



# **PRINCIPLES OF STATE RESPONSIBILITY TO PROTECT HIGHER EDUCATION FROM ATTACK**

## Quality higher education depends on having a safe place to teach, learn and work

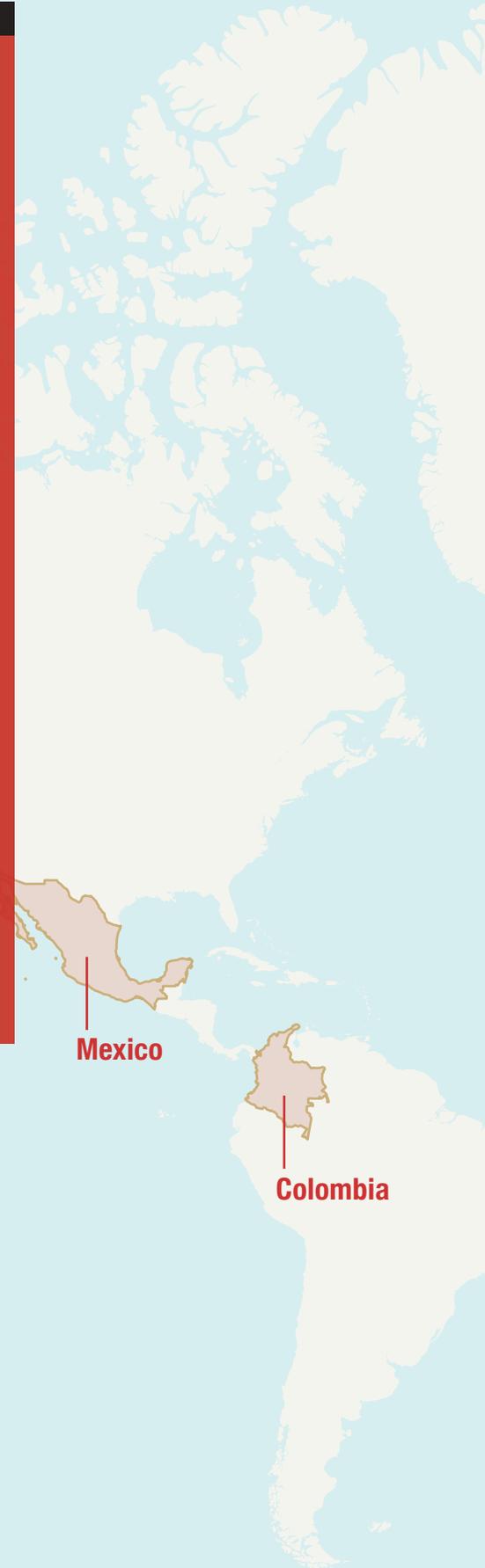
Throughout the world, the higher education sector plays a vital role in knowledge production and dissemination, innovation, skills development, cultural preservation and national progress. Universities play an essential role in preparing States and peoples for the global “knowledge economy” and “knowledge society”, and rapid internationalization of higher education offers the promise of more equitable access to the benefits of higher education than ever before. To achieve this promise, States must do more to ensure that higher education communities are physically secure and free from intimidation.

## Attacks on higher education happen around the world

Members of higher education communities are targeted to intimidate or silence them, or to impose by force or coercion external control over who is allowed to learn, who is teaching, and what is learned. They are murdered, abducted, threatened with violence, or illegally detained or imprisoned, and in some cases tortured, often *because of their status as students, academics and higher education leaders*. During insecurity and armed conflict, universities have been targeted, burned and shelled by state forces and armed rebel groups, leaving them in ruins or dangerous to use. Universities have also been used for military purposes, as bases, barracks, weapons caches and detention centers, placing those within them at risk of attack by opposing forces.

### What is an attack?

The Global Coalition to Protect Education from Attack defines an attack on education as any threat or deliberate use of force, carried out for political, military, ideological, sectarian, ethnic or religious reasons, against education institutions, leaders and administrators, academic and other staff, or students. These include acts of intentional violence resulting in damage or destruction of institutions or facilities, or physical harm or death to individuals. They also include deliberate acts of coercion, intimidation or threats of physical force that create a climate of fear and repression that undermines academic freedom and educational functions. The Coalition's definition of attacks does not include other infringements of academic freedom or the right to education which lack these violent or physically coercive dimensions (for example, acts of discrimination in hiring, promotion or admission).



