

Sudan busts people smugglers: report

KHARTOUM — Sudanese intelligence officers have broken up a ring preparing to smuggle Eritreans to Israel, a report said on Monday, just days after UN officials voiced concern over the gangs.

The Sudanese Media Center, which is close to the security apparatus, said officers in Kassala state bordering Eritrea "were able to capture a network of people smugglers".

It did not say how many suspects were caught.

"We found with them four Eritreans who were being prepared for transport to Israel," the report said, adding that officers also recovered firearms, ammunition, satellite telephones and documents.

"They allegedly send the people to Israel to find jobs. Sometimes they transport them by force. They are people trafficking," the Sudanese Media Center said.

On a visit on Thursday to a refugee camp in eastern Sudan near the border, United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, Antonio Guterres, said Eritrean refugees are being kidnapped and sometimes killed by human traffickers.

He called for global action against the crimes but said the UNHCR will also work with Sudanese authorities and the International Organisation for Migration, an intergovernmental body, to strengthen local police with additional vehicles, computers and other equipment.

Young migrants are turning to illegal transportation by smugglers to reach the Sudanese capital Khartoum, the Middle East or Europe, where they hope to find greater opportunities, UNHCR said in a briefing paper.

But some simply end up being kidnapped for ransoms which the UNHCR said can reach \$10,000.

Many of the Eritreans are fleeing military service in their authoritarian homeland.

(AFP)