

INDIA

Attacks on education continued during this reporting period in conflict-affected areas of the country, such as Jammu and Kashmir and areas where Naxalite opposition groups operated. While reported attacks on schools decreased, reported attacks on school and higher education students and personnel increased in 2018 and 2019, in part due to excessive use of force and the detention or arrest of over one thousand teachers and university students and staff. Reports of military use of schools decreased between 2017 and 2019, occurring only sporadically.

Context

In May 2019, the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) won the elections with a majority and Prime Minister Narendra Modi remained for a second term.⁸⁶⁴ Violence between BJP supporters and opposition parties occurred in 2018 and 2019.⁸⁶⁵ The government also enforced sedition and defamation laws during this period.⁸⁶⁶

Relations between India and Pakistan degraded during the 2017-2019 reporting period.⁸⁶⁷ In August 2019, the Indian government revoked the special constitutional status of Jammu and Kashmir, splitting the state into two separate federally governed Union Territories. Before announcing the Jammu and Kashmir Reorganization Act, the government blocked communications and imposed a lockdown, including the closure of schools.⁸⁶⁸ Armed conflict between Indian security forces and Pakistan-based militant groups, such as Jaish-e-Mohammad (JeM),⁸⁶⁹ over control of the long-disputed Kashmir border territory, intensified in 2019, resulting in the killing and displacement of civilians,⁸⁷⁰ despite the cease-fire agreement signed by India and Pakistan in May 2018.⁸⁷¹

As in the previous reporting period, separatist movements in Manipur state as well as Naxalite opposition groups, operating primarily in Chhattisgarh, Jharkhand, Odisha, and Bihar states, also affected education.⁸⁷² These groups targeted schools functioning as polling stations during elections in 2019.⁸⁷³

Children from socially and economically marginalized communities remained at risk of labor, trafficking, and reduced access to education during the reporting period.⁸⁷⁴ Women and girls with disabilities were also subjected to a heightened risk of abuse, according to Human Rights Watch.⁸⁷⁵

In Jammu and Kashmir, unrest, protest, and strikes reportedly forced school closures in 2017, according to the UN.⁸⁷⁶ One analysis, conducted by media outlet *India Spend*, revealed that schools and colleges in Kashmir were closed for nearly 60 percent of working days between July 2016 and May 2017, due to violent protests and the use of force by security forces.⁸⁷⁷ Additionally, in 2019, after the attack on a convoy of vehicles carrying Indian paramilitary police in Pulwama, Jammu and Kashmir, schools in the districts along the Line of Control, meaning those within a five-kilometer range of the international border, were closed by government order in late February.⁸⁷⁸ Schools were also closed after August 5, 2019, in Jammu and Kashmir, after the abrogation of Article 370, which bifurcated the state into two Union Territories.⁸⁷⁹ Even though the government ordered schools to reopen on August 19, 2019, few children reportedly returned to class in Kashmir due to continued tensions.⁸⁸⁰

Police employing excessive force and arresting university students during demonstrations also impacted education. Students held on-campus protests during the reporting period, and led off-campus, education-related demonstrations, including against the force used by police when entering university campuses.⁸⁸¹

Attacks on schools

During the 2017-2019 reporting period, GCPEA collected at least 43 reports of attacks on schools. The rate of reported attacks declined in comparison to the last reporting period. In 2013, GCPEA collected more than 25 reported attacks on schools, followed by a decline during 2014 and 2015, then a sharp increase in 2016 when GCPEA collated over 50 reported attacks on schools, primarily in Jammu and Kashmir.⁸⁸²

In 2017, GCPEA documented 12 reported attacks on schools, which included explosive devices and arson, perpetrated by unknown parties and non-state armed groups in Jammu and Kashmir, Bihar, Jharkhand, Chhattisgarh, and Uttar Pradesh states, as well as crossfire between Indian and Pakistani forces in Jammu and Kashmir.⁸⁸³

In 2018, local media sources reported at least four attacks on schools, a decrease from the previous year.⁸⁸⁴ Reported attacks included the planting of explosive devices at or near schools in Bihar state and Jammu and Kashmir:

