

# **Education under attack**

**A global study on targeted political and military violence against education staff,  
students, teachers, union and government officials, and institutions**

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## Dedication

This report is dedicated to the memory of, a former Afghan teacher who, during the reign of the Taliban, risked her life by running an underground school for girls from her home. As the director of women's affairs in Kandahar province, she worked tirelessly to champion efforts to get all Afghan girls back into school, and to provide professional and vocational training for women. She was shot and killed outside her home in Kandahar on 25 September, 2006.



*Photo source: UNESCO/Roya Aziz/Star Group*

Koïchiro Matsuura, Director-General of UNESCO, said: 'Safia Ama Jan's courage was an inspiration to us all. And her violent death serves as a grim reminder that those working to defend human rights, especially women's rights, the right to education and education for girls, are often working on the front line, with their lives constantly under threat.

'National authorities and the international community must stand united against the forces that would seek to destroy the efforts made by people like Safia Ama Jan. Education is one of the pillars of development, prosperity and peace. It is a human right. We must do our utmost to defend and ensure the security of those who are working in this vital area.'

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## 1. Introduction

In the wake of the assassination of Safia Ama Jan in Kandahar, Afghanistan, Koïchiro Matsuura, Director-General of UNESCO, announced that UNESCO would conduct a study into violence directed against educational personnel worldwide and into what can be done to improve safety and security. The objective of this report is to raise awareness and understanding of the extent to which those involved in education, whether students, teaching staff, trade unionists, administrators or officials, are facing violent attacks, and what can and should be done about the problem.

To differentiate this study from other examinations of violence affecting educational personnel, institutions and premises, the following terms of reference have been set. This study focuses on targeted violent attacks, carried out for political, military, ideological, sectarian, ethnic or religious reasons, against students, teachers, academics, education trade unionists, education officials and all those who work in or for education institutions such as schools, colleges and universities. It also includes attacks on educational buildings, such as the firebombing of schools.

For the purpose of this study, the term 'violent attacks' refer to any injury or damage by use of force, such as killing, torture, injury, abduction, illegal incarceration, kidnapping, setting of landmines around or approaching educational buildings, assault with any kind of weapon, from knives to bombs or military missiles and burnings when carried out for the reasons given above.

It includes forced recruitment of child soldiers, voluntary recruitment of child soldiers under the age of 15, and rape where it is part of a political, military and/or sectarian attack. It also includes threats of any of the above.

It includes looting, seizure, occupation, the closure or demolition of educational property by force, for instance the use of schools as a military base, and prevention of attendance at school by armed or military groups.

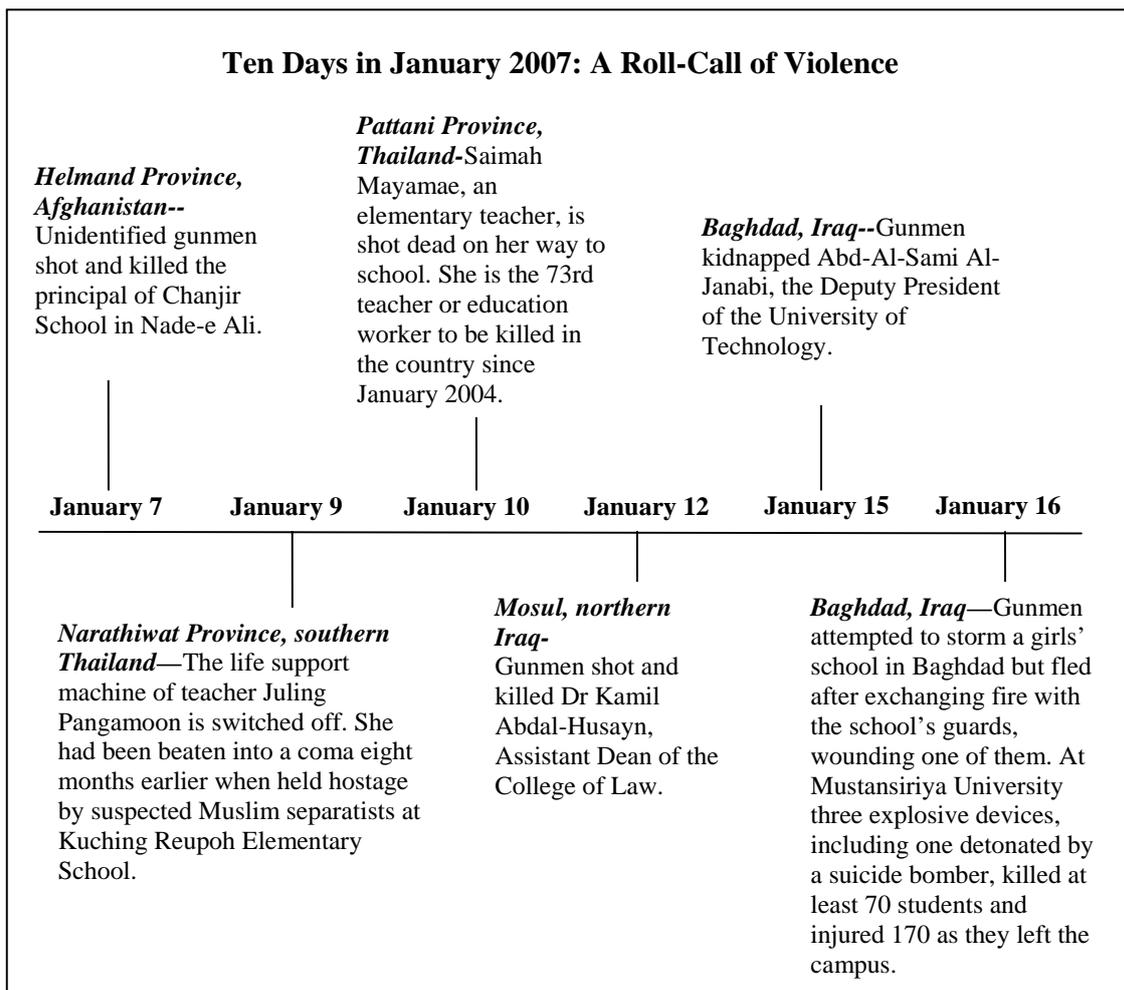
It includes the closure of schools by the state as well as rebel forces, or occupying troops, or any armed ethnic, military, political, religious or sectarian group.

