

A photograph of a young child walking down a set of concrete stairs in a severely damaged school building. The walls are covered in colorful murals of flowers and musical notes. Debris is scattered on the ground.

**SUMMARY**

**EDUCATION  
UNDER ATTACK  
2014**



# Global Coalition to **Protect** **Education from Attack**

This study is published by the **Global Coalition to Protect Education from Attack (GCPEA)**, an inter-agency coalition formed in 2010 by organizations working in the fields of education in emergencies and conflict-affected contexts, higher education, protection, international human rights and humanitarian law who were concerned about ongoing attacks on educational institutions, their students and staff in countries affected by conflict and insecurity.

GCPEA is a coalition of organizations that includes: the Council for Assisting Refugee Academics (CARA), Human Rights Watch, the Institute of International Education, the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), Protect Education in Insecurity and Conflict (PEIC, a programme of Education Above All), Save the Children, the Scholars at Risk Network, the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) and the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO). GCPEA is a project of the Tides Center, a non-profit 501(c)(3) organization.

This study is the result of independent external research commissioned by GCPEA. It is independent of the individual member organizations of the Steering Committee of GCPEA and does not necessarily reflect the views of the Steering Committee member organizations.

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**(Cover)** Children wander amid the remains of Tarik Al Bab primary school, closed and damaged by fighting in Aleppo, Syria, 9 February 2013.

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# **EDUCATION UNDER ATTACK 2014**

A global study of threats or deliberate use of force against students, teachers, academics, education trade union members and government officials, aid workers and other education staff, and against schools, universities and other education institutions, carried out for political, military, ideological, sectarian, ethnic or religious reasons in 2009-2013

# PREFACE

It was 9 October 2012. The school bus, a converted truck, had travelled only a few hundred yards from Khushal school in Mingora, north-west Pakistan, when a masked man stepped in front of the vehicle. An accomplice armed with a pistol climbed onto the tailgate at the rear, leaned over and asked which of the 20 schoolgirls huddled inside was Malala. When the driver stepped on the accelerator, the gunman opened fire, shooting Malala in the head.

Malala Yousafzai, 15, had become well known in the area – and a Pakistani Taliban target – after daring to speak out against the militants’ edict banning girls from attending classes and their bombing of schools. Critically wounded by a bullet that tore through her head and shoulder and lodged near her spine, she was rushed by helicopter to a military hospital in Peshawar, along with two wounded school friends. From there, she was taken to England, where she has made a remarkable recovery and now lives.

Hailed by international media and feted by human rights groups for her courage, Malala is today famous around the world. But she is just one of the many thousands of students, teachers, academics and other education personnel in dozens of countries targeted with violence.

This global study charts the scale and nature of attacks on education; highlights their impact on education – including on students, teachers and facilities; and documents the ways that governments, local communities, non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and UN agencies try to reduce the impact of such violence and prevent future attacks.

In doing so, it provides the most extensive documentation of attacks on education to date.

Following earlier studies that UNESCO published in 2007 and 2010, it not only examines attacks on schools, as previous research has done, but also considers military use of education facilities and more closely examines attacks on higher education. The study’s four main aims are to: better inform international and national efforts to prevent schools, universities, students, teachers, academics and other education staff from being attacked; encourage the investigation, prosecution and punishment of the perpetrators of attacks; share knowledge about effective responses; and help those who have been attacked to recover and rebuild their lives – as Malala is doing – by providing recommendations for action that the international community, governments and armed non-state groups should adopt and implement.

In July 2013, Malala addressed the UN General Assembly and stressed the importance of protecting education. ‘The terrorists thought that they would change my aims and stop my ambitions,’ she said, ‘but nothing changed in my life, except this: weakness, fear and hopelessness died. Let us pick up our books and pens. They are our most powerful weapons.’

At a school in Lahore, Pakistan, people hold candles and pictures of Malala Yousafzai, a student shot by the Pakistani Taliban for speaking out against the militants' destruction of schools and for promoting education for girls, 12 October 2012.

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The main parts of *Education under Attack 2014* are:

- a summary providing an overview of the main points and key recommendations;
- a methodology section outlining the methods used in the research and the principal challenges faced;
- a global overview providing a more detailed picture of the scale, nature, motives and impact of attacks on education and the variety of responses that are being, or could be, made;
- three thematic essays offering more depth about how schools and universities can best be protected;
- profiles of the 30 most seriously affected countries, providing an insight into the context in which attacks take place, a detailed record of reported attacks on education during 2009-2012 and an outline of attacks during the first nine months of 2013; and
- endnotes providing citations for every piece of information used in the study.

The full *Education under Attack 2014* study is available online at [www.protectingeducation.org](http://www.protectingeducation.org)

## SUMMARY

**T**his global study examines threats or deliberate use of force against students, teachers, academics, education trade union members, government officials, aid workers and other education staff, and against schools, universities and other education institutions, carried out for political, military, ideological, sectarian, ethnic or religious reasons in 2009-2013; and military use of education buildings and facilities.

It focuses on targeted attacks by state military and security forces and armed non-state groups on education facilities, students or staff, not death, injury or destruction resulting from being caught in crossfire.

It does not examine school attacks by lone armed individuals with none of the above-listed motives or affiliations, such as the school shooting at Sandy Hook in the United States in 2012.





An Afghan youth looks through textbooks damaged during a bomb blast that killed the head teacher and wounded another employee at a school in Nangarhar province, Afghanistan, 15 March 2011.