## Countries with attacks on higher education facilities, students and staff, 2009-2012\*



\*Of the 30 countries profiled in its report, *Education under Attack 2014*, GCEPA documented attacks on higher education facilities, staff and/or students, or military use of universities in 28 countries between 2009 and 2012. Attacks damaged or destroyed higher education buildings in 17 of these countries during this period.

*Education Under Attack 2014* is available at <http://www.protectingeducation.org>.



## Attacks on higher education undermine national well-being

These attacks undermine research and teaching, harming academic quality. They improperly restrict access to higher education, impairing social cohesion. They contribute to “brain drain”, which hinders present-day intellectual, economic and social progress, and deprives future generations of high quality teachers and researchers.

## Attacks on higher education harm education at all levels

Attacks on higher education harm primary and secondary education by interrupting advances in pedagogy, teaching materials and teacher training and contribute to an overall climate of vulnerability.

## Attacks on higher education in one country harm all countries

More than ever before, quality higher education depends on the movement of staff, students and knowledge across borders. Attacks on higher education in any country disrupt these movements and limit the benefits of cross-border research and exchange.



Pakistani police inspect a damaged university bus after it was destroyed by a roadside bomb on the outskirts of Quetta on June 18, 2012, killing at least two and wounding more than twenty-five people, including students.

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## **States are obligated under existing human rights standards to protect higher education**

At all times, States are obligated to protect the human rights of persons within their territories. During armed conflict, States are also obligated to make all reasonable efforts to safeguard civilians and civilian objects, including in higher education. UNESCO Member States are specifically called upon “to protect higher education institutions from threats to their autonomy coming from any source.”\*

### **PRINCIPLES OF STATE RESPONSIBILITY TO PROTECT HIGHER EDUCATION FROM ATTACK**

States should:

- **Abstain from direct or complicit involvement in attacks on higher education**
- **Protect higher education against present and future attacks**
- **Assist victims of attacks**
- **Deter future attacks, including by investigating attacks and holding perpetrators accountable**

\* UNESCO Rec. Concerning the Status of Higher Education Teaching Personnel, especially at ¶17-19 (available at: <http://portal.unesco.org/>).

Recognizing these obligations and the widespread attacks on domestic and cross-border higher education,

## The Coalition calls on States to...

1. **Demonstrate publicly support for these Principles** and for higher education that is safe and free from intimidation, including by:
  - Communicating support to their higher education sector, including institutions, staff and students; and
  - Encouraging other States to support the Principles domestically and in appropriate inter-State relations.
2. **Review national policies and laws**, in close cooperation with their higher education institutions and staff, and with due respect for the values essential to quality higher education, including especially institutional autonomy, academic freedom and social responsibility,\* to ensure that higher education communities are physically secure, and free from intimidation and improper external influence.
3. **Review emergency protection measures**, and update as necessary, to ensure the security of higher education institutions and personnel against threats and future attacks.
4. **Take all reasonable measures to assist victims and deter future attacks**, including by conducting prompt, thorough and transparent investigations and holding perpetrators accountable in proceedings consistent with internationally recognized standards.

## The Coalition calls on the Higher Education Sector to...

1. **Demonstrate publicly support for these Principles** and for higher education that is safe and free from intimidation, including by:
  - Communicating support to their respective associations, networks and institutions; and
  - Encouraging their respective States to support the Principles domestically and in appropriate inter-State relations.
2. **Assist States in reviewing national policies and laws**, with due respect for the values essential to quality higher education, including especially institutional autonomy, academic freedom and social responsibility,\* to ensure that higher education communities are physically secure, and free from intimidation and improper external influence.
3. **Take all reasonable measures to assist victims and help deter future attacks** by documenting and reporting attacks to appropriate State and civil society partners, and pressing States to conduct prompt, thorough and transparent investigations and to hold perpetrators accountable.

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**The Global Coalition to Protect Education from Attack** was established in 2010 by organizations working in the fields of education in emergencies and conflict affected contexts, higher education, protection, international human rights, and humanitarian law who were concerned about ongoing attacks on educational institutions, their students, and staff in countries affected by conflict and insecurity.

GCPEA is a unique coalition of leading international organizations including CARA, Human Rights Watch, the Institute of International Education's Scholar Rescue Fund, Protect Education in Insecurity and Conflict, Save the Children International, Scholars at Risk, UNICEF, UNESCO, and UNHCR.

GCPEA is a project of the Tides Center, a nonprofit 501(c)(3) organization.

Cover: Syrians gather at the scene of an explosion at Aleppo University on January 15, 2013, which killed at least 82 people and injured more than 150.

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