The common thread is that these are incidents involving the deliberate use of force in ways that disrupt and deter the provision of and access to education.

The terms do not include general daily violence in schools, for instance between students or between students and teachers. Nor do they include collateral damage where, for example, teachers are killed or schools damaged accidentally by general military violence rather than attacks deliberately targeted against them.

## 2. The scale of attacks

Parts of the world are becoming a deadly place to be a student, teacher or education official. Attacks on education often escape international attention amid the general fighting in conflict-affected countries. But the number of reported assassinations, bombings and burnings of school and academic staff and buildings has risen dramatically in the past three years, reflecting the increasingly bloody nature of local conflicts around the world. Accurate global figures do not exist for the number of teachers, students or officials killed each year, or for other types of attack such as abductions, torture and threats of violence, nor are there accurate global figures for the number of attacks on schools, universities and education offices. But there are specific figures for the number of incidents in particular countries and territories, and they suggest that the worst-affected in the past five years include Afghanistan, Colombia, Iraq, Nepal, the Palestinian Autonomous Territories, Thailand and Zimbabwe, and in all cases except Nepal the conflict is ongoing. The pattern of unreported incidents might tell a different story, however, and it appears impossible to make comparisons with incident rates in previous decades, or in other sectors, due to lack of available data. It may be that attacks on education rise and fall according to the extent of wider conflict. Nevertheless, in 2006 the Special Representative on Children and Armed Conflict warned the United Nations that



schools, places that should be safe havens for children, have “increasingly become the prime target of attacks by armed parties”<sup>1</sup>. Moreover, in a number of countries the bombing of universities and education offices and targeted killing of teachers and academics have become the favoured tactics of fighting groups. Reported incidents in some of the worst-affected countries are presented below.

*Afghanistan:* A Human Rights Watch report documented 204 attacks on teachers, students and schools in 18 months from January 2005 to June 2006; Amnesty International reported that 75 students, teachers and other school staff were killed in attacks in 2005 to 2006. In 2005, there were 11 explosions, 50 burnings and one missile attack aimed at education targets, rising in 2006 to 18 explosions, 66 burnings and two missile attacks, and 37 reported threats.<sup>2</sup>

*Colombia:* On average, 42 teachers are murdered every year in Colombia. A report<sup>3</sup> from the Federación Colombiana de Educadores (Fecode) lists 310 murders of teachers between 2000 and 2006. Other Fecode documents list 27 murders of teachers in 1999. Between 1999 and 2001 a further 13 teachers and school employees were kidnapped or “disappeared” (this term denotes detained incommunicado, without acknowledgement, possibly killed).<sup>4</sup> In 2003, it was reported that 11,000 irregular combatants were child soldiers, mostly recruited between age 7 and 13.<sup>5</sup>

*Democratic Republic of the Congo:* In November 2003 in Walikale territory, UN assessors found all schools had been seriously damaged, many completely pillaged and destroyed in fighting. In Djugu, 211 schools out of 228 were destroyed between 1999 and 2004. In 2003, an estimated 30,000 children were taking part in combat, or attached to armed groups and used for sexual or other services, many of them forcibly recruited.<sup>6</sup> Between 2004 and 2005, 18,000 were released, although recruitment continued. One health centre in Kibirizi recorded 174 cases of rape, allegedly by soldiers, between July 2005 and May 2006, and in 80 per cent of incidents the victims were girls.<sup>7</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Report of the Special Representative to the Secretary General for Children and Armed Conflict, 17 August 2006 (A/61/275).

<sup>2</sup> Human Rights Watch, 2006, *Lessons in Terror: Attacks on Education in Afghanistan*; Amnesty International, 19 April 2007, ‘Afghanistan: All Who Are Not friends Are Enemies: Taleban Abuses Against Civilians’; UNICEF Media Release Kabul/Geneva, 7 August 2006, ‘UNICEF Alarmed as Attacks on Afghan Schools Rise’.

<sup>3</sup> Federación Colombiana de Educadores, 7 January 2007, ‘*La lucha Integral por los Derechos Humanos y Fecode*’.

<sup>4</sup> Watchlist on Children in Armed Conflict, February 2004, Colombia.

<sup>5</sup> Joanne Mariner, Human Rights Watch, 29 September 2003, ‘Children at War in Colombia’.

<sup>6</sup> Watchlist on Children in Armed Conflict, April 2006, ‘Struggling to Survive: Children in Armed Conflict in the Democratic Republic of the Congo’.

<sup>7</sup> Report of the Secretary General on children and armed conflict in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, 13 June 2006 (S/2006/389).

*Iraq:* 280 academics, including 186 university professors, have been killed since the fall of Saddam Hussein in April 2003;<sup>8</sup> 296 education staff members were killed in 2005; and 180 teachers were killed between February and November 2006.<sup>9</sup> More than 100 university students were killed in one month in January 2007. In November 2006, armed gunmen in police uniforms kidnapped 100 men from the Ministry of Education. Some hostages were freed the next day, others were found dead.

*Liberia:* In 1999,<sup>10</sup> it was reported that thousands of children had been abducted and given guns to fight, and there were many reports of attacks on schools but no specific numbers; 11,780 children were demobilized from the fighting forces after the war.<sup>11</sup>

*Myanmar:* In 2002, there were an estimated 70,000 child soldiers, many of them enlisted in the national army, some forcibly recruited as young as age 11.<sup>12</sup>

*Nepal:* In Nepal, 145 teachers and 344 students were killed between 13 February 1996 and 31 December 2006.<sup>13</sup> In the 5 years between 1 January 2002 and 31 December 2006, the Maoists destroyed 79 schools, one university and 13 district education offices. In the same five-year period, 10,621 teachers were abducted and 29 teachers were 'disappeared', 734 teachers were arrested or tortured, 320 teachers were beaten, 356 teachers were threatened, and 41 were injured. In the same period, 21,998 students were abducted, 126 were 'disappeared', 1,730 were arrested or tortured, 368 were beaten, 1,264 received threats and 323 were injured. In 2003, an estimated 30 per cent of Maoist forces were aged 14 to 18.<sup>14</sup> Maoists had enlisted an estimated 4,500 child soldiers.<sup>15</sup>

*Palestinian Autonomous Territories:* Since September 2000, 43 schools have been occupied by Israeli troops and turned into military bases, according to the Palestinian

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<sup>8</sup> www.irinnews.org, 27 February 2007, 'Iraq: The Exodus of Academics has Lowered Educational Standards'.

