



## *Education Under Attack 2014*

### **Key Facts about the Study and Findings**

This global study provides the most comprehensive and thorough examination to date of targeted attacks on education. It examines threats and deliberate use of force against students, teachers, academics, education trade union members, government officials, aid workers and other education staff and attacks on schools, universities and other education buildings carried out for political, military, ideological, sectarian, ethnic or religious reasons in 2009-2013. The study also examines military use of schools and other education facilities.

The focus is on targeted attacks by state military and security forces and armed non-state groups, not death, injury or destruction resulting from being caught in crossfire. The study does not cover attacks by lone individuals with none of the above-listed motives or affiliations, such as the school shooting by Adam Lanza in Sandy Hook, Connecticut, in 2012. Nor does it cover acts of vandalism by unarmed individuals with none of the above-listed motives.

#### **Key Facts**

- Attacks on education were reported in at least 70 countries worldwide. This study focuses on 30 countries<sup>1</sup> (see map) where there was a pattern of attacks or military use: at least five separate incidents or victims, including at least one direct attack on a school or the killing of at least one person between 2009 and 2013.
- In six *very heavily affected* countries – Afghanistan, Colombia, Pakistan, Somalia, Sudan and Syria – reports documented 1,000 or more incidents of attacks on schools, universities, staff and students; or 1,000 or more students, teachers or other education personnel who were victims of attacks or education buildings attacked or used for military purposes in 2009-2012. In an additional seven *heavily affected* countries – Côte d'Ivoire, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Iraq, Israel/Palestine, Libya, Mexico and Yemen – there were between 500 and 999 reported attacks, victims or affected facilities.
- The study is rich with detailed examples of attacks, especially in the heavily and very heavily affected countries.

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<sup>1</sup> Those 30 countries are: Afghanistan, Bahrain, Central African Republic (CAR), Colombia, Côte d'Ivoire, Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC), Egypt, Ethiopia, India, Indonesia, Iran, Iraq, Israel/Palestine, Kenya, Libya, Mali, Mexico, Myanmar, Nigeria, Pakistan, the Philippines, the Russian Federation, Somalia, South Sudan, Sudan, Syria, Thailand, Turkey, Yemen and Zimbabwe.

- The study's information was compiled through a systematic gathering of data for 2009-2012 and the collection of data on significant incidents that took place in the first nine months of 2013.
- Targeted attacks on education and incidents of military use of schools and universities are occurring in far more countries and far more extensively than previously documented in UNESCO's 2007 and 2010 reports. It is unclear whether this increase reflects growing awareness of the problem and more frequent and better quality reporting of attacks, or an actual increase in the number of attacks.

## **Findings**

Hundreds of students, teachers and academics were killed as a result of attacks on education and many more were injured. Hundreds of thousands of students were denied the right to an education, and many children and young people, teachers and education staff, lived in fear of attacks.

- Many of the attacks on facilities involved bombing, burning or shelling buildings, leaving them in ruins or rendering them dangerous to use.
- In many countries, individual students, teachers, academics and other education staff were murdered, abducted, threatened with violence, or illegally detained or imprisoned, and in some cases tortured.
- In some countries, children were captured en route to and from school or taken from their classrooms and recruited as soldiers.

### *Military use of schools and universities*

This study closely examines one of the key factors that can lead to attacks on education – the use of schools and universities for military purposes by armed groups or national armed forces.

- In 24 of the 30 countries profiled (see map), armed non-state groups and/or state armed forces used schools as bases, barracks, weapons caches, detention centers and even torture chambers –displacing students and teachers, interrupting the learning process and putting those students and staff who remained in school at risk of attack by opposing forces. These occupations lasted for weeks, months or, in some cases, years.

### *Attacks on higher education*

This is also the first study to report comprehensively on attacks on higher education worldwide.

- In 28 of the 30 countries profiled, higher education facilities and/or students and staff were attacked or institutions were used for military purposes (see map).

Attacks damaged or destroyed university and college buildings in 17 of the 30 countries.

### *Motives*

Armed non-state groups and/or national military and government security forces carried out attacks for various purposes. Reported motives include to:

- Destroy symbols of government control or demonstrate control over an area by an anti-government group;
- Block the education of girls, or any type of education perceived to teach or impose alien religious or cultural values, biased history or an unfamiliar language of instruction;
- Restrict teacher trade union activity and academic freedom;
- Abduct children for use as combatants, sex slaves or logistical support in military operations, or abduct students and teachers for ransom; or
- Seize schools and universities for use as barracks and bases or firing positions, or attack schools because they are being used for these purposes by opposing forces.

### *Long term consequences*

In many of the countries profiled in this study, attacks on education have persisted year after year – in some cases, beginning long before 2009, the start of the current study's reporting period. Although the study did not attempt to measure the long-term consequences of attacks on education, they can include:

- Rising student absentee and dropout rates, and a growing shortage of willing and qualified teachers;
- Falling access to good quality education as facilities are forced to close, damaged and/or destroyed – a factor exacerbated if it takes years to repair or rebuild schools and universities;
- Stagnating research, innovation and debate within universities;
- At the individual level, lingering psychological distress and a narrowing of opportunity as a result of less education;
- Over the long term, it is reasonable to expect that an undereducated citizenry will be less able to promote open and accountable government, safeguard essential human rights and compete in a global economy.

### *Preventing attacks on education*

In addition to describing the nature and scale of attacks on education, the study explored ways of protecting institutions and individuals from harm, specifically by:

- Systematically monitoring and reporting attacks and their impact so that appropriate responses can be made;
- Holding perpetrators accountable by investigating and prosecuting those responsible;
- Issuing and enforcing domestic legislation and military orders that prohibit use of schools and universities for military purposes;
- Negotiating with belligerent parties when appropriate to halt attacks on education;
- Ensuring that education facilities and staff are not used for electoral tasks and political events when this could heighten the risk of attack;
- Enhancing security around school buildings, students and teachers, as well as establishing alternative safe learning spaces and distance learning mechanisms, while recognizing that security responses, such as the presence of armed guards, may actually increase the risk of attacks in some contexts; and
- Modifying education policies and school curricula to prevent actual bias or the perception that schools are biased against particular ethnic or religious groups, which can be a trigger for attacks on education, and to promote peacebuilding and civic responsibility.

The study ends with a series of high-level recommendations, including a call for the widespread adoption of the [\*Lucens Guidelines for Protecting Schools and Universities from Military Use during Armed Conflict\*](#)

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