During the 2017-2019 reporting period, armed groups used schools as venues for child recruitment, with over 200 children recruited from their places of learning. Armed groups also threatened teachers who refused to teach their curriculum or did not help recruit students for fighting purposes. More than 140 attacks on schools, students, and personnel were reported. Unidentified armed parties and non-state armed groups also sporadically targeted higher education personnel.

Context

Armed conflict intensified between 2017 and 2019, as the Somali National Army and regional military forces, along with the African Union Mission in Somalia (AMISOM), the United States, and other foreign forces, fought against non-state armed groups, including al-Shabaab and “IS” (Islamic State). Both al-Shabaab and “IS” carried out attacks that killed or injured civilians and military personnel. During the reporting period, the US intensified its use of airstrikes in Somalia, carrying out 34 in 2017 and 47 in 2018, according to Amnesty International, and over 60 in 2019. Fighting between Somaliland and Puntland, over the territorial control of the Sool and Sanaag areas, also escalated after Somaliland forces captured the Puntland town of Tukaraq in the Sool region in January 2018.

Conflict, combined with recurrent climatic shocks and natural disasters, continued to impact millions of Somalis, resulting in food insecurity and widespread displacement. As of December 2019, an estimated 2.6 million Somalis were internally displaced, with an estimated 665,000 newly displaced between January and October 2019. OCHA reported that one million children under the age of five were acutely malnourished in late 2019. In addition, the denial of humanitarian access by armed groups, of which the UN verified 74 incidents in 2018, further impacted civilians.

Children were particularly affected by conflict in Somalia. According to UN-verified data for 2018 on the six grave violations against children, Somalia had the highest number of cases of sexual violence, child recruitment and abduction among the countries where the UN Monitoring and Reporting Mechanism (MRM) was activated; the UN verified that 2,300 children were recruited by armed groups in 2018, with the majority recruited by al-Shabaab. The UN also reported that the Somali National Army and police, along with other armed actors, detained 375 children with alleged ties to al-Shabaab throughout 2018.

The UN reported that, as of December 2019, that approximately three million school-aged children, more than 60 percent of the total school-aged population of 4.9 million, were reported out of school. Armed conflict often forced schools to close. For example, in the Sool region, during disputes between Somaliland and Puntland, violence between armed groups caused schools to shut down in October 2018. The UN Human Rights Council reported that armed groups, aiming to impose religious ideology and practices on schools, attacked and threatened schools and school personnel throughout 2018.

GCPEA did not identify as many reported cases of attacks on education from 2017 to 2019 as during previous years; however, that decrease was likely due to changes in information available, such as Education Cluster surveys, rather than a decline in violence affecting education. The majority of reported attacks on education during the current reporting period took the form of violence, abductions, and threats related to the curriculum taught in schools and madrassas, as well as child recruitment at schools.

Attacks on schools

For the 2017-2019 reporting period, there were at least 140 UN-verified incidents of attacks on schools. However, this number included incidents falling under other subcategories of attacks on education as defined by GCPEA, such as threats against education personnel, proximity of al-Shabaab military bases or camps to schools, and the forced recruitment of children. According to the UN, attacks on schools became more commonly verified in Somalia from 2014 to 2018. In addition to explosive attacks, al-Shabaab enforced the use of its own curriculum, reportedly forcing the closure of schools and threatening teachers who refused to comply. While al-Shabaab developed and launched a
new curriculum in mid-2017, the Somali government launched its own new curriculum for grades one to four in August 2018.\textsuperscript{1724}

For 2017, the UN verified 64 attacks on schools and school personnel,\textsuperscript{1725} representing an increase of around 40 percent compared to 2016, when the UN verified 46 attacks on schools.\textsuperscript{1726} Of the 64 attacks verified by the UN, al-Shabaab was responsible for the majority (58), and most took place in areas controlled by the armed group in southern and central Somalia.

Reports of attacks on schools remained as frequent in 2018 as during the previous year. The UN verified 77 attacks on schools and school personnel in 2018, including attacks on teachers, destruction, and looting.\textsuperscript{1727} GCPEA also identified two reported incidents of attacks on schools in media sources, which may have also been included in cases verified by the UN:

- On March 21, 2018, an explosion reportedly occurred in front of a Quranic school in Galkayo district, Mudug region, killing one child and injuring 13 others, according to ACLED.\textsuperscript{1728}

- International media reported that on September 2, 2018, a vehicle-borne explosive attack by al-Shabaab targeting a government office in Mogadishu reportedly caused a nearby school to collapse.\textsuperscript{1729} Fourteen people, including six children, were severely injured, and many of those injured were students at the school.\textsuperscript{1730}

GCPEA identified one attack on a school in 2019. According to ACLED, on May 19, 2019, a vehicle-borne explosive device reportedly detonated near the Djibouti School in Wadajir, Banadir district and region. According to the report, some people were injured, though their status as school students or personnel was not indicated.\textsuperscript{1731} UN-verified data for 2019 was not available at the time of writing.

