PAKISTAN

Non-state armed groups continued to attack schools, using bombings or arson, across Pakistan, with nearly half of these reported attacks occurring against girls’ schools. In addition, non-state armed groups and unidentified attackers were allegedly responsible for targeted killings, abductions, and indiscriminate attacks against primary and secondary school students, as well as higher education students and personnel.

Context

The Taliban, Al-Qaeda, and other armed groups, such as Baloch separatist groups, continued to target security personnel, law enforcement officials, and religious minorities across the country, including in Balochistan, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, and Punjab provinces.1475 However, civilian deaths due to militant violence reportedly declined, and security reportedly improved in some areas of the country, including in the Federally Administered Tribal Areas (FATA), where Pakistan armed forces had previously conducted extensive military operations; the Pakistani government merged FATA with Khyber Pakhtunkhwa province in May 2018.1476

ICG reported that in February 2019, tensions intensified between Pakistan and India, after a Pakistan-based group claimed responsibility for a suicide bombing in Indian-administered Jammu and Kashmir state, and India carried out airstrikes in Pakistan in response.1477 Cross-border fighting continued regularly into April 2019.1478 These tensions also impacted on education, causing schools to shut during conflict or to evacuate completely.1479

In 2017, 6.6 million children were reported by UNESCO as out of school, including 3.8 million girls.1480 Political instability, repression, violence, and conflict impacted on children’s access to education, with particularly devastating effects on girls.1481 In Balochistan, which was affected by conflict and the worst education indicators in Pakistan, 81 percent of women and 52 percent of men had not completed primary school as of 2014-15.1482 According to Human Rights Watch, the biggest barriers to girls’ education included lack of investment, poor quality of education, lack of enforcement of compulsory education, corruption, poverty, social norms regarding concerns over propriety, prioritization of boys’ education, child marriage, and insecurity, including armed conflict and targeted attacks on education.1483

Attacks on education continued at similar rates during the 2017-2019 period as during the previous years, with several dozen attacks reported each year. These numbers continued to represent a decline in violence targeting education from 2013 and 2014, when over 140 attacks on education were reported.1484

Attacks on schools

For the 2017-2019 reporting period, GCPEA compiled approximately 50 reported incidents of attacks on schools. Attacks on schools occurred at a similar rate as in 2015 and 2016, although reports of attacks on schools during the 2017-2019 reporting period appeared to decline overall in comparison to the 2013-2017 reporting period in Education under Attack 2018, when hundreds of schools were attacked.1485

According to information compiled from UN, NGO, and media sources, just under half of schools allegedly attacked between 2017 and 2019 were girls’ schools,1486 although not all data on institutions attacked was disaggregated by gender. The majority of attacked schools were reportedly targeted by explosives; alleged attacks on schools were concentrated in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa province and FATA (17), Gilgit-Baltistan and the greater Kashmir region (16), and Balochistan province (8), although attacks on schools were also reported in Punjab province (3) and Sindh province (3).1487

In 2017, the UN verified eight attacks on educational facilities and students in Pakistan, half of which targeted girls’ education.1488 In addition, GCPEA identified 19 alleged incidents of attacks on schools reported in NGO and media sources, including six attacks on girls’ schools, some of which may have been included in the UN’s figure. Of these attacks, 12 were not previously reported in Education under Attack 2018,1489 and included:

- Local media source Dawn Online reported allegations that on April 9, 2017, the Tehrik-e-Taliban Pakistan (TTP) claimed responsibility for an explosive attack that targeted a girls’ private school in Bara subdistrict, FATA, reportedly because the school was “spreading immodesty.”1490
- International media outlet Global English alleged that on November 2, 2017, eight explosive devices were re-
- Portedly found outside a school in Parachinar, FATA. They were safely defused.1491

- According to the international database of the National Consortium for the Study of Terrorism and Responses to Terrorism (START), on December 28, 2017, an explosive device reportedly detonated at a high school in Kohlu, Balochistan.1492

