

THE PHILIPPINES

More than 1,000 students and educators in the southern Philippines, particularly those working in indigenous community schools, reportedly experienced threats, harassment, and intimidation. There were also reports that government forces and paramilitary groups used more than 30 schools as bases and camps, and that non-state armed groups recruited children from schools. In approximately one dozen cases, universities were reportedly bombed and university personnel killed, often for unknown reasons.

Context

After several decades of violence, the Philippines continued to be affected by two increasingly fragmented conflicts: a Moro insurgency focused in the southern Philippines, primarily in the Mindanao region, and a communist insurgency that particularly affected indigenous Lumad communities.

The Moro insurgency involved the Armed Forces of the Philippines (AFP) and several non-state armed groups: the Moro National Liberation Front (MNLF), the Moro Islamic Liberation Front (MILF), the 'IS'-affiliated Abu Sayyaf Group (ASG), and the Bangsamoro Islamic Freedom Fighters (BIFF).¹⁷¹⁰ Despite a peace agreement signed in 2012 by the government and the MILF, the conflict continued throughout the reporting period, with increasing involvement from groups claiming affiliation with 'IS.'¹⁷¹¹

In addition, the communist New People's Army (NPA) fought the AFP and paramilitary groups, such as the Alamara and the Magahat-Bahani, which allegedly had ties to the Philippine military. This conflict displaced thousands from Lumad communities, whom the government accused of supporting communist groups.¹⁷¹² In early 2017, the NPA announced the end to a ceasefire with the government, citing the expansion of a state military presence in villages across the country, and the Philippine government later put peace talks on hold.¹⁷¹³

A new president, Rodrigo Duterte, took office in June 2016 pledging a hard line against criminals and the drug trade. Human rights groups subsequently reported a rise in the excessive use of force by government security forces.¹⁷¹⁴

In 2016, CEDAW expressed concern about increased gender-based violence in conflict-affected areas by members of the AFP and others. This included both killings and sexual abuse.¹⁷¹⁵

The Moro and communist insurgencies created significant impediments to education. Hundreds of thousands of people were displaced in areas affected by separatist violence, and clashes between armed groups led to the suspension of classes for thousands of students.¹⁷¹⁶ In Lumad communities, government forces closed schools, which they accused of being run by the NPA, and harassed and intimidated teachers and students.¹⁷¹⁷ In the 2013-2017 reporting period, GCPEA found an increase in all forms of attacks on education reported in the Philippines over the 2009-2013 timeframe covered in *Education under Attack 2014*.

Attacks on schools

The reported level of attacks on schools was higher from 2013 to 2017 than in the period covered in *Education under Attack 2014*. This violence took the form of explosives planted at schools, arson, gun and grenade attacks, and bomb threats. During 2013 and 2016, schools were targeted for their use as polling stations. The UN noted with concern the high number of attacks on indigenous schools throughout the reporting period and observed that these attacks intensified after 2015. The UN verified 24 attacks on schools between December 1, 2012, and December 31, 2016.¹⁷¹⁸ In 2017 alone, more than a dozen schools were reportedly damaged in the southern Philippines during fighting between the AFP and two IS-affiliated groups in Marawi city.¹⁷¹⁹

In 2013, the Children's Rehabilitation Center (CRC), a nonprofit NGO in the Philippines, reported 23 attacks on schools, while GCPEA found seven attacks reported by the UN and media sources.¹⁷²⁰ Some incidents found by GCPEA may have been the same as those documented by the CRC. These attacks occurred in the southern region of the country, particularly in the provinces of North Cotabato, Zamboanga del Norte, and Maguindanao. For example:

- BIFF fighters allegedly opened fire on a public school in North Cotabato province on April 5, 2013, according to media reports. The group stated that the attack was a response to the arrest and killing of one of its members.¹⁷²¹

- Media sources also reported that on May 17, 2013, an IED planted by unknown assailants at the Salung National High School in Zamboanga del Norte province damaged a classroom.¹⁷²²
- Three attacks verified by the UN occurred in September 2013. They involved schools being burned and being destroyed by crossfire between the MNLF and the AFP in Zamboanga city.¹⁷²³
- An arson attack destroyed a daycare facility in Montawal town, Maguindanao province, in November 2013. Local media reported that the followers of a defeated candidate for chairman of the *barangay* (village) set the fire and that authorities attributed the attack to the MILF.¹⁷²⁴