© 2011 AP Photo/Rahmat Gul

**This study, which follows earlier studies published by UNESCO in 2007 and 2010, is the most comprehensive examination of attacks on education to date. Based on extensive data gathering for the period 2009-2012 and information on key incidents in the first nine months of 2013, it finds that over the past five years, armed non-state groups, state military and security forces, and armed criminal groups have attacked thousands of schoolchildren, university students, teachers, academics and education establishments in at least 70 countries worldwide.**

The study reports in detail on 30 countries where there was a significant pattern of attacks in the five-year reporting period and lists 40 other countries where isolated attacks took place.

It concludes that targeted attacks on education and incidents of military use of schools and universities are occurring in far more countries and far more extensively than previously documented. It is not known whether this reflects growing awareness of the problem and more and better reporting of such attacks since the earlier studies were published or an actual increase in the number of attacks.

Many attacks involve bombing or burning schools or universities, or killing, injuring, kidnapping, or illegally arresting, detaining or torturing students, teachers and academics. Hundreds have died as a result and hundreds of thousands more have missed out on the right to an education. In many places, children and young people, and those who teach them, live in fear of attacks.


The 30 countries profiled all have five or more incidents or victims including at least one direct attack on a school or the killing of at least one teacher, student or academic. They are: Afghanistan, Bahrain, Central African Republic (CAR), Colombia, Côte d'Ivoire, Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC), Egypt, Ethiopia, India, Indonesia, Iran, Iraq, Israel/Palestine, Kenya, Libya, Mali, Mexico, Myanmar, Nigeria, Pakistan, the Philippines, Russia, Somalia, South Sudan, Sudan, Syria, Thailand, Turkey, Yemen and Zimbabwe.

The 40 other countries where isolated attacks were reported are: Algeria, Angola, Bangladesh, Belarus, Brazil, Cambodia, Chad, Chile, China, Dominican Republic, Ecuador, El Salvador,



France, Georgia, Guatemala, Haiti, Ireland, Kyrgyzstan, Liberia, Malawi, Maldives, Malaysia, Nepal, Papua New Guinea, Rwanda, Saudi Arabia, South Africa, Sri Lanka, Swaziland, Sweden, Togo, Tunisia, Turkmenistan, United Arab Emirates (UAE), Uganda, Ukraine, the United Kingdom (UK), Uzbekistan, Venezuela and Vietnam.



A photograph showing a man in a white shirt peering into a dark, abandoned room. The room appears to be a student hostel. In the background, there is a wall with some graffiti and a window with a wooden frame. The scene is dimly lit, suggesting it is nighttime.

## **‘School teachers? We will kill them!’**

In Nigeria, from January to September 2013, some 30 teachers were reportedly shot dead, sometimes during class. The Associated Press reported that in a video statement made in July 2013, Abubakar Shekau, leader of the militant Islamist group Boko Haram, threatened teachers, saying: ‘School teachers who are teaching Western education? We will kill them! We will kill them!’; he also endorsed recent school attacks and claimed that non-Islamic schools should be burned down. Boko Haram, whose commonly used name means ‘Western education is a sin’ in Hausa, has sought to impose a strict form of Sharia, or Islamic law, in northern Nigeria and partially destroyed or burned down 50 schools in the first seven months of 2013, according to Amnesty International.

A teacher peers into a deserted student hostel at the Government Secondary School of Mamudo in Yobe state, Nigeria, where gunmen killed at least 22 students and a teacher in the middle of the night on 6 July 2013.

© 2013 Aminu Abubakar/AFP/Getty Images



A woman walks past a fire-gutted Islamic school in Meiktila, Myanmar. In March 2013, a mob of more than 200 Buddhists torched the school and killed 32 Muslim students and 4 teachers.

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## School torched by a sectarian mob

Education in Myanmar faced a new and violent threat from Buddhist nationalists in central and eastern regions in 2013 as schools and students were attacked in outbursts of sectarian violence. In one incident in March 2013, a 200-strong mob of Buddhists marched on a Muslim school in Meiktila, according to media reports. The teachers heard that they were coming and took the students out into a patch of bush near the school to hide. When the mob reached the school they torched it and went looking for the students. When they found them, they clubbed them with staves and, in some cases, poured petrol on them and set them alight. They decapitated one student after they caught him hiding in the undergrowth. In total, 32 students and four teachers were killed. Seven Buddhists were later jailed in connection with the school massacre.

The study differs from previous publications of *Education under Attack* in 2007 and 2010: it covers a different length of time; significantly more resources were employed to undertake the research; and it set out to provide extensive coverage of a wider range of incidents. In particular, there is an additional focus on military use of education buildings and facilities and on attacks on higher education, compared to the two earlier studies. It is difficult, therefore, to draw conclusions about trends over time when comparing the data of this study with those of previous studies.

The research team gathered data for this study from a wide range of secondary sources – including United Nations (UN) monitoring and reporting, research by human rights groups and media reports – with differing purposes and varying levels and methods of verification. Additional data were gathered by information requests sent to UN agencies and international and local NGOs; phone interviews with in-country experts; and in some cases via further in-country research by experienced human rights researchers and journalists. The findings from the different sources have been collated, summarized and cross-checked against each other for reliability and accuracy.

The study was also extensively reviewed by experts in human rights, international law, education-in-emergencies and research methodology. However, it has not been possible to verify every incident.

The study gauges the scale and nature of violent attacks on education in the 30 profiled countries, as well as military use of schools and universities. It also examines their impact on education and the responses that communities and governments, with support from national and international agencies, have taken to address the problem, drawing upon a cumulative understanding of the impact of attacks since the issue was first studied globally and examining good practices across the world.