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

GCPEA identified almost 30 alleged reports of attacks on students and education personnel between 2017 and 2019. The majority of these were targeted killings, and the reasons for the attacks were not always reported in media sources. However, trends in numbers of attacks on students, teachers, and other education personnel were difficult to assess because the UN-verified number, reported in the above section on attacks on schools, did not distinguish between attacks on educational facilities and education personnel. However, evidence suggested that attacks on teachers were often linked to school and curriculum-related issues. For example, according to the UN, teachers who declined to adopt al-Shabaab’s curriculum faced direct attacks.\textsuperscript{1732}

In 2017, media reports indicate that there were at least ten attacks on students, teachers, and other education personnel, some of which were reported in Education under Attack 2018. These included seven targeted killings, two cases of threat or intimidation, and one case in which a school bus was struck by an explosion.\textsuperscript{1733} Examples of attacks not described in Education under Attack 2018 included:

- The Global Terrorism Database reported media accounts alleging that on March 25, 2017, unidentified armed actors reportedly killed a Ministry of Education employee in Mogadishu city.\textsuperscript{1734}

- A local source reported to ACLED that on March 29, 2017, al-Shabaab fighters reportedly intimidated and arrested parents and teachers in Middle Shabelle region. The parents and teachers had reportedly prevented their children from being recruited into the armed group.\textsuperscript{1735}

- On August 30, 2017, armed actors who were allegedly members of a militia reportedly killed a madrassa teacher in Lower Shabelle region.\textsuperscript{1736}

In 2018, GCPEA identified local source and UN reports of at least eight attacks on students, teachers, and other education personnel.\textsuperscript{1737} The majority of these cases were targeted killings of teachers, while in one case, a police officer killed a 14-year-old boy when he shot at a crowd of boys during an intermediate school football game at a stadium in South Galkayo, Mudug region.\textsuperscript{1738} Other incidents included:

- A local source reporting to ACLED alleged that on May 29, 2018, armed assailants shot and killed a Quranic schoolteacher in Banadir region.\textsuperscript{1739}

- On June 9, 2018, the UN verified reports that al-Shabaab militants threatened a Quranic school teacher for cur-
riculum-related reasons, in Shabelle Dhexe region.  
- A local source reported an allegation to ACLED that on October 24, 2018, unidentified armed assailants shot and killed a Quranic school teacher in Lower Shabelle region.  
- A local source reported to ACLED allegation that on November 27, 2018, armed assailants allegedly affiliated with al-Shabaab reportedly killed the director of a school in Lower Shabelle region.  

In 2019, GCPEA identified at least eight reported incidents of attacks on students, teachers, and other education personnel. As in previous years, targeted killings constituted the majority of events. These included:

- Local media alleged that on January 7, 2019, al-Shabaab reportedly detained schoolchildren and teachers after entering and searching their school in Bu’ale town, Middle Juba region. According to the report, those detained were accused of spying for the US and being involved recent drone strikes surrounding the town. Ten people were reportedly arrested in total, including school children, teachers, and elders.  
- A local source reported to ACLED that on January 17, 2019, unknown armed assailants reportedly shot and injured a schoolteacher in Mogadishu.  
- A local source reported to ACLED that on May 15, armed elements allegedly abducted and murdered a Quranic school teacher in Lower Shabelle region for unknown reasons.  
- A local source reported to ACLED that on May 20, 2019, al-Shabaab allegedly abducted approximately 100 male Quranic school students, between the ages of 12 and 16, from a district in Galgaduud region.  

Military use of schools and universities

Although GCPEA heard of anecdotal cases of school and universities used for military purposes in late 2017, at the time of writing, research for Education under Attack 2020 has not identified any reported or verified cases.

Child recruitment at, or on the way to or from, school

Al-Shabaab’s use of schools for child recruitment was a significant problem in Somalia during the 2017-2019 reporting period. As reported in Education under Attack 2018, recruitment efforts escalated in late 2017, after al-Shabaab issued its new curriculum. According to UN sources, 2017 saw at least 76 verified cases in which child recruitment occurred at schools, with at least 242 children recruited. The majority of these cases occurred in areas of Somalia that were controlled by al-Shabaab, as well as in some areas of the country controlled by regional states, including Middle Juba, Bakool, and Middle Shabelle regions.

Child recruitment in school settings continued in 2018. For example, the UN verified that al-Shabaab abducted three boys between the ages of 11 and 16 from a Quranic school in Juba Dhexe region on October 13, 2018. The report indicated that the three children were later indoctrinated and recruited at a training center. Human Rights Watch also reported in 2018 that al-Shabaab used schools to recruit students and teachers and that militants physically removed student from school benches.

