

MYANMAR

Schools were attacked by state armed forces in ethnic conflicts, and students and teachers were targeted during an upsurge of sectarian violence between Buddhists and Muslims in 2013.¹¹²³

CONTEXT

Since 1948 when British colonial rule ended, armed ethnic groups have sought greater autonomy. The democratic elections in 2010 led to ceasefires with several groups in 2011-2012 and with the Kachin Independence Organization (KIO) in 2013.¹¹²⁴ However, threats to education persisted as ethnic and religious violence between Buddhists and Muslims, the descendants of Indian Muslims who arrived under British rule, has continued to erupt periodically.¹¹²⁵

Gross primary enrolment was 126 per cent¹¹²⁶ and net secondary enrolment was 51 per cent (2010).¹¹²⁷ Gross tertiary enrolment was 14 per cent and adult literacy was estimated at 93 per cent (2011).¹¹²⁸

ATTACKS ON SCHOOLS

Schools have been damaged during fighting in eastern and northern Myanmar. In Kayin state, prior to the January 2012 ceasefire with the Karen National Liberation Army, the Myanmar army destroyed schools as well as other properties when they shelled entire villages. For instance, in early February 2010, 200 soldiers attacked K'Dee Mu Der village and destroyed 15 Karen homes, a middle school and a nursery school;¹¹²⁹ in the same month, a high school and nursery school in Thi Baw Tha Kwee Lah village tract were destroyed by Myanmar light infantry battalions;¹¹³⁰ and on 23 July 2010, government forces shelled and then set alight 50

Karen homes, a school and a church in Tha Dah Der, a predominantly Christian village in northern Kayin state.¹¹³¹ In Kachin state, several schools were hit by artillery, although the intention was unclear. In August 2011, it was reported that Myanmar military forces had laid mines close to a school in Myitkyina township to prevent the Kachin Independence Army (KIA) from using it.¹¹³²

ATTACKS ON SCHOOL STUDENTS, TEACHERS AND OTHER EDUCATION PERSONNEL

Children have also been killed and injured in attacks. On 19 February 2010, Myanmar army soldiers in northern Kayin state allegedly killed a 15-year-old student and injured two others when they fired a mortar into a camp for internally displaced persons, hitting a school during examinations. The Karen Human Rights Group claimed the attack was deliberate.¹¹³³

In Kachin state, between June 2011 and January 2013, at least two schools were targeted. Five children and one teacher were seriously injured when the Myanmar army fired on their school in Mansi township in August 2011.¹¹³⁴ On 13 November 2011, 11 young students were killed and 27 injured in a drive-by motorcycle bomb attack on a boarding school in the state capital, Myitkyina.¹¹³⁵

MILITARY USE OF SCHOOLS

Myanmar soldiers have occupied educational premises and forced teachers and students to work for them, according to the Watchlist on Children and Armed Conflict.¹¹³⁶ In May 2011, for example, the army reportedly used village schools as barracks for two weeks, causing some students not to return.¹¹³⁷

ATTACKS ON HIGHER EDUCATION

On 21 May 2010, a prominent imprisoned Burmese student, Kyaw Ko Ko, was sentenced to an additional five years for ‘illegal association and subversion’ because of a speech he had given to students in front of Rangoon City Hall in 2007. Kyaw Ko Ko, who has since been released and is acting as chairperson of the All Burma Federation of Student Unions,¹¹³⁸ was originally arrested for ‘possessing politically sensitive videos’ and ‘trying to reorganize the students’ union’.¹¹³⁹

ATTACKS ON EDUCATION IN 2013

Education in Myanmar faced a new and violent threat from Buddhist nationalists in central and eastern regions in 2013, as schools and students were attacked in outbursts of sectarian violence. On 17 February, it was reported that around 300 Buddhists had attacked an Islamic religious school in Thar-Kay-Ta township, Rangoon,¹¹⁴⁰ and later another Muslim school was burned down in Lashio.¹¹⁴¹ During 20 to 21 March, while armed security forces allegedly stood by, a mob of more than 200 Buddhists torched an Islamic school in Meiktila and killed 32 Muslim students and four teachers; many of them were clubbed, drenched in petrol and burned alive, and one was decapitated, after trying to evade the attackers by hiding in bushes nearby. Seven Buddhists were later jailed in connection with the school massacre.¹¹⁴²

One month later, in July, it was reported that 15 students had been refused permission to attend university in person because they had been absent through imprisonment for fighting for democracy. They were allowed only to resume their studies via distance-learning courses.¹¹⁴³

ENDNOTES MYANMAR

¹¹²³ This profile covers attacks on education in 2009-2012, with an additional section on attacks in 2013.

