UKRAINE

After the full-scale Russian invasion in February 2022, attacks on education in Ukraine increased significantly compared to the previous reporting period. In 2022 and 2023, at least 700 attacks on schools were reported, with the east and south particularly affected; many of the attacks involved explosive weapons including airstrikes, missile strikes, and shelling. Schools and universities were also used for military purposes during the 2022-2023 reporting period.

CONTEXT

On February 24, 2022, Russian armed forces launched a full-scale invasion of Ukraine.[1] In the first months, fighting between Ukrainian and Russian forces occurred in many regions of Ukraine, including in the north near the capital Kyiv; however, by mid-March of that year, much of the combat was centered in eastern and southern regions of the country, as Ukrainian forces regained territory.[2] From mid-2022 through 2023, fighting involved ground combat and artillery in eastern and southern regions; in some regions, such as Zaporizhzhia and Kherson, the Ukrainian armed forces' counteroffensive met Russian forces' defensive lines, while Russian forces went on the offensive elsewhere, for instance in Bakhmut and Avdiivka cities.[3] Before the full-scale invasion, between 2014 and early 2022, Russia annexed Crimea, in the south, and fighting was confined to Donetsk and Luhansk, in the east, along the contact line between Ukrainian forces and Russia-backed armed actors.[4] During the 2022-2023 reporting period, although both parties to the conflict caused damage to civilian infrastructure, Russian forces repeatedly fired missiles targeting Ukraine's civilian infrastructure, killing civilians and leaving them without electricity, water, telecommunications, and other essential services for extended periods, according to the International Crisis Group, Human Rights Watch, and the UN.[5] The Commission of Inquiry on Ukraine documented an array of violations in several regions of Ukraine by Russian forces, including attacks on civilians, sexual violence, and forced transfers and deportations of children.[6]

The number of civilians in need of humanitarian aid reached almost 18 million in mid-2022, with nearly 15 million people still requiring assistance at the end of December 2023.[7] The UN estimated that 7.7 million people were internally displaced between February and May 2022,[8] although the number of internally displaced people decreased to around 3.7 million by December 2023.[9] Persons with disabilities and older persons faced heightened danger due to their inability to leave high-risk areas, according to Amnesty International and the UN.[10] Meanwhile, women and children made up 90 percent of those who fled conflict-affected areas.[11]

Most schools across Ukraine closed in February 2022; by June 2022, 95 percent of regional districts provided distance classes.[12] Around 5.7 million school-aged children in Ukraine experienced disruptions to learning in 2022, according to the UN.[13] Some schools were able to re-open at the start of the school year in September 2022 by putting safety measures in place, such as building bomb shelters; despite these measures, in-person learning was still not possible in some areas due to shelling or proximity to the contact line.[14] In 2023, one-third of primary and secondary students nationwide were learning fully in-person, with one-third learning hybrid, and one-third learning entirely online.[15] However, both in person and virtual classes were disrupted by electricity cuts from bombings, and financial constraints hindered some students' access to online learning, according to media reports and the UN.[16] Amnesty International and media sources also reported that authorities in Russian-controlled areas of Ukraine imposed new syllabi and curriculum in reopened schools.[17]

ATTACKS ON SCHOOLS

GCPEA identified around 700 attacks on schools in 2022 and 2023; the majority of these attacks involved explosive weapons, including airstrikes, rockets, and shelling. This represented a significant increase in attacks on schools compared to previous years, when GCPEA collected reports of 14 such attacks in 2021 and 17 such attacks in 2020.[18] Although most attacks occurred in eastern and southern regions of Ukraine, other regions were also affected, such as Zhytomyr in the north, where 46 schools and 20 kindergartens were reportedly damaged between February 2022 and September 2023.[19]

In 2022, the Ukrainian Ministry of Education and Science (MoES) reported that around 3,000 educational institutions were damaged or destroyed by bombing and shelling that year.[20] The Education Cluster reported that, in Kharkiv alone, about 40 percent of all educational institutions, or 304 schools and 199 kindergartens, were damaged or destroyed in 2022.[21] Reports from the MoES and Education Cluster were not included in the total number of attacks on schools to avoid double-counting and because it was unclear if all incidents met GCPEA's criteria for inclusion as attacks on education.