- On an unspecified date in early February 2018, an alleged Naxalite opposition group reportedly planted two explosives, one of which was a “can bomb,” at the gate of a government middle school in Manjhar village, Bihar state; media reported that this incident was the second such case in 20 days.⁸⁸⁵
- On February 19, 2018, local media reported that two bombs were allegedly found at the gate of a government school in Paraiya, Bihar state; the same school affected by the aforementioned attack earlier in February.⁸⁸⁶
- On June 27, 2018, alleged Naxalites reportedly triggered an improvised explosive device (IED) near a school in Garwha district, Jharkhand state, according to local media.⁸⁸⁷
- Local media reported that on August 6, 2018, an explosive device reportedly detonated in a school, in Shiva village, Jammu and Kashmir, injuring the principal and another staff member and igniting a small fire.⁸⁸⁸

In 2019, the UN verified nine attacks on schools in Jammu and Kashmir.⁸⁸⁹

GCPEA collected at least 26 reports of attacks on schools in 2019.⁸⁹⁰ This marked an increase in comparison to 2018 that could be partly attributed to non-state armed groups and unidentified parties attacking schools used as polling stations during elections. India held elections in phases from April 11 to May 19, 2019, for the Lok Sabha, or lower house of parliament, and some State Assembly seats.⁸⁹¹ Human Rights Watch documented a similar trend during 2009 and 2014 election cycles.⁸⁹² As in previous years, armed groups used explosives and arson to damage schools and school supplies, primarily in Jammu and Kashmir and Bihar state. Examples of attacks on schools reportedly related to elections included:

- Human Rights Watch and local media reported that in Bihar state, Naxalite opposition groups torched a tent and a generator found at Sondaha primary school on March 15, 2019, allegedly because the police planned to stay at the school during the upcoming national elections.⁸⁹³
- On April 10, 2019, an alleged Naxalite opposition group planted a fake bomb at the gate of a school, in Dumaria Imamganj, Gaya district, Bihar state. *The Times of India* reported that a handwritten note found near the fake device called for a boycott of the polls.⁸⁹⁴
- According to a local media report, on April 17, 2019, unidentified persons attacked two schools hosting polling booths in Srinagar, Jammu and Kashmir. Assailants set fire to Kawmohalla Khanyar Government Boys High School and threw IEDs and stones at Gurgari Mohalla Government Higher Secondary School.⁸⁹⁵
- On May 6, 2019, alleged militants reportedly threw a grenade at a polling station located in Girls Middle School Rahmoo, in Pulwama, Jammu and Kashmir, during parliamentary elections, according to local media sources.⁸⁹⁶
- According to *The Times of India*, an unidentified armed group set a government secondary school on fire, in Nehama, Kashmir, on October 23, 2019. The school was to serve as a polling station for the block development council the next day, as reported in the same news outlet.⁸⁹⁷

Other examples of attacks on schools in 2019 included:

- On February 13, 2019, an IED exploded in a school in Jammu and Kashmir, injuring 28 students.⁸⁹⁸
- According to local media reports, on April 19, 2019, police defused a bomb at the New Primary School in Dhirajganj, Jharkhand state. *The Avenue Mail* reported that police presumed the bomb was left in the school to generate fear among teachers and students.⁸⁹⁹
- On April 22, 2019, local media sources reported that two hand grenades were planted in front of Little Flower School in Imphal, Manipur state, which a bomb squad later defused. The Kangleipak Communist Party-Military Council (KCP-MC) claimed responsibility for the incident, planting the explosive devices as a warning to school administration, according to *The Indian Express*. An IED was also allegedly found at the same school’s entrance gate in February.⁹⁰⁰
- Local media reported that a bomb detonated near the boundary wall of the Bright Future School, in Bongaon

village, Uttar Pradesh state, leaving a hole in the wall but no injuries, on July 21, 2019. The bomb, which allegedly relied on a remote-control detonation system, was left by an individual with suspected ties to a non-state armed group, and for whom a warrant had been issued, according to *The Times of India*.⁹⁰¹

- An unidentified armed group reportedly set fire to a government high school in Watoo, Jammu and Kashmir, on October 22, 2019. Local media reported that after the abrogation of Article 370 bifurcating the state into two Union Territories, non-state armed groups allegedly threatened residents to not cooperate with the administration.⁹⁰²

Attacks on school students, teachers, and other education personnel

During the 2017-2019 reporting period, GCPEA collected at least 52 reports of attacks on school students, teachers, and other education personnel. Such attacks occurred at a higher rate between 2017 and 2019, as compared to the previous reporting period. After four reported attacks on students and education personnel in 2013, GCPEA collected between five and ten reports of such attacks for the following three years.⁹⁰³ Abductions, abuse, and killings, perpetrated by non-state armed groups continued in conflict-affected areas during this reporting period; meanwhile, police used excessive force against and detained student, teacher, and parent protesters, in education-related demonstrations across the country.