# Profiled countries with reports of attacks on education and military use of schools and universities, 2009-2012

**Very heavily affected**

Countries where reports documented 1,000 or more attacks on schools, universities, staff and students or 1,000 or more students, teachers or other education personnel attacked or education buildings attacked or used for military purposes.

**Heavily affected**

Countries where reports documented between 500 and 999 attacks on schools, universities, staff and students or between 500 and 999 students, teachers or other education personnel attacked or education buildings attacked or used for military purposes.

**Other affected**

Countries where reports documented less than 500 attacks on schools, universities, staff and students or less than 500 students, teachers or other education personnel attacked or education buildings attacked or used for military purposes.





## SUMMARY

The countries very heavily affected — where reports documented 1,000 or more attacks on schools, universities, staff and students or 1,000 or more students, teachers or other education personnel attacked or education buildings attacked or used for military purposes in 2009-2012 — were Afghanistan, Colombia, Pakistan, Somalia, Sudan and Syria. For example, during that time period:

- In Afghanistan, according to the UN, there were 1,110 or more attacks on school-level education, including arson attacks, explosions and suicide bombings. Staff were threatened, killed and kidnapped.
- In Colombia, one of the most dangerous places to be a teacher, 140 teachers were killed over these four years and 1,086 received death threats, according to the Ministry of Education. In addition, 305 were forced to leave their homes because their lives were at risk, according to the Escuela Nacional Sindical (ENS), a prominent Colombian NGO monitoring labour rights.
- In Pakistan, armed groups, particularly the Pakistani Taliban, attacked at least 838 schools, mostly by blowing up school buildings, and deprived hundreds of thousands of children of access to education, according to primary research by the independent Human Rights Commission of Pakistan. Some 30 school students and 20 teachers were killed and 97 school students and eight teachers injured, and 138 school students and staff were kidnapped. One higher education student and four academics were killed, and dozens of university students were injured.

Other heavily affected countries — where reports documented between 500 and 999 attacks on schools, universities, staff and students or between 500 and 999 students, teachers or other education personnel attacked or education buildings attacked or used for military purposes in 2009-2012 — were Côte d'Ivoire, DRC, Iraq, Israel/Palestine, Libya, Mexico and Yemen.

For instance, in Yemen there were 720 incidents involving the use of force or violence affecting schools in 2009-2012. In Côte d'Ivoire in 2010-2011, 50 university students were attacked and several university facilities occupied and, in 2011, armed groups destroyed, damaged, looted or used at least 477 schools during post-election violence.

However, in all of these countries, the exact number of attacks in which education facilities, students or staff were targeted is unclear, due to the lack of specificity of available information.

Some individual incidents resulted in large numbers of casualties. For instance, in Somalia in October 2011, an Al-Shabaab suicide bomber exploded a truck filled with drums of fuel outside a compound in Mogadishu housing the education ministry and other ministries, killing 100 or more people, many of whom were students and parents. In a pre-recorded message, the bomber reportedly said he was targeting the students, who were due to gather at the Ministry of Education to obtain examination results needed for scholarships to study abroad.

The reported motives for targeting schools, students, teachers and other education staff include the desire to:

- destroy symbols of government control or demonstrate control over an area by an anti-government group;
- block the education of girls, or any type of education perceived to teach or impose alien religious or cultural values, biased history or an unfamiliar language of instruction;
- restrict teacher trade union activity and academic freedom;
- abduct children for use as combatants, sex slaves or logistical support in military operations, or abduct students and teachers for ransom; or
- seize schools and universities for use as barracks and bases or firing positions, or attack schools because they are being used for these purposes by opposing forces.





Schoolchildren sit in a makeshift classroom in the courtyard of the Birhni Middle School, Aurangabad district, Bihar state, India. The school was bombed by Maoist guerrillas on 27 December 2009.

© 2010 Moises Saman/Magnum Photos for Human Rights Watch

## SUMMARY



After rebel forces seized the town, one of their fighters walks through an abandoned classroom, used as an armoury by the Congolese army, in Bunagana, DRC, 7 July 2012.

© 2012 REUTERS/James Akena





## Profiled countries with reports of military use of schools and universities, 2009-2012



## Students used as human shields

In Somalia, armed militants used schools as bases to launch attacks on opposing forces, making them targets for attack while students and teachers were still inside. According to Human Rights Watch in their 2012 report *No place for children: Child recruitment, forced marriage and attacks on schools in Somalia*, in some cases the militant Islamist group Al-Shabaab locked frightened students and teachers in school, using them as human shields while they launched artillery attacks from behind the school or from school grounds against forces of the Transitional Federal Government (TFG) and African Union Mission in Somalia (AMISOM). One primary school student reported in 2010 that he was in class when Al-Shabaab fighters started firing what seemed to be rockets from just behind the school while classes were ongoing. 'AMISOM/TFG started responding.... The school was hit by a weapon that sounded like a thunder when coming and then made a big explosion,' he told Human Rights Watch. Three children died in the attack and six were injured.

### Military use of education institutions

School and university facilities were used for military purposes in 24 of the 30 countries profiled during 2009-2012: Afghanistan, CAR, Colombia, Côte d'Ivoire, DRC, Egypt, Ethiopia, India, Indonesia, Iraq, Israel/Palestine, Kenya, Libya, Mali, Myanmar, Pakistan, the Philippines, Somalia, South Sudan, Sudan, Syria, Thailand, Yemen and Zimbabwe.

