



Global Coalition to **Protect Education from Attack**

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Attacking Education a War Tactic, Study Shows Seven Asian Countries Highly Impacted

(New York, February 27, 2014) – Schools and universities, as well as students, teachers and academics are intentionally targeted for attack in conflicts worldwide, the Global Coalition to Protect Education from Attack said in a 250 page study released today. *Education Under Attack 2014* identifies 30 countries (see [map](#)) where there was a pattern of deliberate attacks between 2009 and 2013, including seven in Asia: Afghanistan, India, Indonesia, Myanmar, Pakistan, the Philippines, and Thailand.

“Education facilities, students and staff are not just caught in the crossfire, but are all too often the targets of attacks,” said Diya Nijhowne, director of the Global Coalition. “They are bombed, burned, shot, threatened and abducted precisely because of their connection to education. They are soft, easy targets, and states and armed groups need to protect them from being used as a tactic of war.”

Both armed non-state groups and national military and security forces are attacking education to advance their own interests, said the Global Coalition. They may be retaliating against a community’s perceived support for the opposition; seeking to demonstrate a lack of government control by harming schools and teachers, symbols of the state; attacking forces based in or using a school building; or opposing the spread of ideas deemed to be objectionable, such as the education of girls.

“Attacks on education in the last five years have killed hundreds of students, teachers, and academics and injured many more,” Nijhowne said. “Hundreds of thousands of students have been denied the right to an education when their schools and universities have been intentionally damaged or destroyed or used for military purposes.”

In political and ideological rifts turned violent, education can be a primary target, as has been the case in Afghanistan, Pakistan, Thailand and Myanmar. More than 1,000 attacks on education in Afghanistan were reported over the past five years, by the Taliban and other armed groups. Attackers lobbed grenades into schoolyards, hid bombs in pushcarts and rickshaws, and carried them on motorbikes. They frequently targeted girls’ education, issuing letters at night warning entire communities not to send their daughters to school and demanding teachers leave their posts or face violent consequences. In May 2011, for example, the head teacher of a girls’ school in Logar province was shot and killed near his home after receiving repeated death threats.

In Pakistan, the Taliban and other militant groups attacked hundreds of schools, typically bombing them at night, and also targeted girls who bravely attended school. The near-fatal shooting of 15-year-old Malala Yousafzai and two other female students on October

9, 2012, came to embody the brutality and ruthlessness of their campaign against education deemed to be Western.

In Thailand, ethnic Malay Muslim insurgent groups assassinated 59 teachers between 2009 and 2012 in violent opposition to an educational system they believe privileges Buddhist teaching and the Thai language. And in Myanmar and Indonesia, sectarian violence was fought out in the schoolyard itself. In March 2013, a mob of 200 Buddhist nationalists torched a Muslim school in Meiktila, clubbing students, setting them on fire, and decapitating one young person – 32 students and a teacher were killed.

In 25 of the 30 countries profiled in the study, including all seven countries in Asia (see [map](#)), warring parties took over schools in whole or part, using them as bases, barracks, firing positions, weapons caches, detention centers and even torture chambers. Buildings that should have been safe spaces for learning became actual battlefields when military use made them a target for attack.

In India, where national armed forces used more than 129 schools as barracks or bases in 2010 – disrupting education for an estimated 20,800 students – Maoists insurgents cited the use of school buildings by security forces as a reason for attacking schools, though frequently the schools had not been used for military purposes. The insurgents often attacked at night, using cans packed with explosives. In the Philippines, despite national legislation explicitly banning military use of schools, national armed forces used schools on at least 56 occasions in the period 2010-2012, in some cases for months at a time.

The Global Coalition also examined assaults on higher education, which have been monitored less than attacks on elementary and secondary schools. Colleges, universities and individual students and academics were attacked in 28 of the 30 profiled countries (see [map](#)), including all seven nations in Asia. On June 15, 2013 in Quetta, Pakistan, for example, a coordinated attack against the Sardar Bahaddur Khan Women's University and the hospital ward where the casualties were taken, killed 25 people, including 14 female students.

Between 2009 and 2012, the Global Coalition found, students and educators were most at risk in six *very heavily affected* countries, including Afghanistan and Pakistan, where in each case, there were reports of at least 1000 incidents of attacks, or at least 1000 education-related victims, or education buildings used for military purposes.

In compiling the data, the Global Coalition relied mainly on information provided by the United Nations, respected human rights organizations and the media. They also interviewed country experts and commissioned some research locally. *Education under Attack 2014* follows two reports by UNESCO, in 2007 and 2010.

The Global Coalition also explored ways of protecting education. These include: investigating attacks and prosecuting perpetrators; negotiating with belligerent parties to respect schools as safe zones; ending the use of schools and teachers for electoral tasks in conflict areas; ensuring equitable access of different identity groups to education; and improving curricula to address perceptions that education is biased and to build respect for diversity.

In particular, the Global Coalition called for widespread adoption of the [*Lucens Guidelines for Protecting Schools and Universities from Military Use during Armed Conflict*](#). The Guidelines draw on international human rights and humanitarian law as well as good practice to preserve education as a sanctuary in conflict.

The Global Coalition to Protect Education from Attack (GCPEA) is a coalition of organizations that include: the Council for Assisting Refugee Academics (CARA), Human Rights Watch, the Institute of International Education, Protect Education in Insecurity and Conflict, Save the Children, the Scholars at Risk Network, UNESCO, UNHCR and UNICEF. GCPEA is a project of the Tides Center, a nonprofit 501(c)(3) organization.

The following materials are available at:

<http://www.protectingeducation.org/user/login?destination=secure/education-under-attack-2014>

Login information:

Username: GCPEA Secure

Password: Pr3v1ew8a#

- “Education Under Attack” [video]
- Maps of Education Under Attack
- Key Facts and Findings from the Study
- Frequently Asked Questions about the Study
- *A Summary of Education Under Attack 2014*

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