



**OFFICE OF THE HIGH COMMISSIONER FOR
HUMAN RIGHTS**



Abduction of children in Africa

Commission on Human Rights resolution 2003/85

The Commission on Human Rights,

Recalling the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, the Convention on the Rights of the Child, the Convention against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment, the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, the African Charter on Human and People's Rights and the African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child,

Recalling also the Optional Protocols to the Convention on the Rights of the Child on the involvement of children in armed conflict and on the sale of children, child prostitution and child pornography,

Reaffirming the Vienna Declaration and Programme of Action adopted by the World Conference on Human Rights in 1993 (A/CONF.157/23) and the United Nations Millennium Declaration, as well as the special session of the General Assembly on children, which inter alia called for the protection of children, particularly those under difficult circumstances,

Recalling also the obligation to respect and strictly observe international humanitarian law, including the Geneva Conventions of 12 August 1949 for the protection of victims of war, the additional Protocols thereto of 1977 and other applicable instruments of international law,

Recalling Security Council resolutions 1379 (2001) of 20 November 2001 and 1460 (2003) of 30 January 2003 (2003) on children in armed conflict,

Bearing in mind the resolutions of the Commission on Human Rights relevant to the rights of the child,

Welcoming the appointment by the United Nations Secretary-General of the independent expert for the study on violence against children,

Welcoming also the report of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Children and Armed Conflict (E/CN.4/2003/77),

Expressing its appreciation to those African countries which have established national mechanisms to ensure greater protection of children, including measures to combat and eliminate abduction of children,

Deeply alarmed at the spread of the practice of abduction of children during armed conflicts in many African countries,

1. *Condemns in the strongest terms* the abduction and recruitment of children for armed conflicts;

2. *Also condemns* the abduction of children from refugee camps by armed groups, as distinct from the armed forces of States, and their subjection of children to forced conscription, torture, killing and rape;

3. *Demands* the immediate demobilization and disarmament of all child soldiers, including abducted children forcibly conscripted into armed groups;

4. *Calls* for the immediate and unconditional release and safe return of all abducted children to their families and communities;

5. *Calls upon* African States:

(a) To pay particular attention to the protection of refugee children, especially unaccompanied refugee minors, and internally displaced children who are exposed to the risk of being abducted or becoming involved in armed conflicts;

(b) To take extra measures to protect refugee children, particularly girls, from being abducted by guerrilla groups;

(c) To increase and enhance cooperation at regional and international levels to combat networks of abduction and child trafficking and to suppress their activities;

(d) To take adequate measures to prevent the abduction and recruitment of children by armed groups, as distinct from armed forces of States, through, inter alia, the adoption of legal measures to prohibit and criminalize such practices;

6. *Encourages* all African States to integrate the rights of the child into all peace processes, peace agreements and post-conflict recovery and reconstruction phases;

7. *Urges* all African States that have not yet done so to ratify the Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child on the involvement of children in armed conflict;

8. *Welcomes* the progress achieved in the eradication of abduction of children by some national mechanisms and encourages other States which have not yet done so to consider establishing such mechanisms;

9. *Requests* African States, in cooperation with the relevant United Nations agencies, to provide the victims and their families with the necessary assistance and to support sustainable rehabilitation and reintegration programmes for abducted children, including the provision of psychological assistance, basic education and vocational training, taking into account the special needs of abducted girl children;

10. *Calls upon* the donor community to provide generous financial assistance to national mechanisms, where they exist, established in some African countries with a view to complementing their national efforts in combating abduction of children;

11. *Decides* to continue its consideration of this question at its sixtieth session under the same agenda item.

25 April 2003
[Adopted without a vote.]

See chap. XIII.E/CN.4/2003/L.11/Add.8]