



Students stand in the doorway of a classroom at Maiduguri Experimental School, a private school attacked by the armed Islamist group Boko Haram, in Maiduguri, Nigeria, 12 May 2012.

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PART I — GLOBAL OVERVIEW

Scale and nature of attacks on education

Thousands of targeted attacks on education have been reported across dozens of countries and spanning most regions of the world in the period covered by this study, 2009-2013.

The vast majority of these attacks involved either the bombing, shelling or burning of schools or universities, or the killing, injury, kidnapping, abduction or arbitrary arrest of students, teachers and academics. Some were carried out by armed forces or security forces, others by armed non-state groups or in some cases by armed criminal groups.

In addition, education facilities were used as bases, barracks or detention centres by armed groups and armed forces. Moreover, there was significant evidence of children being recruited for use as combatants from schools and some instances of sexual violence by military forces and armed groups against students and teachers.



This study reports on incidents in 30 countries in which a significant pattern of attacks on education has been found. These 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, Russia, Somalia, South Sudan, Sudan, Syria, Thailand, Turkey, Yemen and Zimbabwe.

The 30 countries profiled all have five or more incidents or victims including at least one direct attack on a school or the killing of at least one teacher, student or academic. There are other countries in which evidence of isolated or sporadic attacks on education have been found. For instance, attacks on higher education have also been reported in Angola, Bangladesh, Belarus, Brazil, Cambodia, China,¹⁰ Ecuador, El Salvador, France, Ireland, Kyrgyzstan, Malawi,¹¹ Maldives, Malaysia, Rwanda, Saudi Arabia, South Africa, Sri Lanka,¹² Swaziland,¹³ Tunisia, Turkmenistan, United Arab Emirates (UAE), Uganda, Ukraine, Uzbekistan, Venezuela and Vietnam by the Scholars at Risk Network,¹⁴ and in Dominican Republic,¹⁵ Haiti,¹⁶ Sri Lanka,¹⁷ Sweden¹⁸ and Togo¹⁹ by media sources. Countries where isolated or sporadic attacks on primary and secondary education were reported include Algeria,²⁰ Chad,²¹ Chile,²² China,²³ France,²⁴ Georgia,²⁵ Guatemala,²⁶ Kyrgyzstan,²⁷ Liberia,²⁸ Nepal,²⁹ Papua New Guinea,³⁰ Tunisia³¹ and the United Kingdom (UK).³²

The very heavily affected countries — where reports documented 1,000 or more attacks on schools, universities, staff and students or 1,000 or more students, teachers or other education personnel attacked or education buildings attacked or used for military purposes in 2009-2012 — were Afghanistan, Colombia, Pakistan, Somalia, Sudan and Syria.

In Afghanistan, according to the UN, there were 1,110 or more attacks on school-level education, including



A teacher looks out from the ruins of his school in Charsadda, in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa province, Pakistan, after it was attacked in June 2013.

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arson attacks, explosions and suicide bombings. Staff were threatened, killed and kidnapped.³³

In Pakistan, armed groups, particularly the Pakistani Taliban, attacked at least 838 schools, mostly by blowing up school buildings, according to primary research by the independent Human Rights Commission of Pakistan.³⁴ In the vast majority of cases, school buildings were blown up at night using explosives detonated remotely or by timers. Others were shelled or subjected to grenade or armed attacks. Few of the perpetrators were arrested or



prosecuted yet hundreds of schools were destroyed, depriving hundreds of thousands of children of an education.³⁵ A compilation of human rights and media reports suggests that at least 30 schoolchildren were killed and 102 injured in attacks at or en route to school in Pakistan from 2009 to 2012, and at least 138 school students and staff were reported to have been kidnapped.³⁶

Colombia was one of the most dangerous places in the world to be a teacher, with the highest reported number of teachers killed or receiving death threats:

some 140 teachers were killed from 2009 to 2012, 1,086 received death threats and 305 were forced to leave their homes because their lives were at risk, according to the Escuela Nacional Sindical (ENS), a prominent Colombian NGO monitoring labour rights.³⁷

In Sudan, there were sustained attacks on higher education: at least 15 university students were reported killed, at least 479 injured and more than 1,040 arrested or detained during 2009-2012. Most of these violations occurred during student demonstrations at universities, though a number of those

students injured or arrested were involved in protests on wider political issues.³⁸ In one incident, some 450 student rooms at Omdurman Islamic University in Khartoum were set on fire by security agents and supporters of the National Congress Party.³⁹ Some students were reported to have been abducted by security agents and tortured.⁴⁰

In some countries, there were more than a thousand schools destroyed but it was not clear how many were targeted deliberately. During the civil conflict in Syria, by September 2012, more than 2,000 schools had been damaged or destroyed, according to UNICEF, and by April 2013 that figure had risen to 2,445.⁴¹ Both sides used schools either as military headquarters, military bases or detention centres,⁴² and the Syrian Network for Human Rights alleged that the government had turned a thousand schools into detention and torture centres.⁴³ Human Rights Watch presented evidence that schools had been deliberately targeted, in one case causing the death of 12 students.⁴⁴ During Libya's civil war in 2011, some 1,900 schools were damaged or destroyed. It is not known how many were deliberately targeted, but at least 221 were reportedly used by armed groups, making them a potential target, and 27 deliberate attacks on schools were documented, a figure which the UN said reflected only a portion of all the incidents that took place.⁴⁵

Other heavily affected countries — where there were between 500 and 999 attacks, victims or affected facilities — include: Côte d'Ivoire, DRC, Iraq, Israel/Palestine, Libya, Mexico and Yemen. For instance, in Yemen, there were more than 720 incidents involving the use of force affecting schools, school teachers and school students, although not all of them were targeted attacks.⁴⁶ These incidents included looting, shelling, bombardment, military use by armed forces or armed groups, arson and threats to personnel.⁴⁷ In Côte d'Ivoire, armed groups and military forces destroyed, damaged, looted or used 480 schools and universities during 2010-2011 and 50 university students were attacked.⁴⁸

Some of the most devastating and high-profile incidents occurred in Somalia, where, for example, in October 2011, a suicide attack at a compound

containing the Ministry of Education and other ministries killed more than 100 people, many of whom were students and their parents. They were gathering to obtain examination results needed for scholarships to study abroad. Al-Shabaab claimed responsibility. In a pre-recorded interview, their suicide bomber reportedly condemned the education system and criticized students for wanting to study abroad.⁴⁹ Another suicide bombing at Benadir University's graduation ceremony in Mogadishu in 2009 killed 22 people, including the ministers of education, higher education and health, the dean of the medical school, professors and students.⁵⁰

Death threats and the threat of kidnap were mostly directed at individuals but some were also directed at large groups of students or teachers. In Mexico, for instance, armed criminal groups threatened teachers with kidnapping or other violence if they did not hand over a portion of their salaries.⁵¹ In some cases, individuals or individual schools were targeted⁵² while, in another, the entire teaching staff of a specific education district was threatened.⁵³

Since the first global study⁵⁴ on attacks on education was published in 2007, increases or decreases in the reported number of attacks in individual countries have been observed, often because of changes in the conflicts or in the political situations in which they occur.

In Afghanistan, for instance, the total number of reported attacks on education fell dramatically after 2009.⁵⁵ According to one piece of research, an apparent change in the Taliban's policy on attacking schools was believed to have resulted from the Taliban's gradual transformation into a military-political insurgency, its concern to respond to community pressure regarding schools, and an apparent increasing willingness on the government's part to negotiate with the Taliban and agree concessions on education.⁵⁶ However, evidence that attacks on schools increased in 2012 and spread to new areas threw into question the reality of that supposed policy change.⁵⁷

Some countries that were previously heavily affected, such as Nepal,⁵⁸ are no longer experiencing a pattern of attacks on education. In Nepal's case, the number



of incidents decreased very significantly when the Maoist insurgency ended in 2006 and, although attacks flared up in the Terai region after that, they petered out at the start of 2009.⁵⁹

By contrast, in many Middle Eastern and North African countries, there was a sharp rise in attacks and in the military use of schools as Arab Spring protests and uprisings took hold from December 2010 onwards.

In collecting and analysing data from the period 2009-2012, this study has found a significantly greater number of countries in which there is evidence of very high or high levels of attack on education compared with the periods covered by the previous two *Education under Attack* studies published in 2010 and

Mourners lower the Somalia flag-draped body of Minister of Education Ahmed Abdulahi Wayel for burial in Mogadishu, Somalia, 4 December 2009, after he was killed by a suicide bombing at a Benadir University medical school graduation ceremony.

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2007. It is difficult to know whether this represents an actual increase in incidence or whether increased attention to this issue among media, human rights groups, and humanitarian and development organizations since the publication of the last two studies, combined with improved access to local media sources via the internet, has simply resulted in the availability of more and better information.

Soldiers inspect the site where an Israeli teenager was critically wounded when a projectile from Gaza slammed into a bus taking children home from school on 7 April 2011 near the Kibbutz of Nahal Oz, southern Israel.

