

PAKISTAN

Attacks on schools and school students and staff continued in 2022 and 2023, some of which targeted girls' education. In addition, over 540 teachers were detained in attacks on school students and personnel. Attacks on higher education, in particular arrests and abductions, affected over 140 students and staff. As in previous reporting periods, attacks on education included the use of explosive weapons.

CONTEXT

The security situation deteriorated and political instability increased in Pakistan during the 2022-2023 reporting period.¹ Attacks by armed groups targeting security forces increased, particularly in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and Balochistan provinces, according to International Crisis Group.² Following a failed 2021 ceasefire, the government and non-state armed group Tehreek-e-Taliban Pakistan (TTP) agreed to an indefinite ceasefire in June 2022.³ However, in November of that year, the TTP resumed attacks.⁴ In January 2023, a faction of the TTP claimed responsibility for the bombing of a religious building in a police compound in Peshawar city, which resulted in over 80 fatalities and more than 200 injuries, making it the deadliest attack in almost a decade.⁵ The Armed Conflict Location & Event Data Project (ACLED) reported an increase in political violence events involving TTP in 2023.⁶

In April 2022, Prime Minister Imran Khan of the Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) party was removed from parliament; Shehbaz Sharif of the Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz (PLM-N) party was subsequently elected by parliament as prime minister.⁷ Following the decision, protests led by the PTI party broke out throughout the country in May 2022.⁸ In May 2023, police arrested Imran Khan, prompting renewed violent protests across the country;⁹ in response, police used teargas against protesters, and detained over 4,000 people.¹⁰ Journalistic expression and civil society activities were restricted during the reporting period, according to Human Rights Watch.¹¹

The humanitarian situation worsened in Pakistan during the reporting period.¹² In 2023, 20.6 million people were in need of humanitarian assistance, including 9.6 million children.¹³ The situation was compounded by climate disasters, including heat waves and floods.¹⁴ In August 2022, floods displaced over 30 million people and killed at least 1,200, including approximately 400 children, according to the UN.¹⁵ In 2023, an estimated 3.7 million Afghans lived in Pakistan including approximately 600,000 who arrived after August 2021.¹⁶

The Pakistani government reported that approximately 26 million children were out of school in 2022, the majority of whom were girls.¹⁷ Girls faced additional barriers to education, including child marriage, child labor, and discrimination.¹⁸ In 2022, the UN reported that floods damaged more than 30,000 schools, impacting at least 3.5 million children.¹⁹ In addition, the Education Cluster reported that over 7,000 schools were used to host internally displaced people following the flooding.²⁰ Amid political unrest in May 2023, some schools and

universities temporarily closed.²¹

ATTACKS ON SCHOOLS

GCPEA identified at least eight attacks on schools during the 2022-2023 reporting period. This was similar to the previous reporting period, when GCPEA identified six attacks in 2021 and one attack in 2020.²² Most attacks during this reporting period involved the use of explosive weapons, and over half targeted girls' schools. In 2022, the UN reported an attack on a middle school for girls which involved the use of explosive weapons.²³ In addition, GCPEA identified two attacks in 2022:

- On September 12, 2022, unidentified armed men allegedly threw a grenade at a religious school in Dera Ismail Khan city and district, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa province, injuring a teacher and two students, as reported by ACLED and local media *Dawn*.²⁴
- On December 1, 2022, members of an armed group shot at a girls' school in Azam Warsak village, South Waziristan district, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa province, injuring a security guard, as reported by ACLED and local media *Tribune*; Tehreek-e Taliban Pakistan claimed responsibility for the attack.²⁵

GCPEA identified five attacks on schools in 2023.²⁶ For example:

- On April 11, 2023, an explosive device concealed in a pen allegedly detonated and injured a student at a religious school in Pishin district, Balochistan province, as reported by ACLED and local media *24News*.²⁷
- On May 21, 2023, explosives reportedly detonated and caused significant damage to two girls' schools in Mir Ali town, North Waziristan district, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa province, disrupting education for around 500 students, according to ACLED and local media outlets *The Defense Post* and *Daily Sun*.²⁸
- On December 5, 2023, an explosive device reportedly detonated near a school in Peshawar city, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa province; the explosion killed four Afghan children although GCPEA was unable to establish whether they were students.²⁹

ATTACKS ON SCHOOL STUDENTS, TEACHERS, AND OTHER EDUCATION PERSONNEL

GCPEA identified 20 attacks on school students, teachers, and other education personnel during the 2022-2023 reporting period, during which over 540 teachers were arrested, and over 70, mostly teachers, were injured or killed. This marks an increase as compared to the previous reporting period, when GCPEA identified at least nine incidents in 2021 and at two in 2020, and over 250 students and teachers were arrested.³⁰

GCPEA identified ten attacks on school students, teachers, and other education personnel in 2022.³¹ For example:

- On June 1, 2022, teachers protested employment conditions in Saddar neighborhood, Karachi city, Sindh province. Police reportedly baton-charged the protesters and arrested over 250, according to ACLED and local media *Ary News* and *Pakistan Today*.³² Similar protests in the same location also took place on July 4

and July 18, 2022, when police reportedly detained 40 and 35 teachers, respectively, and baton-charged protesters, according to ACLED and local media *Dawn*.³³