In addition to the seven incidents described above, GCPEA identified eight media reports of attacks targeting schools because of their use as voting stations:

- Three attacks by unknown assailants reportedly targeted schools being used as polling stations for national government mid-term elections on May 13, 2013. Two involved grenades thrown at schools. In the third, unidentified perpetrators opened fire on a school, killing an election poll security guard.¹⁷²⁵
- Five further incidents, which involved arson, explosive devices, and gunfire, targeted schools serving as polling centers for *barangay* official elections in October. For example, in two separate incidents on October 26, 2013, in Digos city, Davao del Sur province, unidentified assailants on motorcycles threw Molotov cocktails at schools. Both of the schools were reportedly damaged in the ensuing fires.¹⁷²⁶

The CRC documented 64 attacks on schools in 2014.¹⁷²⁷ The UN verified five incidents of fighting between the armed forces and the BIFF and between the Philippines national police and the NPA that damaged schools over the course of the year.¹⁷²⁸ GCPEA found five reports of specific attacks that year reported by media and NGO sources, all occurring in the south of the country.¹⁷²⁹ It is unclear whether there was overlap among these different incident counts. Examples included:

- On March 18, 2014, a school run by the Rural Missionaries of the Philippines-Northern Mindanao was hit by gunfire during a rehearsal for the upcoming graduation ceremony, according to the Save Our Schools Network.¹⁷³⁰
- SOS recorded three attacks in October 2014 in Surigao del Sur province, including an arson attack on a school in Kabulohan *barangay* on October 27, 2014, allegedly by the AFP.¹⁷³¹

SOS reported 84 attacks on 57 schools between January 2014 and September 2015. The group alleged that paramilitary and military forces were responsible for most of these incidents, which displaced more than 3,000 Lumad children.¹⁷³² The UN verified 12 attacks during 2015. The military and paramilitary groups were responsible for 10 attacks (the Magahat 5, the Alamara 2, and the AFP 3), while the NPA and the BIFF were responsible for the other two.¹⁷³³ Media and NGO reports documented seven attacks on schools in 2015.¹⁷³⁴ It is possible that there was some overlap of incidents across the SOS, UN, and media totals, and it should be noted that SOS likely used a different definition of attacks on schools than the UN, and thus included more incidents of threats and harassment. Attacks on schools in 2015 included the following:

- Media sources reported two arson attacks on schools in 2015. The first took place in May in Parang town, Maguindanao province.¹⁷³⁵ The second took place in November in Sibagat municipality, Agusan del Sur province, and in Parang town, Maguindanao province.¹⁷³⁶
- According to SOS, government forces fired indiscriminately at a Salungpungan Ta' Tanu Igkanugon Community Learning Center (STTICLC) on July 26, 2015, and at Tibucag Elementary School on July 26 and August 3, 2015, both in Talaingod, Davao del Norte province.¹⁷³⁷
- Government soldiers reportedly destroyed school property and forced the closure of a Lumad school on October 23, 2015, also according to SOS.¹⁷³⁸

In 2016 there were again reports of attacks on schools that were used as polling stations. Media reports collated by GCPEA indicated that 15 schools were attacked because of their use as polling stations between April 27 and May 11, 2016. Methods of attack included explosives, firearms, and arson.¹⁷³⁹ The UN verified ten attacks affecting twelve schools

in 2016, of which two were attributed to the armed forces, one to the Bangsamoro Freedom Fighters, and seven were unknown.¹⁷⁴⁰ Attacks on schools in 2016 included the following:

- On April 27, 2016, grenades and antitank rockets were reportedly fired into six school buildings that were to be used as polling stations, according to news sources. No one was reported injured, and no group claimed responsibility for the attacks.¹⁷⁴¹
- On May 9, 2016, unidentified attackers set fire to polling centers at Dilausan Primary School in Tamparan town and Ragayan Elementary School in Poona Bayabao town, both in Lanao del Sur province. There were no injuries in the attacks.¹⁷⁴²
- On May 11, 2016, unidentified attackers threw a grenade at a primary school in Mohammad Ajul in Basilan province, where votes were being counted. No one was reported injured in the attack.¹⁷⁴³

Media reports indicated that schools in Marawi city were highly affected by armed conflict in 2017, after two groups affiliated with 'IS'—the Maute group and ASG—attempted to take control of the city and the AFP responded. Between May 23, 2017, and August 8, 2017, fighting between anti-government groups and government forces damaged at least 14 schools, according to the Philippines Department of Education.¹⁷⁴⁴ The UN was able to verify six of the cases as of September 2017.¹⁷⁴⁵