In 2022, the UN verified 461 attacks on schools and students or educators in Ukraine; although both Ukrainian and Russian armed forces were responsible for these attacks, the majority were perpetrated by Russian armed forces and affiliated armed groups.[22] Most of these attacks appeared to be on schools, rather than against students and staff. GCPEA identified individual reports of more than 215 attacks on schools in 2022.[23] Such attacks spiked in March, April, and May of that year. For example:

- On February 25, 2022, shelling damaged School No. 50 in Gorlovka city, Donetsk region, killing two teachers, according to Save the Children and an international news outlet.[24]
- On February 25, the Sonechko nursery and kindergarten in Okhtyrka town, Sumy region, was hit with cluster munitions in an attack that appeared to be carried out by Russian forces, according to Amnesty International.[25] Save the Children and media sources reported that the attack killed at least one child and two other civilians.[26]
- Amnesty International and international news outlets *PBS* and *The Guardian* reported that, on February 26, 2022, shelling struck a kindergarten and started a fire in Chernihiv city and region.[27]
- Human Rights Watch reported that, on March 1, 2022, a boarding school serving blind students was damaged by shelling in Kharkiv city and region during Russian bombing of the city. The attack injured one student and the director of the school.[28]
- The UN reported that, on March 3, 2022, two schools and several apartment buildings were destroyed in Chernihiv city and region, likely due to airstrikes by Russian forces. The strikes killed 47 civilians.[29]

- The UN and media sources reported that, on March 20, 2022, shelling damaged School No. 36 in Mariupol city, Donetsk region.[30]
- On August 30, 2022, a kindergarten that served about 350 students was reportedly damaged in Kharkiv city and region. Several classrooms and school windows were destroyed, and two assistant teachers were injured as a result, according to media reports.[31]
- On October 2, 2022, local media reported that a secondary school in Kryvyi Rih city, Dnipropetrovsk region, was hit by a drone, damaging two floors of the building.[32]

In late 2023, the MoES reported that nearly half of the educational institutions in Kharkiv and Kherson regions had been damaged during the war, and that over 80 percent of schools had been damaged or destroyed in Donetsk region.[33] The MoES number was not included in the total number of attacks on schools to avoid double counting, and because it was unclear if all incidents met GCPEA's criteria for inclusion as attacks on education.

In 2023, the UN reported some 240 attacks on schools.[34] Separately, GCPEA identified around 155 individual reports of attacks on schools.[35] Since these reports may have overlapped with the UN count, they are not included in the total number of attacks on schools, to avoid double counting. Examples of individual reports identified by GCPEA included:

- On January 22, 2023, a school was damaged by shelling in Oleshky town, Kherson region, as reported by local media outlet *Ukrinform*.[36]
- On January 29, 2023, shelling in Kherson city and region damaged a school, as reported by the United States Agency for International Development.[37]
- On February 8, 2023, shelling reportedly damaged a kindergarten in Novoselivka village, Donetsk region, according to local media and ACLED.[38]
- On March 22, 2023, a drone reportedly struck a specialized secondary school in Rzhyshchiv village, Kyiv region, damaging dormitories and an academic building, according to local media.[39]
- On April 30, 2023, the State Emergency Service of Ukraine, as cited in media outlets, reported that missile strikes damaged nine educational institutions in Pavlohrad city, Dnipropetrovsk region.[40]
- The UN and local media reported that, on August 23, 2023, a kindergarten caught fire after it was hit by an airstrike in Kherson city and region.[41]
- On August 23, 2023, a drone reportedly struck and destroyed a school in Romny city, Sumy region. The school director, deputy director, secretary, and a librarian were killed in the attack as they were in the school preparing lessons for the new academic year, according to local news outlet *Ukrainska Pravda* and international outlet *Reuters*.[42]
- On December 29, 2023, missile and drone strikes reportedly damaged three schools and a kindergarten in Lviv city and region.[43]