In 2018, the UN verified 34 attacks on schools, injuring 26 students, 14 of which targeted girls schools and took place on one day in August.1493 Information on Pakistan collated by GCPEA from NGO and media sources depicted a similar trend. For example, GCPEA found 25 reported attacks on schools in 2018, which included 12 attacks on girls’ schools. Some media and NGO reports were likely reported in the UN’s 2018 summary figure. Nearly half of the attacks on schools reported in 2018 occurred in Diamer district, Gilgit-Baltistan on August 3, 2018, when 12 schools—including six girls’ schools—were set on fire overnight, according to reports published by Dawn newspaper and Human Rights Watch.1494 In some cases, books had reportedly been thrown out of the school windows and set on fire.1495 An attack against another girls’ school in Gilgit-Baltistan was reportedly prevented on August 26, 2018, when police stated that they arrested 13 people who had been planning an attack.1496 The UN also verified attacks on eight schools used as polling stations during the elections on July 25, 2018. Over half of these incidents involved grenades, including a hand grenade launched at a girls’ primary school in Kushak village ahead of voting.1497

In 2018, attacks on schools were also reported in Balochistan (4), Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and FATA (4), Sindh (2), and Azad Jammu and Kashmir (1).1498 For example:

- Shelling across the line of control between India and Pakistan reportedly landed on the grounds of the Girls’ Inter College and Boys High School Seri in Kotli district, Khuiratta sector of Azad Jammu and Kashmir, on April 12, 2018, according to Dawn newspaper. Students were reportedly taking their tenth-grade exams at the time.1499

- Dawn reported that two girls’ schools were allegedly attacked on May 7 and May 9, 2018, in the Hasokhel area of Mir Ali tehsil in North Waziristan, FATA. Around the same time, a group called Ittehadul Mujahideen North Waziristan reportedly issued a pamphlet to middle schools in the area warning against “grown-up girls” going to school.1500

- Dawn and The Express Tribune also reported at least two attacks that allegedly targeted schools being used as polling stations during parliamentary elections on July 25, 2018, including one in Madeji town in Shaikarpur district, Sindh province, where an explosion was reported outside a high school being used as a polling station; there were no reports of injuries or fatalities.1501 The second report alleged that a suicide attacker detonated an explosive device at Tameer-e-Nou public school in Quetta city, Balochistan province, killing at least 31 people, including two children. Thirty-seven others were reportedly injured.1502

- Regional media outlet Indian Express alleged in reporting that on September 30, 2018, explosives planted at a boys’ primary school reportedly serving between 80 and 90 students partially destroyed the building, in Arandu village in Chitrals district, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa province. No one was injured in the attack.1503

In 2019, attacks on schools decreased as compared to 2018. At least two attacks on schools were reported in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and Punjab provinces during the first half of 2019, according to media sources. These included:

- According to the Balochistan Times, on January 4, 2019, explosives were allegedly found in proximity to a private school in Bannu town, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa province. The devices were safely defused.1504

- Local media Dawn reported that on February 21, 2019, an armed individual allegedly opened fire at a girls’ primary school in Bhatt village in Haripur district, Punjab province. A security guard reportedly returned fire. No one was reported injured in the attack.1505

**Attacks on students, teachers, and other education personnel**

During the 2017-2019 reporting period, GCPEA compiled at least 27 reported incidents of attacks on students, teachers, and other education personnel in Pakistan. Reports of attacks declined in frequency from 2017 to 2018, and then increased in 2019. Targeted and indiscriminate killings, as well as abductions, were the most common forms of reported
attacks.

GCPEA identified 14 attacks on students, teachers and other education personnel in 2017, as reported in media sources and NGO sources. Half of these incidents were identified after the publication of *Education under Attack 2018* and included:

- Local media outlet *The Balochistan Times* reported allegations that on May 23, 2017, unidentified attackers shot and killed a teacher in Turbat, Balochistan.1507
- Local media sources reported that on September 26, 2017, a remotely triggered explosion allegedly struck the driver of a school bus in Quetta, injuring the driver. No children were harmed, although some reports alleged that students were on board at the time of attack.1508
- Local media *The Express Tribune* reported the allegation that on October 4, 2017, unidentified attackers opened fire on the car of the controller of examinations for the Mipurkhas Board of Intermediate and Secondary Education in Karachi Pakistan. The controller was not in his car at the time and nobody was injured.1509

