

EGYPT

University student protests turned violent, with Egyptian security forces killing and injuring dozens of students and arresting more than 1,000. Additionally, unknown individuals and armed groups, including some affiliated with 'IS', increasingly attacked civilians and civilian institutions, including students, educators, and education buildings, in the country's north.

Context

Muslim Brotherhood leader Mohammad Morsi was ousted from Egypt's presidency in July 2013, and General Abdel Fattah El-Sisi, former head of the Egyptian armed forces, became president.⁷⁶¹ Egyptian security forces responded to the protests that followed, allegedly using violent means such as arbitrary arrests, disappearances, and torture of detainees and killing at least 1,150 demonstrators against Morsi's ouster in July and August 2013.⁷⁶² According to Amnesty International, sexual harassment, primarily of girls and women, was a common characteristic of these protests, and mob sexual assaults became common in demonstrations near Tahrir Square in Cairo after November 2012.⁷⁶³ Pressure continued to mount from 2013 to 2014, before subsiding slightly in 2015.

Under El-Sisi, the Egyptian government focused on reestablishing political stability and maintaining security, sometimes using repressive measures.⁷⁶⁴ Egyptian security forces sought to limit the activity of 'IS,' which established a stronger presence in the Sinai and targeted Egyptian security and government officials.⁷⁶⁵ The reporting period saw some increase in interreligious and sectarian tensions in Egypt, including anti-Christian violence.⁷⁶⁶

These trends impacted education during the reporting period. From 2013 through 2017 there were sporadic cases of sectarian fighters and other unknown individuals targeting schools, universities, students, and teachers with explosives and gunfire. Police and government security forces reportedly used violent means to respond to protests on campuses, and university students and faculty came under scrutiny for the content of their academic work. Related to this violence were allegations that Egyptian security forces sexually abused male and female students who were detained or arrested on campus.⁷⁶⁷

GCPEA identified more systematic patterns of violence against education in the current reporting period than the occasional incidents reported in *Education under Attack 2014*, particularly in higher education. These patterns were largely related to violence that occurred in response to student protests.

Attacks on schools

Media sources indicated that explosives, gunfire, and clashes between protesters and Egyptian security forces damaged close to 20 schools in sporadic incidents throughout the current reporting period. These findings represented an increase in comparison to *Education under Attack 2014*, which found only a few attacks on schools in 2013. These reports were largely unverified.

In 2013, arson in the context of protests damaged or destroyed at least five schools, all located in Cairo:

- According to media sources, al-Howeiyaty Secondary School for Girls and the Lycée al-Horreya were set on fire during fighting between demonstrators and security forces in central Cairo in 2013. Al-Howeiyaty school burned to the ground.⁷⁶⁸
- On August 14, 2013, following a deadly raid by Egyptian security forces on two camps of protesters in Cairo, violence surged throughout the country, including against Christian targets, according to Human Rights Watch.⁷⁶⁹ The Coptic boys' school complex and Saint Joseph's girls' school in Minya City were set on fire amidst this violence. The same day, a mob looted and set fire to a Franciscan girls' school in Bani Suef.⁷⁷⁰

Violence affecting schools shifted to the Northern Sinai in 2014, as media reports indicated that unidentified attackers deployed explosives at at least four schools in northern Egypt and the Sinai Peninsula. For example:

- A vehicle loaded with explosives was reportedly discovered and the devices deactivated near the Ibrahimiyah private school in Kafr al-Sheikh city, located north of Cairo, on January 2, 2014.⁷⁷¹

- *Seif News* reported that on April 15, 2014, unidentified individuals threw a flash grenade into a Mansheyat al-Salam girls' secondary school in Dakahlia governorate, injuring 25 people.⁷⁷²
- On December 7, 2014, a bomb planted by an unknown assailant reportedly exploded at Salman al-Farsi Elementary School in al-Salam, Cairo, resulting in minor property damage, according to *Akhbar Al-Alam*.⁷⁷³
- A similar event was reported on December 10, 2014, but it did not cause any damage. According to media sources, security forces found and defused an explosive device planted near a school in Al-Arish town in North Sinai governorate.⁷⁷⁴

