



# General Assembly

Distr.: General  
5 April 2023

English only

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## Human Rights Council

### Fifty-second session

27 February–31 March 2023

Agenda item 3

**Promotion and protection of all human rights, civil,  
political, economic, social and cultural rights,  
including the right to development**

## **Written statement\* submitted by Elizka Relief Foundation, a non-governmental organization in special consultative status**

The Secretary-General has received the following written statement which is circulated in accordance with Economic and Social Council resolution 1996/31.

[4 February 2023]

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\* Issued as received, in the language of submission only.



# **The Reality Of The Sale and Sexual Exploitation Of Children In Africa**

## **Introduction**

Children bear the brunt of the international system's severe consequences. As many as 1.5 billion children are victims of violence and exploitation each year, and an estimated 4.00 million children worldwide are sexually exploited every year. The phenomenon of child exploitation, especially sexually, is clearly evident in poor economic, social, health, security, and political environments, which have 20% of cases of sexual and physical exploitation of children, or 1 out of 5 children. The Covid-19 pandemic has sharply accelerated the pace of this phenomenon, by being responsible for the rise in poverty rates of children to 1.2 billion globally and the increase in rates of working children to more than 160 million children. This is particularly severe in the African continent. In this context, Elizka Relief Foundation submits its contribution to the Special Rapporteur on the sale and sexual exploitation of children.

## **First: selling and sexual exploitation of children in Africa:**

There is an undeniable decline in human rights conditions in Africa. Violations of children's rights, mainly sexual exploitation and trafficking are on the rise. Africa's five regions, especially the east, center, and south, are the most vulnerable and fragile environments due to economic, political, security, social and institutional decline. Therefore, they set a conducive environment for sexual exploitation. More than 3/4 of street children live as victims of violence and sexual exploitation in Uganda, and more than 50% of Cameroonian and Senegal children with disabilities are subjected to sexual violence, compared to 40% of girls and boys in Ghana, and 1 in 3 children declared being subjected to sexual abuse and violence before reaching the age of 17 in South Africa. Online sexual exploitation has emerged due to Africa's poor digital competence, investigation, monitoring, and governance. Over 200,000 victims of children of the age group 12: 17 in the United Republic of Tanzania(1), and more than 300,000 victims in Mozambique, equivalent to 13%, have reportedly been subjected to online exploitation, according to the statistics of October 27, 2022. In the midst of this, child sexual exploitation can be highlighted as follows:

### **a. South Africa**

Despite South Africa's tangible efforts and progress in the elimination of child trafficking and sexual exploitation, whether through the ratification of a set of human rights agreements on children, such as the African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of Children, the Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child on the sale of children, child prostitution and child pornography, the Convention on the Rights of the Child, or through having a national framework for the legal protection of children, including the Children's Act No. 38 of 2005, the Sexual Offenses Act No. 32 of 2007, the Human Trafficking Act and the Child Justice Act, 60% of South African children suffer from poverty and poor economic conditions. The rates of crimes related to rape and sexual exploitation jumped to 13% during the period between 2018 and 2022. As a result, 1.39 million people from South Africa were subjected to sexual exploitation and trafficking, 50% of children were forced into sexual activities, and 1 out of 5 children were victims of sexual abuse. In 2020, 24,000 children were sexually abused, and in 2021, a case involving more than 730 charges of child pornography, rape, human trafficking, and sexual abuse were brought before the Gauteng High Court in Johannesburg. On November 8, 2022, a South African court convicted a man of 90 charges of rape against schoolgirls, some of whom were under the age of 9, in addition to 4 charges of forcible rape and 3 charges of coercion of a child to witness a sexual act.

### **b. Democratic Republic of the Congo**

Violations of child exploitation and trafficking remain outrageously high in central Africa, which records 47% of child sex trafficking in the world. This is particularly evident in the

Democratic Republic of the Congo, which is still ranked at the top of countries committing grave violations against children due to its poor security and economic contexts since 2005. There are about 5,256 cases of grave violations committed against children, which is estimated by over 14 grave violations per day. A total of 7,616 grave violations against 6,073 children were verified and attributed to 78 parties to conflict between April 2020 and March 2022. At least 1,249 children were victims of multiple violations, with children abducted in order to be recruited and used, and then killed or maimed. 93% of all violations were attributed to armed groups(2).

