

We were told that CEAWC has established sub-committees in North Bahr el Ghazal, West Bahr el Ghazal, South, West and North Darfur, & South Kordofan, and has established liaison offices there. In South Darfur, a safe place has been set up for abducted children in order to reunify them with their families. CEAWC organized a workshop in Nyala for tribal leaders, Committee members, and Save the Children Fund UK.

Work began on identifying children through tribal leaders; photographs and i.d. papers were sent to Aweil and to Wau; and more than 100 children were identified. CEAWC then worked with UNICEF and SCF/UK on ways to reunify the children. 11 have been taken to Aweil and reunified. Plans are in hand to reunify 100 children but funding has not yet arrived from donors. CEAWC has gathered more than 200 women and children from the area and is in the process of reuniting them with families

We were then told that, yes, there was speculation that there have been abductions from the train that runs between Babanusa and Wau, via Aweil. CEAWC held meetings in Aweil and Wau and developed a two-fold plan. First, there would be workshops and seminars in Wau, Babanusa and Aweil to discuss the ill effects of this practice and the damage to the reputation of the country. This would be impressed on the murahleen and the tribal chiefs. Next, clear instructions would be given to the Aweil sub-committee to prevent any child from boarding the train, but one related problem was that not all children were abductees; some want to travel to the north for work.

One official expanded on this theme, saying that the train needs protection as it passes through areas under rebel control. The murahleen who provide protection used to take children to help them make tea during the journey, but there are no allegations that they buy and sell these children. There are stories of the murahleen giving families tea and sugar, in return for allowing the children to serve tea and coffee to the murahleen along the way.

We cannot give credence to "explanations" such as this. It appeared to us that the issue was not one of children "riding the train", but of the murahleen using the train as a base for raids and for abducting children. It was stressed to us that the GOS is not involved with the murahleen, and their abductions constitute a crime taking place in areas not fully under GOS control.

The GOS is not part of this, it was emphasized to us. The Chief of Police in Aweil is now on the local CEWAC sub-committee; the police are being used to arrest children, to prevent them from boarding trains between Aweil, Babanusa and Wau. There are now clear instructions not to allow any child to move on the train for any reason whatsoever unless accompanied by their family. CEAWC has made it clear to the Governor in Wau that the train has given Sudan a bad reputation.

Where there is war and instability, there will be a problem, we were told, but where the GOS is fully in control, there is no problem. The problem is instability. Resolution of the issue rests on a resolution of the war. Unless there is an end to the war, the GOS won't have control of the territory & the problem will persist. It is the duty of the GOS to ensure the rule of law prevails,