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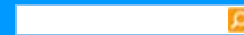
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UNICEF condemns attacks on schools in Afghanistan



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In Kandahar Province, Afghanistan, a page from a school notebook that bears the UNICEF logo lies amid other burnt papers and books.

KABUL, Afghanistan, 14 November 2008 – UNICEF has condemned the increasing number of attacks on schools and students in Afghanistan. A recent acid attack on 15 female students walking to school in the southern city of Kandahar blinded two of the girls and injured two others.

"We are concerned about the rising number of attacks on schools, teachers and students that are being targeted. The violence has to stop," said UNICEF Representative in Afghanistan Catherine Mbengue.

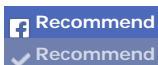
So far this year, there have been 256 violent school incidents, resulting in some 58 deaths and 46 injuries. In 2007, arsonists were to blame for a total of 236 school incidents.

A safe space for children

Communities in war-torn Afghanistan have been working to overcome violence and other obstacles that can hinder children, especially girls, from attending school.

Despite the often difficult environment, student enrolment in the country has continued to rise. Over 6 million Afghan children now attend school, in comparison to 3 million in 2002.

UNICEF maintains that schools should provide a safe space for children and that the targeting of schools, innocent teachers and school children must cease.



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