- On August 4, 2022, over 100 teachers and other personnel peacefully protested outside the District Education Department office in Rawalpindi city and district, Punjab province, when police reportedly baton-charged protesters, injuring ten, and detained at least 15, according to ACLED and local media *Dawn*.³⁴
- As reported by ACLED and international media *The Independent*, on October 10, 2022, a gunman reportedly killed a driver and injured a child when he attacked a school van in Mingora, Swat district, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa province.³⁵ The attack took place on the ten-year anniversary of the shooting of Malala Yousafzai, also in Swat district, and a day ahead of her arrival in Pakistan to visit flood victims. Following the attack, private schools in Swat district closed for two days.³⁶
- On October 18, 2022, police reportedly baton-charged protesting male and female teachers who demanded teaching positions in Saddar neighborhood, Karachi city, Sindh province, injuring three, and detained at least 20, according to ACLED and local media *Dawn* and *Ary News*.³⁷

GCPEA identified ten attacks on school students, teachers, and other personnel in 2023.³⁸ For example:

- On January 3, 2023, in Nasirabad town, Qambar Shahdadkot district, Sindh province, police allegedly baton-charged secondary school students who were peacefully protesting against an examination fee, as reported by ACLED and local media *The Nation*.³⁹
- As reported by ACLED and local media *Dawn* and *The Express Tribune*, on May 16, 2023, in Sangota village, Swat district, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa province, a female student was reportedly killed by gunfire as she was leaving school, and seven others were injured, including female students and a female teacher.⁴⁰
- On July 12, 2023, in Karachi city, Sindh province, police allegedly used batons and water cannons to disperse a teacher demonstration, as well as allegedly detaining 19 teachers; over 200 primary school teachers protested work conditions, including contracts and payment of allowances, as reported by ACLED and local media *Dawn*.⁴¹
- On July 13, 2023, in Peshawar city, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa province, secondary school teachers held a protest to demand better work conditions; police allegedly used batons and teargas to disperse the protest, according to ACLED and local media *The News International*.⁴²

MILITARY USE OF SCHOOLS AND UNIVERSITIES

GCPEA identified one report of the military use of a school during the 2022-2023 reporting period. GCPEA did not identify any such reports in the 2020-2021 period covered by *Education under Attack 2022*.

On December 13, 2023, in Daraban town, Dera Ismail Khan district, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa province, a school that was reportedly being used as a military base was targeted in an attack involving vehicle-borne explosives, causing the building to collapse; non-state armed group Tehreek-e-Jihad Pakistan, a group affiliated with the TTP, claimed responsibility for the attack, as reported by international media *The Washington Post*, the UN, and local media *Dawn*.⁴³

ATTACKS ON HIGHER EDUCATION

GCPEA identified 20 attacks on higher education during the 2022-2023 reporting period, a similar rate as compared to the prior reporting period, when GCPEA identified 13 such incidents in 2021, and five in 2020.⁴⁴ Over 130 students were reportedly arrested or abducted in attacks on higher education, and the use of excessive force against protesting students continued. Most incidents were recorded in Balochistan, Punjab, and Sindh provinces. Local media reported that over 48 ethnically Baloch students were forcibly disappeared between January and May 2022.⁴⁵

GCPEA identified 13 attacks on higher education in 2022.⁴⁶ For example:

- On March 7, 2022, employees at the University of Punjab in Lahore city, Punjab province, held a peaceful demonstration to demand payment of a government allowance; police allegedly used teargas and batons to disperse the protest, as reported by *Scholars at Risk*.⁴⁷
- As reported by *Scholars at Risk* and international media, on April 26, 2022, a woman reportedly detonated a person-borne improvised explosive device outside the Confucius Institute at the University of Karachi in Karachi city, Sindh province, killing three Chinese teachers and injuring another. The Baloch Liberation Army separatist group claimed responsibility for the attack. Instruction at the university was suspended, and 12 other Chinese teachers left the university.⁴⁸
- On May 11, 2022, in Karachi city, Sindh province, at least two Baloch students from the University of Karachi were allegedly detained and forcibly disappeared by security forces, as reported by *Scholars at Risk*.⁴⁹
- On October 1, 2022, at Balochistan University in Quetta city, Balochistan province, police allegedly baton-charged protesting students, injuring at least eight, and arrested at least three, as reported by ACLED and local media *Quetta Voice*; the students protested entry tests at the university.⁵⁰
- On November 19, 2022, at Government Islamia Science College in Karachi city, Sindh province, police reportedly used teargas and batons when clashing with students, according to *Scholars at Risk*, ACLED, and local media *Dawn*. Police were reportedly at the college with education officials, who were communicating court orders to vacate the premises.⁵¹

GCPEA identified seven attacks on higher education in 2023.⁵² For example:

- On May 15, 2023, police allegedly used batons to disperse protesting students outside a private university in Lahore city, Punjab province, as reported by ACLED and local media *Dawn*; students demonstrated against advance payment for examinations.⁵³
- On October 27, 2023, at University of Punjab in Lahore city, Punjab province, police allegedly beat and arrested a Baloch student as he was leaving the campus, as reported by local media *Dawn*.⁵⁴

ENDNOTES

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