

KYRGYZSTAN

During a brief escalation of hostilities between Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan in September 2022, more than 20 schools and kindergartens were damaged or destroyed by fighting. At least one school was used for military purposes.

CONTEXT

In 2022, hostilities between Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan escalated along the disputed border in the area covering the south-western Kyrgyz region of Batken and the region of Sughd in northern Tajikistan, which includes the Tajik enclave of Vorukh.¹ Border guards reportedly fired at each other, and clashes occurred in January, April, June, and September 2022, as reported by the Armed Conflict Location & Event Data Project (ACLED).² These incidents were among at least 20 border clashes between Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan since 2017, which involved both government forces and civilians.³ Violence peaked in September 2022, when hostilities lasted for four days and resulted in 62 deaths, as reported by Human Rights Watch.⁴ Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan reached a ceasefire on September 16, 2022, which generally held for the remainder of the reporting period, despite reports of sporadic shelling from both sides.⁵

In south-western Kyrgyzstan, the UN reported that over 140,000 people were displaced by the hostilities in Batken region, including some to neighboring Osh region.⁶ Although many returned in the months that followed, some homes had been destroyed and over 3,900 people remained displaced as of December 2022.⁷ The International Organization for Migration reported the lowest temperatures in fifteen years across the region during the 2022-2023 winter, leaving those displaced in the Batken and Osh regions in need of humanitarian aid.⁸

In September 2022, 53 schools in Batken town were converted into shelters to accommodate families, as reported by Human Rights Watch, and 26 schools and 30 kindergartens closed, some as a result of damage caused by hostilities.⁹ According to the UN, learning was disrupted for over 130,000 students as 161 schools in Batken and Osh regions were temporarily closed, and children suffered psychosocial trauma.¹⁰ As of October 2022, nearly all education facilities had reopened.¹¹

Kyrgyzstan was not profiled in *Education under Attack 2022* so no comparison can be made with the previous reporting period.

ATTACKS ON SCHOOLS

During the reporting period, GCPEA identified at least 23 attacks on schools in Kyrgyzstan, primarily from UN reports.¹² According to the UN, the government of Kyrgyzstan reported that 12 schools and 11 kindergartens

were damaged in the Batken region during conflict in September 2022.¹³ As reported by Human Rights Watch, some schools and kindergartens were damaged by shrapnel.¹⁴ GCPEA was unable to identify details about individual incidents.

In Tajikistan, during the conflict, Human Rights Watch reported that School No. 64 in Somoniyon town, Sughd region, was burned down on September 16, 2022, affecting 450 children.¹⁵ Also in Tajikistan, in Khojai A'lo village, Sughd region, a teacher was reportedly killed as he was attempting to protect his students during fighting.¹⁶ However, GCPEA could not determine whether these incidents constituted attacks on education as per GCPEA definitions. Therefore, Tajikistan did not have a sufficient number of attacks on education for a profile in this reporting period, as per the report's methodology.

GCPEA did not identify any reports of attacks on schools in 2023.

MILITARY USE OF SCHOOLS AND UNIVERSITIES

GCPEA identified one report of the military occupation of a school in Kyrgyzstan during the reporting period. As reported by Human Rights Watch and local media, on September 16, 2022, Tajik armed forces used a school as a military base in Ak-Sai in Batken district and region, for two days.¹⁷

GCPEA did not identify any reports of the military use of schools or universities in 2023.