<sup>9</sup> Fred Van Leeuwen, General Secretary, Education International, November 2006, Letter to President Jalabani of Iraq.

<sup>10</sup> Office of the Special Representative of the Secretary General for Children and Armed Conflict, 3 June 2003, 'UN Envoy Calls on Warring West African Parties to Cease Activities Affecting Children'.

<sup>11</sup> UNICEF press release, 1 March 2006, 'Japan Provides \$6.78 Million to Liberia's children'.

<sup>12</sup> Human Rights Watch, 2002, 'My Gun Was as Tall as Me'.

<sup>13</sup> Informal Sector Service Centre (INSEC), 2007, *Human Rights Yearbook*. By the end of 2007, INSEC will have a wide range of data available in electronic form. Contact Prekshya Ojha, Chief, HR Documentation and Dissemination Centre, prekshya@insec.org.np

<sup>14</sup> Charu Lata Hogg, Chatham House/Coalition to Stop the Use of Child Soldiers, 2006, *Child Recruitment in South Asian Conflicts: A Comparative Analysis of Sri Lanka, Nepal and Bangladesh*.

<sup>15</sup> Human Rights Watch, February 2007, 'Children in the Ranks: The Maoists' Use of Child Soldiers in Nepal'.

Ministry of Education and Higher Education. There were 299 incidents of shelling and breaking into schools, directorate offices and universities by June 2004; 36 teachers, 622 pupils and 200 university students have been killed by January 2007.<sup>16</sup>

*Sierra Leone:* An estimated 1,200 schools were destroyed in targeted attacks during the brutal civil war, which ended in 2001. At least 6,845 children were used as child soldiers and 3,000 young girls were abducted and taken as wives (sex slaves).<sup>17</sup> An unspecified number of schoolchildren had limbs forcibly amputated, many of them following attacks on schools. Most amputations took place in 1998-1999.<sup>18</sup>

*The Sudan:* 108 children were reported abducted by the Sudanese Liberation Army on 26 May 2006. One school and one teacher-training institute were attacked in May 2006. In July 2006, one student was killed at a school in Dalil, Darfur and ten students and one teacher were shot dead trying to escape<sup>19</sup>. There are no aggregate figures for education-related attacks in north or south Sudan, UNICEF says.

*Sri Lanka:* Tamil Tigers recruited at least 3,516 children between February 2002 and November 2004.<sup>20</sup> When 1,600 child soldiers were demobilized by the Karuna faction in 2004, the Tamil Tigers recruited many of them using intimidation, abduction and violence.<sup>21</sup>

*Thailand:* The Thai Ministry of Education said in December 2006 that 71 teachers had been killed and 130 schools burned down in the previous three years. At least 112 teachers had been injured.<sup>22</sup> In the three southernmost provinces, 16 students died and 58 were injured in the same period.<sup>23</sup>

*Zimbabwe:* Between 2001 and 2002, there were at least 238 human rights violations against teachers, including 34 cases of torture, 75 incidents of assault, 13 death threats, 45 school closures and 6 abductions. In addition, 2 ministers were alleged to have issued death threats against student leaders and their principals for supporting the opposition

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<sup>16</sup> MoEHE, 'The Effect of the Israeli Occupation on the Palestinian Education from 28/9/2000-22/1/2007'.

<sup>17</sup> Ekundayo J. D. Thompson, March 2007, note on 'The Sierra Leone Civil War: Destruction of Educational Infrastructure'.

<sup>18</sup> *The Final Report of the Sierra Leone Truth and Reconciliation Commission*, Appendix 5, Amputations in the Sierra Leone Conflict.

<sup>19</sup> Amnesty International, 31 July 2006, 'Darfur: Korma: Yet More Attacks on Civilians'.

<sup>20</sup> Human Rights Watch, 11 November 2004, 'Sri Lanka: Tamil Tigers Forcibly Recruit Child Soldiers'.

<sup>21</sup> *Amnesty International Report 2005*

<sup>22</sup> Injury figures supplied obtained by Save the Children, Bangkok, from the Southern Border Provinces Administrative Centre, January 2007.

<sup>23</sup> Figures supplied by UNICEF from the Thailand Ministry of Education records.

Movement for Democratic Change.<sup>24</sup> In 2000, there were allegations of rape and molestation of female teachers and severe beatings of teachers and headmasters due to their political allegiance.<sup>25</sup>

Worldwide, the overwhelming majority of attacks on schools are carried out by local forces, but one source claims there have been 314 attacks on schools by 'international militarized terrorists' in recent years against schools in Afghanistan, Bosnia, Chechnya, Israel, Malaysia, the Netherlands, the Philippines, Russian Federation, Timor-Leste and Turkey.<sup>26</sup>

### **Scarcity and quality of data**

There is no single, exhaustive global database dedicated to monitoring violent attacks on education workers, students and institutions that can provide a reliable picture of the number of attacks. In addition, some of the available country-specific information is supplied by Ministries of Education, which may not have a neutral role in the conflict.

There is one global database of terrorist acts that includes educational institutions as one of the categories of targets of attack, but its figures for the countries worst-affected by attacks on education are very significantly lower than those supplied by education ministries, NGOs and press reports. The Terrorism Knowledge Base (TKB) is provided by the Memorial Institute for the Prevention of Terrorism (MIPT)<sup>27</sup> and draws on data from the RAND Terrorism Chronology and RAND-MIPT Terrorism Incident Databases, the Terrorism Indictment database, and DFI International's research on terrorist organizations. It is funded by the United States Department for Homeland Security.

The TKB suggests that the countries suffering the highest number of attacks on educational institutions since 1998 are Iraq and Thailand, followed by Afghanistan and Nepal, then Pakistan, Colombia, India, Turkey and Spain.

It indicates that the number of attacks on educational institutions has been rising at ever-increasing rates since 2000, with a doubling of the number of incidents in 2004 and a six-fold increase on the 2003 figure in both 2005 and 2006. It also reports a quadrupling of the number of education fatalities per year in 2004 and this year (2007) there are ominous signs that worse is to come. In the first half of January 2007, there were 72 fatalities and 171 injuries in five terrorist attacks on education institutions, more deaths and injuries than in any other sector affected by terrorism.