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Reported motives and perpetrators of attacks

The reported motives for attacks on schools, students and teachers include, in no particular order, to:

- destroy symbols of government control or demonstrate control over an area by the anti-government element;
- seize school or university buildings for use as barracks, bases or firing positions, or attack them because they are being used for these purposes by opposing forces;
- block the education of girls;
- block education that is perceived to impose alien religious or cultural values;
- react against curricula that are perceived to meet the preferences of the elite or the majority group, or that portray certain identity groups in an inferior or hostile way;
- prevent schools from teaching a language, religion, culture or history alien to the particular identity group;
- restrict teacher trade union activity and academic freedom;
- threaten a particular ethnic group;
- abduct children for use as combatants, sex slaves or logistical support for military operations; or
- raise money by extortion or ransom.

The reported motives vary according to each context, but also may vary within each situation and there may be multiple motives for any single attack. For instance, in southern Thailand, the motive of ethnic Malay Muslim insurgent groups in attacking schools may stem from their perception that schools are being or have been used as a means to impose Buddhism, Thai language and Thai versions of history on ethnic Malay Muslims, but it may also be a means of challenging government control of the area.⁶⁰

Depending on the context, attacks may be carried out by any number of the following groups: armed forces (including international armed forces), police forces, intelligence services, paramilitaries and militias acting on behalf of the state, and armed non-state groups including rebel forces and any other armed

Children and schools are often the first to suffer the consequences of armed conflict. Mines and unexploded ordnance pose a continuing danger to children, including on their way to school. In Misrata, Libya, a girl walks to school surrounded by remnants of the fighting, December 2012.

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military, ethnic, political, religious or sectarian group; or in some cases by armed criminal groups. Attacks may also be carried out by violent mobs that are not organized as an armed group.

In reviewing available evidence, it appears that certain types of attacks are more likely to be carried out by government or government-backed forces,⁶¹ such as arrests, imprisonment, torture and attacks on higher education. These government-instigated attacks are typically linked to motives such as restricting trade union activity, quelling dissent and controlling information, or marginalizing a particular ethnic or political group. Other types of attack may sometimes be performed by government forces but are more likely to be carried out by armed groups including pro-government paramilitaries and militia or anti-government forces, such as abduction of students and teachers and attacks on government schools. They are often linked to motives that may include spreading fear among civilians. When perpetrated by anti-government groups the motives may include undermining government control over an area or community, preventing the education of certain groups such as girls, or reacting against perceived bias in curricula and teaching that may reflect wider social, religious or ethnic discrimination or conflict.

In some cases, there is a blurring of the line between armed groups and armed criminal groups, and between military and criminal motives. In some countries, such as the Philippines,⁶² armed groups have kidnapped teachers as a means to secure ransom money to fund their activities. In Mexico, killings, kidnappings and threats, particularly against teachers, have reportedly been carried out by armed criminal gangs.⁶³ In Colombia, criminal groups have attacked schools in similar ways to armed groups, seeking to control territory and using schools as recruitment grounds. In Medellín, for instance, criminal groups, linked to paramilitary successor groups,⁶⁴ have threatened or killed students en route to or from school.⁶⁵

The study has found a wide range of motives ascribed to the various attacks on education, but it is difficult to draw any firm conclusions because it is hard to find solid evidence for the motive behind many individual incidents.



Syrian rebels take position in a classroom at an empty school to observe the movement of regime forces nearby in the Bustan al-Basha district in the northern city of Aleppo on 26 October 2012.

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Military use of schools and universities

Military use of school and university facilities was reported in at least 24 of the 30 countries profiled during the 2009-2013 period: Afghanistan, CAR, Colombia, Côte d'Ivoire, DRC, Egypt, Ethiopia, India, Iraq, Indonesia, Israel/Palestine, Kenya, Libya, Mali, Myanmar, Pakistan, the Philippines, Somalia, South Sudan, Sudan, Syria, Thailand, Yemen and Zimbabwe.

Education buildings were used as barracks to house soldiers/fighters, bases to mount security operations, fighting positions, prisons or detention centres, interrogation centres, torture centres, training grounds for soldiers and places to store weapons. Schools were also used to indoctrinate, recruit and train students.

The forces using the schools included armed groups, paramilitaries, armed forces, police forces and international forces – the UN recorded five incidents of school occupation by international military forces in Afghanistan in 2010, for instance.⁶⁶

The country with by far the most reported incidents in 2009-2012 was Syria where military use arising from the conflict spiked in 2011-2012. Although it does not specify exact figures, the UN reported numerous incidents of government forces using schools as temporary bases or detention centres and there were allegations that the Free Syrian Army used schools in a number of areas as bases and as places to store ammunition during this period. Furthermore, the Syrian Network for Human Rights alleged in mid-January 2013 that government forces had used approximately 1,000 schools as detention and torture centres and used schools to house security and intelligence personnel or as positions from which to shell the surrounding area. Across the 14 other countries with the highest incidence of military use in 2009-2012 – Afghanistan, CAR, Colombia, Côte d'Ivoire, DRC, India, Libya, Mali, Pakistan, the Philippines, Somalia, South Sudan, Thailand and Yemen – a total of 923 schools and universities were reported as being used for military purposes.⁶⁷ In Libya, 221 schools were used by armed groups during the 2011 uprising, according to a UN respondent,⁶⁸ and at least one school was used to detain hundreds of prisoners.⁶⁹ In India in 2010, more than 129

A police bunker set up atop a school where children were studying in Eragon, Dantewada, India, 10 November 2009.

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schools were used as barracks or bases in operations, particularly in states most affected by the Maoist insurgency.⁷⁰ Police and paramilitary forces occupied school buildings, either temporarily or for extended periods ranging from six months to three years during their counter-insurgency operations. Some were occupied for over a decade.⁷¹ In Thailand, security forces occupied at least 79 schools in 2010⁷² and continued to use schools as barracks and bases for at least the next year, Human Rights Watch reported.⁷³

Colombia and the Philippines specifically prohibit the military use of schools in military policy,⁷⁴ and national legislation bans the practice unequivocally in the Philippines.⁷⁵ Yet in Colombia, the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) recorded 75 cases of occupation of school facilities by all armed actors during 2009-2012;⁷⁶ and in the Philippines, the military was responsible for most of the 56 incidents of military use of schools in 2010-2012 recorded by the UN. They used some schools as barracks or bases for over a year;⁷⁷ used functioning schools as weapons and ammunition stores in 2010;⁷⁸ and, in 2011, used at least 14 schools during the course of counter-insurgency operations.⁷⁹

In many countries, the military use of schools led to them being attacked or was employed as a justification by perpetrators of attacks. In Somalia, for instance, Al-Shabaab fighters used a school in Mogadishu as a firing position while the students were still in the classrooms, drawing return fire from pro-government forces. Five rockets hit the school compound, with one striking and killing eight people just as the students were leaving the school.⁸⁰

In some places, such as India, rebels claimed they were attacking schools because they were or had been occupied by security forces even though this was not always the case.⁸¹ When using schools, police often fortified the buildings, set up sentry boxes and lookout shelters and dug trenches or created barriers from rings of barbed wire and sandbags, leaving schools resembling military installations rather than neutral places of learning. This may have increased the risk that they might be viewed as military targets even after the troops had left.⁸²

Recruitment of children and sexual violence at schools or along school routes

Recruitment of children for military purposes and sexual violence are addressed in this study only insofar as they amount to a type of attack on schools and students. While forced recruitment and sexual violence happen in a range of settings during conflict, parties may specifically target schools or school routes because they are places where children are known to be concentrated. Although child recruitment and sexual violence are regularly reported by the UN, there is very little reporting on how many of these violations take place at school or along school routes.

This study found evidence of recruitment of children from school, or en route to or from school, during the 2009-2012 period in at least six countries: Colombia, DRC, Pakistan, Somalia, Thailand and Yemen. In Colombia, guerrilla and paramilitary groups were reported to recruit children at schools;⁸³ child recruits were used as spies or to transport arms or pass on messages to other students in schools, as well as to run their drug business inside schools.⁸⁴ In Pakistan, children were recruited from madrassas (religious schools) and mainstream schools. In some cases, they were lured or abducted from schools and madrassas to train to become suicide bombers.⁸⁵

Recruitment methods varied across countries and ranged from selection through indoctrination programmes at school and the offering of inducements, to abduction en route, the use of death threats and the rounding up of whole groups of students at schools.

For example, in Colombia, armed groups waited outside schools to talk to children, find out information, and recruit and control them.⁸⁶ In Yemen, Houthi rebels used students and teachers to recruit children at schools for them.⁸⁷ In DRC, a breakaway rebel group seized 32 boys from a school, tied them up and marched them off to a military camp to train to fight.⁸⁸

In Somalia, where thousands of children were given military training or recruited, mostly from schools, teachers were ordered by the armed group Al-Shabaab to enlist them or release them for training.⁸⁹ One

witness told Human Rights Watch how students scrambled to jump out of school windows on the second and third storeys to escape Al-Shabaab members when they came to their school.⁹⁰

Isolated cases of sexual violence against students and teachers perpetrated by armed forces or armed groups at, or en route to or from, schools or universities were also reported in DRC and Somalia. Two incidents in CAR and India were also reported in 2012-2013.

Human Rights Watch research in Somalia found evidence of girls being lined up at schools and taken to be ‘wives’ of Al-Shabaab fighters. In one case, the girls were selected at gunpoint; one who refused to be taken was shot dead in front of her classmates.⁹¹ In another incident, after 12 girls were taken by Al-Shabaab, the teacher reported that some 150 female students dropped out of school. One of the 12 taken, a 16-year-old, was beheaded after refusing to marry a fighter much older than her and her head was brought back to be shown to the remaining girls at the school as a warning.⁹²

The number of incidents is likely to be under-reported, especially for incidents en route to or from school.

