

ill-effects of abduction and how it hurt Sudan's reputation. Next, the Aweil sub-committee would be told 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, saying that the train needs protection as it passes through rebel areas and the murahleen who provide protection used to take children to help them make tea during the journey. 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.

Where the GOS is fully in control, there is no problem, we were told. The problem is instability. Until the war is ended, the GOS won't have control, and the problem will persist.

We were also confronted by the "cultural" explanation, the essence of which is that there are always fights in this part of Sudan; both parties raid, they take women and children; this is not slavery, it is retribution and revenge.

We knew that CEAWC had been created only since May 1999, and that for ten years before that, a group of Dinka leaders had been working to combat abductions. [REDACTED]

[REDACTED] We were later able to go [REDACTED] to a "safe house" for abducted children in Khartoum, where they are housed prior to re-unification. There were about 40 children present, and some had been there 3 to 6 years. Others have been there only a matter of months.

UNICEF

UNICEF wants to advocate mass voluntary retrievals, and feels this can only succeed if the President, ministers, officials, the media, religious leaders, tribal leaders and intellectuals from the Baggara all participate in a national effort to end abduction. If such a mass movement were to be led by the President and/or the First Vice President, UNICEF believes that 90% of abductees, perhaps more than 14,000 children and women, would be retrieved within a few months.

The point was made that the President, the Minister of Justice, and the Minister of Foreign Affairs have never spoken publicly about Abductions. It was suggested that for them to do so would be construed as admitting there was a slavery problem in Sudan. Certainly, when the Minister of Foreign Affairs told us he would get involved in any slavery case, he was silent in respect of abductions.