The TKB figures are limited by two factors, however. One is the database's narrow focus on acts of terrorism, defined as 'violence, or the threat of violence,

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<sup>24</sup> Zimbabwe Human Rights NGO Forum, September 2002, 'Teaching Them a Lesson: A Report on the Attack on Zimbabwean Teachers'; and Zimbabwe Human Rights NGO Forum, 2006, 'An Analysis of the Zimbabwe Human Rights NGO Forum Legal Cases, 1998-2006'.

<sup>25</sup> Canadian Association of University Teachers (23 May, 2000) letter to President Mugabe of Zimbabwe.

<sup>26</sup> Keith Jones, March 2007, Tactical Response magazine, 'Terrorism Deterrence, Part 1'.

<sup>27</sup> MIPT is funded by the United States Department of Homeland Security and was set up as a non-profit organization in the wake of the Oklahoma City bombing in 1995. Its function, as directed by the United States Congress, is to research the social and political causes and effects of terrorism.

calculated to create an atmosphere of fear and alarm', perpetrated by rebel or subversive groups. They do not cover violence by the state or occupying forces, for instance where schools are closed by force or destroyed as part of a strategy of undermining the culture or infrastructure of a resistant or rebel ethnic or religious minority. The TKB figures could therefore cover attacks on schools by the Taliban and allied rebel forces in Afghanistan today, but not the Taliban's use of state force to ban millions of girls from going to school and women from teaching when the Taliban was in power in Kabul. Yet women caught teaching were hanged, imprisoned or beaten for fulfilling children's fundamental human right to education, a violent use of state power for illegitimate aims. Nor do they cover acts of torture or forced recruitment of child soldiers, both serious offences against education and, in the case of the latter, a widespread problem.<sup>28</sup>

There are other limitations common to all sources, which must be addressed to aid the development of effective international and domestic strategies for dealing with attacks. These include the lack of data or lack of full access to data, as well as questions of political bias of data from one side or the other in a conflict. The usefulness of media reports may be limited by their ad hoc nature and bias towards the language of the media outlet, which may mean reporters are not able to cover victims on one side of the conflict as easily as on the other. The accuracy of media and government reporting may suffer from lack of access to more rural and remote areas or lack of local data and reporting in areas of high illiteracy, which may equate to areas on one side of the conflict. In Afghanistan, for instance, attacks on schools are more frequent in rural areas off the main roads. Figures provided by a Ministry of Education or union organization may also not be objective, depending on the nature of their involvement in the conflict.

A third problem in collecting data is being able to determine whether an attack is targeted. For instance, if a bus carrying police guards and teachers is hit, were the police the target or the teachers – or both? In many cases, there may be insufficient evidence to decide.

Finding data on the use of child soldiers is also problematic. A Chatham House report last year said that there remained a 'disturbing lack of information about the involvement and impact of conflict on children in both Sri Lanka and Nepal'. No studies had been conducted to ascertain the actual number of children in the ranks of the Tamil Tigers in Sri Lanka or the Maoist forces in Nepal.<sup>29</sup>

One organization charged by the UN Security Council with monitoring grave violations of children's rights is the Office of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Children in Armed Conflict. Its monitoring remit includes attacks on schools, recruitment of child soldiers, forced child labour and serious sexual offences against children, which it covers mainly by providing situation reports from missions to priority countries. However, it does not collect detailed or standardized data that can be compared between countries and the main emphasis of reporting so far has been on child soldiers, with less attention paid to attacks on schools. It also concentrates on a handful of priority countries.

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<sup>28</sup> Saira Shah, 2001, Channel 4, United Kingdom, 'Beneath the Veil'.

<sup>29</sup> Charu Lata Hogg, Chatham House/Coalition to Stop the Use of Child Soldiers, 2006, *Child Recruitment in South Asian Conflicts: A Comparative Analysis of Sri Lanka, Nepal and Bangladesh*.

In 2005, the Special Representative reported that more than 250,000 children continued to be exploited as child soldiers. The recruitment or use of child soldiers was continuing in the period November 2005 to September 2006 in Burundi, Chad, Colombia, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, the Cote d'Ivoire, Myanmar, Nepal, the Philippines, Somalia, the Sudan, and Sri Lanka. Abductions of children were continuing in Chad, Democratic Republic of the Congo, Nepal, Sri Lanka, the Sudan and Uganda.<sup>30</sup>

The Special Representative's remit does not go beyond children, so does not address the important question of attacks on teachers, academics and education officials. The monitoring of attacks on schools was established only last year, so it is in an early stage of development. The Office has supplied only limited or anecdotal information on attacks on educational institutions relating to a handful of countries so far including Afghanistan, Burundi, Cote d'Ivoire, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Iraq, Nepal, Palestinian Autonomous Territories and Sri Lanka. There is no information in a form that could be used in a database to look at trends emerging across countries, even though attacks on schools are a category of war crime.

Of all the countries looked at in detail for this study, the most comprehensive figures on attacks on education are available for Nepal, provided by the Informal Sector Service Centre (INSEC)<sup>31</sup>, a human rights NGO dedicated to systematically documenting and disseminating human rights situation and violation records, aided by 75 human rights reporters, one in each district of the country. This may offer an effective model of data collection that could be replicated in other countries.

If the international community wishes to address the problem of violent attacks on education, it must support the development of an independent system of monitoring attacks in a common form across countries so that trends in the scale and types of attacks, the perpetrators and targets, and where possible, the motives can be analysed and made public. The impact on education provision and the measures that are being taken to prevent attacks and limit their impact should also be monitored and the knowledge shared across conflict-affected countries and internationally.

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<sup>30</sup> UN Secretary-General, 26 October 2006, 'Children and Armed Conflict', Annexes I and II (A/61/529 S/2006/826).

<sup>31</sup> [www.inseconline.org/aboutinsec.php](http://www.inseconline.org/aboutinsec.php).

### 3. The nature of attacks

The types of attack carried out vary from sophisticated military-style operations such as the Beslan school tragedy, probably the worst single attack on an educational institution in recent history, to bombings, assassinations, detention and torture, and threats of violence.

