



Office of the Legal Adviser

31 March 2014

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Ms. Diya Nijhowne  
Director  
Global Coalition to Protect Education from Attack  
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New York, NY 10118-3299  
USA  
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Dear Ms. Nijhowne,

Thank you very much for your letter dated 12 February 2015 regarding the "Guidelines for Protecting Schools and Universities from Military Use During Armed Conflict". Federal Minister Sebastian Kurz asked me to respond on his behalf.

In recent conflicts we have witnessed an increase in unlawful attacks on schools, universities and students, as well as the unlawful use of educational facilities by armed groups. Austria therefore welcomes the initiative by a group of civil society organisations to formulate guidelines in order to raise awareness of the issue and prevent such attacks and use in the future. Consequently, we decided to join the initiative led by Norway and Argentina to draft the text of the "Safe Schools Declaration" and are actively and constructively participating in the discussions in Geneva.

The framework of international humanitarian law is already offering a comprehensive set of standards to ensure the protection of educational facilities during armed conflict and Austria is fully committed to adhering thereto, in law and in practise. Despite doubts

whether the text of the guidelines always adequately reflects these obligations under international humanitarian law, Austria will support the guidelines and is committed to their implementation.

Respectfully yours,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'G. Doujak', written in a cursive style.

Dr. Gerhard Doujak,  
Head, Department for Human Rights,  
International Humanitarian Law and Minority Issues