Also in Egypt's north, Human Rights Watch reported that, between July 2013 and August 2015, Egyptian military forces demolished six schools during an operation to clear land for a buffer zone along Egypt's border with the Gaza Strip. These actions reportedly left some children without access to education in the town of Rafah on the Sinai Peninsula.⁷⁷⁵

Reports of explosive attacks on schools increased in 2015. Media sources reported at least seven cases in which unidentified perpetrators targeted schools, most taking place north of Cairo and in the Sinai Peninsula. These reports coincided with an escalation of violence carried out by non-state armed groups, including 'IS', and Egypt's counterterrorism response.⁷⁷⁶ For example:

- On January 19, 2015, a projectile reportedly struck a high school in Sheikh Zuweid city, North Sinai governorate. No casualties were reported.⁷⁷⁷
- On February 8, 2015, unknown attackers allegedly planted explosive devices at three schools in the Qantara Gharb area in Ismailia governorate. All three explosives were discovered and defused before going off.⁷⁷⁸
- A similar incident was reported one month later when, on March 9, 2015, an explosive device was found and safely defused at a school in Alexandria city.⁷⁷⁹
- Also on March 9, 2015, unidentified individuals reportedly detonated a bomb and opened fire on a Coptic Catholic school in the Kafr al-Dawar town of the Beheira governorate. The incident injured two police guards.⁷⁸⁰
- Two weeks later, on March 23, 2015, a rocket reportedly exploded near a school outside al-Muqataah village in the North Sinai.⁷⁸¹
- On March 25, 2015, media sources reported that another explosive detonated in the hands of a 10-year-old girl who was playing outside an elementary school in Faiyum city, southwest of Cairo. The girl later died.⁷⁸²
- On April 4, 2015, two bombs reportedly exploded outside Ahmed Oraby School in Imbabah neighborhood, Giza city.⁷⁸³

Rates of reported attacks on schools slowed again in 2016 and 2017, with sporadic cases occurring in the North Sinai governorate. The media reported at least three attacks on schools during the two years, including the following:

- On October 30, 2016, *Masr al-Arabiya* reported that a suicide bomber exploded a car at al-Yaser School in al-Arish, Northern Sinai governorate. The attack significantly damaged the school building and property.⁷⁸⁴
- Nine days later, on November 9, 2016, security forces reportedly defused an explosive device planted by unknown attackers near Abu-Bakr al-Siddiq Preparatory School, also in al-Arish.⁷⁸⁵
- On February 3, 2017, fighters reported by local media to be associated with an 'IS' affiliate remotely detonated explosives planted at a state-run school in Rafah in the northern Sinai. The school had previously been caught in artillery fire between security forces and 'IS'. No students were attending school at the time. The media stated that the attack had been conducted to prevent Egyptian security forces from using the roof of the school to monitor the armed group.⁷⁸⁶

Attacks on school students, teachers, and other education personnel

As during the 2009-2013 period documented in *Education under Attack 2014*, arrests and targeted killings sporadically affected primary and secondary school students and teachers between 2013 and 2017.

In 2013, local media reported the arrests of one teacher and seven high school students:

- In May, Egyptian officials arrested a Christian school teacher after her students accused her of expressing disdain for Islam. She was ordered to pay more than 25 years of her salary as punishment.⁷⁸⁷
- In September 2013, seven high school students were arrested during a student-led protest in Faiyum.⁷⁸⁸

Between 2014 and 2017, local media reported at least three targeted attacks on teachers carried out by fighters suspected of being affiliated with 'IS', along with one allegedly carried out by Egyptian security forces:

- On January 13, 2015, assailants suspected to be with 'IS' in the Sinai Province reportedly shot and killed a female teacher in Sheikh Zuweid town.⁷⁸⁹
- Two years later, on January 17, 2017, anonymous gunmen on a motorbike opened fire on a teacher in the center of al-Arish city, killing him.⁷⁹⁰
- On February 16, 2017, Coptic Christian teacher Gamal Tawfiq died in a similar incident in the same city. He was shot by two men on a motorbike as he walked to al-Samran School. According to media sources, security officials suspected that 'IS' in the Sinai Province was responsible for the killing.⁷⁹¹
- In the one case implicating Egyptian security forces, Amnesty International alleged that teacher Mohamed Abdelsatar was disappeared on April 9, 2017, and later extrajudicially executed. Abdelsatar was reportedly taken from Abdel Samie Saloma School, the Al-Azhar University affiliate where he worked, by plainclothes officers on the morning of April 9. Egyptian police denied the claim, stating that Abdelsatar had belonged to an armed group and was killed in an exchange of fire with police.⁷⁹²

In addition to these individual attacks, a local media source reported that Sinai Province fighters repeatedly stopped school buses taking teachers from al-Arish to Rafah in March 2017. They threatened to kill or mutilate with acid women teachers who were not accompanied by male relatives and did not abide by "dress codes."⁷⁹³

Sexual violence by armed parties at, or en route to or from, school or university

At least two cases of sexual violence against students were reported between 2013 and 2017, one affecting a female student and one affecting a male student. Both cases occurred in the context of protests in Cairo in 2013 and 2014, during which rights groups documented patterns of sexual harassment and abuse.⁷⁹⁴

- Amnesty International reported testimony from a female Al-Azhar University student, who accused Egyptian Central Security Forces of detaining her on campus on December 30, 2013. The security forces allegedly dragged her across the pavement, beat her with batons, and kicked her, before taking her into a police van and threatening to rape her. She told Amnesty International that the police officers continued to beat her with batons after she was transferred to the police station.⁷⁹⁵
- According to the *Guardian*, plainclothes police officers arrested a 19-year-old male student leader on March 24, 2014, after a student protest. The student alleged that the police officers beat him, gave him electric shocks on his genitals, armpits, fingers, and stomach, and sexually assaulted him.⁷⁹⁶

Attacks on higher education

Attacks on education occurred more frequently in Egypt's higher education sector than at the primary or secondary levels, with dozens of students, professors, and university personnel killed or injured and more than 1,000 detained or arrested.⁷⁹⁷ The most frequent forms of attack included the arrest of Egyptian and foreign national university students and academics in relation to anti-government protests that took place on campus. This violence peaked in 2013 and 2014. In addition, unidentified attackers and non-state armed groups used explosives to target university campuses. Both forms of attack were similar to those reported in *Education under Attack 2014*, but they were documented more frequently over the 2013-2017 period.

In 2013, there were several cases of Egyptian security forces arresting students and professors or injuring or killing students while responding to student protests on campus.⁷⁹⁸ One incident occurred during the first half of 2013, but the majority took place during the second half of the year, after General El-Sisi became president. Media sources reported that Egyptian security personnel used force to break up protests and arrested students at Cairo University, Zagazig Uni-

versity in Sharqia governorate, and Al-Azhar University in al-Arish city, Northern Sinai governorate. Examples included the following:

- According to the Scholars at Risk Network, on April 16, 2013, Suez Canal University professor Dr. Mona Price began receiving death threats after delivering a lecture in which she referred to a poster hung on campus by Salafist students as an example of sectarianism. The university responded to these attacks by informally suspending Dr. Price without pay, after first advising her to stay at home because they could not guarantee her safety. She was also subject to a disciplinary investigation.⁷⁹⁹
- Scholars at Risk also reported that five days later, on November 21, 2013, Egyptian police shot sixth-year medical student Abdel Ghany Hamouda in the head as they broke up a protest at Al-Azhar University. Protesters were demonstrating against the military coup and the new government's crackdown on Muslim Brotherhood supporters.⁸⁰⁰
- On November 28, 2013, police reportedly used live bullets and teargas to disperse a protest on the Cairo University campus, shooting and killing a 19-year-old engineering student named Mohamed Reda, according to Scholars at Risk. Protesters were objecting to the 11-year prison sentences imposed on 14 adult female students, and the unspecified juvenile detention time given to 7 minor female students for their involvement in pro-Morsi protests. Egypt's Ministry of Interior denied using lethal force.⁸⁰¹
- Egyptian police allegedly used teargas and live ammunition to disperse crowds of protesting students at Al-Azhar University on December 28, 2013, during clashes between student supporters of former president Morsi and other students. One student was killed in the incident, another was left in critical condition, and three others were less seriously injured. Two university buildings were reportedly damaged.⁸⁰²

According to media sources, there were also two explosive attacks by unknown perpetrators in 2013, both of which affected Al-Azhar University in Cairo:

- On December 26, 2013, a bomb reportedly exploded on a bus in the road near student dormitories, injuring four to five people on the bus. It did not appear that students were among those injured.⁸⁰³
- A second explosive device was discovered and defused outside the Al-Azhar University faculty of medicine on December 29, 2013.⁸⁰⁴

Similar patterns of violence occurring during student protests continued in 2014, with allegations that security forces responded to both peaceful and violent student protests with disproportionate force.⁸⁰⁵ SAIH and AFTE reported that, between September 2013 and July 2014, Egyptian security forces killed 18 university students and detained close to 1,000.⁸⁰⁶ Violence reportedly affected Cairo University, Ain Shams University, Al-Azhar University, and Alexandria University. After only a handful of incidents in early 2014, violence surged after the summer break. For example:

- On January 23, 2014, Egyptian security forces used teargas and live ammunition against protesting Alexandria University students who were throwing stones at them. One student was shot and killed, several others were injured.⁸⁰⁷
- On May 20, 2014, pro-Muslim Brotherhood students protesting at Cairo University to gain the release of several of their colleagues threw lit firecrackers at security officers. The officers responded by firing live bullets, killing an engineering student and injuring at least one other.⁸⁰⁸
- Amnesty International reported that from October 11 to October 17, 2014, at least 200 students had been arrested and 90 injured during protests, according to information from the Marsad Tolab Horreya (Student Freedom Observatory).⁸⁰⁹ By the end of the year, 15 Zagazig University students and 8 Al-Azhar University students were facing prosecution in military court for their participation in on-campus protests.⁸¹⁰
- Scholars at Risk also reported that several students from Al-Azhar University and Zagazig University were arrested during protests in December 2014. Five of the students from Al-Azhar were accused of setting fire to a university office.⁸¹¹

In addition to the protest-related violence, explosives, often set by unidentified attackers, targeted Egyptian universities in at least six cases reported by local media sources in 2014.⁸¹² In some cases, the bombs appeared to target security personnel located just outside the universities. Examples included:

- A group calling itself the Soldiers of Egypt reportedly claimed responsibility for three bombs that affected Cairo University on April 2, 2014. The bombs may have been directed at police stationed just outside the university. The first two devices exploded near the faculty of engineering, and the third explosion occurred near the main university gate approximately two hours later. A fourth bomb was found in a car parked near the university but was safely defused. The explosions killed a senior police official and wounded between five and nine other individuals. The Soldiers of Egypt stated that the attack was retribution for the Egyptian government's detention of girls and women.⁸¹³
- Six days later, on April 8, 2014, Egyptian security forces reportedly found 12 explosive devices planted by unknown individuals at Ain Shams University in Cairo. The devices were safely defused.⁸¹⁴
- On May 19, 2014, a bomb planted by unknown attackers reportedly detonated at Ain Shams University during a protest, wounding at least one person.⁸¹⁵
- On October 22, 2014, media sources reported that nine people, including five police officers, were wounded when a bomb exploded outside the gates of Cairo University.⁸¹⁶