Attacks on students and educators became significantly less common in 2018, with just two incidents reported in media sources. These were:

- Local media *Dawn* reported that on February 15, 2018, shots allegedly fired by Indian soldiers struck a school van carrying students near the line of control in the Dharamsal area of Kolti district, Azad Jammu and Kashmir. The driver of the vehicle was reportedly killed.1510
- On October 24, 2018, local and international media reported that unidentified gunmen on motorcycles reportedly opened fire on students outside a private school in the Kili Shabu area of Quetta city, Balochistan. Four students were allegedly hospitalized.1511

Attacks on students and educators increased in 2019, when GCPEA identified 11 incidents, primarily reported by media sources. In at least seven incidents identified by GCPEA, police allegedly used excessive force against or arrested teachers participating in education-related protests in Karachi and Islamabad; these reported attacks led to the injury of at least ten and the detention of at least 480 teachers, including women. Teachers reportedly demonstrated against insufficient or unpaid salaries and the non-regularization of teachers’ contracts. In addition, two alleged incidents consisted of targeted killings that took place in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa province, and one involved the use of explosives in Balochistan. These were:

- Local media *Dawn* reported that on February 28, 2019, a government primary school teacher was killed when reportedly shot by unidentified armed individuals in Karak town and district, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa province.1515
- Local media sources reported that on March 27, 2019, unidentified assailants reportedly attacked an Education Department monitoring team in Shadirkhel area of Lakki Marwat district, Khyber Pakhtukhwa province, injuring three education officials and one security personnel and killing two security personnel.1516
- *Dawn* reported allegations that on April 23, 2019 in the Nasirabad district of Balochistan, an improvised explosive device (IED) reportedly exploded near a vehicle that was transporting teachers on a mission to inspect schools for an education support program, according to local media. The blast, which police said targeted the vehicle, reportedly damaged the car but did not injure any teachers.1517
- On July 23, 2019, police allegedly used excessive force to disperse a protest led by early childhood education teachers who were demonstrating in Karachi against the government’s termination of their contracts. Police reportedly arrested 24 teachers.1518
- On October 23, 2019 in Islamabad, local media sources reported that police arrested 223 teachers of the Basic Education Community Schools program who participated in a protest calling for the government to regularize their contracts, and the payment of salaries. On October 26, 2019, a civil judge released the 223 teachers on a bail bond of approximately US$12 each.1519
- On December 9, 2019, police used baton charges, teargas, and water cannons to disperse teachers in Saddar town area of Karachi, Sindh province. At least 200 teachers demonstrating for the Sindh government to regu-
larize the contracts of teachers who had passed recruitment tests were reportedly arrested, according to The Pakistan Observer and News International.\textsuperscript{1521}

**Military use of schools and universities**

Between 2017 and 2019, GCPEA identified at least one reported incident of military use of schools. GCPEA identified significantly fewer reports of military use of educational facilities in Pakistan during the 2017-2019 reporting period than in the period covered in Education under Attack 2018. It was not clear whether this was due to a reduction in the availability of reports of incidents as opposed to an actual reduction. Whereas Human Rights Watch reported that, according to Khyber Pakhtunkhwa’s Education Department, more than 200 schools were occupied in December 2014, GCPEA identified only one case of military use during the current reporting period.\textsuperscript{1522} In December 2017, the paramilitary Frontier Corps were allegedly based at a school in Kharan city, Balochistan province, reportedly triggering an attack on the school. On December 7, 2017, an unidentified group fired two rockets at the school, injuring two Frontier Corps soldiers.\textsuperscript{1523}

**Attacks on higher education**

Between 2017 and 2019, GCPEA compiled 17 reports of attacks on higher education that harmed at least 30 students and personnel and resulted in the detention of at least 380. Attacks on university students and staff were reported at similar rates in the 2017-2019 period as during the period covered in Education under Attack 2018, with under ten incidents reported annually. However, the nature of attacks on higher education changed. While armed groups and unknown attackers were responsible for the majority of reported attacks from 2013 to 2017, Pakistani police forces were allegedly responsible for the majority in 2018 and 2019, with most violations comprising the use of batons or teargas to disperse university protests, or the arrest of students.