Attacks on higher education

The study found attacks on higher education facilities, students and academics and military use of universities were reported in 28 of the 30 profiled countries in 2009-2012. The exceptions were CAR and Mali.

Attacks on higher education over the reporting period included assassination, killing or injury of students and academics, arbitrary arrest, torture, abduction, kidnapping, imprisonment and the bombing of groups of students, individual academics and higher education facilities. There were also incidents of universities being taken over or shut down by force. These attacks on higher education were carried out both by government armed forces, security forces or police and by armed non-state groups, including guerrillas, rebels, paramilitaries and militias. The difference from school-level attacks is that, in higher education, a greater proportion of attacks involve arbitrary arrest or forms of persecution of named individuals and there are far fewer attacks on



buildings. In this regard, they are closer in type to attacks on teacher trade unionists.

The countries with the highest number of reported attacks on higher education included Sudan and Yemen. The largest number of university students killed was reported in Yemen, where 73 higher education students were killed during the 2011 uprising and 139 were injured, 38 of whom were permanently disabled as a result of their injury, according to the Wafa Organization for Martyrs' Families and Wounded Care.⁹³ However, it is not known how many of these killings and injuries occurred on campus or in the vicinity of universities, or because the victims were being targeted as students. By contrast in Sudan, far fewer university students were reportedly killed (15), but far more were injured (479), many when police and security forces used excessive force against students demonstrating on campus over university policies.⁹⁴

The largest number of university student arrests was reported in Sudan – with more than a thousand

Rescue workers and family members gather to identify the shrouded bodies of students killed during an attack on the Yobe State College of Agriculture that left some 50 students dead in Gujba, Yobe state, Nigeria, 29 September 2013.

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arrested, mostly in incidents directly related to protests on education issues or carried out at university dormitories or other education facilities.⁹⁵

Where killings took place, in many cases they were related to excessive use of force by security forces against student demonstrators or were targeted killings of individual academics and students. Some of the most serious incidents involved raids carried out on student dormitories or other forms of campus residence in Côte d'Ivoire, Indonesia, Iran, Nigeria, Pakistan, Sudan and Syria.⁹⁶ For instance, in September 2013, gunmen stormed a dormitory in the middle of the night at a college in Yobe, Nigeria, and opened fire, killing at least 50 students;⁹⁷ and security forces killed seven students, injured 49 and arrested

Police officers stand guard after a mail bomb exploded at the Monterrey Institute of Technology campus on the outskirts of Mexico City, Mexico, 8 August 2011.

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330 in two raids on dormitories at Damascus and Aleppo universities in Syria in 2011 and 2012.⁹⁸

Cases of abduction and torture were also reported in some countries. In Sudan, a Darfuri student at the University of Khartoum's Department of Education was reportedly seized by National Intelligence and Security Service agents in front of the university on 10 February 2010. His body was found the next day in a street in Khartoum and showed signs of torture.⁹⁹

Attacks on higher education facilities – damaging, destroying or threatening university buildings and campuses – occurred in 17 countries: Afghanistan, Côte d'Ivoire, DRC, Egypt, Iran, Iraq, Israel/Palestine, Libya, Mexico, Nigeria, Pakistan, the Philippines, Somalia, South Sudan, Sudan, Syria and Yemen. In Nigeria, at least 15 universities were reported to have received an email message in September 2011, apparently from the violent Jihadist movement Boko Haram, warning them that their campuses were on a target list for bombings.¹⁰⁰ In Mexico, bombs were sent to six university campuses or research institutes, in some cases causing injury, and six more were listed as targets, reportedly by a group opposing nano-technology research.¹⁰¹

Military use of higher education facilities

Military use of higher education facilities appears to be less pervasive than military use of school facilities, but has been a problem in several countries, including Côte d'Ivoire,¹⁰² Somalia¹⁰³ and Yemen; in the latter, the breakaway First Armoured Division forces occupied Sana'a University Old Campus in 2011, halting university life for 10 months.¹⁰⁴ In Somalia, university campuses were used by the armed group Al-Shabaab, as well as by African Union forces in the international peacekeeping force, AMISOM, and government troops, particularly during 2012 military campaigns that drove Al-Shabaab out of their strongholds.¹⁰⁵

Motives and targets

The motives for attacks on higher education also varied from one context to another, but were often quite different from those for attacks on school-level education and bore a closer resemblance to those for attacks on teacher trade unionists. Many attacks on

higher education were connected to a government's desire to prevent the growth of opposition movements, restrict political debate or criticism of policies, and prevent alternative points of view from being expressed or gaining support. Others related to government authorities' wish to restrict education trade union activity, silence student protests, prevent certain subjects being researched by academics (ranging from human rights issues to concerns about HIV/AIDS) or limit the influence of, or exposure to, foreign ideas.

As with attacks on schools, students and teachers, there were also cases of sectarian attacks and ethnic groups being targeted. In Sudan, for example, unknown men attacked 15 Darfuri students in their dormitory at Khartoum University in 2009.¹⁰⁶ In Ethiopia, in June 2012, security forces reportedly stormed dormitories and arrested engineering students at Haromaya University in Oromia to break up a demonstration and held them outside without food for two days.¹⁰⁷

In addition, attacks on higher education were carried out as a show of strength or in retaliation for military gains unrelated to education. The Taliban said they launched a double suicide bombing on the International Islamic University in Islamabad on 20 October 2009, which killed two female and three male students, in retaliation for a Pakistani army offensive in South Waziristan.¹⁰⁸ During Operation Cast Lead in Gaza at the turn of 2008-2009 (27 December-18 January), Israeli forces damaged 14 of the 15 higher education institutions in the Gaza Strip, destroying three colleges and six university buildings.¹⁰⁹ The action appeared to be part of a strategy of destroying enemy infrastructure, as reportedly declared by the Israeli Deputy Chief of Staff.¹¹⁰

Long-term impact of attacks on education

There is a dearth of research quantifying the long-term impact on education of the types of attack documented in this study. In some countries, education authorities or international NGOs have documented the immediate impact, such as the number of schools damaged or destroyed, or the number of teachers or students killed or injured, but

information on how the provision of education is affected, let alone the wider social and economic impact, is scant. However, a wide range of potential effects can be hypothesized from individual effects documented in media and human rights reports and research into attacks on education.

Where attacks on education are persistent in an area or the threat of force is used to block recovery from attacks, the impact may well include any number of the following effects which impinge on student attainment and access to good-quality education:

- chronic disruption of attendance by students, teachers and other education staff;
- permanent drop-out of students, teachers and other education staff;
- falling recruitment of staff, leading to teacher shortages, and declining enrolment of students, hindering attempts to achieve Education for All;¹¹¹
- persistent demotivation and distraction of students, teachers and other education staff by fear or trauma and other factors that lower the quality of teaching and impinge on students' ability to learn;
- damage to or failure to repair or resupply infrastructure, textbooks and other learning materials that reduces access, reduces the quality of teaching and learning, and potentially puts students, teachers and other education staff at risk;
- reduced government capacity to deliver education or develop the education system;
- suspension or reduction in international aid for education;
- falling recruitment of teacher trade unionists, reducing their capacity to provide a teachers' viewpoint on the development of education.¹¹²

Across countries where attacks are persistent, UN, media and human rights reports indicate that hundreds of thousands of children have been denied access to education, in some cases for years, because of the length of time schools are closed: either the re-opening or rebuilding of schools is blocked by the



security threat or the government does not have the capacity or the will to rebuild in a timely way. For instance, in Yemen, 54 schools were closed for up to two months after 143 attacks on education in 2011, affecting 182,000 children. In Afghanistan, the Ministry of Education reported that more than 590 schools were closed in vulnerable areas as of May 2012, compared to 800 or more in 2009.¹¹⁴ In some cases, security threats or prolonged military use block them being rebuilt or reopened, as in India where by

A Palestinian Bedouin schoolgirl cries as she watches her classroom being destroyed by Israeli army tractors near the West Bank city of Hebron, on 12 January 2011.

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2009 police had occupied some schools for three years and one for a decade,¹¹⁵ and in South Sudan, where armed forces occupied some schools for up to five years.¹¹⁶



A teacher checks students' chalk boards on the first day of the reopening of schools on 4 February 2013, in Gao, in the north of Mali. The majority of the school's tables and benches were looted during fighting in northern Mali in 2012 and early 2013.

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A particularly stark example of this problem was found in Sierra Leone, prior to this study's reporting period, where pupils and teachers were abducted from schools and where schools and symbols of education were widely targeted for destruction: by the time the decade-long conflict ended in 2002, 87 per cent of schools were unusable due in part to damage caused by attacks. Three years later, 60 per cent of primary schools and 40 per cent of secondary schools still

required major rehabilitation or reconstruction. It is not known for how many years during the conflict those particular schools were out of use but the figures suggest that entire cohorts of children in many areas missed out on between three and 13 years of schooling.¹¹⁷

In those schools that do continue to operate after attacks or threats of attack, the quality of the education provided and the quality of the learning experienced may be greatly reduced. A commonly reported problem is teachers fleeing the area or giving up their jobs. Similarly, students may be withdrawn from school or not sent back to school because of parental fears for their safety. Attacks on schools and recruitment from schools may also be a reason for

families or communities uprooting and seeking a place of safety.