### **c. Ethiopia**

In Ethiopia, the phenomenon of sexual exploitation and trafficking of children, not to mention their abuse, is on the rise due to various intertwining elements. The deteriorating security situation and the increasing ethnic and civil conflicts, such as the ongoing wars in Tigray, Afar, and Oromia regions, is a key element that causes the displacement and internal displacement of about 4.5 million. There is also the intensification of humanitarian needs that increases the opportunities for exploitation and human trafficking, including children, due to a lack of access to justice and poor economic conditions. In terms of sexual abuse and exploitation online, at least 10% of Ethiopia's internet-using children aged 12-17 (approximately 300,000 children) were victims of grave instances of online sexual exploitation and abuse, and this is due to weakness, fragility and lack of clear mechanisms for reporting sexual abuse and exploitation of children(3).

### **d. Kenya**

The Kenyan context is one of the clearest examples of the phenomenon of sexual exploitation of children, whether in terms of response policies or the escalation of the phenomenon. Although the Kenyan government has put in place a remarkable political and strategic framework to curb the sexual exploitation and abuse of children. What is clear in the Children (Amendment) Act 2021, the National Plan of Action to Tackle Online Child Sexual Exploitation and Abuse (2022-2026), and the National Care Reform Strategy for Children in Kenya 2022: 2023, the Kenyan contexts depict an increasing reality of the phenomenon of sexual exploitation, especially in light of weak institutional structure specific to child abuse, failure to provide a relevant database, and the spread of the Covid-19 pandemic, as a result of which the rate of sexual exploitation and abuse against children decreased to include the age group starting from 12 years. More than 5: 13% of children who use the Internet were exposed to sexual exploitation and violence, and 7% of them received money or gifts in exchange for obtaining sexual pictures and clips of themselves in 2020, according to January 2023 statistics.

## **Second: Recommendations**

After monitoring the reality of the sale and sexual exploitation of children in Africa, a number of recommendations can be made as follows:

- a. Elizka Relief Foundation recommends the Rapporteur on the sale and sexual exploitation of children to provide technical support to African countries in a way that contributes to the formulation of strategies and the launch of programs and budget necessary to address the phenomenon of sexual exploitation and sale of children, and to activate their international, regional and national human rights commitments to children.
- b. Elizka Relief Foundation draws the attention of African countries, especially Ethiopia, Kenya, South Africa and the Democratic Republic of the Congo, to the need to modernize the institutional structure concerned with combating children and train its elements, including police and judges, to apply the law, achieve transitional justice, provide remedies and compensation for children and hold them accountable.
- c. Elizka Relief Foundation appeals to African countries to intensify collective and national efforts to address the social, economic and security causes driving the phenomenon of sexual exploitation, especially child labor and recruitment, displacement, poverty and poor social and health care.

d. Elizka Relief Foundation intensifies its recommendations and appeals regarding the importance of partnerships between African governments and their development partners in order to address the phenomenon of sexual exploitation and sale of children in order to support and protect children's rights, accelerate humanitarian response efforts, rehabilitate children victims of sale and sexual trafficking, and provide them with medical, psychological and social services.

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- 1) New 24, "About 200 000 children exposed to online sexual exploitation, abuse in Tanzania – report", 22 March 2022, <https://bit.ly/3XHW9sV>
  - 2) relief web, democratic-republic-congo/drc-children-still-paying-highest-price-conflict-parties-should-strengthen-engagement-un-end-and-prevent-all-grave-violations, access date 28 January 2023, <https://bit.ly/3ja4l6m>
  - 3) ECPAT, Launch of the Disrupting Harm Report for Ethiopia on Technology and the Sexual Exploitation of Children, ACCESS DATE 28 January 2023, <https://bit.ly/3ReBVVt>