On 1 September 2004, the first day of term, 32 or more armed militants stormed Number One School in the Russian town of Beslan, North Ossetia. They held its 900 pupils and around 400 parents and teachers hostage for three days in the gymnasium, which was rigged with trip wires and explosives. The hostages were told if any mobile phones were found on any individual they and the three people nearest to them would be shot. When gunfire broke out between Russian security forces and the hostage takers, 344 hostages were killed including 186 children. An estimated 700 civilians and 30 special forces personnel were wounded. Chechen warlord Shami Basayev, who has since been killed, claimed responsibility for the storming of the school. Russian sources suspected Al Qaeda involvement in the attack.

The Beslan tragedy captured the news headlines across the world and large-scale attacks, such as the explosions in Iraqi universities, receive international press attention, but many incidents involving individual assassinations are not reported in the media outside the country in which they take place. Yet for teachers in those places, a threat or just the knowledge that militants are out there, watching and waiting for an opportunity to shoot or stab them, can be as significant a deterrent to carrying on their work as an explosion that kills dozens of students and staff.

The types of attack can be divided into groups according to the tactics involved and the intended effect, as described below.

- a) Multiple deaths of education workers, students and officials via bombings, remotely detonated explosions and sprayed gunfire in places where large numbers of people congregate, such as university and school entrances, playgrounds and offices, or at large-scale events such as protests, or on vehicles carrying staff to and from work.
- b) Targeted assassinations of individual education staff, students and trade unionists by firearms, typically in the classroom or on the way to and from work. Other weapons such as knives and hammers are also used.
- c) Destruction of education buildings and resources via remotely detonated explosions, bombings, burnings, looting and ransacking.
- d) Illegal detention, 'disappearance' or torture of teachers, academics and education trade unionists, usually by forces of the state or forces supported by the state, though sometimes by rebel groups.
- e) Abduction of students, teachers and officials by armed forces for extortion or to spread terror; forced recruitment of child soldiers, and abduction and/or rape of school girls and teachers by military forces.

The number and combination of tactics used varies between conflict situations. In Thailand, two of the main tactics are targeted assassination of known teachers by motorcycle pillion passengers wielding a pistol; another is bombings targeted at buses carrying armed guards and teachers. In Iraq, there have been many large-scale bombings using remotely detonated devices at universities, causing dozens of deaths in one blast, as well as shootings and kidnappings. In Afghanistan, burning down schools has been the predominant tactic but there have also been explosions and missile attacks. Two conflicts involving a clash between left- and right-wing ideologies – in Colombia and Nepal – have included many incidents of illegal detention, disappearance and torture, usually by state or state-backed forces, as well as abduction by guerrillas. Left-right struggles have also made education trade unionists prime targets for these tactics, as in Colombia and Ethiopia.<sup>32</sup> In Colombia, landmines laid by guerrilla groups and unexploded ordnance on school premises represent a grave and growing concern.<sup>33</sup>

The recruitment of child soldiers represents another form of attack on education because it prevents children going to school and can gravely harm their development, due to the atrocities they witness or are ordered to commit. The latter range from killing friends and members of their own families, to dismembering bodies and drinking human blood. Many are abducted and recruited at gunpoint from school. Others volunteer either

#### **Terror Tactics Faced by Colombian Teachers**

According to the Federación Colombiana de Educadores (Fecode), their members' rights are being violated through the use or threat of violence in a range of ways (*Fecode, 7 January 2007, 'La lucha integral por los derechos humanos y Fecode'*):

- telephone and written threats;
- harassment at home by armed personnel;
- public declarations or written messages singling them out as military targets;
- demands for their resignation from their job with an ultimatum to leave the work place;
- extortion by illegal armed groups against teachers on the highest salary scales (those with 25 years' service) and those who already have a pension;
- armed groups using schools as meeting places for spreading their political views or threatening the community, regardless of opposition from teachers and the school authorities;
- raiding/breaking into homes and education institutions, and murdering teachers in front of their families and students;
- death threats written in graffiti on schools and teachers' homes
- forced disappearances and kidnappings;
- armed groups ordering teachers to leave the union or not participate in union activities.

<sup>32</sup> In January 2007, Education International alerted member organizations to the case of two elected officials of the Ethiopian Teachers Association who were tortured while detained without warrant and a third who was missing.

<sup>33</sup> UN Secretary-General, 26 October 2006, 'Children and Armed Conflict'.

out of fear, desperation to escape poverty or abuse at home, or even because the education system has failed them. But enlistment of children under 15 years of age is a category of war crime and there is a case for extending that to enlistment under age 18 on similar grounds to the treatment of under-age sexual intercourse, which in some African countries falls under the same legal definition (defilement) as rape, whether it is consensual or not.

## 4. Targets and motives

The motives for attacks vary between conflicts and within conflicts, and can be multi-layered. In Afghanistan and Pakistan, many of the assaults against girls' schools or those who work in them are carried out by extremist Islamic groups thought to be allied to the Taliban or Al Qaeda. Their motive is reportedly an ideological belief, rooted in an interpretation of religion and local traditions, that the education of girls should be forbidden. However, the forced closure of schools may also have a military objective of spreading fear and instability to undermine the authority of the state locally. A burning could also be an act of revenge or a show of strength in a rivalry between warlords, or armed groups exploiting jealousy over the building or repair of a school in a rival village.

In Iraq, institutions are targeted in some cases on a sectarian basis because they are in an area dominated by Sunnis or Shia Muslims, but also because factions believe they will have a better chance of creating the conditions in which they can seize control of the country if they can drive out the intellectuals through fear and violence. Some academics are assassinated by Shia militants because they are suspected of collaborating with the regime under Saddam Hussein, others are killed by Sunnis because they did not. In Nepal and Sri Lanka, the root causes of conflict lie in the failure of successive governments to provide broad-based development and social justice, and the role of education is contested. There are arguments over access to education in remote areas, the language of instruction, distribution of the education budget and the focus of the curriculum.<sup>34</sup>

In some cases, attacks are part of a strategy of degrading the infrastructure of a resistant power by occupying forces. During Operation Defensive Shield in the Palestinian Autonomous Territories in 2002, for instance, Israeli forces destroyed 11 schools and damaged 112, and damaged the Ministry of Education, confiscating equipment and records.<sup>35</sup> But some students may also be targeted because they are suspected of being involved in resistance activities, such as attacking troops with stones. Between 2000 and 2005, around 3,000 schoolchildren were detained by Israeli forces.