ENDNOTES

- 1 Olha Polishchuk, Magda Anastasijevic, Giulia Bernardi and Nicola Audibert, "Regional Overview: Europe, Caucasus, and Central Asia 28 May-3 June 2022," ACLED, June 9, 2022. Olha Polishchuk, Giulia Bernardi, Magda Anastasijevic and Nicola Audibert, "Regional Overview: Europe, Central Asia, and the Caucasus 11-17 June 2022," ACLED, June 23, 2022. Magda Anastasijevic, Olha Polishchuk, Giulia Bernardi and Nicola Audibert, "Regional Overview: Europe, Caucasus, and Central Asia 10-16 September 2022," ACLED, September 22, 2022. Reuters, "Fighting flares on disputed Kyrgyzstan-Tajikistan border, killing 24 people," *The Guardian*, September 17, 2022. Reuters, "Kyrgyzstan Says Tajikistan Resumes Shelling After Ceasefire Deal," *VOA*, September 16, 2022. Catherine Putz, "Violent Clashes at the Troublesome Kyrgyzstan-Tajikistan Border," *The Diplomat*, May 4, 2021.
- 2 Laura Fluegel, Olha Polishchuk, Giulia Bernardi and Magda Anastasijevic, "Regional Overview: Europe, Caucasus, and Central Asia 22-28 January 2022," ACLED, February 3, 2022. Olha Polishchuk, Magda Anastasijevic, Giulia Bernardi and Nicola Audibert, "Regional Overview: Europe, Caucasus, and Central Asia 28 May-3 June 2022," ACLED, June 9, 2022. Olha Polishchuk, Giulia Bernardi, Magda Anastasijevic and Nicola Audibert, "Regional Overview: Europe, Central Asia, and the Caucasus 11-17 June 2022," ACLED, June 23, 2022. Magda Anastasijevic, Olha Polishchuk, Giulia Bernardi and Nicola Audibert, "Regional Overview: Europe, Caucasus, and Central Asia 10-16 September 2022," ACLED, September 22, 2022. Olha Polishchuk, Giulia Bernardi, Magda Anastasijevic and Nicola Audibert, "Regional Overview: Europe, Caucasus, and Central Asia 9-15 April 2022," ACLED, April 21, 2022.
- Syinat Sultanalieva, "Kyrgyzstan-Tajikistan Border Clashes Prove Deadly for Civilians," Human Rights Watch dispatch, September 21, 2022.
- 3 Syinat Sultanalieva, "Kyrgyzstan-Tajikistan Conflict Leaves Children without Education," Human Rights Watch dispatch, October 3, 2022.
- 4 Human Rights Watch, *World Report 2023* (New York: Human Rights Watch, 2023), Kyrgyzstan chapter.
- 5 International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies, *Kyrgyzstan: Border Conflict DREF Application (MDRKG015)* (Switzerland: International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies, October 2022). "Kyrgyzstan/Tajikistan: Statement by the Spokesperson on the latest border clashes and the ceasefire," European Union External Action press release, September 16, 2022. Alys Davies, "Kyrgyzstan-Tajikistan border clashes claim nearly 100 lives," *BBC News*, September 19, 2022. "Kyrgyzstan-Tajikistan ceasefire holds up after border fighting," *Reuters*, September 17, 2022.
- 6 OCHA, "Kyrgyzstan Emergency Response Plan 2022: Executive Summary," October 25, 2022, p. 2.
- 7 UNICEF, "UNICEF Kyrgyzstan Country Office Annual Report 2022," [date unknown], p. 1.
- 8 "Conflict-displaced Families in Kyrgyzstan Face the Coldest Winter in Over A Decade" IOM news release, January 25, 2023.
- 9 Syinat Sultanalieva, "Kyrgyzstan-Tajikistan Conflict Leaves Children without Education," Human Rights Watch dispatch, October 3, 2022.
- 10 UNICEF, "UNICEF Kyrgyzstan Country Office Annual Report 2022," [date unknown], p. 1.
- 11 Information received from a UN respondent via email on February 20, 2024.
- 12 OCHA, "Kyrgyzstan Emergency Response Plan 2022: Executive Summary," October 25, 2022, p. 2.
- 13 OCHA, "Kyrgyzstan Emergency Response Plan 2022: Executive Summary," October 25, 2022, p. 2.
- 14 Syinat Sultanalieva, "Kyrgyzstan-Tajikistan Conflict Leaves Children without Education," Human Rights Watch dispatch, October 3, 2022.
- 15 Syinat Sultanalieva, "Kyrgyzstan-Tajikistan Conflict Leaves Children without Education," Human Rights Watch dispatch, October 3, 2022. Farzon Muhammadi, "Where will our children study? Residents of Somoniyon village ask first of all to restore the school. («Где будут учиться наши дети?». Жители села Сомониён просят в первую очередь восстановить школу)," *Ozodi*, September 24, 2022.
- 16 Syinat Sultanalieva, "Kyrgyzstan-Tajikistan Conflict Leaves Children without Education," Human Rights Watch dispatch, October 3, 2022. Farzon Muhammadi, "Chorkuh: details of the death of young children and a pregnant woman in an ambulance. (Чоркух: подробности гибели малолетних детей и беременной женщины в машине "скорой помощи").," *Ozodi*, September 20, 2022.
- 17 Syinat Sultanalieva, "Kyrgyzstan-Tajikistan Conflict Leaves Children without Education," Human Rights Watch dispatch, October 3, 2022, <https://www.hrw.org/news/2022/10/03/kyrgyzstan-tajikistan-conflict-leaves-children-without-education> (accessed March 1, 2023). *24Kg. RFE/RL*, as cited in ACLED, Event ID KGZ1679 (data downloaded Oct 21, 2022). "The military of Tajikistan occupied the school building in the village of Dostuk (Военные Таджикистана заняли здание школы в селе Достук)," *Sputnik.kg*, September 16, 2022. Ayzirek Imanaliyeva. Peter Leonard. Kamila Ibragimova, "Tens of thousands displaced as Tajikistan, Kyrgyzstan conflict rages on," *Eurasianet*, September 16, 2022.