

# Afghanistan

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GCPEA identified over 89 attacks on schools, school students, and education personnel, as well as a number of attacks on higher education. At least 68 students and staff were arrested or detained. The military use of schools and universities continued.

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## Context

Conflict-related violence in Afghanistan involving the Taliban and other armed groups and in particular the use of explosive weapons and suicide attacks decreased overall during the 2024-2025 reporting period.<sup>1</sup> However, cross-border tensions continued and armed opposition groups remained active without eliminating the Taliban's territorial control.<sup>2</sup> According to the UN, armed opposition to Taliban de facto authorities took place in Kabul, Kandahar, Ghor and Baghlan provinces. Armed groups such as the National Resistance Front and the Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant-Khorasan (ISKP), remained active in the region during this reporting period. De facto authorities increased their presence in the eastern, south-eastern, and southern Border Regions with Pakistan as cross-border tensions continued in 2024 and 2025. Airstrikes by Pakistan and cross-border armed clashes targeted suspected Tehrik-e Taliban Pakistan (TTP) locations in Paktika, Kabul, and Kandahar provinces.<sup>3</sup> This violence continued to place civilians at risk, particularly children, who continued to be in danger of encountering unexploded ordnance (UXO) while at school or play, and led to many civilian casualties and pauses in UN humanitarian operations.<sup>4</sup> In 2025, the United Nations and the Taliban engaged to vacate occupied schools and to secure the release and reintegration of child soldiers.<sup>5</sup>

Human rights violations significantly increased since 2023, and the International Criminal Court (ICC) issued arrest warrants in July 2025 for Hibatullah Akhundzada, the Taliban leader, and Abdul Hakim Haqqani, Taliban Chief Justice, based on the crime against humanity of gender-based persecution.<sup>6</sup> The UN reported that Taliban forces committed extrajudicial killings, arbitrary arrests and detention, public executions, torture, and public corporal punishment.<sup>7</sup>

According to the UN, in 2025, approximately 22.9 million people in Afghanistan, 53 per cent of them children, required humanitarian support. In 2024, approximately 20.4 million people received at least one form of assistance.<sup>8</sup> More than 1.25 million documented and undocumented displaced Afghans were forcibly returned by Iran and Pakistan in both 2024 and 2025.<sup>9</sup> In 2025, approximately 2.78 millions of displaced Afghans returned.<sup>10</sup>

Lack of opportunity continued to challenge financial well-being, and child marriage rates continued to rise.<sup>11</sup> Decreases in international aid, which previously contributed approxi-

mately 75 percent towards Afghanistan's public spending, severely reduced access to public health services, intensifying already high levels of poverty.<sup>12</sup> In May 2024, heavy rain led to flash flooding, destroyed thousands of homes in north-eastern Afghanistan, and contributed to increased numbers of internal displacement.<sup>13</sup> Earthquake activity further compounded humanitarian challenges. A 6+ magnitude earthquake and subsequent aftershocks in August and September of 2025, killed over 2,150 and injured an additional 3,600 people in eastern provinces of Afghanistan. Approximately 499,000 people were affected.<sup>14</sup>

Taliban policies continued to restrict girls and women's freedom of movement and access to education beyond sixth grade.<sup>15</sup> The UN estimated that, in 2024 alone, at least 1.4 million girls, or 80 percent of school-aged girls, were denied their right to secondary education, as they were not allowed to pursue education beyond the sixth grade, with the exception of religious studies.<sup>16</sup> Furthermore, attempts to provide such education led to arrest. Limitations placed on local media outlets also prevented females from accessing informal educational and social programs.<sup>17</sup> In December 2024, the Taliban officially prevented women from attending medical institutions, previously it's only exception.<sup>18</sup> These policies also indirectly impacted male students' access to education. Economic constraints continued to reduce attendance rates as more male students contributed to family incomes.<sup>19</sup>

## Attacks on schools

GCPEA identified at least 50 attacks on schools in the 2024-2025 reporting period, compared to 60 in 2023 and eight in 2022.<sup>20</sup>

The UN reported a total of 48 attacks on schools in 2024, which were mostly attributed to the Taliban.<sup>21</sup> Separately, GCPEA identified one attack on a school during the reporting period; this incident was not added to the UN tally, to avoid double counting.