By contrast, separatists target schools and universities as a symbol of the state they oppose and because they are relatively soft targets. Hamas, for instance, detonated a remote controlled bomb at Hebrew University, Jerusalem, in July 2002, killing and injuring students.<sup>36</sup>

In some countries, such as Colombia, the targeting of teachers reflects their political role in taking a stand on human rights or social justice on behalf of their community. They come under pressure from both sides in the conflict because, as the

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<sup>34</sup> Charu Lata Hogg, Chatham House/Coalition to Stop the Use of Child Soldiers, 2006, *'Child Recruitment in South Asian Conflicts: A Comparative Analysis of Sri Lanka, Nepal and Bangladesh'*.

<sup>35</sup> Susan Nicolai, 2006, *Forced Migration Review, Education Supplement*, 'Education and Chronic Crisis in Palestine'.

<sup>36</sup> Watchlist on Children in Armed Conflict, September 2002, *Israel/Palestinian Occupied Territory*, which also quotes two UNICEF reports, *Occupied Palestinian Territory, Donor Alert*, 2 April 2002, and *Occupied Palestinian Territory, Donor, Update*, 29 May 2002.

most educated members of the local population, many of them have become spokespeople on local issues for the communities in which they live, such as disagreements over the extraction of local resources by multinational companies and human rights violations. Mario Novelli,<sup>37</sup> a researcher on the Colombian conflict, based at Amsterdam University, says teachers are being killed because they are involving themselves in campaigns defending the right to education. Teachers have been in the forefront of opposing budget cuts, which have led to the introduction of 'cost recovery' mechanisms, such as school fees for secondary education, and encouraged the setting up of private schools. A similar process has taken place in universities, where the Colombian Universities Workers union has organised demonstrations. As the leaders of protests, education trade unionists have become targets of violence and threats. The tactics used against them have switched since President Aríbe came to power in 2002 from assassination towards arbitrary detainment, according to Novelli.

Movements defending education against cuts and cost recovery have emerged in a number of countries in Latin America and Africa. The Oaxaca uprising in Mexico was triggered in May 2006 by protests by Section 22 of the National Teachers Union. It is reported that they were demanding free school uniforms and breakfast for students, more scholarships, and more funding for school buildings and equipment. They were beaten while asleep in tents by baton-wielding police officers and tear gas grenades were fired at them from helicopters. Four protestors were killed, including one teacher, and another protesting teacher was later assassinated. Gunmen opened fire on teachers during several later protests and protestors retaliated with other violent acts such as burning buses.<sup>38</sup>

The motive for forced recruitment of child soldiers appears to be a common strategy to increase troop levels and logistical support, an extreme example of forced child labour, but the act of abduction is also a means to spread terror and undermine resistance to the armed group from the local population. But recruitment is not confined to rebel forces. For example, the Government of Sudan forcibly recruited children in their early teens in 2000 and trained and assigned them to provide security for the Heglig oil facility in the Greater Nile, where they were ordered to carry out 'human rights abuses against their neighbours and relatives, including killing people, burning villages and looting food'.<sup>39</sup> The Watchlist on Children in Armed Conflict reported in 2003 that children, some as young as 10, were being used extensively by both government and opposition forces in Sudan and that many had been forcibly recruited on both sides.

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<sup>37</sup> Mario Novelli is currently carrying out research on violence against the education community *in situ* in Colombia, supported by IIEP-UNESCO, Education International and the Netherlands government. Contact: m.novelli@uva.nl

<sup>38</sup> Duncan Kennedy, BBC online, 23 August 2006, 'Mexico Teachers Extend Protests'.

<sup>39</sup> Watchlist on Children in Armed Conflict, March 2003, Sudan, [www.watchlist.org](http://www.watchlist.org).

## Case studies

### *Iraq: Gunning for the intellectuals*

On 25 February 2007, a suicide bomber triggered a ball-bearing packed charge amid a crowd of mainly Shiite students at a college in Baghdad, killing 42 people and injuring 55 others.<sup>40</sup> Most of the victims were students.

Witnesses said a woman dressed in a chador (Islamic veil) and holding plastic sacks carried out the attack at Mustansiriyah University, detonating the bomb at the gates of the Business and Administration department as students entered to sit mid-term exams. The University had already been warned to close its doors.<sup>41</sup> The main campus of the same university was hit by a series of bombings that killed 100 students in January.

Koïchiro Matsuura, Director-General of UNESCO, expressed his shock and anger over the attack. He said: 'I strongly condemn this barbarous act. The systematic targeting of the Iraqi education system, its schools, universities, teachers and students, must not be allowed to continue.'<sup>42</sup>

But the savagery of the attack was not out of the ordinary in today's Iraq. Since the beginning of last year, militants have stepped up efforts to drive out Baghdad's remaining intellectuals and middle classes with a wave of death threats, intimidation, bombings and assassinations, and they are succeeding in driving thousands of academics out of the country. It is a tactic that has been used before, in Algeria.<sup>43</sup>

For example, on 24 January 2007, gunmen opened fire on the motorcade of Iraq's higher education minister on a highway in southern Baghdad, killing one of his guards and seriously wounding another<sup>44</sup>.

On 31 January 2007, the bodies of 3 Sunni professors and one student were found. The four academics were seized when their car was ambushed four days earlier as they left Nahrain University's law school in northern Baghdad, the Ministry of Higher Education said.<sup>45</sup>

On 12 February 2007, up to 16 people were reported killed and 27 wounded after another suicide bomber detonated explosives in a van in a car park between the College of Economic Sciences in Western Baghdad and a food warehouse.<sup>46</sup>

The Iraq Index, compiled by the Brookings Institution in Washington and released on 21 December 2006, estimated that up to 40 per cent of Iraqi professionals had fled the

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<sup>40</sup> Brian Murphy, Associated Press, 'Shiite College Bombed', *Denver Post*, 26 February, 2007; AFP, 26 February 2007, Khaleej Times online, 'Baghdad College bomber a Woman'.