Destruction of infrastructure may lead to overcrowding in remaining classrooms and may put children at risk in unsafe learning environments if damage has not been repaired or schools and school grounds not cleared of unexploded ordnance and other dangerous objects. Some schools may be forced to organize double shifts to accommodate students from other schools that have been damaged, reducing the number of classroom hours and subjecting facilities to additional wear-and-tear. Looting and damage of classroom materials may leave students without textbooks and other items that facilitate learning, further affecting the quality of education.

Where schools are damaged the quality of education provided will be lowered, and that impact will last for all the time that the schools are not repaired. For example, in Gaza, according to the Ministry of Education, none of the 280 schools damaged (including 18 completely destroyed) in the Israeli military incursion that ended in January 2009 had been repaired by February 2010 because an Israeli blockade prevented construction materials from entering the territory.¹¹⁸ The effects of the damage therefore continued for at least one year after the damage occurred.

In addition, students and staff may experience prolonged psychological distress, ranging from distraction to trauma, that impairs their ability to study or teach to their full potential, as is the case with students who witness other acts of violence in conflict. A 2009 field study in Yemen found that 54 per cent of 1,100 children surveyed had had nightmares after witnessing conflict in their schools or villages, 35 per cent had been aggressive towards their relatives or peers, 22 per cent had considered dropping out of school and 22 per cent were prone to bed-wetting or unconscious urination.¹¹⁹

Military use of schools not only makes them a target for attack, but leads to degradation of facilities and furniture. Where classes are ongoing, students and teachers are put at risk from attacks or crossfire or the presence of weapons and are vulnerable to misconduct by troops and security forces, including

sexual advances. In many cases, parents withdraw their children from school – and girls are typically the first to be kept at home. Where they do not, dual use of the facilities can lead to overcrowding and a lowered quality of education provided, particularly where military use lasts for long periods¹²⁰ – for example, some schools were occupied for three years in India.¹²¹

Repeated attacks, and the associated security threat, can challenge the capacity of the state to manage or provide education services – ranging from paying teachers and rebuilding or re-supplying education facilities to holding examinations and inspecting schools. Recurrent attacks undermine or halt social and economic development, for which education is a key enabling provision, and can threaten the stability of particular villages, regions or even whole states, undermining government control of the country. This may be a key reason why schools are systematically attacked in some countries.¹²² The destruction of schools in Pakistan was seen as a powerful symbol of the Pakistani Taliban insurgents' ability to operate in the border areas with impunity, thereby undermining people's sense of the government's ability to assure their safety. A Pakistani Taliban campaign of assassination of anyone seen to be helping rebuild schools hampered the recovery effort.¹²³

Due to the interdependence and interconnectedness of the various components of an education system, attacks on higher education communities and institutions have an impact on all levels of education and society. As with attacks at other levels of education, they put students' and academics' lives and liberty at grave risk, as well as those of their families, and may also cause falling enrolment, withdrawal from education and flight of teaching staff. The effects of attacks can be devastating for research and teaching because they trigger retreat, fear and flight and may silence a whole academic community. Attacks on higher education can also limit the subjects that can be studied or researched, restrict international collaboration and undermine the university as a learning institution. They have wider consequences for society, too, in restricting development, particularly the emergence or strengthening of political plurality, accountable government and open democracy.

Response and prevention

So what can be done to stop attacks on education and how can their impact be limited? There are many ways in which the problem is already being addressed. An important first step is to gather more information about the nature, scale and location of the threat through monitoring, assessment and reporting. There are ways to deter attacks by holding perpetrators to account and to reduce military use through laws and policies that prohibit the practice. Numerous ways of improving security for schools have been attempted. Negotiations have been held with armed groups and government forces to treat schools as zones of peace, free of military activity. Education ministries and authorities can address grievances that otherwise may increase the risk of attack by developing and implementing conflict-sensitive policies and curricula.

However, while more information has been gathered on prevention and response since the last *Education under Attack* study was published in 2010, rigorous, empirical and comparative research into the effectiveness of different measures is still lacking, in part due to the major methodological challenges of conducting such research.¹²⁴ The appropriateness of the response used depends heavily on the nature of the attacks and their perpetrators, as well as the overall conflict and community dynamics in a given situation. A clear understanding is still needed of exactly how these factors influence the success or failure of a particular intervention in different contexts; the relative advantages of one intervention over another given the nature of attacks, their perpetrators and motives; and the potential negative side effects, unintended consequences and trade-offs.¹²⁵

Monitoring, assessment and reporting

Monitoring, assessment and reporting involve documenting abuses, analysing their impacts and using the data and analysis for advocacy as well as to inform policy development, service delivery and other responses intended to prevent or remedy these problems and thereby shield education from attack. For instance, reporting of threats of attack can be used to trigger evacuation, temporary closure of schools or heightened security measures. Documenting military

use of schools can facilitate advocacy with the relevant military authorities to end such use. Accurate reports of damage and destruction of schools inform rehabilitation and safety measures. Monitoring and reporting also play a vital role in accountability.

These objectives may require different types of monitoring, while channels for reporting will also vary, depending on the objective. Several mechanisms and processes provide regular channels for monitoring and reporting.

UN Monitoring and Reporting Mechanism on Grave Violations against Children in Situations of Armed Conflict

The UN Monitoring and Reporting Mechanism (MRM) on Grave Violations against Children in Situations of Armed Conflict was established in 2005 through Security Council Resolution 1612 to end six grave violations:

- Recruitment or use of children by armed forces or armed groups
- Killing or maiming of children
- Rape and other grave sexual violence against children
- Attacks against schools and hospitals
- Denial of humanitarian access to children
- Abduction of children

Each year, the UN Secretary-General produces a report to the UN Security Council on children and armed conflict that includes in its annexes a list naming parties to conflict who have committed one or more of the four ‘trigger’ violations.¹²⁶ One of the most significant developments during the reporting period was the passing of UN Security Council Resolution 1998 in July 2011, which made attacks on schools and hospitals one of those trigger violations.¹²⁷ In 2012 and 2013, the Taliban forces in Afghanistan (including the Tora Bora Front, the Jamat Sunat al-Dawa Salafia and the Latif Mansur Network), Forces démocratiques de libération du Rwanda (FDLR) in DRC, Islamic State of Iraq/Al-Qaida in Iraq, and the Syrian Armed Forces, intelligence forces and the Shabbiha militia in Syria were listed as parties that attacked schools and hospitals.¹²⁸

A working group of the UN Security Council has a number of means to urge the listed party to change its behaviour to stop grave violations against children, including submissions to Security Council sanctions committees, referral to the International Criminal Court and field visits.¹²⁹ To be delisted, the UN must verify that the party has ended the grave violation. This is most often achieved through the party implementing an action plan agreed with the UN to end, address and prevent the grave violation.

The first time that a party to the conflict is listed in a specific country, this should lead to the MRM being established to provide timely, reliable and objective information on the six grave violations.¹³⁰ The MRM in any given country is managed by the Country Task Force co-chaired by the UNICEF Representative and the UN Resident Coordinator in countries without a UN Mission, and by the UNICEF Representative and the Special Representative of the Secretary-General in peacekeeping or special political mission settings where there is a Department of Political Affairs or Department for Peacekeeping Operations Mission.

The findings of the Country Task Forces are reported to the UN Secretary-General and distributed via the Secretary-General's annual report on children and armed conflict, through the Secretary-General's country-specific reports on children and armed conflict, and through a quarterly internal Global Horizontal Note that provides regular updates on the situation in all MRM countries.¹³¹ Information collected by the Country Task Forces is also used to develop appropriate responses to the violations.

While the MRM covers an important niche for monitoring and reporting, it is specifically established to monitor the situation for schools and does not include attacks on higher education. Also, it is limited to situations of armed conflict, and is not tasked with reporting on the overall impact of attacks on children's access to education or on the prevention and response measures taken to protect the education system, personnel and students.¹³² The MRM only covers reported incidents that it has been able to verify and therefore may miss cases where monitors lack access or where they cannot otherwise secure accurate information. The information the MRM

presents, therefore, will always be about patterns of attacks but will not always give the complete number of attacks.

For the reasons given above, so far the MRM has operated in a limited number of countries – typically around 13-14 in any given year. It did operate in many of the countries that were very heavily or heavily affected by attacks on education in 2009-2012, but it did not operate in all of them, or in a number of other profiled countries in which a significant pattern of attacks on education took place.

In the majority of countries affected by attacks on education, there remains a need to further strengthen monitoring and reporting partnerships between UN agencies, international NGOs, human rights and development NGOs, and education ministries and district education offices to improve data collection and verification of data, and better inform the range of responses.

There are a number of examples of strong collaboration to draw from.