The country with by far the most reported incidents was Syria, where military use from the conflict spiked in 2011-2012. Although it does not specify exact figures, the UN reported numerous incidents of government forces using schools as temporary bases or detention centres and there were allegations that the Free Syrian Army used schools in a number of areas as bases and as places to store ammunition during this period. Furthermore, the Syrian Network for Human Rights

alleged in mid-January 2013 that government forces had used approximately 1,000 schools as detention and torture centres and used schools to house security and intelligence personnel or as positions from which to shell the surrounding area. It is assumed that nearly all of these incidents took place before 2013, although there is insufficient evidence to confirm this.

Beyond Syria, in the other 14 countries with the highest reported incidence of military use in 2009-2012 – Afghanistan, CAR, Colombia, Côte d'Ivoire, DRC, India, Libya, Mali, Pakistan, the Philippines, Somalia, South Sudan, Thailand and Yemen – armed groups, armed forces, police forces and international forces used a total of 923 or more schools and universities for military purposes in those four years. In Libya, for example, armed groups reportedly used 221 schools during the 2011 uprising; and in eastern and north-eastern India in 2010, government forces reportedly used at least 129 schools as barracks or bases in their conflict with Maoist insurgents and other armed groups.

Across the countries where military use occurred, schools and universities were used as barracks to house soldiers or fighters or as bases to mount security operations. They also served as fighting positions, prisons or detention centres, interrogation or torture sites

and places to store weapons. School buildings were additionally used as places to indoctrinate, recruit and train students in some places. In Mali, for instance, children as young as 11 were reportedly trained by armed groups in private, public and Koranic schools.

State armed forces and armed non-state groups jeopardize the lives of students and teachers or other personnel when they use schools and universities for military purposes without evacuating them first, because the military presence could well draw enemy fire. In many cases, military use leads to learning being disrupted or halted altogether, as parents withdraw their children, fearing for their safety, or the school is closed. Even if the schools are empty, military use can damage facilities or lead to those schools being destroyed in subsequent attacks.

### Recruitment of children and sexual violence at schools or along school routes

This study addresses child recruitment and sexual violence only to the extent that such abuses happened at schools or along school routes. Armed groups and armed forces sometimes specifically target such locations because they know they will find children there.

Reported evidence of armed groups and armed criminal groups recruiting children while they were in school or as they travelled to or from school was found in six countries during 2009-2012: Colombia, DRC, Pakistan, Somalia, Thailand and Yemen.

Recruitment happened for a variety of reasons. In Colombia, for example, child recruits were used by armed groups as spies or to transport arms or pass on messages to other students in schools, as well as to run their drug business inside schools. In Pakistan, militants recruited, lured or abducted children from mainstream schools and madrassas (religious schools), in some cases to train as suicide bombers.

Recruitment methods included indoctrination programmes at school, threatening to kill students if they did not join, abduction en route to schools and rounding up students at

schools. In Colombia, armed groups waited outside schools to talk to children, find out information, and recruit and control them; in Yemen, Houthi rebels used students and teachers to recruit children; and in DRC, a breakaway rebel group abducted children en masse from school to fill their ranks.

The strongest evidence of systematic recruitment from schools was found in Somalia, where the UN reported that Al-Shabaab abducted 2,000 children for military training in 2010 and recruited another 948 in 2011, mostly from schools. Human Rights Watch reported cases of Al-Shabaab abducting girls from schools for forced marriage to fighters. In one case, militants beheaded a 16-year-old who refused to marry a commander much older than her and brought her head back to be shown to the remaining girls at the school as a warning.

There were also isolated reports of sexual violence by armed forces or armed groups at or en route to or from schools in DRC and Somalia in 2009-2012. Two incidents in CAR and India were also reported in 2012-2013. These types of attacks may be more widespread, but public reporting of sexual violence is often very limited and, when it does occur, tends to lack information about whether the violence took place en route to or from or at school.

## Children seized at school

According to Human Rights Watch, in April 2012 in DRC, followers of the rebel general Bosco Ntaganda, formerly of the Congolese Army, raided Mapendano secondary school in North Kivu province and seized 32 male students. It was one of their methods of forcibly recruiting school students when villagers refused to hand over their sons. A 17-year-old student told Human Rights Watch that fighters entered his school at the end of classes, took them outside, tied up their hands and marched the students off the premises to join the forces fighting for Ntaganda. At a military camp, they were given some training. Recruits who resisted were beaten and others were told they would be killed if they tried to escape. In one case, a 16-year-old recruit told Human Rights Watch that at night Ntaganda's men 'put grenades on us and told us that if we moved, they would explode'. Back in the villages, fear of recruitment led many boys and young men to flee across the border into Rwanda.



Security forces survey the site of a double suicide bombing by the Pakistani Taliban that killed at least five students at the International Islamic University in Islamabad, Pakistan, 20 October 2009.

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## Attacks on higher education

The study found attacks on higher education facilities, students and academics and military use of universities were reported in 28 of the 30 profiled countries in 2009-2012. The exceptions were CAR and Mali.