- As reported by *Insecurity Insight* and local media outlets *Kabul Now*, on September 29, 2024, a girls' school was allegedly set on fire in the Paranda valley, Bazarak city, Panjshir province.<sup>22</sup>

In 2025, GCEPA identified two attacks on schools. For example:

- According to *Kabul Now*, on January 12, 2025, in addition to arresting and detaining the director and multiple teachers from an English language education center in Kor-ga area of Khadir, Daikundi province, the Taliban allegedly seized office equipment and computers from the school.<sup>23</sup>
- On November 7, 2025, as reported by *Kabul Now*, the Taliban allegedly set fire to a school in the Parangal area of Abshar district.<sup>24</sup>

## Attacks on school students, teachers, and other education personnel

During the 2024-2025 reporting period, GCPEA identified at least 39 reports of attacks on school students and teachers, compared to five reports in 2023 and ten reports in 2022.<sup>25</sup> In the previous reporting period, many of these attacks were against female students and teachers or those protesting in support of girls' education. Most of the 2024 and 2025 attacks were arrests of educators, many of them males, who were accused of providing girls' education.

In 2024, GCPEA identified at least nine attacks on school students, teachers, and other education personnel:

- In early 2024, as reported by local human rights organization Rawadari, Taliban intelligence allegedly arrested managers of in-person and online Mathematics and English courses for teaching girls above sixth grade in Ghor province.<sup>26</sup>
- In January 2024, as reported by local human rights organization Rawadari, the Taliban allegedly arrested an educator in Ghor province for teaching girls above sixth grade.<sup>27</sup>
- On February 21, 2024, as reported by ACLED and local media outlet *Hasht-e Subh*, armed men entered a private school in Qoul Ordu area, Herat city, in Herat province, beat several teachers and fatally shot the principal.<sup>28</sup>
- As reported by local human rights organization Rawadari, in July 2024, the General Directorate of Intelligence allegedly arrested and imprisoned the head of an education center for teaching girls above the sixth grade in Ghor province. The educator was released after one month.<sup>29</sup>
- As reported by local human rights organization Rawadari, on August 7, 2024, the General Directorate of Intelligence allegedly arrested a woman teaching sewing and English to girls in Ghor province. She was arrested and detained for 24 hours and her center was forcibly closed.<sup>30</sup>
- As reported by ACLED and regional media outlet *Eurasia Diary*, on August 22, 2024 in Kandak village, Darah-e-Noor District, Nangarhar province, a landmine explosion killed two teachers and four children from a religious school in Nuristan province.<sup>31</sup>
- In October 2024, according to local human rights organization Rawadari, during a protest related to the alleged forced reassignment of a school into a madrassa, the Taliban allegedly used violence to suppress the protest and arrested two administrators and teachers.<sup>32</sup>
- On November 6, 2024, the owner of Resalat Schools in Herat province was allegedly arrested by the Taliban, as reported by local media.<sup>33</sup>

In 2025, GCPEA identified at least five attacks on school students, teachers, and other education personnel:

- As reported by *Kabul Now*, on January 12, 2025, Taliban intelligence allegedly arrested and detained the director and six teachers during a raid of the Ofuqi Naw English language center in Korga, Khadirin central Daikundi province. Of those initially arrested, four female teachers were later reportedly released on bail.<sup>34</sup> In a second incident on February 26, 2025, the Taliban returned to the Ofuqi Naw English language center and rearrested nine teachers, as reported by *Kabul Now*.<sup>35</sup> On May 19, 2025, the director and five teachers were sentenced to prison for five months and three months, respectively.<sup>36</sup>
- On January 25, 2025, as reported by ACLED and *Kabul Now*, Taliban intelligence forces allegedly shut an English language training center in Lal Wa Sar Jangal district in Ghor province, and reportedly arrested its director and four teachers, including a female teacher. This center educated girls above the sixth grade.<sup>37</sup>
- Around February 25, 2025, as reported by regional news source *The Independent*, Taliban intelligence forces allegedly arrested Wazir Khan, the director of Today Child, a non-profit organisation advocating for girls education. Khan reportedly had been providing access to free education for girls and children in remote areas.<sup>38</sup>
- As reported by ACLED and *Kabul Now*, a medical student was allegedly arrested on the campus of Malalai Private University in Kandahar on December 3, 2025 by Taliban forces. The student previously criticized a public execution that occurred in Khost province in a Facebook post.<sup>39</sup>