The Education Cluster

Education clusters,¹³³ which are present in all major humanitarian emergencies and many post-crisis settings, including in 19 of the countries profiled in this study, can play a positive role in assessing the impact of attacks on education, as well as in monitoring attacks and military use and sharing information to stop them from occurring. Education cluster coordinators and information officers have been instrumental in several countries in developing tools for data collection, and they have been collating, analysing and using information on attacks on schools and their impact, for example, to assess the financial costs and programming needs for appropriate response and to advocate with key partners. In Côte d'Ivoire, the Education Cluster, with the full cooperation of the Ministry of Education, was the catalyst for a nationwide survey on the impact of the post-election conflict on schools in 2010-2011, which involved head teachers in collecting data for the survey.¹³⁴ In South Sudan, the Cluster developed and disseminated briefing notes on military use of schools and collected data that were useful in negotiations with armed forces to vacate schools. The success of

these examples demonstrates that education clusters at country level could have an important role in encouraging wider involvement in monitoring, assessment and the use of collected data to inform a full range of responses. Education clusters can also work with child protection clusters to develop integrated inter-cluster responses. In Israel/Palestine, the Working Group on Grave Violations against Children has developed such an approach between the Child Protection and Education Clusters.¹³⁵

Government

Ministries and government bodies have monitored threats as well as the impact of attacks on education as part of their duty to provide education. In many contexts, they are well placed to do so because collecting data on student enrolment, attendance and learning achievements and on teacher attendance and teaching standards, as well as on school infrastructure and learning materials, is a core part of their work.

However, some governments either lack the political will or the capacity to monitor and respond to attacks on education. In some situations, they may themselves be complicit in, or responsible for, violations against students or education personnel or for the military use of education facilities. Governments may also resist or block international monitoring, even of the activities of rebel groups, for political reasons.

Civil society

Monitoring, data collection, assessment and reporting by civil society, community-based organizations, and national and international NGOs have continued to grow. The development of local organizations' capacity to do this requires further support. At the international level, Human Rights Watch, Watchlist on Children and Armed Conflict, CARE and others have published in-depth investigations in recent years.

The most glaring gap in data collection is the absence of global monitoring of attacks on higher education, although rescue networks and Education International do provide international alerts about the cases of individuals. In recent years, Scholars at Risk launched a monitoring project tracking violent and coercive attacks on higher education in a range of countries

and regions.¹³⁶ There is a good deal of media reporting of such attacks but this study represents the first attempt to report on the full range of attacks on higher education globally. However, the methods for continuing to report globally will need to be strengthened over the coming years.

Accountability and ending impunity

The legal framework protecting education

Attacks on education may violate international human rights law, international humanitarian law (also known as the laws of war) or international criminal law, depending on the context. Although these are distinct legal regimes, they overlap and are increasingly inter-linked. Each contains rules that protect education explicitly, or protect the conditions necessary for education provision, such as the protection of educational facilities and the lives of students and education staff.¹³⁷ The right to education is guaranteed under international human rights law in both conflict and non-conflict situations where states have ratified the relevant treaties,¹³⁸ with primary education to be compulsory and available free to all and other levels of education to be available and/or equally accessible to all.¹³⁹ Its protection is most effective, however, where states have taken national measures to implement these treaty provisions. States may also be bound by human rights and other legal provisions through customary international law, which applies to all states regardless of whether they have ratified a relevant treaty.

In situations of armed conflict, both international human rights law and international humanitarian law apply. The latter offers protections to students and education staff under its general provision for protecting civilians,¹⁴⁰ and to education facilities insofar as such property is civilian, is not a military objective and its seizure or destruction is not justified by imperative military necessity.¹⁴¹ Further, international humanitarian law seeks to protect the educational needs of particularly vulnerable groups, notably children, by ensuring that their education continues uninterrupted during armed conflict.¹⁴² The use of schools and universities in support of a military effort is restricted under international humanitarian law but not prohibited in all circumstances.¹⁴³

Under international criminal law, certain acts attract individual criminal responsibility – for example, wilful killing of civilians, torture, wanton destruction or seizure of enemy property, and attacks on civilian objects (including education facilities). Under the Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court,¹⁴⁴ there is a specific reference to the prohibition of intentionally directing attacks against buildings dedicated to education provided they are not military objectives.¹⁴⁵ Insofar as inhumane acts such as torture, imprisonment and forced disappearance are part of a widespread or systematic attack on a civilian population (including students, scholars, and teachers) – even where there is no nexus with armed conflict – they may be considered crimes against humanity and therefore prosecutable under international criminal law.¹⁴⁶

National law may have even greater potential to deter attacks than international law. National legislation is a key piece of the legal framework, enabling domestic enforcement of protections and prosecutions of perpetrators. The incorporation into national law of, for example, Article 8 of the Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court would promise greater deterrence and accountability as well as give more visibility to the protection of education in law. Comparatively few countries, however, have included attacks on educational facilities as a crime within their national criminal or military laws. According to the Coalition for the International Criminal Court, 65 countries have enacted domestic legislation implementing the crimes contained in the Rome Statute, while another 35 countries have some form of advanced draft of implementing legislation.¹⁴⁷

Some countries have also introduced legislation, jurisprudence or military policies restricting, and in some cases completely prohibiting, the military use of schools or universities, although this injunction is not always consistently enforced. Examples include Argentina,¹⁴⁸ Colombia,¹⁴⁹ Ecuador,¹⁵⁰ India,¹⁵¹ Ireland,¹⁵² the Philippines,¹⁵³ Poland,¹⁵⁴ South Sudan¹⁵⁵ and the UK.¹⁵⁶

In the Philippines, for example, the practice of military use of schools has been explicitly banned under both national legislation and military policy¹⁵⁷ – although

incidents continue to be reported.¹⁵⁸ A draft law was also under consideration that would criminalize the occupation of schools.¹⁵⁹ Further legal measures to address the problem of attacks have been proposed by a bill that would increase the penalty for election-related violence and another that would make election service voluntary for teachers and other citizens, since violence against teachers and schools is frequently connected with their use during elections.¹⁶⁰ These are promising steps for increasing accountability, though their effectiveness will ultimately depend on the extent to which they are enforced.

In order to promote greater protection of schools and universities during armed conflict, GCPEA has worked with a range of stakeholders to develop and promote the *Lucens Guidelines for Protecting Schools and Universities from Military Use during Armed Conflict*, international guidelines that urge all parties to armed conflict not to use schools and universities for any purpose in support of their military effort.¹⁶¹ These guidelines respect international law as it stands, are not legally binding in themselves and do not affect existing obligations under international law. They also reflect evidence of good practice already applied by some parties to armed conflict to avoid impinging on students' safety and education. They are intended to lead to a shift in behaviour that will contribute to better protections for schools and universities in times of armed conflict and, in particular, to a reduction in their use by the fighting forces of parties to armed conflict in support of the military effort.¹⁶² These guidelines are discussed further in this report in the essay 'Military use of schools and universities: changing behaviour'.

Strengthening accountability

It is clear that a strong legal framework for the right to education and the protection of education exists, even though there may be ways it can still be further enhanced. However, impunity for those responsible for attacking education is a persistent problem.

Accountability means, in its most basic sense, ensuring there are adverse consequences for those who perpetrate abuses.¹⁶³ This is important for purposes of justice, both as an end in itself and because it can play a key role in peace-building by

addressing the causes of conflict through legitimate and just ways. It can also have a deterrent effect, contributing to the prevention of future attacks¹⁶⁴ – although it may also be the case that conflict continues because one or more parties does not want to face justice.

There are a range of effective mechanisms and means for holding perpetrators to account available at local, national and international levels, the appropriateness of which depend, for example, on the nature of the perpetrator, where the perpetrator is to be held accountable and whether or not an issue can be addressed domestically.¹⁶⁵ This range covers, for example, civilian criminal trials, military trials, civil suits, travel bans and the freezing of financial assets for holding individual perpetrators to account in domestic fora, and truth commissions and traditional justice mechanisms for both individuals and states or non-state groups. Victims may also be awarded reparation.¹⁶⁶

At the international level, individual perpetrators may be prosecuted by the International Criminal Court (ICC) or other international tribunals or have international travel bans and asset freezes imposed; meanwhile, accountability for states may be increased by mechanisms such as the UN Security Council (including through the UN MRM, mentioned above), the Human Rights Council, the Committee on the Rights of the Child (CRC) and other treaty bodies,¹⁶⁷ regional human rights courts and commissions, or by sanctions or other embargoes.¹⁶⁸ States – as opposed to individual leaders or military commanders – cannot be prosecuted criminally; therefore, holding them accountable includes increasing the costs to their international diplomacy through stigmatization or ‘naming and shaming’ and by imposing punitive sanctions, where appropriate.¹⁶⁹

While no one has yet been charged specifically for attacks on education facilities under the relevant provisions of the Rome Statute by the ICC, a handful of cases already on the Court’s docket – and one that has been successfully prosecuted – have mentioned the issue of attacks on schools or the effects that recruitment of children as soldiers can have on education.¹⁷⁰ For example, both the closing arguments

and sentencing submission by the Prosecution in the first case at the ICC, against Thomas Lubanga Dyilo from the DRC, as well as several submissions during the reparations phase, included references to the impact that the crime of child recruitment had on education.¹⁷¹ In the case investigated against Sudan’s President, Omar al-Bashir, with respect to atrocities in Darfur, he has been charged with multiple attacks on the civilian population of Darfur that took place from March 2003 to 14 July 2008 as part of the counter-insurgency campaign. These attacks included the bombing of schools where a large proportion of victims were children.¹⁷²

The deterrent effect of the Rome Statute against criminal violations during armed conflict that constitute attacks on education would be enhanced if ICC investigations were carried out with a view to bringing charges against high-profile leaders who are alleged to have issued orders to attack schools or kill teachers or students for going to school.