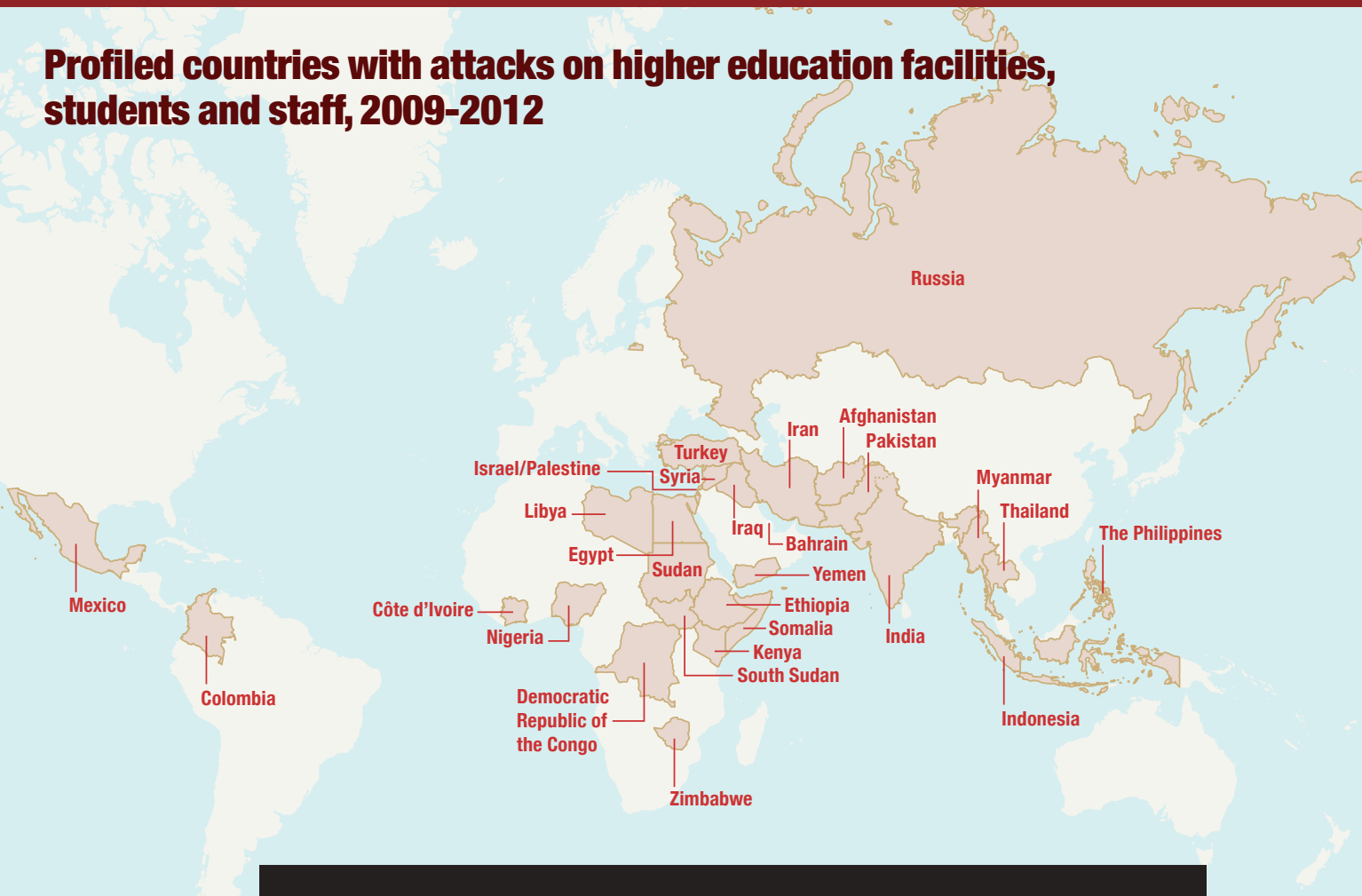
Unlike most attacks on schools, violent attacks on higher education frequently take place in non-conflict situations – although they do also occur in countries affected by war – and more often involve arbitrary arrest, detention or persecution of particular students and teachers.

Many attacks on higher education are linked to government attempts to prevent the growth of opposition movements; restrict political protests, including those related to education policy; stop anti-government protests on campus; quell education trade union activity; or curtail the freedom of lecturers and researchers to explore or discuss sensitive

subjects or alternative views to government policy. As with violence against school students and teachers, attacks on higher education can also involve sectarian bias and targeting of ethnic groups.

During 2009-2013, most attacks on education buildings were directed at school facilities rather than those used for higher education. However, higher education facilities were attacked in at least 17 countries: Afghanistan, Côte d'Ivoire, DRC, Egypt, Iran, Iraq, Israel/Palestine, Libya, Mexico, Nigeria, Pakistan, the Philippines, Somalia, South Sudan, Sudan, Syria and Yemen. In Mexico, for example, a group opposing nanotechnology research reportedly bombed six campuses and research laboratories and threatened six others in 2011; and in Syria, two explosions at Aleppo University killed at least 82 and wounded dozens more, possibly as many as 150, on the first day of mid-term examinations in January 2013.

## Profiled countries with attacks on higher education facilities, students and staff, 2009-2012



### Students' convoy targeted

In May 2010, at least 100 students were injured when a convoy of buses was attacked, according to the United Nations Assistance Mission for Iraq (UNAMI). The buses were transporting college students from Christian towns and villages on the Nineveh Plain back to classes at the University of Mosul and were being escorted by Iraqi forces. A car bomb exploded as the first buses crossed a checkpoint along the internal border between the semi-autonomous Kurdish region and the rest of the country. Shortly afterwards, another roadside bomb went off, according to the New York Times. The area around Mosul University had already experienced several attacks and threats of attacks in 2009, which is why students travelled in these types of convoys. The attacks on Christian students were part of a spate of dozens of attacks against Christians in Iraq in 2010. According to Worldwatch Monitor, nearly 1,000 students stayed away from class for the rest of the semester as a result of the convoy attack.