The Philippine government and armed forces singled out indigenous community schools. In July 2017, President Duterte issued a public statement in which he threatened to bomb indigenous Lumad schools in Mindanao for allegedly teaching communism and encouraging rebellion. In the statement, the president also ended peace negotiations with the NPA. President Duterte later said that he was not encouraging harm to Lumad children, only to the school buildings.¹⁷⁴⁶ According to SOS, the AFP, the Citizen Armed Force Geographical Unit (CAFGU), an auxiliary force, and paramilitary forces were also responsible for physical damage to several indigenous schools that year. For example:

- SOS alleged that members of the 84th Infantry Battalion of the AFP and suspected paramilitary groups damaged one Lumad school each in Compostela Valley province between December 8, 2016, and January 3, 2017.¹⁷⁴⁷
- Also according to SOS, a member of the CAFGU fired his gun three times at an STTICLC building in Talaingod, Davao Del Norte province, on June 20, 2017.¹⁷⁴⁸

Attacks on school students, teachers, and other education personnel

Teachers and other education personnel experienced a high number of individually targeted attacks related to education, including threats, kidnappings, and killings. These threats closed some schools and particularly affected Lumad communities. As with attacks on schools, reports of individually targeted attacks on students and educators appeared to increase from the period reported in *Education under Attack 2014*, when approximately 20 attacks of this type were found. Individually targeted attacks on students and educators also appeared to increase over the course of the current reporting period.

The UN verified 41 cases of teachers being threatened with violence and 12 school personnel being killed, injured, or abducted between December 1, 2012, and December 31, 2016.¹⁷⁴⁹ SOS, which had a broader definition of attacks on students and educators, including threats, harassment, and intimidation, documented 71 incidents of attacks directly targeting learners and educators that affected 859 students and 142 education personnel. Most of these attacks were in the form of threats, harassment, and intimidation.¹⁷⁵⁰

At least 13 cases of harassment, attempted and actual killing, and abduction targeted 18 students and 57 teachers and other education personnel in 2013, according to media and NGO reports compiled by GCPEA.¹⁷⁵¹ Unidentified gunmen were responsible for the majority of these incidents. For example:

- On January 22, 2013, gunmen shot and kidnapped the principal of a madrassa, who was also a Muslim scholar, in Labuan, Zamboanga city, Zamboanga del Sur. He remained missing as of the end of August 2013. Human rights groups suspected that state security forces were responsible for the abduction.¹⁷⁵²
- At least two killings occurred before the May 13 elections in Maguindanao, resulting in the deaths of a head teacher in Sultan Mastura town and the district education supervisor of General S. K. Pendatun town.¹⁷⁵³

- Later in the year, unidentified gunmen ambushed, shot, and killed a school district deputy education supervisor in Talayan municipality on June 17, 2013.¹⁷⁵⁴
- In Basilan, on August 26, 2013, unidentified gunmen shot at three teachers who were on their way home from school in Lamitan city. The attack killed two of the teachers and injured the third.¹⁷⁵⁵

Information from NGO and media sources indicated that there were at least 15 incidents of attacks affecting approximately 14 students and 22 educators in 2014.¹⁷⁵⁶ This included actual and attempted killings and abductions, along with threats, harassment, and intimidation. Unidentified gunmen were responsible for most of the killings and abductions, while government forces or paramilitary groups were allegedly responsible for the threats, harassment, and intimidation. For example:

- On August 31, 2014, unidentified attackers shot and killed a district education supervisor and her husband while they were riding on their motorbike in Pikit town, North Cotabato province.¹⁷⁵⁷
- According to local media sources, unknown gunmen were responsible for the attempted abduction of four teachers in Tagbak village, Sulu province, on March 10, 2014.¹⁷⁵⁸
- The ASG was suspected of being responsible for the abduction of two married school administrators in Zamboanga del Sur province on January 27, 2018, and the group claimed responsibility for the abduction of a school principal in Libug village, Basilan province on March 31, 2014. All of those abducted were later released.¹⁷⁵⁹
- SOS documented threats, harassment, and intimidation of students and teachers at indigenous community schools on March 19 and April 3 in Talaingod, Davao del Norte; on August 4 in Davao city; on October 16 in Tagum city, Davao del Norte; and on October 20, 2014, in Compostela, Compostela Valley province. Government forces were allegedly responsible for these violations, sometimes in coordination with paramilitary group members.¹⁷⁶⁰