In 2017, media sources reported eight attacks on higher education, including two attacks on facilities, and six attacks on university students or personnel. Unidentified attackers or non-state armed groups were responsible for seven of these attacks.\textsuperscript{1525} The last incident reportedly involved the arrest of over 100 students protesting against a fee increase.\textsuperscript{1526} Attacks on higher education in 2017 not described in Education under Attack 2018 included:

- The Hindustan Times, a regional media outlet, reported that a female University of Punjab professor was attacked and killed on April 18, 2017.\textsuperscript{1527}
- Local media The News alleged that unidentified attackers killed a college lecturer in Peshawar, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa province, on July 17, 2017.\textsuperscript{1528}
- Local media Pakistan Today report that on October 3, 2017, a university professor was allegedly abducted by unidentified individuals in Karachi city, Sindh province. An intelligence agency reportedly arrested three individuals alleged to belong to the non-state armed group Ansarul Shariah.\textsuperscript{1529}

In 2018, GCPEA identified at least two reported incidents of attacks on higher education. In both of these, Pakistani police either carried out arrests or used excessive force in response to university protests. These cases were:

- According to Scholars at Risk, on January 15, 2018, police reportedly arrested approximately 24 teaching personnel from the Federal Urdu University of Arts, Science and Technology who were peacefully protesting on campus against efforts to reinstate the university’s former vice-chancellor. The teachers were released the same day.\textsuperscript{1530}
- Scholars at Risk and media sources reported that police used excessive force in response to a student protest on Peshawar University campus on October 4, 2018, allegedly including physically assaulting students with batons. Reports alleged that at least 15 students were injured, and 15 students arrested for unlawful assembly.\textsuperscript{1531}

According to media and NGO sources, at least seven attacks on higher education reportedly occurred in 2019. University students, in some cases accompanied by personnel, engaged in various protests related to campus issues, a national ban on student unions, and increases to tuition fees following government cuts to higher education in June 2019.\textsuperscript{1532} In six incidents identified by GCPEA, Pakistani police forces allegedly either used force during clashes with university stu-
dents or arrested students and personnel participating in protests.\textsuperscript{1533} In addition to these protest-related attacks, in one case a higher education official was killed by unidentified perpetrators.\textsuperscript{1534}

On November 29, 2019, students, professors, and supporting labor unions, joined a nationwide Student Solidarity March which led to the arrest of higher education personnel and staff.\textsuperscript{1535} World University News reported that in the second half of 2019, police charged approximately 300 students with anti-state activities, many of which occurred in relation to the Student Solidarity March.\textsuperscript{1536}

Alleged attacks on higher education in 2019 included:

- Local media outlets \textit{Dawn and Business Standard} reported that on January 30, 2019, at the University of Azad Jammu and Kashmir, police allegedly used baton charges and teargas in response to students protesting for parking facilities at the university. The students reportedly threw stones at police and engaged in vandalism. Thirteen students, two university security guards, and several police officers were reportedly injured.\textsuperscript{1537}

- Local media \textit{Pakistan Today} reported that on March 26, 2019, unidentified attackers allegedly killed the examinations superintendent of Balochistan University in Quetta city, Balochistan.\textsuperscript{1538}

- According to Amnesty International, Scholars at Risk and local media sources, on November 30, 2019, following their participation in the Student Solidarity March, police reportedly arrested two university students and a professor, along with other activists who helped organize the demonstration at Punjab University in Lahore. One student remained in detention at the time of writing while the other two were released on bail the next day. Scholars at Risk and local media also reported that police filed First Information Reports, a document used by police to launch criminal investigations, on 250 student protesters.\textsuperscript{1539}

- Scholars at Risk reported that on December 2, 2019, police arrested a professor of political science at Abdul Wali Khan University in Mardan, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa. The professor had allegedly supported the Student Solidarity March on social media and had also recently posted about human rights violations.\textsuperscript{1540}


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