Where armed groups were the perpetrators, bombings were among the most common incidents, along with assassinations and kidnappings. State security forces also resorted to arbitrary arrest or detention and excessive force that, at times, resulted in death and injury. There were incidents of state armed forces or security services, rebel groups and guerrillas taking over or shutting down universities as well.

The largest number of higher education student casualties during 2009-2012 was in Yemen where more than 73 were killed and more than 139 injured in 2011, although it is not known how many were targeted. The largest number of arbitrary arrests of students was reported in Sudan where more than 1,040 were arrested by security agents, the majority of them in protests related to education or which began at, or took place at, education institutions, according to human rights and media reports.

Some of the most serious incidents involved raids by security forces or armed groups on student dormitories or other forms of campus residence in Côte d'Ivoire, Indonesia, Iran, Nigeria, Pakistan, Sudan and Syria. In September 2013, gunmen stormed a dormitory in the middle of the night at a college in Yobe, Nigeria, killing as many as 50 students. In 2011 and 2012, security forces in Syria raided dormitories at Aleppo and Damascus universities, killing seven students, injuring 49 and arresting 330, according to media reports. In Sudan, some 450 student rooms at Omdurman Islamic University in Khartoum were reportedly set on fire by security agents and supporters of the National Congress Party in December 2012.

## Long-term impact of attacks

In some countries, education authorities or NGOs have documented the number of schools damaged or destroyed, or the number of teachers or students killed or injured. But information is scant regarding the way such attacks affect the provision of education in the long term, let alone their wider social and economic impact. The study's discussion of long-term impacts, therefore, is not restricted to situations where attacks took place during the reporting period but draws on experiences in countries where attacks have been documented in the past as well.

Where attacks on schools, students and teachers are persistent or the use of force – real or threatened – blocks recovery from attacks, the effects, which impinge on student attainment and access to good-quality education, can include:

- persistent demotivation and distraction of students, teachers and other education staff by fear or psychological distress or trauma;
- chronic disruption of attendance or permanent drop-out of students, teachers and other education staff;
- falling recruitment of staff, leading to teacher shortages, and declining enrolment of students, hindering national and global attempts to achieve Education for All (EFA), the drive to achieve universal primary education and other important educational goals.

All these effects have short-, medium- and long-term dimensions but the longer attacks persist or violence blocks recovery, the deeper and more lasting the effects are likely to be.

In countries where attacks have persisted on a significant scale year after year – many countries experienced attacks on education long before the start of this study's reporting period – lengthy school closure has meant that hundreds of thousands of children have been denied access to education, sometimes for months or sometimes for years. For instance, in Yemen, 54 schools were closed for up to two months after 143 attacks on education in 2011, affecting 182,000 students. In Afghanistan, the Ministry of Education reported that more than 590 schools were closed in vulnerable areas as of May 2012, compared to 800 or more in 2009. In some cases, security threats or prolonged military use block them from being rebuilt or reopened, as in India where by 2009 police had occupied some schools for three years and one for a decade, and in South Sudan, where armed forces occupied some schools for up to five years. Often, where schools are damaged or destroyed, the government lacks the capacity or will to rebuild in a timely manner.

In higher education, attacks may not only endanger lives and disrupt education, but also prove devastating for research and teaching by triggering fear, flight and self-censorship among whole academic communities. They also disrupt training of teachers, education planners and managers.

Attacks on education can also exact a psychological toll, in the short or long term, including distraction, distress and impaired ability to study or teach.

Wider and long-term consequences for society include restricting development and – particularly in the case of attacks on higher education – hindering the emergence and strengthening of political plurality, accountable government and open democracy.

## Response and prevention

So what can be done to stop attacks on education and how can their impact be limited? Although more information has been gathered on prevention and response since the last *Education under Attack* study was published in 2010, rigorous empirical and comparative research into the effectiveness of different measures is still lacking, in part due to the major methodological challenges of conducting such research. A clearer understanding is still needed of exactly what the relative advantages of one intervention over another are, given the nature of attacks, their perpetrators and motives; the particular context; and the potential negative side effects and unintended consequences. Nevertheless, there are examples of measures that have been taken to respond to and prevent attacks, both before and during this study's reporting period, by international agencies, national governments, NGOs and communities.

### *Monitoring and reporting*

Effective monitoring, assessment and reporting are crucial for ensuring that governments, UN agencies and NGOs take appropriate prevention and response measures. One of the most significant developments during the reporting period was the passing of UN Security Council Resolution 1998 in July 2011, which made attacks on schools and school personnel a trigger for listing in the annexes to the UN Secretary-General's annual report on children and armed conflict. This, in turn, requires the violating parties to develop action plans to end such attacks or face consequences that can include targeted sanctions applied by the UN Security Council.

The passing of Resolution 1998 has ensured that the UN pays greater attention to attacks on schools and teachers in monitoring and reporting carried out by Country Task Forces of the UN-led Monitoring and Reporting Mechanism (MRM) on grave violations against children in situations of armed conflict. However, so far the MRM has operated in a limited number of countries – typically around 13-14 in any given year. It did operate in many of the very heavily or heavily affected countries, but it did not operate in all of them, or in a number of other profiled countries in which a significant pattern of attacks on education took place. This was partly because the activation of the MRM requires a high standard of UN verification of incidents and identification of perpetrators. Moreover, its remit only allows it to operate in situations of armed conflict and a number of countries with a significant

number of attacks on education are not recognized as situations of conflict, such as Mexico and Zimbabwe.