In 2017, GCPEA compiled 11 reports of attacks on school students, parents, and personnel that affected at least 180 people.⁹⁰⁴

In 2018, teachers in several states protested against the government's policy on contractual teachers, also called para-teachers, and other education-related issues. Police used excessive force, including smoke bombs, lathi (martial-arts stick) charges, water cannons, and teargas to disperse teacher and student protests, and arrested at least 125 students, teachers, and personnel. Of the 15 reported attacks on school students and personnel in 2018, most occurred in the context of protest repression, while only a few involved abductions, assault, or targeted violence against students and education staff.⁹⁰⁵ Examples of attacks on school students and teachers in 2018 include the following:

- On September 20, 2018, students protested against the alleged recruitment of Urdu and Sanskrit teachers at Daribhita High School, in Islampur, West Bengal state. Police reportedly clashed with protesters, killing two students, according to *The Times of India* and other sources.⁹⁰⁶
- On November 11 or 12, 2018, teachers associated with Sanjha Adhyapak Morcha, an umbrella organization of teachers' unions, held a protest near a minister's residence in Patiala district, Punjab state, in response to the government's new plan to regularize teachers and teacher transfer policies. Police reportedly used force to disperse protesters, according to local media.⁹⁰⁷
- On November 15, 2018, thousands of para-teachers reportedly organized a demonstration in Morhabadi Ground, Ranchi, Jharkhand state, to demand their regularization and a salary increase. *The Times of India* reported that police forces arrested and removed more than 2,000 para-teachers from Ranchi before the protest began. The protesters threw stones at police officers, who responded with batons and teargas, reportedly injuring several demonstrators, and several female para-teachers were reported injured. According to district reports, police detained 800 people at the protest.⁹⁰⁸ Jharkhand state employs at least 57,000 para-teachers.⁹⁰⁹
- *The Hindu* reported that on November 26, 2018, teachers associated with the Tamil Nadu Primary School Teachers' Federation held a protest against Government Orders 234 and 303, on changing salaries, in Villupuram town, Tamil Nadu state; the police reportedly arrested 85 teachers.⁹¹⁰

In 2019, reported attacks on school students and teachers rose in comparison to 2018. GCPEA compiled 26 reports of attacks on students and teachers in 2019,⁹¹¹ the majority of which comprised protest repression:

- Local news outlets reported that on February 10, 2019, in Patiala city, Punjab state, police used water cannons on teachers from Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan and Rashtriya Madhyamik Shiksha Abhiyan schools, during their protests against a policy requiring them to work for three years before receiving formal contracts; over 12 teachers were reportedly injured.⁹¹²

- *The Hindustan Times* reported that on February 22, 2019, members of Akhil Bharatiya Vidyarthi Parishad (ABVP), a student organization aligned with the Hindu nationalist Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh (RSS), blocked the entrance to the residence of the School and Mass Education Minister in Bhubaneswar, Odisha state. Police arrested at least 50 students, according to local news sources.⁹¹³
- *The Times of India* and *The Telegraph* reported that on April 2, 2019, police allegedly clashed with teachers in Kolkata, West Bengal state, during a protest over salaries for computer teachers; several people, including policewomen, were injured, and at least one was hospitalized, during the protest.⁹¹⁴
- In Patna, Bihar state, police used teargas and charged at contract teachers with lathis to prevent them from protesting on July 20, 2019. As reported in *The Times of India*, police arrested five teachers, while 35 teachers were allegedly injured in the lathi charge, as relayed by the Teachers' Association in an interview with the news outlet. The contract teachers reportedly protested for equal pay and improved working conditions.⁹¹⁵
- On November 6, 2019, primary school teachers blocked a road during their protests for a pay increase, in Kolkata, West Bengal state, as reported by local media. The police allegedly detained several protesters, releasing them on bail shortly after.⁹¹⁶
- Computer teachers attempted to block traffic during their protest in Panchkula, Haryana state, on September 17, 2019, according to local media. Police reportedly responded with water cannon and lathi charge. Approximately 140 teachers participated in the protest; they reportedly had long-standing demands for salary increases and permanent contracts.⁹¹⁷

In addition to excessive force, GCPEA identified reported attacks on students and education personnel involving abductions, bombs, killings, and assaults in 2019, for instance:

- On March 10, 2019, Naxalites reportedly killed a teacher at the Jawaharlal Nehru Municipal School in Gadchiroli, Maharashtra state. After the incident, the Naxalites issued an apology, claiming that they had wrongly identified the teacher as a policeman, as reported in *India Today*.⁹¹⁸
- While returning home from primary school, three girl students reportedly saw a bag on the road, which exploded once it was picked up, near Banghusra village, Uttar Pradesh state, on July 6, 2019. According to local media, the explosion injured all three girls, who were admitted to the district hospital; no details were reported on the perpetrator.⁹¹⁹

Military use of schools and universities

Military use of schools occurred at a similar rate during the 2017-2019 reporting period as compared to the previous period, which covered 2013-2017. In the prior period, GCPEA collected between one and four isolated reports of military use each year, from 2013 to 2015, in Jharkhand, Bihar, and West Bengal, states and Jammu and Kashmir. In 2016, the number spiked, when 20 schools were used by paramilitary forces during unrest in Jammu and Kashmir.⁹²⁰

In April 2017, the UN reported that the Central Reserve Police Force occupied over 20 schools in Srinagar, Jammu and Kashmir.⁹²¹ In addition, GCPEA found one local media report of state security forces using two schools in Imphal, Manipur state.⁹²²

A Naxalite opposition group reportedly attacked and significantly damaged a government school in Latehar district, Jharkhand state, on July 18, 2018, in response to state security personnel using the school as a bunker; the attack destroyed three of the six classrooms, according to local media.⁹²³

In 2019, GCPEA collected two reports of military use of schools. An unidentified non-state armed group reportedly fired gunshots at the 72nd Battalion Central Reserve Police Force mobile bunker, in Drabgam, Jammu and Kashmir, on October 29, 2019. According to some local media sources, the bunker was allegedly stationed at a school during the attack, where students were taking exams; however, *The Hindu* reported that while the shooting occurred near the school, the education facility was not the target. No casualties were reported.⁹²⁴ Additionally, in Selda village, Khunti district, Jharkhand state, police allegedly camped in one or more schools in the last months of 2019, as reported in *United News of India* and other local media outlets.⁹²⁵

Military use of schools and the proximity of police and armed forces to education facilities continued to provoke attacks on schools during this reporting period, as in the previous period.⁹²⁶ These incidents continued despite the repeated decisions from India's Supreme Court ordering the government to ensure that school buildings would not be used by security forces for any purpose.⁹²⁷

Attacks on higher education

Higher education students and personnel were subject to attacks, imprisonment, and prosecution in connection with their nonviolent expression and academic conduct between 2017-2019. Across this reporting period and last, the use of explosives in attacks on higher education decreased, while protest repression increased. During the 2013-2017 period covered in *Education under Attack 2018*, reported attacks on higher education involving explosives occurred at a rate of between approximately two and five per year, from 2013 through 2016. However, beginning in 2017, the rate of reported attacks involving explosives declined to approximately zero or one each year. Instead, between 2017-2019, the rates of reported protest repression, and detention of higher education students and personnel, rose starkly, peaking in the last months of 2019. In 2017, GCPEA collected 12 reports from Scholars at Risk and local and international media sources of attacks on higher education.⁹²⁸ These reports included clashes between university students and police, as well as protest repression and arrests, in Jammu and Kashmir, and Chandigarh and Uttar Pradesh states.

In 2018, 16 reports of attacks were collected in both conflict-affected and non-conflict-affected states.⁹²⁹ All of these incidents involved the use of excessive force to disperse protests, or the detention of students or academics, and included the following examples:

- At Rajasthan University, in Jaipur, Rajasthan state, on January 9, 2018, students and police reportedly clashed during a student protest by ABVP during which over 200 students gathered to demonstrate against university policies. Campus and other police used batons to disperse the students, injuring six and detaining 30 others, of which ten were arrested, according to Scholars at Risk.⁹³⁰
- In Aligarh, Uttar Pradesh state, student activists from two conservative Hindu student groups violently clashed with students at Aligarh Muslim University (AMU) over a portrait in AMU's student union of Muhammad Ali Jinnah, the founder of Pakistan, on May 2, 2018.⁹³¹ Afterwards, while AMU students were en route to file a complaint with the authorities, police allegedly caned and used teargas on them, injuring a dozen, as reported in local media.⁹³²
- On September 20, 2018, police reportedly entered a student residence at Manipur University, in Imphal, Manipur state, and detained 90 students and five faculty members, after clashes between students and state police over protests concerning university administration, as reported in local media.⁹³³
- On October 10, 2018, students and police clashed again at Manipur University, in Imphal, Manipur state, while marching towards the university's administrative building to protest the detention of students and professors from earlier demonstrations. Police reportedly fired teargas, launched mock bombs, and arrested as many as 17 students from various unions, according to Scholars at Risk and local media sources.⁹³⁴