<sup>41</sup> Daily Telegraph, 26 February, 2007, '40 die as bombers target Iraq students'

<sup>42</sup> UNESCO Press Release No 2007-17, Paris, 27 February 2007, 'UNESCO Director-General Condemns Deadly Attack on Baghdad College and Urges Increased Protection for Iraq's Education System'.

<sup>43</sup> www.irinnews.org, 27 February 2007, 'Iraq: The Exodus of Academics has Lowered Educational Standards'.

<sup>44</sup> Reuters, 24 January 2007, 'Gunmen Open Fire on Iraqi Minister's Convoy, Kill one'

<sup>45</sup> AP, Khaleej Times, 31 January, 2007, 'Bodies of three Sunni professors and a student found, three days after their abduction'

<sup>46</sup> Aljazeera.net, 13 February, 2007, 'Bomber strikes near Baghdad College'.

country since 2003. The number of teachers leaving nearly doubled last year, according to UNESCO.

‘The health and educational systems are depleted of good professionals. Nearly one third of those living in Iraq before 2003 have fled violence,’ Dr Mustafa Jaboury, a research investigator at the ministry, told IRIN News. ‘Shiite militias and Sunni insurgents are killing intellectuals to ensure Iraq is poorly managed and poorly governed.’

Paul Colley, a London-based analyst, said: ‘By removing these groups the insurgents are aiming to eliminate all support for a democratic society and hope that by targeting academics, Iraq will become theocratic like the Islamic Republic of Iran.’<sup>47</sup>

Muhammad al-Rubai, adviser to the Iraqi president on scientific affairs, talking to the BBC<sup>48</sup>, said assassinations had hit nearly every academic discipline and every university in Iraq. The universities have become a brutal battleground where abduction and murder of academics are a common event, he said. The competing motives can be sectarian, to seek revenge for losing influence with the fall of Saddam Hussein or to “cleanse” universities of his collaborators.

A report by Iraq Democracy Watch says: “We are faced with an organised, systematic operation driven by ideological, sectarian, and political motives.”<sup>49</sup>

Academic posts, such as university presidents, deans and chairs, as well as scholarships, are distributed on the basis of sectarian regional and gender quotas, where the percentage of women is almost non-existent and ministries have become party fiefdoms, Iraq Democracy Watch says.

Students are also targets for violent crime and sectarian killings, especially in Baghdad and Mosul. For instance in Baghdad, armed groups killed and injured a group of students in the Dura district and 12 university students were killed in the Latifia district. In Mosul, 12 students were killed off-campus last year, according to Iraq Democracy Watch.

Koïchiro Matsuura said: ‘What possible future can Iraq have if its children and youth are denied their right to education? What possible future [is there] for a country whose intellectuals, researchers and educators have fled because of terror and intimidation?’

He urged the authorities, with whom UNESCO is working closely, to rebuild and revitalize an education system that was once the region’s finest; to do their utmost to make schools and universities safe from the terrible violence; and to protect the lives of educational personnel and students.

#### *Afghanistan: A war against girls*

Jamila Niyazi has received many death threats as the principal of Lashkar Girls’ High School in Helmand province, southern Afghanistan.

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<sup>47</sup> www.irinnews.org, 27 February 2007, ‘Iraq: The Exodus of Academics has Lowered Educational standards’.

<sup>48</sup> BBC News, 5 November 2006, ‘Iraq’s Academics Targeted by Militias’.

<sup>49</sup> Iraq Democracy Watch, Baghdad, July 2006, Report on the Democratic Process in Iraq. (English translation). Iraq Democracy Watch is a monitoring body operating under the umbrella of the Iraq Foundation, a non-sectarian NGO set up by Iraqi expatriates.



In ‘night letters’ delivered to her doorstep, followed by threatening phone calls, the Taliban has repeatedly warned her to close the 7,000-pupil school on the grounds that girls should not leave their home.

It is a common tactic of ultra-conservative elements, who use propaganda, coercion and violence to spread their influence. In one of the most brutal incidents, in Zabul province, the headmaster of a co-educational school was beheaded.

Niyazi has received no help from the government or security forces and is only able to keep the school open by hiring security staff to guard the school. ‘I have not told the teachers about the threats and also hid the second letter from my own family,’ she told IRIN News.<sup>50</sup>

Her plight is not unusual. In July 2006, Human Rights Watch warned that escalating attacks by the Taliban and other armed groups on teachers, students and schools in Afghanistan were shutting down schools and depriving another generation of an education, and the main target is girls.

In the *LA Times*<sup>51</sup>, Zama Coursen-Neff, a senior Human Rights Watch researcher, recounted the story of Setarah, a teacher in the first girls’ school in her village, whose students found a landmine in their classroom, hidden under a bag.

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<sup>50</sup> www.irinnews.org, the UN-OCHA Integrated Regional Information Networks, 21 February 2007, ‘Afghanistan: Women Forced to Quit Work Because of Insecurity’.

<sup>51</sup> Zama Coursen-Neff, *LA Times*, 31 July 2006, ‘The Taliban’s War on Education: Schoolgirls are Still Under Fire in Afghanistan’.

The Taliban had posted a note in the village mosque a few weeks earlier ordering all girls schools to close and a night letter left at a nearby school had warned: ‘Respected Afghans: Leave the culture and traditions of the Christians and Jews. Do not send your girls to school.’ Otherwise, it said, the Mujahedin of the Islamic Emirates, the name of the former Taliban government, ‘will conduct their robust military operations in the daylight’.

Girls’ education is not the only target. Anwar Alsaïd, programme specialist at UNESCO Kabul, said that the reported motive for some attacks is a belief that the curriculum has been influenced by the Western powers and will undermine the Afghan identity, even though the ministry consulted widely before drawing it up.

Amnesty International has published details from a Taliban military rule book, which says: “Anyone who works as a teacher for the current puppet regime must receive a warning. If he [sic] nevertheless refuses to give up his job, he must be beaten. If the teacher continues to instruct contrary to the principles of Islam, the district commander or group leader must kill him.” It also says schools set up by NGOs under the current regime cannot be tolerated, and if they fail to heed warnings to close must be burned.<sup>52</sup>

Coursen-Neff is a co-author of the most comprehensive study on the situation, *Lessons in Terror: Attacks on Education in Afghanistan*,<sup>53</sup> which reported that attacks on all aspects of the education process sharply increased in late 2005 and the first half of



Photo source: UNESCO/Roya Aziz/Star Group

2006. By the middle of 2006, attacks were averaging one school a day.

Night letters were being left in homes, on roadsides en route to schools, and in mosques, threatening violence against individuals or communities, warning them against sending children, particularly girls, to school and against teaching.