UN human rights treaty bodies and other international human rights mechanisms have also, in several cases, begun to include attacks on education in their observations, calling on states to address the impacts of attacks that violate the right to education and to hold perpetrators to account.¹⁷³ The CRC – the treaty body established under the Convention on the Rights of the Child which requires signatories to submit reports every five years for review upon which recommendations for enhancing protections are then made¹⁷⁴ – is one treaty body that has made recommendations regarding attacks on schools and military use to several countries. For example, in 2013 it issued concluding observations on the second to fourth periodic reports of Israel, which expressed concern over a range of attacks on schools and students as well as severe classroom shortages and restrictions on freedom of movement that impinge on access to education for some Palestinian children.¹⁷⁵

In addition, there are a handful of examples of domestic accountability mechanisms that have been used in response to attacks on school buildings or military use of schools. For example, in India, where security forces used more than 129 schools during 2010 alone,¹⁷⁶ the Supreme Court issued a ruling

ordering the forces out.¹⁷⁷ In general, however, considerably less is known at present regarding local or national investigations and prosecutions for violations committed against students, education staff and education facilities. A study published by Conflict Dynamics International in 2011 suggests that national-level mechanisms have real potential to contribute to improved accountability, but that most do not prioritize children affected by armed conflict. Technical capacity and funding are also lacking.¹⁷⁸ Therefore, there is a need to encourage and support countries to provide these requirements.

While encouraging steps have been taken to increase accountability for attacks, these are relatively few when compared with the number of violations documented by this study alone. Advocacy to strengthen accountability and reduce impunity for perpetrators who commit violations of law that constitute attacks on education remains a pressing need at both international and national levels. To be better able to draw lessons and address gaps, more information is also needed regarding the enforcement of national legislation and the use of domestic accountability mechanisms.

Enhancing security on the ground

Many different protection measures have been used in high-risk areas to shield potential targets, minimize damage from attacks or provide means of self-defence.¹⁷⁹ These have included assigning armed or unarmed guards to education institutions, establishing checkpoints near schools, reinforcing school infrastructure such as building walls around school perimeters, making housing available for students or personnel near or on campus, providing a protective presence or escorts to accompany students or teachers en route to and from schools, offering safer modes of transportation and arming teachers.

For example, in Iraq, in response to child abductions and recruitment, the Ministry of Education instructed schools to take precautions and security patrols and checkpoints around schools were increased.¹⁸⁰ In Thailand, the government – due in part to teacher trade union demands – has for a long time emphasized the use of hard protection measures such as providing military escorts for teachers travelling to and

from school or lining the road to and from school with security forces, as well as issuing firearms licenses for teachers to carry weapons as a means of self-defence en route to and from school.¹⁸¹ In response to extortion-related kidnap threats issued to schools in Mexico, municipal authorities in 2009 dispatched hundreds of police cadets to patrol the targeted school surroundings,¹⁸² while a local government-created programme in Acapulco, called ‘Safe School’, increased security personnel in and around the schools in 2011 and installed alarm buttons in school buildings.¹⁸³

Although an elevated risk of attack or a general security situation may warrant the use of physical protection measures in some cases, these measures can have unintended negative consequences that need to be considered carefully. Reinforcing school infrastructure may make it more attractive for military use, for example. Furthermore, the presence of guards, police or other armed personnel, when they are themselves the intended targets of violence, can put students and teachers at increased risk of attack.¹⁸⁴

Negotiated solutions

A variety of negotiated responses to attacks have been attempted, in particular to military use of schools. In some cases, negotiations have been conducted by local communities or community leaders with armed groups or government forces; in others, they have been undertaken by government officials, depending on the context and nature of attacks. Negotiations have involved dialogue and consensus-building among parties to the conflict and education stakeholders around the types of behaviour that are permissible on school grounds, the negative impact of military use, the politicization of schools or the content of the curriculum. Agreements may declare a ban on weapons within a defined area, prohibit political propaganda on school grounds, restrict the military use of schools or order the vacating of schools by armed groups or security forces, establish codes of conduct for military and armed groups, or dictate other terms relevant locally.¹⁸⁵

Negotiations to cease or prevent military use of schools during the reporting period have also

succeeded in some cases. For example, in Somalia, the UN has collected and used data on military use of education facilities to secure the agreement of military commanders to vacate schools.¹⁸⁶ In some instances, negotiations have taken place successfully with armed forces and groups at local level to ban certain practices from school grounds, such as occupation and use of schools and looting and burning of learning materials and classroom furniture. In South Sudan, community leaders and Parent Teacher Associations (PTAs) play a central role, acting as steering committees for county commissioners who negotiate with government security forces.¹⁸⁷

Dialogue initiated by ministries of education or UN partners with ministries of defence and leaders of the national armed forces has led the latter to issue a number of military directives to vacate school premises, for instance in South Sudan.¹⁸⁸ In Mali, the education ministry and the UN engaged in dialogue with the defence ministry and a number of schools were subsequently vacated.¹⁸⁹ In DRC, UN-led intervention with military leaders resulted in the national armed forces vacating schools.¹⁹⁰

Community-driven negotiations to develop and agree to codes of conduct have also been undertaken in countries such as Nepal and the Philippines, where a number of communities have established programmes whereby schools or ‘learning institutions’ become recognized as ‘Zones of Peace’ (SZOP and LIZOP, respectively). In Nepal, one of the key components of the SZOP programme was the writing and signing of codes of conduct defining what was and was not allowed on school grounds in order to minimize violence, school closures and the politicization of schooling. For instance, terms of the code in some cases included: ‘No arrest or abduction of any individual within the premises’, ‘no use of school to camp’ or ‘no use of school as an armed base’. This was achieved through collaboration among diverse political and ethnic groups in widely publicized mass meetings.¹⁹¹ The signatory parties kept their commitments, in general, and these efforts helped communities to keep schools open, improving protection as well as school governance.¹⁹²



Syrian children attend a small makeshift school, set up for families who were scared to send their children far in the midst of war, in a village in northern Syria, 9 February 2013. The lessons are taught by a medical student whose own studies were cut short because of fighting.

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In the Philippines, codes of conduct developed collaboratively have been used to encourage armed groups and government forces to protect and promote children's right to education and the human rights of teachers and other education personnel. They are asked to sign up to morally binding commitments to abide by the codes. According to a case study of LIZOP at a school in Maguindanao province, this process opened space for dialogue among the community and other stakeholders on how to better protect and ensure the continuity of schooling for their children, and provided 'an opportunity for actors in conflict to become actors in building learning spaces that are safe and secure', with members of armed groups involved in both agreeing and signing the LIZOP declaration.¹⁹³

Concerns regarding negotiation include potential risks to the mediator and representatives of the parties involved in the dialogue in dealing with armed non-state groups; whether to use local or international mediators and how they will be perceived by the parties in the negotiations; whether to hold talks in private or publicly; and how far to compromise on education policy and curriculum for short-term security gains without undermining the quality of, or access to, education in future.

Community responses

The limited amount of research that has been carried out on the subject supports the view of some international agencies and NGOs that responses initiated by communities may have a key role to play in protecting schools.¹⁹⁴ Communities can be involved in all of the types of response discussed in this study and contribute to protection in a range of ways. These may include the involvement of school management committees in protecting schools, students and teachers; the establishment of school defence committees; the involvement of communities in the construction, maintenance and protection of schools including as night-watchmen or security guards; the use of parents and other community members as student and teacher escorts or a protective presence; and the development of community alert systems, community-based schooling, and community-led protests, negotiations and monitoring.

These responses may be generated and implemented by communities with little or no external support in some instances. In other cases, they may be developed and managed by communities in consultation with, or with technical or financial support from, external organizations or government partners. Different forms of engagement may be more or less feasible depending on the context, the nature of attacks and community values with regard to education.

For example, in DRC in 2012, Education Cluster partners worked at school level with students, teachers and parents to analyse risks, including protection-related threats resulting from conflict and insecurity, and to develop risk reduction plans.¹⁹⁵ In Myanmar, local organizations and communities developed systems for monitoring, negotiating with armed groups and providing physical protection.¹⁹⁶ In Palestine, UNESCO helped to support the establishment of an alert system via text messages on mobile phones, building on the initiative of parents who call teachers in the morning to ensure that school routes are safe. The system helps warn students, teachers and parents when and where incidents are occurring.¹⁹⁷

Knowledge of the comparative effectiveness of different types of community response remains limited. It is generally accepted that community involvement is a critical component for improving the protection of education.¹⁹⁸ However, more research is needed on what makes community-level interventions effective and their long-term impact. This issue is explored further in the essay: 'The role of communities in protecting education' later in this study.

Education policy and planning

In areas where there are persistent attacks, education ministries and departments can take steps to help prevent future incidents, reduce the impact of ongoing attacks and ensure affected schools recover in a timely way. When rebuilding, rehabilitation and resupply work is slow, it can lengthen the denial of access to good quality education by years. If curricula, teacher recruitment policies or resource allocation are a source of tension, failing to address them may mean that attacks continue or recur. Conflict-sensitive education policy and planning measures that take into

account the need to both prevent attacks on education and respond to attacks where they do occur are therefore critical to improving protection. Strengthening the elements of education for peaceful resolution of conflicts, respect for human rights and responsible citizenship in the curriculum may also help reduce the recurrence of conflict and build peace.