The rate of reported violence affecting higher education appeared to decline after the start of the 2014-2015 school year. SAIH and AFTE reported that, between September 2014 and July 2015, Egyptian security forces killed 3 students and arrested 162 during protests, a marked reduction from the previous year.⁸¹⁷ In addition, there were at least four reported explosive attacks affecting universities. The majority of these explosions affected Zagazig University, whose president was also reportedly attacked by unidentified individuals:

- According to international and local news sources, on March 28, 2015, a bomb exploded near a subway entrance next to the Cairo University campus, injuring eight people, including police officers stationed at the university entrance. The Soldiers of Egypt claimed responsibility.⁸¹⁸
- On May 1, 2015, a bomb reportedly detonated at the Zagazig University stadium, damaging the building.⁸¹⁹
- A media source reported that another bomb detonated at the Zagazig University pharmacy faculty building approximately six months later, on October 10, 2015. A second explosive went off in front of the University's College of Engineering that same day. No one was killed or injured in either blast, and no group claimed responsibility for either incident.⁸²⁰
- On December 17, 2015, three unidentified attackers reportedly injured the Zagazig University president as he was leaving his home.⁸²¹

Protest-related violence continued to slow during the 2015-2016 school year. SAIH and AFTE documented 21 arrests of university students.⁸²² There were also two attacks on doctoral candidates at the beginning of 2016, both of which appeared to be connected to their scholarly research:

- On January 25, 2016, Giulio Regeni, an Italian doctoral student, disappeared. He was later found dead. Regeni had been researching an emerging street vendors' union. Investigative media sources suspected that Egyptian authorities were responsible for Regeni's death because of the government's concern that the street vendors were becoming increasingly difficult to control as a group.⁸²³
- In February 2016, Medhat Maher, another doctoral candidate at Cairo University, was arrested and accused of belonging to the Muslim Brotherhood. Maher had reportedly been researching Islamic movements and owned books related to the topic. The evidence against him included books related to his research.⁸²⁴

By 2017 there were no more reports of protest-related violence affecting university students or personnel. However, there were reports of at least one explosive attack targeting a university and one case of university students being detained and deported:

- *Daily News Egypt* reported that on February 4, 2017, unknown attackers suspected to be members of the Sinai Province blew up an institute affiliated with Al-Azhar University.⁸²⁵
- According to Human Rights Watch and media reports, beginning on July 2, 2017, Egyptian police began targeting shops, restaurants, and student dormitories where university students from the Chinese Uighur ethnic group were known to congregate and detaining them. Chinese authorities sought the return of Uighur students studying abroad throughout 2017, according to Human Rights Watch.⁸²⁶

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⁷⁶² Human Rights Watch, *World Report 2017*, Egypt chapter. Amnesty International, *Annual Report Egypt 2016/2017* (New York: Amnesty International, 2017), pp. 146-149. "Egypt: Raba'a Killings Likely Crimes against Humanity," Human Rights Watch news release, August 12, 2014.

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⁷⁶⁴ "Egypt: Untamed Repression," Human Rights Watch news release, January 18, 2018.

⁷⁶⁵ Human Rights Watch, *World Report 2016*, Egypt chapter. Human Rights Watch, *World Report 2018*, Egypt chapter. Amnesty International, *Annual Report Egypt 2016/2017*.

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⁷⁶⁸ "In pictures: Fire destroys historic downtown school," *Egypt Independent*, January 27, 2013, as cited in GCEPA, *Education under Attack 2014*, p. 136.

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⁷⁷⁶ Human Rights Watch, *World Report 2016*, Egypt chapter.

⁷⁷⁷ "Hosted Product: Sinai Weekly Summary 15-28 January 2015," Israeli Government, January 30, 2015," as cited in START, GTD 201501190114.

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⁷⁸⁰ David D. Kirkpatrick, "Militants Kill Three Police Officers in Egypt as Violent Attacks Spread," *New York Times*, March 9, 2015.

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