In 2019, GCPEA collected at least 48 reports of attacks on higher education,⁹³⁵ the majority of which involved the police using excessive force against student and faculty protesters, and detaining academics and students. Such attacks peaked in the last months of 2019, and involved the reported injury or killing of at least 150 higher education students and personnel, as well as the alleged detention of over 780 students and staff. Examples included:

- In New Delhi, authorities reportedly detained hundreds of academic personnel from the All India Research Scholars Association on January 16, 2019, during a peaceful protest demanding an increase in research scholars' stipends in front of the Ministry of Human Resource Development, according to Scholars at Risk.⁹³⁶
- Local media sources reported that on March 26, 2019, police used teargas to disperse students of the Islamic University of Science and Technology in Awantipora town, Jammu and Kashmir, during a protest against the death of a schoolteacher during detention.⁹³⁷
- On March 28, 2019, authorities reportedly arrested a visiting professor at Ranchi University, in Garhwa, Jharkhand state, according to Scholars at Risk. The academic had reportedly spoken at a meeting on the "Right to

Food” movement before the incident. Police allegedly used the “Model Code of Conduct” law to detain him and claimed that the gathering required a permit.⁹³⁸

- Scholars at Risk reported that on July 22, 2019, students and police clashed during a protest at the University of Kerala, in Thiruvananthapuram, Kerala state, leading to the injury of at least 13 and the detention of six student demonstrators. Students were reportedly demanding a government investigation into the stabbing of a student that had occurred earlier that month. While students allegedly threw objects at police, police used teargas, smoke bombs, water cannons, and physical force against the students.⁹³⁹
- Police reportedly used water cannons and batons to clear Jawaharlal Nehru University students who were causing traffic jams, near the All India Council for Technical Education auditorium in New Delhi, while protesting fee increases for residence halls, on November 11, 2019. Hundreds of students marched, as reported by local media and Scholars at Risk, and police allegedly detained several protesters.⁹⁴⁰

In December 2019, university students held on-campus protests against the Citizenship Amendment Act passed by parliament that month, which police repressed using teargas, arrests, and other means of excessive force. Students from universities across India also marched on and off campus against the excessive force police used when entering higher education campuses, to which the police responded with yet further repression and arrests.⁹⁴¹ Examples of violent repression related to higher education demonstrations included:

- On December 15, 2019, Jamia Millia Islamia (JMI) University students protested the Citizenship Amendment Act by marching in neighborhoods around campus. Police allegedly used teargas to disperse students as they approached a barricade; police then entered the JMI campus, where they allegedly made at least 50 arrests, injured students and staff, and fired teargas canisters into the library, as reported by Scholars at Risk.⁹⁴²
- That same day, AMU students reportedly protested against the Citizenship Amendment Act, as well as the violence police used earlier that day against JMI students, first on campus, then towards a monument outside the University’s main gate. Police then allegedly used teargas, rubber bullets, and batons, on the protesters, before entering the campus; some students reportedly threw stones at the police. *The Hindu* quotes sources from a nearby medical college as saying that at least 60 students were taken there with injuries, while Scholars at Risk reported an estimate of over 100 people injured during the protest repression. The university stated it would remain closed until January 6, 2020.⁹⁴³
- On December 17, 2019, students at the Islamia College of Science and Commerce, in Srinagar, Jammu and Kashmir, reportedly organized to show their solidarity with JMI and AMU students. As the Islamia College students attempted to leave campus, police and the Central Reserve Police Force used teargas and batons to contain the students, many of whom were women, according to *The Hindu*.⁹⁴⁴
- As reported in Scholars at Risk, police allegedly detained a few protesters from the University of Madras, in Chennai, Tamil Nadu state, on December 18, 2019, after they participated in a sit-in against the Citizenship Amendment Act and police violence at other universities.⁹⁴⁵

In addition, GCPEA collected reports of several conflict-related attacks on higher education in 2019. In one incident, a grenade reportedly exploded outside the main gate of the University of Kashmir, in Srinagar, Jammu and Kashmir, on November 26, 2019. Four people were injured in the blast, although it is unclear whether any were students; about a month and a half later, the police arrested the suspected perpetrators, who were allegedly linked to Pakistan-based militant group JeM, according to *India Today*.⁹⁴⁶

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