One important aspect of educational planning in ensuring the recovery of the education system is making funds and other resources available to rebuild and repair schools. Every year that passes without a school being rehabilitated and reopened can mean a lost year of education for its students. But rehabilitating schools where large numbers have been destroyed, as in Afghanistan and parts of Pakistan, is a very heavy burden that may require sustained, large-scale collaboration with international donors and NGOs to fill gaps in funding. Investment on this scale is only possible where attacks have been halted, which requires intervention to avert or deter attacks and resolve conflict over education issues.¹⁹⁹

Where unequal access to quality education is a source of tension, as was the case in Sierra Leone, establishing fair and transparent criteria for allocating resources may be an important contributor to ending grievances that can lead to attacks.²⁰⁰ Transparency in education system governance and resource allocation is also vital for restoring trust. In Nepal, for instance, after years of unequal distribution of education resources, the government tried to ensure resources went to where they were really needed within conflict-affected areas by introducing district-level micro-planning.²⁰¹ It also sought to improve governance and transparency by encouraging parental involvement in school management via PTAs, making school governance bodies more inclusive and introducing fiscal audits.²⁰²

Curriculum reform, changes to teacher recruitment and management, and increased community involvement that seeks to address the grievances of particular groups may also help to prevent attacks motivated by perceived bias or the imposition of alien cultural values, history, religion or language. In Nepal, the latest editions of social studies textbooks now include education for human rights, peace and

civics.²⁰³ Moreover, the provincial education authorities in the southernmost provinces of Thailand decided that protection against attacks on schools and assassinations of teachers could be increased by changes to education curriculum and staffing policies and practices. The southern provincial education offices have instituted a number of policies to improve protection for teachers and schools, including:

- increasing by five-fold the hours of Islamic religious instruction in the four provinces where the ethnic Malay Muslim population is concentrated or predominates and switching from five to six days a week of schooling to accommodate the extra lessons;
- teaching English, the Malay language and the local Muslim population's tribal language;
- funding projects that build relationships with the local community such as vegetable gardens for the school;
- transferring Thai Buddhist teachers to city areas which are safer, supported by subsidies to cover the extra cost of additional travel to school;
- recruiting more than 3,000 teachers from the local community to replace teachers transferred to other parts of the country;
- requiring students to study at home when access to school is limited, with community teachers visiting their homes.²⁰⁴

The aim of these policies is to build relationships and trust with the local community and encourage them to protect teachers, students and schools, although it is difficult to say whether they have affected the number of attacks.²⁰⁵

The Inter-Agency Network for Education in Emergencies (INEE), UN agencies and a number of donors are also increasingly focusing on education policies and sector plans, as well as NGO and UN programming that are conflict-sensitive and anticipate and respond to some of the causes of armed conflict and associated attacks. The *INEE Guiding Principles on Integrating Conflict Sensitivity in Education Policy and Programming in Conflict-Affected and Fragile Contexts* were adopted at a high-level meeting



Schoolchildren displaced by fighting in the southern Philippines watch through the windows of a temporary classroom provided by UNICEF at an IDP camp in Talayan, Maguindanao, Mindanao, the Philippines.

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convened by INEE and UNESCO in April 2013. INEE has developed a *Guidance Note on Conflict-Sensitive Education*²⁰⁶ and USAID was commissioning work on conflict-sensitive sector planning in 2013. Protect Education in Insecurity and Conflict (PEIC) and the UNESCO International Institute for Educational Planning are beginning a capacity-building project for crisis-sensitive education.

Safety measures, including emergency drills, have become a part of school policy in some places in an effort to mitigate the impact of potential attacks. In Mexico, for example, in response to crossfire in shootouts near to schools, teachers in a number of states were given training on how to keep their students safe during gun battles and schools began to hold drills.²⁰⁷

Aside from protection, a key problem affecting recovery from attacks is providing continuity of education for students affected by violence or whose schools have been destroyed. To ensure this happens, education authorities must develop and implement plans which respond to current emergencies and prepare for future ones; for example, they should ensure that education is protected and continuous for displaced populations – whether displaced internally or across borders – as well as for those who remain in their place of origin; and that regulations are in place to guarantee the safety of rebuilt or replaced facilities as well as the availability of temporary learning facilities in the meantime.²⁰⁸

UN agencies and NGOs frequently supplement government efforts in areas of conflict by providing temporary learning spaces for displaced school populations, often in the form of tented classrooms, as well as emergency education supplies.²⁰⁹ In Somalia, for example, the Somali Formal Education Network, an umbrella group for 55 schools in Mogadishu and three other regions, helps teachers follow communities when they are uprooted, sometimes teaching under trees or tents. When an area becomes dangerous, the school authorities look for another location and move to ensure that education continues.²¹⁰

Protecting higher education

Most responses to attacks on higher education appear to focus on either enhancing physical protection or promoting resilience and adaptability. This study found no examples of responses in the form of community protection or turning universities into ‘zones of peace’.²¹¹ Alongside the relative dearth of information about attacks on higher education compared with attacks on other levels of education, there is even less about the effectiveness of responses at the tertiary level.

The physical protection of higher education can take several forms, including on-campus security guards or escorts and strengthening gates, fences and windows. In Colombia, for example, an elaborate protection scheme for individuals, originally set up for teachers and teacher trade unionists, was extended to protect academic and trade union representatives in higher education. Established by human rights groups, teacher trade unions, OHCHR and representatives of the Colombian government, it is providing threatened or targeted individuals with administrative and financial support for physical protection measures and, depending on the type and degree of risk of each individual case, armed escorts or guards, mobile phones, bullet-proof vehicles or temporary relocation.²¹²

A number of measures to promote the resilience of higher education in response to attacks have also been taken. Distance learning programmes, such as those established for Iraq,²¹³ Israel/Palestine²¹⁴ and Zimbabwe,²¹⁵ and scholarship schemes for studying, teaching or researching abroad have been used to enable continuity of education where normal teaching is no longer possible, for instance due to the security risk of travelling to university. Iraqi academics in exile, for example, have been able to contribute filmed lectures to Iraqi universities on specialist subjects through a Scholar Rescue Fund project.²¹⁶ In recent years, scholar protection organizations have also put an increased focus on funding placements in countries neighbouring the conflict-affected country to increase the likelihood of scholars returning to their homeland when peace is restored.

Pressure for greater accountability in higher education has stemmed primarily from political and human rights campaigns at local and international levels, rather than the use of legal instruments, the prosecution of perpetrators or enhanced monitoring and reporting. Examples include student protests and demonstrations against repressive measures or the allegedly excessive use of force by state security forces; and national and international advocacy campaigns in support of individual academics or students. There is no clear evidence regarding the impact of many such actions.

GCPEA’s research examining the relationship between autonomy and security concluded that enhancing university autonomy *vis-à-vis* the state may in some situations contribute to reducing or preventing attacks on higher education, particularly when coupled with university-controlled internal security provision.²¹⁷ This includes developing and extending the notion of the university as a space outside of direct state control (even when funding is largely state-provided) – particularly concerning decisions about recruitment, financial and administrative management, curriculum and research. It also includes prohibiting state forces from entering university campuses (unless invited in by the institutional leadership or in extremely rare circumstances).²¹⁸ While university autonomy alone is insufficient to prevent attacks, many of which occur outside of university campuses, the research found that it appears to be an important component of efforts to improve the protection of higher education. These issues are explored in greater detail in this study in the essay: ‘Protecting higher education’.

Advocacy

Advocacy has been undertaken at international, national and local levels over the past several years to increase awareness of the problem of attacks and catalyse improved response and prevention.

Concerted advocacy undertaken by a number of NGOs and UN agencies seems to have encouraged the decision to include attacks on schools and hospitals as a triggering offence for mandated UN monitoring and reporting of violations against children in armed conflict through UN Security Council Resolution 1998

(2011) and a corresponding increase in reporting in the UN Secretary-General's annual report on children and armed conflict. Awareness-raising efforts have also contributed to improved coverage of attacks in these reports.

Advocacy efforts around the right to education in crisis-affected contexts have also called greater attention to the issue of attacks. In September 2012, the UN Secretary-General launched his 'Global Education First Initiative', a five-year strategy to improve education access and quality worldwide, which included as its second 'Key action': 'Sustain education in humanitarian crises, especially in conflict'.²¹⁹ To help implement this component of the agenda, the education-in-emergencies community met to develop 'Education Cannot Wait', which was launched at an event in September 2012 at the UN General Assembly bringing together global leaders from governments, international organizations and civil society. These leaders endorsed a 'Call to Action'²²⁰ urging the protection of schools from attacks, as well as significant increases in humanitarian aid for education and integration of emergency prevention, preparedness, response and recovery in education sector plans and budgets.²²¹ An INEE Education Cannot Wait Advocacy Working Group, focused on reaching the goals set out in the Call to Action, was formed and a high-level follow-up event was held in September 2013 to assess progress and shortfalls and reaffirm commitments to: 'plan, prioritize and protect education in crisis-affected contexts'.²²²

International human rights organizations such as Human Rights Watch and Amnesty International and trade union organizations such as Education International have helped to focus public attention on the problem of attacks, producing country reports that cover the issue in-depth in a range of contexts, or alerts on the plight of students, teachers and academics who have been arbitrarily imprisoned, tortured or killed. Other international NGOs such as CARE, Save the Children and Watchlist on Children and Armed Conflict have similarly developed thematic reports and advocacy documents highlighting the problem. Local human rights groups have also continued their coverage of attacks, producing publi-

cations and statements calling for an end to attacks and for appropriate redress. Collectively, these organizations have raised awareness and put pressure on perpetrators, including through the use of petitions, open letters and submissions to human rights bodies.

