
LIBYA

Socialist People's Libyan Arab Jamahiriya

Population: 5.9 million (2.1 million under 18)

Government armed forces: 76,000

Compulsory recruitment age: 17

Voluntary recruitment age: 17

Voting age: 18¹

Optional Protocol: acceded 29 October 2004

Other treaties ratified (see glossary):

CRC, GC AP I and II, ILO 138, ILO 182, ACRWC

Although the government stated that the minimum voluntary recruitment age was 18, no amendments to legislation had been made to reflect this. Under-18s were reportedly recruited into militias.

Government

National recruitment legislation and practice

On accession to the Optional Protocol in October 2004, Libya declared that the required legal age for volunteering to serve in the armed forces was 18.² This followed concern expressed in 2003 by the UN Committee on the Rights of the Child over the Mobilization Act No. 21 of 1991, which “allows for persons of 17 years to, among other things, engage in combat” and the Committee’s call for the law to be amended so that under-18s were not deployed as active combatants in wartime.³ However, amendments to the 1991 Act to raise the age of conscription from 17 to 18 were not believed to have been made.⁴ According to Libya’s Second Periodic Report to the Committee, national service was compulsory for “medically fit” men aged between 18 and 35.⁵

Little information was available about military training and schools. There was a military academy in Tripoli.⁶

Armed groups

Children as young as 14 were reportedly recruited into government-sponsored militias including the Revolutionary Guard and the revolutionary committees. This took place mostly in rural areas.⁷

Developments

Amnesty International on several occasions expressed concern over the detention and ill-treatment of hundreds of Eritrean nationals, several of them children, by the authorities.⁸ In February 2006 Human Rights Watch reported that girls who had been detained for “social

rehabilitation” at the Benghazi Home for Juvenile Girls were held indefinitely, provided with no education and sometimes put in solitary confinement. Many of them were reportedly victims rather than perpetrators of crimes.⁹

Libya brokered a peace agreement between four Chadian armed groups and the government of Chad, signed in Sirte, Libya, on 25 October 2007.¹⁰ The accord foresaw an immediate ceasefire and the setting up of a committee which would decide on the integration of members of the armed groups into Chadian state structures, although there was no mention of the demobilization and integration of child soldiers.¹¹

The UN refugee agency UNHCR reported a significant increase since 2004 in the numbers of asylum-seekers, especially from Sudan and Somalia, requesting refugee status in Libya. This was expected to continue through late 2007.¹²

- 1 System of indirect voting for the 468 members of the General People’s Congress. Inter-Parliamentary Union, <http://www.ipu.org>.
- 2 Declaration on accession to the Optional Protocol, www2.ohchr.org.
- 3 UN Committee on the Rights of the Child, Consideration of report submitted by the Libyan Arab Jamahiriya, Concluding observations, UN Doc. CRC/C/15/Add.209, 4 July 2003.
- 4 Confidential source, November 2007.
- 5 Second periodic report of Libya to the Committee on the Rights of the Child, UN Doc. CRC/C/93/Add.1, 19 September 2002.
- 6 Global Security, “Libyan Army”, www.globalsecurity.org.
- 7 Confidential source, June 2007.
- 8 Amnesty International, “Libya: Forcible return/torture and ill-treatment”, Urgent Action, 8 February 2007, AI Index MDE 19/004/2007.
- 9 Human Rights Watch, “Libya: a threat to society? Arbitrary detention of women and girls for ‘social rehabilitation’”, *Human Rights Watch*, Vol. 18, No. 2 (E), February 2006.
- 10 “Libya seals peace deal for Chad”, BBC News, 26 October 2007.
- 11 “Chad rebels sign peace accord”, Al-Jazeera, 25 October 2007, <http://english.aljazeera.net>.
- 12 UN High Commissioner for Refugees, UNCHR Country Operations Plan 2007, Libyan Arab Jamahiriya, 1 September 2006, www.unhcr.org.