In most countries affected by attacks on education, there is still a need to strengthen monitoring and reporting partnerships between UN agencies, international and national NGOs and education ministries and district education offices to improve data collection on attacks on schools (including data on the long-term impact on education) and verification.

There is also a pressing need to fill the gap in global monitoring and reporting of attacks on higher education. Monitoring such attacks is not part of the remit of the UN-led MRM, which focuses on grave violations against children and therefore school-level incidents only.

### *Accountability and ending impunity*

International human rights law, international humanitarian law and international criminal law provide a strong legal framework for protecting education, depending on the context. However, impunity for those responsible for attacking education is a persistent problem and urgently needs to be addressed at national and international levels. Very few investigations of attacks or prosecutions of perpetrators have been documented.

Achieving a reduction in or an end to the use of schools and universities for military purposes may significantly reduce the number of education institutions put at risk of attack, because military use makes them a potential target. International humanitarian law restricts the use of schools and universities in support of a military effort, but it does not prohibit such use in all circumstances.

Some countries have taken the important step of introducing legislation, jurisprudence or military policies restricting, and in some cases completely prohibiting, the military use of schools or universities, although this injunction is not consistently enforced. Examples include Colombia, India, the Philippines and, most recently, South Sudan, which in August 2013 issued a military order prohibiting its armed forces from using schools for military purposes.

A positive step is the current effort, which the Global Coalition to Protect Education from Attack (GCPEA) has galvanized, to develop international guidelines – the *Lucens Guidelines for Protecting Schools and Universities from Military Use during Armed Conflict*. The intention is that when a state adopts the Guidelines they will incorporate them into their domestic legislation and military doctrine, thereby making them binding via





## Partnerships for monitoring and reporting

During the post-election crisis in Côte d'Ivoire from December 2010 to June 2011, dozens of schools were attacked. The Education Cluster worked with the Ministry of Education to set up a national survey of 9,000 schools to assess the impact of attacks on education nationally.

According to the Global Education Cluster, the education ministry and district education authorities encouraged the involvement of teachers in every village to collect data for the survey by hand and by email. They looked for information on schools being used for military purposes or as shelters for internally displaced people, the destruction and looting of schools, forced closure of schools due to threats of violence, incidents of explosions and attacks on students.

The survey found 477 schools had been destroyed, damaged or looted, or used by armed and military groups: of these, 180 schools were looted, 173 destroyed, burned down or damaged and 20 schools were attacked by bombs. The information was later used to press for an end to military use of schools. By November 2011, armed groups had vacated 45 schools as a result of negotiations, according to a GCPEA study.

Soldiers from the 'Invisible Commandos' practice ambush techniques at a middle school serving as a base in the PK-18 area of the Abobo neighbourhood in Abidjan, Côte d'Ivoire, 19 April 2011.

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## SUMMARY

Police officer in front of a school pockmarked with bullet holes, Pasto, Colombia, 2010.

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domestic law. If many countries can be persuaded to follow suit, significant progress could be made towards reducing the number of schools put at risk of attack and the number of students whose safety is threatened – and whose learning is compromised – by the presence of troops and weapons in their classrooms.

### ***Military and security responses***

Some military forces, education authorities and communities have taken physical protection measures to secure schools and teachers against attack. These include assigning armed or unarmed guards to education institutions; establishing checkpoints near schools; reinforcing school infrastructure such as building walls around school perimeters; providing housing for students or personnel on campus or nearby; providing a protective presence or escorts to accompany students or teachers en route to and from schools; offering safer modes of transportation; and arming teachers. Many of these measures have been taken in Thailand's far south, for instance. Unarmed guards have been used in Afghanistan.

Not all measures have proven effective. In some contexts, measures such as security escorts may be counterproductive and increase the likelihood of teachers or schools being targeted because it offers armed groups the opportunity to target both soldiers and teachers in the same incident. In southern Thailand, for instance, there have been many attacks against troops providing protection for teachers en route to school in which either troops or troops and teachers have been killed.

### ***Negotiated solutions***

In some cases, local community leaders, armed groups or government forces, government officials or external actors have negotiated with attacking parties to prevent or end attacks or military use of education facilities, for example, in DRC and South Sudan where occupying forces agreed to vacate schools.

### ***Community responses***

Communities have contributed to protection in a range of ways. In Afghanistan, this has involved school management committees in protecting schools, students and teachers; setting up school defence committees; providing night-watchmen; and running community schools or offering classes in people's homes, which are less likely to be attacked. In Liberia, it has involved parents providing student escorts; in Gaza, a community alert system was established; in Mexico, teacher trade unions led protests demanding better security measures; in Nepal, community members led negotiations to ensure schools were respected by both sides in the conflict as zones of peace; and in Côte d'Ivoire, local head teachers helped in the monitoring of attacks.

## **Tailored protection for teachers at risk**

In Colombia, a Working Group on the Human Rights of Teachers, composed of the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) and representatives from the Colombian government and the teacher trade unions, provided support to threatened or targeted teachers, university academics and trade union leaders through various protection measures. Working on a case-by-case basis, special committees studied the type and degree of risk and the mode of protection that would be most effective, including armed escorts or guards, mobile phones, bullet-proof vehicles and temporary relocation, a 2009 Education International study reported. In 2010, the government offered teachers at risk 'provisional status' so that they could relocate rapidly while they waited for police to carry out a risk assessment. According to the National Ministry of Education, of the 600 teaching staff who reported receiving death threats in 2011, 38 left the country, 282 were given temporary transfers and 38 were transferred permanently.