In 2015, sporadic killings and abductions of educators continued, and threats against educators appeared to escalate. The UN verified the killing of one school director, the maiming of one teacher, and threats against 40 teachers in 2015.¹⁷⁶¹ According to SOS, paramilitary groups harassed groups of students and teachers in Lumad areas in Mindanao with increasing frequency.¹⁷⁶² Media sources and SOS reported at least 31 incidents of intimidation, harassment, and threat directed at 289 students and 104 education personnel in 2015.¹⁷⁶³ The extent to which SOS reports overlapped with the UN-verified incidents was unclear. The targeted killings and abductions, and the incidents of threats, harassment, or intimidation, included the following:

- Human Rights Watch reported that on January 5, 2015, soldiers and members of the Alamara paramilitary group stopped a teacher in Talaingod on his way to school and told him they would kill him and “chop him up” if he continued on to school.¹⁷⁶⁴
- A student at a Mindanao Interfaith Services Foundation (MISFI) Academy in Kapalong town, Davao del Norte province, reported to Human Rights Watch that soldiers and the Alamara harassed her and her classmates, accusing them of working with the NPA. She noted one incident in February 2015 when the Alamara fired guns in the air as she passed them.¹⁷⁶⁵
- The UN reported that the Alamara group also threatened four teachers on their way to school in Davao del Norte province in February 2015. In March 2015, the group again threatened the teachers, this time in coordination with the AFP, and interrogated them about their alleged links to the NPA.¹⁷⁶⁶
- In early March 2015, suspected ASG members kidnapped two teachers from Moalboal village in Zamboanga Sibugay province, holding one hostage until May 14, 2015, and the other until July 12, 2015, according to local media.¹⁷⁶⁷
- A widely reported targeted assassination, which was documented by human rights groups and the UN, occurred on September 1, 2015, when the Magahat paramilitary group allegedly tortured and killed educator Emerito “Tatay Emok” Samarca, the executive director of the Alternative Learning Center for Agriculture and Development and a convener of the SOS Network in Surigao del Sur province.¹⁷⁶⁸ According to media reports, the Magahat stated that they killed Samarca because they did not approve of his ideology in educating students.¹⁷⁶⁹ The violent attack caused several thousand community members to flee to an evacuation camp in Tandag city.¹⁷⁷⁰

- Some teachers reportedly experienced repeated harassment. For example, members of the Alamara allegedly threatened, harassed, and intimidated two STTICLC teachers on November 23, 2015. One of the two teachers was reportedly harassed a second time on December 19, 2015, along with a third teacher.¹⁷⁷¹

Similar trends continued in 2016, with sporadic cases of killing and abduction. Teachers and students from indigenous communities in the Mindanao area also reportedly faced a high level of harassment and intimidation from the military and paramilitary groups. SOS and media sources documented 31 incidents of threats, harassment, and intimidation affecting 243 students and 36 teachers in 2016.¹⁷⁷² Unknown assailants were responsible for most cases of killing and abduction, and government and paramilitary forces were allegedly responsible for most cases of threats and harassment. Individually targeted attacks in 2016 included the following:

- Media sources documented an incident in which unidentified assailants opened fire on a daycare teacher at his home in Palma Gil, Davao del Norte province, on January 26, 2016. The teacher was unharmed in the attack. Sources attributed the incident to the NPA.¹⁷⁷³
- According to SOS, a high school student at a MISFI Academy was harassed on February 14, 2016, and again on June 15, 2016, allegedly by members of the AFP's 68th battalion.¹⁷⁷⁴
- According to media sources, on June 30, 2016, attackers suspected to be ASG members abducted a child in front of a school in Patikul district, Sulu province. The outcome of the kidnapping was unknown.¹⁷⁷⁵
- Local civil society groups reported that, in October and November 2016, government officials harassed students and teachers at the Lumad School Diya Menuwa, run by the Center for Lumad Advocacy and Services in Palimbang, Sultan Kudarat province, and distributed flyers that threatened to arrest educators.¹⁷⁷⁶

These patterns of violence and harassment continued in 2017. From January through July 2017, SOS and media sources documented 22 cases of threats and harassment affecting 37 educators and 304 students in indigenous communities.¹⁷⁷⁷ There also was one instance of a teacher abduction, allegedly by members of the ASG. For example:

- A member of the Alamara paramilitary group harassed and intimidated three MISFI teachers in Davao city, Davao del Norte, during the first week of January 2017, according to SOS.¹⁷⁷⁸
- SOS reported that the Bagani paramilitary group threatened, harassed, and intimidated 168 students and 9 teachers and education personnel at the Father Fausto Tentorio Memorial School in Magpet, North Cotabato province, on February 18, 2017.¹⁷⁷⁹
- A female indigenous school teacher was threatened and harassed on eight occasions in Talaingod, Davao del Norte province, between August 17, 2015, and March 3, 2017. Her family was also harassed on April 22, 2016, according to SOS. According to the NGO, those responsible were unidentified but were suspected to be members of the state intelligence services.¹⁷⁸⁰
- Local media reported an incident on March 11, 2017, in which gunmen suspected to be part of ASG abducted a public school teacher in Patikul town, Sulu, while he was on his way home.¹⁷⁸¹
- Media sources reported that an STTICLC teacher was shot three times, but not killed, in Talaingod, Davao del Norte, on June 20, 2017. The CAFGU was allegedly responsible for the attack. The teacher had reportedly been threatened previously by the CAFGU and was said to have sought but not received support from the Department of Education.¹⁷⁸²

Military use of schools

Dozens of schools reportedly continued to be used for military purposes between 2013 and 2017, as they were in the period covered in *Education under Attack 2014*. In the majority of cases, government armed forces allegedly used schools as bases or interrogation centers, or for lodging. Paramilitary groups were sometimes reported to use schools jointly with the AFP. In a few cases, non-state armed groups also reportedly used schools as fighting positions.

The UN reported that 31 schools were used for military purposes, the majority by Philippine security forces, between December 1, 2012, and December 31, 2016.¹⁷⁸³ Similar information provided to SOS indicated that schools were used for military purposes in 37 cases between 2013 and 2017.¹⁷⁸⁴ It is not clear how many of these cases overlapped with

those verified by the UN. SOS alleged that members of the armed forces and armed groups threatened, harassed, and intimidated the teachers and students at the schools they were occupying, affecting a reported total of approximately 3,194 students and 103 teachers.¹⁷⁸⁵ Military use of schools appeared to become more common over the course of the reporting period.

In 2013 there were at least two cases of schools used by the AFP and one case of schools use by the BIFF:

- In July 2013, the UN verified an incident in which three boys from Maguindanao province were detained, interrogated, and abused by members of the AFP in a school. The army accused the boys, who were ages 16 and 17, of being members of the BIFF.¹⁷⁸⁶
- In another case, international media reported that the AFP used a school as a base during a battle with armed separatist groups that took place in September 2013 in Zamboanga province. It was unclear how long the school served as an army base.¹⁷⁸⁷
- The BIFF also used a school in North Cotabato province as a defensive position on September 23, 2013. According to local media and information verified by the UN, during their occupation the BIFF held approximately adults and children hostage and abducted nine teachers who tried to vacate the school.¹⁷⁸⁸

There were again reports that AFP, along with paramilitary groups, used schools in 2014. Information from SOS indicated that there were 10 cases of military use between January and December 2014.¹⁷⁸⁹ The UN verified the use of six schools, which may have overlapped with those reported by SOS.¹⁷⁹⁰ Of the UN-verified cases, the AFP was responsible for five incidents that occurred during operations against the BIFF, and the BIFF was responsible for one incident.¹⁷⁹¹ For example:

- On January 2, 2014, the BIFF used a school during fighting with the Philippine army and set fire to the school as members retreated, according to the UN.¹⁷⁹²
- SOS reported that an STTICLC elementary school-kindergarten was used by 37 members of the 25th Infantry Battalion of the AFP in Magayan, Compostela Valley province, from October 3, 2013, through January 24, 2014. The military personnel based there allegedly threatened, harassed, and intimidated 130 students at the school.¹⁷⁹³
- According to SOS, the 60th Infantry Division of the AFP used a school and the teachers' staff house in Sitio Km. 30 in Tailaingod, Davao del Norte province, as barracks from March 26 to March 30, 2014.
- In another incident reported by SOS, the army used the Salugpungan community school in Sitio Nasilaban in Tailaingod, Davao del Norte province, from April 1 to April 12, 2014.¹⁷⁹⁴
- SOS also reported that in October 2014, the 68th Infantry Division of the army and the Alamara paramilitary group slept in a school in Sitio Laslasakan in Palma Gil village, Davao del Norte province. The group also looted the building and tampered with the teachers' materials.¹⁷⁹⁵

