licences (SHRO June 2003, 34).

In a February 2005 letter, cited in a January 2007 UK report on Sudan, the Foreign Commonwealth Office (FCO) noted that "although they were not aware of specific cases of draft evaders/deserters facing inhuman, degrading or persecutory treatment, they would not be surprised to find that this was the case" (UK 18 Jan. 2007, 27).

Treatment of family members of those who refuse service

Information on the treatment of family members of those who refuse national military service could not be found among the sources consulted by the Research Directorate within the time constraints of this Response. However, Sudan's 1992 National Service Act, provided in the 2001 Danish fact-finding mission report, states that those who helps a conscript avoid national service could face up to three years in jail, a fine, or both (Denmark 2001, 73).

This Response was prepared after researching publicly accessible information currently available to the Research Directorate within time constraints. This Response is not, and does not purport to be, conclusive as to the merit of any particular claim for refugee protection. Please find below the list of additional sources consulted in researching this Information Request.

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Additional Sources Consulted

Oral sources: Attempts to contact Sudan Human Rights Organization (SHRO) - Cairo were unsuccessful.

Internet sites, including: Amnesty International (AI), British Broadcasting Corporation (BBC), Center on Conscience and War (CCW), European Country of Origin Information Network (ecoi.net), Factiva, GlobalSecurity.org, Human Rights Watch (HRW), United Nations Mission in Sudan (UNMIS), *Sudan Tribune*, War Resisters International (WRI).

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