Education Clusters at country level have used data collected by education and child protection partners to advocate with government counterparts to vacate schools as well as to mobilize funds for the rehabilitation or construction of damaged schools and the provision of educational materials such as desks and textbooks. For example, in Côte d'Ivoire, monitoring information was used for advocacy with the ministries of education and defence on the issue of attacks on education; it was also published in the Education Cluster's reports.²²³ Education and child protection partners undertook awareness-raising activities to sensitize armed groups to the effects of military use of schools and to improve their understanding of international humanitarian law, including through training and visits to military checkpoints and occupied schools. As a result of these efforts, military commanders dismantled checkpoints near schools and armed groups vacated the majority of occupied schools.²²⁴

Advocacy has also been undertaken by organizations or communities directly with governments, armed forces or armed groups. According to a UN respondent, advocacy and awareness-raising with the armed forces in South Sudan increased their understanding of the negative impacts of military use of schools on education and children's well-being.²²⁵ Subsequently, the number of schools occupied decreased significantly, as did the length of time from when a school was reported to be occupied until it was vacated.²²⁶ Then in 2013, the SPLA ordered its troops to stop using schools.²²⁷

Recommendations

The evidence is incontrovertible: attacking schools, universities, students, teachers and academics is a common tactic in situations of conflict and insecurity around the world. While some progress has been made, much more can and should be done to protect education from attack.

Monitoring, assessment and reporting

Monitoring, assessment and reporting of attacks on education are essential for many purposes, including holding those responsible to account, devising effective ways to respond to and prevent attacks, and addressing their impact.

- Ministries of education, interior and other relevant parts of government should rigorously monitor and investigate attacks against students, schools and universities, teachers, academics and other education personnel and the impact of such attacks, and should use that information to devise effective, coordinated responses. International agencies such as the Education and Child Protection clusters, the Department of Peacekeeping Operations (DPKO), UNICEF, UNESCO and donor governments should support or continue to support these efforts, involving local NGOs in the monitoring process where possible.
- UN human rights monitoring mechanisms, including the Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights; the Human Rights Committee; the Committee on the Rights of the Child; and the Human Rights Council and its mechanisms, including the Special Rapporteur on the Right to Education, should give greater attention to monitoring and reporting attacks on education at all levels of schooling, where relevant to their mandates. Governments and civil society organizations, in turn, should submit or continue to submit to these bodies information about violations of international law that constitute attacks on education.
- Country task forces of the UN-led MRM on grave violations against children in situations of armed conflict should enhance monitoring and reporting of attacks on schools, teachers and other persons related to the school (protected persons); threats of attacks against protected persons; and actions by parties to the conflict which impede children's access to education, including the military use of schools, as requested by the Security Council in Resolution 1998 of July 2011. Although more information is being gathered, gaps still remain, particularly in certain countries. Steps should include:
 - Establishing or strengthening monitoring and reporting partnerships involving NGOs.
 - Reporting in more detail about education. For example, country task forces that combine attacks on schools and hospitals should disaggregate the information. In addition, reporting on killing and maiming, sexual violence, and recruitment should specify if these violations took place in or en route to or from schools.
 - Linking data collection to action on the ground to prevent or respond to military use of schools and attacks on schools and protected personnel, including, where appropriate, collaborating with education ministries and authorities to better inform and trigger responses to attacks and monitor the effectiveness of response measures.

International and national legal protections

Notwithstanding the existence of a strong framework of international law in favour of the right to education and the protection of education, the number of attacks on education and the impunity of most perpetrators indicate that much remains to be done to further strengthen legal protections and accountability mechanisms at international and national levels.

- All parties to armed conflicts should abide by the laws of war and never intentionally direct attacks against civilians – such as students, teachers or other education personnel – who are not taking direct part in hostilities. Nor should they intentionally direct attacks against buildings dedicated to education – such as schools and universities – provided they are not military objectives.
- Government officials and leaders of armed non-state groups should make clear public statements that attacks on education are prohibited, issue clear orders to this effect and refrain from using education institutions for military purposes.
- States should ensure that their domestic law criminalizes all elements of attacks on education in line with international humanitarian and human rights law.
- Where they have not done so, states should ratify the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, which protects the right to education at all levels.
- Relevant UN treaty-based human rights bodies and other international and regional monitoring and supervisory bodies should offer coherent and coordinated guidance to states (and, where relevant, non-state actors) on the measures required to implement their obligations under international law with respect to attacks on education. States and armed non-state groups should, in turn, implement these bodies' recommendations.
- All parties to peace agreements and mediators should ensure that issues concerning attacks on education be included in any post-conflict agreement and that international legal protections for education are explicitly articulated.

Military use of schools and universities

The use of schools and universities for military purposes during armed conflict can displace students and deprive them of an education, create a wholly inappropriate learning environment, or even place students, teachers and academics – and schools and universities – at risk of attack.

- All parties to armed conflict should refrain from using schools and universities for any purpose in support of the military effort. While certain uses may not be contrary to the laws of war, all parties should endeavour to avoid impinging on students' safety and education.
- To this end, states, as well as UN and regional peacekeepers, should support and endorse the *Lucens Guidelines for Protecting Schools and Universities from Military Use during Armed Conflict* and incorporate them into military doctrine, military manuals, rules of engagement, operational orders and other means of dissemination, as far as possible, to encourage appropriate practice throughout the chain of command.

Accountability

Perpetrators of attacks must be held responsible, where appropriate, in domestic, regional and international fora through judicial and non-judicial mechanisms. Others who are responsible for putting education at risk of attack or for failing to fulfil their responsibility to prevent or respond to attacks should also be held to account.

- States should, in accordance with international standards, systematically investigate and, where appropriate, prosecute those individuals responsible for ordering, taking part in, or bearing command responsibility for, the range of violations of international law that constitute attacks against education.
- Tribunals at regional and international levels should similarly give specific consideration to the range of violations that constitute attacks against education during relevant investigations and pursue and prosecute cases of sufficient gravity over which they have jurisdiction. When considering awards of reparation, tribunals should consider the full effect of such attacks.
- Informal and transitional justice mechanisms, such as commissions of inquiry and truth and reconciliation commissions, should, where relevant, recognize and concretely address attacks against education at all stages in their processes, including in fact-finding and any reparations.

Protective programmes, policies and planning

In areas where attacks occur, implementing effective measures to prevent, respond to and mitigate the impacts of attacks is critical. All interventions should be tailored to context and conflict dynamics and, where possible, should be based on assessment and evaluation of what works and why.

- Governments, NGOs and UN agencies should involve communities, including marginalized and vulnerable groups, in analysing the nature of attacks, as well as programme design and delivery. Community engagement should not come at the expense of community members' safety.
- Donors should ensure flexibility in both programme design and funding to allow for interventions to be tailored to context and to change course as needed.
- UN agencies, NGOs and relevant ministries should undertake conflict analysis to avoid unintentionally increasing or transferring risk.
- UN agencies, NGOs and education ministries should pay particular attention to the impact of violent attacks on girls' and women's education and devise appropriate programmes of prevention, response and recovery.
- UN agencies, NGOs, peacekeeping forces and governments, where appropriate and where security concerns allow, should undertake negotiations with parties to a conflict, or support such negotiations, to reach agreement on respect for schools as safe sanctuaries and the re-opening of closed schools.
- States should take steps towards de-linking education facilities, staff and students from electoral tasks and partisan political events in contexts where it can be reasonably expected that such linkages would heighten the risk of attacks.
- Education ministries should adopt conflict-sensitive curricula and resourcing policies to ensure that education does not help trigger conflict and become a target for attack.

- Education ministries and international agencies should support in policy and practice the development of contingency plans to ensure that schools and universities are equipped to respond to attacks and resume educational activities as soon as possible.
- Academics, practitioners and education providers, including international and local organizations, should conduct rigorously designed in-country and comparative research to illuminate what programmes successfully protect education and why, taking into account the fact that attacks are often highly context-specific. All actors should make use of available relevant research to inform their responses.

Higher education

Greater efforts are needed to strengthen the protection, and promote the resilience, of higher education institutions. Stronger guarantees of university autonomy, academic freedom and security are essential in the face of a wide variety of attacks and threats.

- States should publicly affirm their responsibilities to protect higher education from attack, including abstaining from direct or complicit involvement in attacks and preventing and deterring attacks. This should include conducting thorough investigations of any incidents which occur, reporting findings in an open and transparent way, and holding perpetrators accountable under law.
- All states should promote the security and autonomy of higher education institutions at all times and prevent violence and intimidation against academics. To this end, states should encourage, within higher education communities and society generally, a culture of respect for institutional autonomy, including rejection of external ideological or political interference. Suitable measures may include new policies, regulations and laws that promote both institutional autonomy and the security of higher education communities.
- States and other relevant organizations should do everything in their power to protect higher education personnel from threats and danger, including by providing support to those who seek refuge from such threats or danger in another country.
- More information about the nature, scale and impact of attacks on higher education is needed. States, higher education institutions and professionals, UN and international agencies, and NGOs should support and expand research on and monitoring of attacks on higher education communities.