The UN verified 10 cases of military use of schools in 2015. The AFP was responsible for more than half. In six cases they used the schools alone, and in three cases they used them jointly with paramilitary groups. The UN verified one case of a school used by the BIFF.¹⁷⁹⁶ SOS reported 11 incidents of military use of schools by the AFP and paramilitary groups that same year.¹⁷⁹⁷ The SOS-reported cases may have overlapped with those verified by the UN. The incidents reported included the following:

- According to SOS, more than 100 members of the Alamara, CAFGU, and 60th Infantry Battalion of the AFP used a MISFI Academy in Kapalong, Davao del Norte, as a base from February 6 to February 12, 2016, reportedly harassing and intimidating 144 students and 4 teachers.¹⁷⁹⁸
- Human Rights Watch reported that the AFP and paramilitaries used schools in 2015, such as a Salugpungan school in Talaingod. Soldiers slept in the classrooms and teachers' quarters and harassed students, asking them about the NPA.¹⁷⁹⁹
- The 67th Infantry Battalion of the AFP reportedly camped in Paglusnagan Primary School and the Yapasay Elementary School Annex, both in Cateel municipality, Davao Oriental province, from May to September 2015, which affected 23 students and 2 teachers, according to SOS.¹⁸⁰⁰

Military use of schools decreased slightly in 2016, to eight cases verified by the UN. Of these, six were attributed to national security forces and two to the Maute group. Four of these schools were attacked while they were occupied.¹⁸⁰¹ Local and international media and civil society groups reported 14 cases of school occupation in 2016.¹⁸⁰² At least four cases involved encampment by AFP soldiers, according to SOS.¹⁸⁰³ Some cases of military use reported by the media and NGOs may have overlapped with those verified by the UN. Examples included the following:

- The *Philippine Daily Inquirer* reported that on June 1, 2016, evacuees from Barangay Palma Gil in Talaingod, Davao del Norte province, returned home but were unable to return to class because soldiers were still using the school.¹⁸⁰⁴
- SOS reported that the 46th Infantry Battalion used a school in Compostela, Compostela Valley, on June 23, 2014, allegedly threatening and harassing a 12-year-old female student while encamped there.¹⁸⁰⁵
- According to SOS, on November 10, 2016, eight soldiers used the grounds of a Salugpongan community school in Compostela Valley. The soldiers allegedly told the teachers they would remain in the school until the new year in order to observe the community.¹⁸⁰⁶
- Members of an 'IS'-affiliated group allegedly used a high school in Butig municipality, Lanao del Sur province, in late November 2016, according to media reports, which stated that the school was used during a battle with Philippine troops.¹⁸⁰⁷
- On December 13, 2016, the *Northern Dispatch Weekly* wrote that the 50th Infantry Battalion of the AFP was staying in Western Uma Elementary School in Kalinga province in the northern part of the country.¹⁸⁰⁸

GCPEA compiled information on 11 cases of military use of schools and universities during 2017 from SOS reports and media sources.¹⁸⁰⁹ As during the previous years, the majority of these cases took place in indigenous communities in the southern Philippines, with responsibility most commonly attributed to the AFP and paramilitary groups. For example:

- SOS documented seven cases in Talaingod, Davao del Norte province, between February and June 2017.¹⁸¹⁰
- Local media reported in January 2017 that authorities discovered two bombs in a house on Mindanao State University grounds in Marawi city, Lanao del Sur province. Security forces believed that the house was being used by the Maute group.¹⁸¹¹
- On June 21, 2017, armed fighters alleged to be affiliated with the BIFF attacked Pigcawayan town in North Cotabato province, seizing the Malagakit Elementary School and holding several students hostage for approximately 12 hours. None of the students was reported harmed in the incident.¹⁸¹²

Child recruitment at, or en route to or from, school

UN and media sources indicated that armed groups may have used educational institutions to indoctrinate and recruit children during the reporting period.¹⁸¹³ In September 2017, *Reuters* reported that foreign fighters, including some affiliated with 'IS', were allegedly recruiting students from schools, madrassas, and daycare centers.¹⁸¹⁴ The UN verified two such cases of child recruitment:

- The ASG recruited a 14-year-old boy from a school in 2013. No additional details about this incident were reported.¹⁸¹⁵
- The ASG also recruited three boys ages 14 and 15 from the same school in 2014, and threatened the school director after he encouraged his students not to join the group. The locations of these incidents were not reported.¹⁸¹⁶

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

There was one documented attack on education in the form of sexual violence during the reporting period. Local media reported that on June 20, 2016, gunmen suspected to be ASG members abducted a female teacher at Kanlagay Elementary School in Kalingalan Caluang, Sulu province, later forcing her to marry one of her abductors.¹⁸¹⁷

Attacks on higher education

Research for the current reporting period identified sporadic attacks on higher education. In 2013 and 2014, these attacks were slightly more common than was documented for the years covered in *Education under Attack 2014*, with between seven and ten incidents per year. Rates of reported attacks on higher education appeared to drop in 2015 and later years to two or three per year.

These incidents included bombs and bomb threats directed at universities, arson attacks on university campuses, and abductions and targeted killings of university personnel. As with other violations against education in the Philippines, the majority of the attacks occurred in Mindanao. However, several occurred in other areas, including Metro Manila, and Sorsogon and Pampanga provinces.

In 2013, media sources documented seven attacks on higher education, including three on universities and four on personnel associated with higher education.¹⁸¹⁸ This represented a significant increase from the previous year, when only one attack was reported. For example:

- An education staff member in Western Mindanao State University's Islamic Studies department in Sulu province was reportedly abducted by unidentified assailants on June 22, 2013, and held until July 31, 2013. Although no group claimed responsibility for the attack, media sources suspected that the ASG was responsible.¹⁸¹⁹
- Mortar shells reportedly struck the gymnasium of Zamboanga University on September 23, 2013, damaging the building but not harming anyone. Media sources suspected that non-state armed actors fired the rounds.¹⁸²⁰

During 2014, media sources reported ten attacks on higher education, including six attacks on institutions and four on personnel.¹⁸²¹ These attacks were similar to those that occurred during the previous year. For example:

- On February 26, 2014, unknown actors allegedly set fire to the University of Southern Mindanao administration building in Kabacan town, North Cotabato province, burning parts of it down. A grenade had exploded on the campus previously. The reasons for the attacks were unknown.¹⁸²²
- On August 20, 2014, an explosive device detonated inside the car of a Mindanao State University professor in Cotabato city, Maguindanao province. The professor was unharmed. Although no group took credit for the blast, media sources suspected that the ASG was involved.¹⁸²³
- Local media reported that Rendell Ryan Edpan Cagula, a student activist at the University of the Philippines-Mindanao, was found shot dead on November 4, 2014. The AFP allegedly mistook him for a member of the NPA.¹⁸²⁴

In 2015, GCPEA identified two reports of attacks on higher education, down from ten the previous year. Media sources documented one explosion affecting an institution of higher education in the north, and one attack on higher education personnel in the south, possibly indicating a decrease in violence affecting higher education in the region:

- On February 24, 2017, there was an explosion in the parking lot of the AMA Computer Learning Center campus in Angeles city, Pampanga province.¹⁸²⁵
- On November 21, 2015, unidentified gunmen shot and injured a college official in North Cotabato province.¹⁸²⁶

In 2016 the level of attacks on higher education stayed constant, as bomb threats targeted three universities, including one actual explosion, according to local media sources:

- On March 28, 2016, students and personnel at the Ateneo de Manila University in Metro Manila were evacuated due to a bomb threat.¹⁸²⁷
- On September 6, 2016, the University of Southeastern Philippines campuses in Obrero in Metro Manila and Mintal in Davao city, Davao del Sur province, both received bomb threats. The next day, September 7, St. John Paul II College was also threatened.¹⁸²⁸
- Media sources reported that on April 4, 2016, an explosive device detonated at Cotabato City State Polytechnic College in Maguindanao, injuring three students. It was not clear who was responsible for the attack.¹⁸²⁹

There were at least two reported attacks that affected higher education in 2017, including one on education personnel in the north and one in which a college's infrastructure was caught in the crossfire of fighting in the south:

- On January 7, 2017, unknown assailants on a motorcycle allegedly shot and killed an instructor from the University of Northern Philippines in Vigan city while he was driving his motorcycle along the national highway of San Ramon village.¹⁸³⁰
- On May 23, 2017, Dansalan College was reportedly set on fire during government clashes with the Maute group as they fought over Marawi city, Lanao del Sur province.¹⁸³¹

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