## Military use of schools and universities

GCPEA identified at least 31 cases of the military use of schools during the reporting period, compared to 54 during the previous 2022-2023 reporting period.<sup>40</sup>

The UN verified 31 schools used in 2024 by the Taliban throughout Afghanistan. Fourteen of these schools were vacated.<sup>41</sup>

No cases of military use were identified in 2025 at the time of writing, although it was not clear whether the 17 listed above and which were not vacated, continued to be used.

## Attacks on higher education

GCPEA identified at least eight attacks on higher education in the reporting period, which included five attacks on higher education students and staff, and three attacks on universities. The number of attacks has decreased since the previous reporting period, when GCPEA identified at least 24 such attacks in 2022 and at least two in 2023.<sup>42</sup> This decrease may be related to the decreased access to education, particularly facing women.

Many of the higher education personnel and students arrested in this reporting period were accused of providing formal and non-formal education to females or protesting on their behalf.<sup>43</sup> Other reported incidents involved seizures of electronic equipment from education centers and raids of university libraries.<sup>44</sup> In addition to the restrictions and oversight placed on jurisprudence faculty and curriculum, those associated with these departments have reportedly faced attacks by the Taliban.<sup>45</sup>

GCPEA identified at least four attacks on higher education in 2024:

- According to Scholars at Risk, on January 9, 2024, Taliban intelligence forces reportedly detained the Vice-Chancellor of Student Affairs at Roshan Afghanistan Online University near the Ministry of Higher Education in Kabul. His apparent support for women's education may have been associated with his arrest, torture, and interrogation.<sup>46</sup>
- On January 13, 2024, according to *Kabul Now*, after threats, the Taliban shut down an education center that primarily served female students in the Sang Takht-e-Bandar district of Daykundi province. Multiple educators were detained.<sup>47</sup>
- As reported by ACLED and local media *Kabul Now*, on December 1, 2024, a Kabul University Student was arrested by Taliban intelligence forces from the Kabul University dormitory in Kabul city after being beaten by the Taliban dormitory director. While the motive for his arrest is unclear, it is likely associated with his participation in protests demanding women's rights and an end to the Hazara genocide campaign. When the student was released on January 11, 2025, he returned to Kabul University and discovered that he had been expelled.<sup>48</sup>
- As reported by the German Federal Office for Migration and Refugees, on November 6, 2024 in Herat, the Taliban allegedly arrested the founder of the educational foundation Resalat.<sup>49</sup>
- ACLED and Scholars at Risk reported that, on December 3, 2024, a professor at Sheikh Zayed University in Khost city, Khost province, was severely beaten, detained, and allegedly tortured by the bodyguards of the Taliban governor for protesting against government evaluations of jurisprudence professors.<sup>50</sup>

GCPEA identified at least four attacks on higher education in 2025:

- As reported by *Kabul Now*, in the course of shutting down the GRS education center in Daykundi, Sang Takht-e-Bandar on January 13, 2025, the Taliban allegedly arrested and detained 3 of its educators.<sup>51</sup>
- As reported by local media *Amu TV*, on January 29, 2025, the Taliban allegedly raided and seized all electronics from the Sadat-e Jadid Educational Institute in Daikundi province. During this incident, two senior officials were also reportedly arrested.<sup>52</sup>
- In February 2025, the Taliban allegedly detained an elderly British couple living in Afghanistan who led the education and training non-profit, Rebuild, as reported by *CNN*. The couple was released on September 9, 2025, as reported by *The Times*.<sup>53</sup>