¹¹²⁴ See ICG, Myanmar: A New Peace Initiative (Brussels, New York, London: ICG, 30 November 2011), 20-21; and ICG, A Tentative Peace in Myanmar's Kachin Conflict (Brussels, New York, London: ICG, 12 June 2013).

¹¹²⁵ "When the lid blows off," *The Economist*, 30 March 2013; HRW, *World Report 2013: Burma* (New York: HRW, 2013).

¹¹²⁶ The World Bank, "School enrollment – primary (% gross)," *The World Bank Data* (2010). The figure is higher than 100 per cent because gross enrolment means the total number enrolled, regardless of age, as a percentage of the age cohort.

¹¹²⁷ The World Bank, "School enrollment – secondary (% net)," *The World Bank Data* (2010).

¹¹²⁸ UNESCO Institute for Statistics (UIS), "Education (all levels) Profile -Myanmar," *UIS Statistics in Brief* (2011).

¹¹²⁹ Jennifer Quigley, "Burma's Regime Escalates Attacks against Karen Villagers, Destroys Mobile Health Clinic, Schools, Villages, Forcing Thousands to Flee," *U.S. Campaign for Burma*, 10 February 2010; and Jane Lee and Withaya Huanok, "Local Medics Respond to Flu Outbreak in Karen State," *The Irrawaddy*, 12 February 2010.

¹¹³⁰ UNSC, Report of the Secretary-General on Children and Armed Conflict in Myanmar, S/2013/258, 1 May 2013, para 36.

¹¹³¹ US Department of State, 2010 Country Reports on Human Rights Practices -Burma (Bureau of Democracy, Human Rights, and Labor, 8 April 2011); and Watchlist on Children and Armed Conflict, "Attacks on Schools and Hospitals in Burma," <http://watchlist.org/attacks-on-schools-and-hospitals-in-burma/>

¹¹³² UNSC, Report of the Secretary-General on Children and Armed Conflict in Myanmar, S/2013/258, 1 May 2013, para 37.

¹¹³³ "Myanmar/Burma: Mortar Attack on School in Northern Karen State," KHRG, 3 March 2010.

¹¹³⁴ UNSC, Report of the Secretary-General on Children and Armed Conflict in Myanmar, S/2013/258, 1 May, 2013, paras 32 and 37.

¹¹³⁵ "11 Students Killed in an Attack on Kachin Boarding School," *Kachin News Group*, 15 November 2011.

¹¹³⁶ Watchlist on Children and Armed Conflict, No More Denial: Children Affected by Armed Conflict in Myanmar (Burma), (New York: Watchlist on Children and Armed Conflict, May 2009), 27.

¹¹³⁷ Karen Human Rights Group, "Tenasserim Interview: Saw P—," received in May 2011, as cited in GCPEA, *Lessons in War: Military Use of Schools and Other Education Institutions during Conflict* (New York: GCPEA, November 2012), 35.

¹¹³⁸ Dennis Aung Aung, "ABFSU to Announce Plans on Uprising Anniversary," *Myanmar Freedom Daily*, 5 July 2013.

¹¹³⁹ Ba Kaung, "Five Years Added to Student Leader's Sentence," *The Irrawaddy*, 25 May 2010; and Nay Linn, "Dissident Jail Term Extended," *Radio Free Asia*, 21 May 2010.

¹¹⁴⁰ Andrew RC Marshall, "Special Report: Myanmar gives official blessing to anti-Muslim monks," *Reuters*, 27 June 2013; "Religious attack in Rangoon wreaks havoc on local community," *DVB*, 21 February 2012; "Buddhist extremist mob attacks an Islamic Religious School in Yangon, Myanmar," *Myanmar Muslim Media*, 17 February 2013; and "Muslim quarter attacked in Rangoon," *Radio Free Asia*, 21 February 2013.

¹¹⁴¹ Thomas Fuller, "Myanmar Struggles to Put Down Buddhist Attack on Muslims," *New York Times*, 29 May 2013.

¹¹⁴² Todd Pitman, "Massacre Of Muslims In Myanmar Ignored," *Huffington Post*, 6 July 2013; "Myanmar jails Buddhists in Islamic school massacre," 11 July 2013; AP, "Burma jails 25 Buddhists for mob killings of 36 in Meikhtila," *The Guardian*, 11 July 2013; and AP, "Buddhists Get Prison Terms in Myanmar," *New York Times*, 11 July 2013.

¹¹⁴³ Lawi Weng and May Sitt Paing, "Former political prisoners denied university access," *The Irrawaddy*, 2 July 2013.