## Addressing education's role in conflict

In the far south of Thailand, ethnic Malay Muslim insurgent groups have attacked schools at least in part due to their perception that schools have in the past been used as a means to impose Buddhism, Thai language and Thai versions of history on ethnic Malay Muslims. Some 59 teachers were assassinated in 2009-2012.

The education authorities decided that protection against attacks on schools and assassinations of teachers could be increased by making changes to the curriculum and adopting staffing policies that help build relations with the local community.

Major changes included increasing by five-fold the number of hours of Islamic religious instruction and switching from a five-day to a six-day week to accommodate the extra lessons; recruiting thousands of Malay Muslim teachers locally instead of relying on bringing in Thai Buddhist teachers from outside the area, who are the main targets of attack; and incorporating the teaching of English and the local Malay language.



Thai Rangers stand guard at a school as they provide security to students and teachers after the school's head teacher was killed by suspected separatist militants the previous week in Thailand's restive southern province of Narathiwat, 17 December 2012.

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### ***Education policy and planning***

In countries at risk of conflict, addressing education-related grievances can play an important part in reducing the risk of attacks on schools, students and education personnel. Where unequal access is a source of tension, education authorities can address the problem by ensuring that there are fair criteria for allocating resources. Where curricula are perceived to be biased against one ethnic group because classes are taught in an alien language or because alien cultural values, a different religion or distorted history are being taught, curriculum reform can reduce the potential motives for attack. Strengthening education for peaceful resolution of conflicts, respect for human rights and responsible citizenship in the curriculum may also help reduce conflict and build peace.

In countries where attacks on education have taken place, every year that passes without a school being rehabilitated and reopened after an attack can mean a lost year of education for its students. While conflict is ongoing, it is often too dangerous to attempt to rebuild schools, but also when it ends, governments frequently lack the funds or capacity to repair and rehabilitate schools quickly, as has been the case in Afghanistan and earlier in Sierra Leone, for instance. As a result, it can take many years to overcome the impact of attacks. Repair and rebuilding of education facilities may therefore require sustained, large-scale collaboration with international donors and NGOs to fill funding and capacity gaps.

### ***Protecting higher education***

Protecting higher education can include some measures similar to those used within primary and secondary schools, such as using on-campus security guards or escorts and strengthening gates, walls, fences and windows. But it can also include other types of measures. Distance learning programmes and scholarship schemes for studying, teaching or researching abroad, for instance, have enabled education to continue away from the source of threats. GCPEA's recent research examining the relationship between autonomy and security concluded that enhancing university autonomy vis-à-vis the state can also contribute to reducing the risk of attacks, particularly where universities provide their own security guards, by reducing the likelihood of confrontation between students and the forces of the state and the likelihood of arbitrary arrest over issues of academic freedom.



The UN Security Council unanimously adopts Resolution 1998 (2011) to include attacks on schools and hospitals as a triggering offence for mandated UN monitoring and reporting of violations against children in armed conflict.

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## ***Advocacy***

Reporting and advocacy by international human rights organizations, NGOs and UN agencies have increased awareness of attacks and encouraged improved response and prevention. Data from monitoring have been used to press military forces to vacate schools that they have been using for military purposes in Afghanistan, DRC and South Sudan, for example, and to seek funds for repairing and resupplying damaged schools. In some countries, such as India, organizations have tried to persuade governments to stop using schools as voting stations or teachers as polling officers during political elections, which can heighten their vulnerability to attack. Human rights organizations and trade union movements have advocated internationally for the release of arbitrarily detained, tortured or imprisoned students and academics in countries such as Colombia, Iran, Sudan and Turkey.

## Key recommendations

Attacking schools, universities, students, teachers and academics is a common tactic in situations of conflict and insecurity around the world. While some progress has been made, much more can and should be done to protect education:

- States should investigate, prosecute and, if guilt is proven, punish individuals responsible for ordering, bearing command responsibility for, or taking part in, the range of violations of international law that constitute attacks on education. Regional and international tribunals should, similarly, give specific consideration to the range of violations that constitute attacks against education.
- Governments, the United Nations, regional peacekeepers and armed non-state groups should refrain from using schools and universities for military purposes; they should endorse the *Lucens Guidelines for Protecting Schools and Universities from Military Use during Armed Conflict* and incorporate them into their doctrine and policies.
- Government leaders and leaders of armed non-state groups should make clear public statements that attacks on education are prohibited and issue clear military orders to this effect. States should also ensure that their domestic law criminalizes all elements of attacks on education in line with international humanitarian and human rights law.
- Governments of states where attacks occur should rigorously monitor and investigate attacks against students, teachers, academics and other education personnel, and schools and universities, as well as the impact of such attacks, and use that information to coordinate responses. At the international level, the human rights treaty monitoring bodies should more systematically raise the issue of attacks on education and military use of schools in their examination of states, and governments and civil society should provide more information about these violations in their submissions.
- Where safety concerns allow, UN agencies, NGOs, peace-keeping forces and governments should undertake or support negotiations with parties to a conflict in order to reach agreement regarding respect for schools as safe sanctuaries and re-opening closed schools.
- Governments should ensure education facilities, staff and students are not used for electoral tasks and political events whenever it can be reasonably expected that such use would heighten the risk of attack.
- Education ministries should adopt conflict-sensitive curricula and resourcing policies to ensure that education does not help trigger conflict and become a target for attack.
- States should protect higher education institutions at all times and prevent violence and intimidation against academics by introducing and implementing policies, regulations and laws that promote both institutional autonomy and the security of higher education communities.