ATTACKS ON SCHOOL STUDENTS, TEACHERS, AND OTHER EDUCATION PERSONNEL

During the 2022-2023 reporting period, GCPEA identified at least six attacks on school students, teachers,

and other education personnel. In addition, *BBC* and other media sources citing the MoES reported that teachers in Russian-controlled areas of Ukraine have been tortured because they refused to teach a Russian curriculum.[44]

In 2022, GCEPA identified at least six reported attacks on education personnel.[45] Attacks involved the abduction or detention of educators who reportedly resisted the adoption of Russian curriculum. For example:

- In late March and early April 2022, four school principals were abducted after refusing to change their schools' curricula in Melitopol city, Zaporizhzhia region, according to local media sources and a human rights group.[46]
- As reported in late September 2022, a head teacher in the village of Ivanivka, Kherson region, was detained for 19 days, due to her refusal to adopt a Russian curriculum. According to international media outlet *BBC*, she was beaten while in detention.[47]

GCPEA did not identify any attacks on school students, teachers, and other education personnel in 2023.

MILITARY USE OF SCHOOLS AND UNIVERSITIES

GCPEA identified at least 67 reports of the military use of schools and universities during the 2022-2023 reporting period. This marked a significant increase compared to previous years in which GCPEA identified only sporadic incidents.[48] GCPEA identified reports of armed forces from both sides of the conflict using schools and universities for military purposes,[49] although more reports identified Russian forces and affiliated armed groups as the perpetrator. In several cases, rival forces subsequently targeted the school or university being used, according to media outlets and human rights organizations.[50]

In 2022, GCPEA identified at least 60 incidents of military use of schools and universities.[51] Separately, the UN reported the use of 23 schools for military purposes that year, with Russian forces and affiliated armed groups perpetrating the majority of cases.[52] Since it was unclear how many of these cases overlapped with reports that GCPEA collected, they were not included in the total number of military use incidents, to avoid double counting. A media outlet reported that, in Zaporizhzhia region, schools were partially occupied while students continued learning in the buildings.[53] Examples of military use of educational facilities included:

- Human Rights Watch and international media outlets reported that from early March until March 29, 2022, Russian forces used both a lyceum and kindergarten as a military base and hospital in Bohdanivka village, Kyiv region.[54]
- Between February 24 and early March, Ukrainian Territorial Defense Force members used School No. 11, located nearby a kindergarten, in Izium city, Kharkiv region, as a base until Russians troops advanced on the city in early March 2022, according to interviews conducted by Human Rights Watch.[55]
- Human Rights Watch reported that Russian forces used a school in Yahidne village, Chernihiv region, as a military base and detention center for 28 days in March and April 2022, holding more than 350 villagers in the basement, including at least 70 children. Ten older people died there during that time due to sickness

or the poor conditions.[56]

- In late April 2022, School No. 12, which served about 600 students, was used as a base, in Izium city, Kharkiv region. *The New York Times* reported that, around April 30, opposing forces targeted the school, killing approximately 200 soldiers stationed there.[57]
- On May 21, 2022, a Russian airstrike damaged a university in Bakhmut city, Donetsk region, which was being used as a base by Ukrainian forces, as reported by Amnesty International.[58]
- On May 27, 2022, Russian forces seized Dmytro Motornyi Tavria State Agrotechnological University and Bohdan Khmelnytsky Melitopol State Pedagogical University, in Melitopol city, Zaporizhzhia region, as reported by Scholars at Risk.[59]
- In early September 2022, a school in Orlianske village, Zaporizhzhia region, was reportedly used as a military base on one floor, with military equipment stored in the yard, while school instruction continued on the second floor.[60]
- Human Rights Watch reported that, between March and early September 2022, Russian forces used School No. 10 as a base, positioning military vehicles outside, in Izium city, Kharkiv region. Upon leaving the school, Russian forces reportedly looted it.[61]

GCPEA identified seven incidents of military use of schools or universities in 2023.[62] Separately, the UN verified the military use of two schools.[63] Since the UN count may have overlapped with the reports identified by GCPEA, it was not included in the total, to avoid double counting. For example:

- Around January 30, 2023, a kindergarten in Tavrichesky town, near Skadovsky city, Kherson region, was used as a military hospital, according to local media.[64]
- Around March 18, 2023, a school in Polohy city, Zaporizhzhia region, was reportedly used as a military field hospital, according to local media outlets.[65]
- Around March 22, 2023, a kindergarten located in Vesele village, near Melitopol city, Zaporizhzhia region, was used as a military hospital, according to local media outlets.[66]
- Around April 12, 2023, at least two educational institutions in Skadovsk city, Kherson region, were reportedly used as military bases while students attended classes, according to local media outlets.[67]

ATTACKS ON HIGHER EDUCATION

For the 2022-2023 reporting period, GCPEA identified at least 39 incidents of attacks on higher education in Ukraine, the majority of which were attacks on higher education facilities while the remainder were attacks on students and staff. These incidents took place primarily in Kharkiv and Donetsk regions. Attacks on higher education increased significantly in 2022 and 2023 as compared to the previous reporting period, during which GCPEA did not identify any reports of attacks on higher education.[68]

In 2022, GCPEA identified at least 34 reported incidents of attacks on higher education, which included two attacks on higher education students and personnel.[69] Separately, the MoES reported that, as of December 24, 2022, the "property and premises" of 95 research or higher education institutions had been damaged.[70] Specifically in Kharkiv, 21 out of the 24 higher education institutions had been damaged or destroyed as of July 13,

2022, according to local media citing the MoES.[71] These numbers are not included in the total number of incidents to avoid double counting and because it was unclear whether all the damage met GCPEA's criteria of attacks on education. Examples of attacks on higher education facilities in 2022 included:

- On March 2, 2022, a Russian missile strike destroyed the Faculty of Economics at V.N. Karazin Kharkiv National University, in Kharkiv city and region, according to Scholars at Risk.[72]
- On March 3, 2022, *PBS* reported that shelling damaged a dormitory and stadium at the University of the State Fiscal Service of Ukraine in Irpin city, Kyiv region.[73]
- On July 6, 2022, a Russian missile strike hit the H.S. Skovoroda Kharkiv National Pedagogical University in Kharkiv city and region, reportedly killing a campus security guard and destroying several buildings on the campus, including the main building and the science library, according to Scholars at Risk and a local media outlet.[74]
- On both August 17 and 19, 2022, Petro Mohyla Black Sea National University in Mykolaiv city and region was damaged by rockets fired by Russian forces, according to Scholars at Risk and media sources.[75]
- *PBS* reported that, around September 19, 2022, the Bakhmut Medical College campus was shelled and partially damaged, in Bakhmut city, Donetsk region.[76]
- Amnesty International and local media outlets reported that, on October 10, 2022, Russian forces damaged a building of the Kyiv National Shevchenko University during missile strikes on Kyiv city and region.[77]
- On November 1, 2022, shelling in Mykolaiv city and region reportedly damaged the Mykolaiv Polytechnic Vocational College.[78]

GCPEA identified two attacks on higher education staff in 2022:

- On June 4, 2022, Russian forces detained the dean of the Agronomy Faculty at Kherson State Agrarian and Economic University for two days, in Kherson city and region, as reported by Scholars at Risk.[79]
- Scholars at Risk and media outlets reported that, around June 14, 2022, Russian forces detained the vice-rector of Kherson State University for a week before releasing him, in Kherson city and region.[80]

In 2023, GCPEA identified five attacks on higher education, all of which were attacks on facilities.[81] For instance:

- On January 8, 2023, two college dormitories were reportedly damaged by a missile strike in Kramatorsk city, Donetsk region, according to *Reuters* and the *Associated Press*.[82]
- On February 5, 2023, a missile strike in Kharkiv city and region reportedly damaged the Beketov National University of Urban Economy building and injured a campus security guard.[83]
- On October 12, 2023, shelling in Kherson city and region damaged a building at Kherson State University, according to local media outlets.[84]

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