Sexual violence at, or on the way to or from, school or university

For the 2017-2019 period, GCPEA identified one report of sexual violence at, or on the way to or from, school. During the previous reporting period, GCPEA did not identify incidents of this violation. In 2019, ACLED reported an allegation from a local source that, on July 9, 2019, Somali armed forces raped and severely abused a nine-year old girl who was on her way to school in Middle Shabelle region. Reports of conflict- and school-related sexual violence may be underreported due to stigma or data availability. At least 328 girls and three boys survived rape and other forms of sexual abuse by parties to conflict in Somalia in 2018, according to the UN, though whether these attacks occurred while children were at, or on the way to or from, school, was not indicated.
Attacks on higher education

Attacks on higher education personnel occurred sporadically over the course of the 2017-2019 reporting period. GCPEA identified five cases reported in media sources, four of which were actual or attempted targeted killings, in 2017 and 2018. They included:

- On May 5, 2017, a senior official of Horseed International University, in Mogadishu, was severely injured when an explosive device attached to his vehicle detonated in Taleh area of Mogadishu, Banadir district. Al-Shabaab members were suspected of being responsible for the attack.1755

- As reported in local media, on April 15, 2018, gunmen reportedly shot and killed a lecturer in the Sharia Faculty at the University of Somalia in Mogadishu. The killing took place in Oodwayne neighborhood in Baynile district, Banadir region.1756

- Unidentified gunmen reportedly shot and killed a female student while she was in class at the University of Somalia in Bar-Ubah neighborhood, Wardhidgley district, Banadir region, on September 21, 2018.1757

- On December 2, 2018, ACLED reported allegations from a local source that a university lecturer was reportedly shot and killed in Towfiq vicinity, Yaqshid district, Banadir region. The lecturer was allegedly pro-“IS”.1758

- On December 24, 2018, Radio Daslan reported that unidentified gunmen reportedly shot and killed a university lecturer while he was on his way to work.1759

In 2019, GCPEA identified two reported incidents of attacks on higher education, both of which involved explosive devices:

- ACLED received a report that on May 29, 2019, an improvised explosive device (IED) allegedly detonated near Job-Key University, located in Afgooye, Lower Shabelle region. The attack, perpetrated by unknown elements, targeted a nearby AMISOM convoy.1760

- On December 28, 2019, an explosive device detonated at Ex-Control Junction in Mogadishu, Banadir region. The blast struck two buses carrying students of Benadir University, many of whom were reportedly female. The New York Times reported that 16 students were killed and another 18 injured. According to media sources, the attack was one of the deadliest in Somalia during the reporting period, with at least 79 people killed and another 149 injured, including students.1761
204.

1722 For details, see GCPEA, *Education under Attack 2018*, pp. 204-7.

1723 Confidential information shared in November 2018.


1728 Undisclosed, as cited in ACLED, Event ID SOM25355.

1729 “Somalia’s capital Mogadishu hit by huge explosion,” BBC, September 2, 2018.

1730 “Somalia: Suicide bomb attack hits offices and school in Mogadishu,” Al Jazeera, September 2, 2018.

1731 Undisclosed, as cited in ACLED, Event ID SOM28501.


1735 Undisclosed source, as cited by ACLED, Event ID SOM28469.

1736 Partner Database, as cited by ACLED, Event ID SOM29584.


1738 Undisclosed, as cited in ACLED, Event ID SOM24975.

1739 Undisclosed, as cited in ACLED, Event ID SOM25884.


1741 Undisclosed, as cited in ACLED, Event ID SOM26968.

1742 Undisclosed, as cited in ACLED, Event ID SOM27647.

1743 Ahmed Weheliye Gaashaan, “Somali Islamists detain school children for spying,” Mareeg Media, January 7, 2019; Undisclosed, as cited in ACLED, Event ID SOM27647; Undisclosed, as cited in ACLED, Event ID SOM28469; Undisclosed, as cited in ACLED, Event ID SOM28510; Undisclosed source, as cited in ACLED, Event ID SOM29737; Undisclosed source, as cited in ACLED, Event ID SOM29958; Undisclosed source, as cited in ACLED, Event ID SOM29968.


1745 Undisclosed, as cited in ACLED, Event ID SOM28469.

1746 Undisclosed, as cited in ACLED, Event ID SOM28510.

1747 Conversations held in November 2018; Information shared by a UN respondent via email, March 7, 2019.


1749 Information shared by a UN respondent via email, March 7, 2019.


1753 Undisclosed source, as cited in ACLED, Event ID SOM29006.

1754 “Somaila: Intelligence officer wounded in Mogadishu car bomb,” Garowe Online, May 7, 2017; Undisclosed source, as reported in ACLED, Event ID SOM22604.

1755 Ali Adan “Police Officer, University Lecturer Shot Dead In Mogadishu,” Waaga Cusub Media, April 16, 2018.

1756 Ali Adan “Police Officer, University Lecturer Shot Dead In Mogadishu,” Waaga Cusub Media, April 16, 2018.

1757 Undisclosed source, as cited in ACLED, Event ID SOM28579.