Human Rights Watch said physical attacks against schools and their staff hurt education directly and indirectly. They forced schools to close because of damage by bombs or burnings and also because staff or

pupils were too afraid to attend. The climate of fear this creates can affect many schools in the surrounding area, which also close, to avoid meeting a similar fate. Even if they stay open, parents may decide it is too risky to send their child to school.

‘Schools are being shut down by bombs and threats, denying another generation of Afghan girls an education and the chance for a better life,’ said Zama Coursen-Neff. In August 2006, UNICEF warned that schools in Afghanistan were becoming the targets of

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<sup>52</sup> Amnesty International, 19 April 2007, ‘Afghanistan: All who are not Friends, are Enemies; Taleban Abuses Against Civilians’

<sup>53</sup> Human Rights Watch (2006), *Lessons in Terror: Attacks on Education in Afghanistan*.

increasingly serious attacks and reported that incidents had spread from the south and south-eastern region to all parts of the country.<sup>54</sup>

Human Rights Watch found entire districts in Afghanistan where attacks had closed all schools and had driven out the teachers and non-governmental organizations providing education. Despite advances in recent years, the majority of girls in the country remained out of school. Nearly one-third of the districts had no girls' schools.

### *Thailand: Targets of separatists*

In December 2006, two distraught teachers were found embracing the charred remains of two of their colleagues who were shot dead by suspected Muslim separatists at Ban Bado, their elementary school. Their bodies had been set alight on a paved road 100 metres from the school.

Chamnong Chupatpong, the Director, and Manoe Sonkawee, one of the teachers, were driving a pickup truck when four suspected militants on motorbikes drove up and shot them at close range.

The attackers dragged their bodies along the road, soaked them with petrol and set them on fire. Spikes had been placed across the road leading to the bodies to slow down any soldiers and police officers chasing after the attackers.<sup>55</sup>

Human Rights Watch said that the two teachers were victims of a wave of separatist violence that erupted in Thailand's three most southerly provinces in January 2004 and has claimed 2,000 lives.

The aim of some armed groups appears to be to divide society along ethnic and religious lines, claiming that the southern provinces represent a religious 'conflict zone' similar to the Palestinian Autonomous Territories or Afghanistan, that must be divided between Muslims and infidels.<sup>56</sup>

Schools and universities are seen as representing the Thai government and Buddhist-Thai culture. 'Insurgents are terrorizing the civilian population by attacking teachers and schools, which they consider symbols of the Thai state,' said Brad Adams, Asia director at Human Rights Watch.

Not only are they symbols of the state, but they are seen as inculcating the values of the state and imposing a national secular curriculum on an area which is 80 per cent Muslim. 'Schools should be safe zones,' says Sheldon Shaeffer, Director of UNESCO's Regional Bureau for Education in Bangkok, 'but they are highly visible targets and attacking them does more to grab the attention of the country or the world than attacking government offices.'

As a result, teachers have been singled out for assassination. Since the start of the insurgency, at least 73 Muslim and Buddhist teachers or education workers have been killed, many of them shot on their way to or from school by pillion passenger assassins.

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<sup>54</sup> UNICEF Kabul/Geneva, 7 August 2006, Media release: 'UNICEF Alarmed as Attacks on Afghan Schools Rise'.

<sup>55</sup> *The Nation*, 29 December 2006, 'Suspected Militants Kill and Burn Two Teachers in Yala'.

<sup>56</sup> Human Rights Watch press release, 29 November 2006, 'Thailand: Insurgent Attacks Shut Down Schools in South'.

Some have been shot in class - in one case insurgents donned school uniforms to get into the school - or at their lodgings, or during ambushes of security patrols trying to convoy students safely to their schools. Others have been held hostage with a view to exchanging them for the release of insurgent suspects from government custody. Many have died in explosions aimed at their transport, some have been attacked with knives and hammers as they left home. Bombs and remotely-controlled bombs have increasingly replaced firebombings as the weapon of choice.

For instance, on 28 September 2006 in Narathiwat, one person was killed and six injured when a 10 kg bomb exploded alongside a village road as a teacher protection unit of the 39th Task Force was making its morning rounds to escort teachers. The blast left a hole in the ground three metres deep and four metres wide. It overturned the soldiers' armoured vehicle and sent shrapnel 30 metres into the air.

Pradit Rasitanin, Director of the Education Ministry's Inspector General's Office, said the number of casualties in education was continuing to rise despite tightened security measures at schools and improved protection for teachers.

Documents prepared by the Special Branch for a Cabinet meeting said insurgents had links to Osama Bin Laden's Al Qaeda and that, to demoralize people and make them afraid of co-operating with the authorities, a group of teenagers had been hired to kill teachers, especially school directors. '[The teenagers] can claim Bt10,000 (\$312) for each victim's life,' the documents said.<sup>57</sup>

#### *Nepal: Still filling the ranks with children*

Henang had no choice when he was kidnapped, aged 13, by Maoist guerrillas in Nepal. 'It was purely chance that it was me,' he recalls. 'When the Maoists came to our school and asked the way to the nearest village, terrified pupils ran in all directions. A guerrilla soldier pointed his pistol at me and threatened to kill me if I didn't go with them.'

Henang (not his real name) was interviewed by Save the Children.<sup>58</sup> He escaped after nine months, covered in scars from punishments. 'I tried many times to get away. Every time I was caught and beaten by the commander. He always watched me, threatened me and hit me.'

One evening, Henang killed the commander and escaped. But he was taken into army custody and pressured into revealing which villages had co-operated with the guerrillas and the army took retribution.

Now he cannot go home in case he is treated as an informer and traitor. Instead, he lives in a rehabilitation and training centre supported by Save the Children.

An Amnesty International briefing note<sup>59</sup> on Nepal reported that Maoists had abducted 'tens of thousands of schoolchildren, along with their teachers' for 'political re-education sessions'. Typically, the tactic was to enter a high school and force all the students and teachers to accompany them to a remote location where hundreds of children from across the area would be gathered.

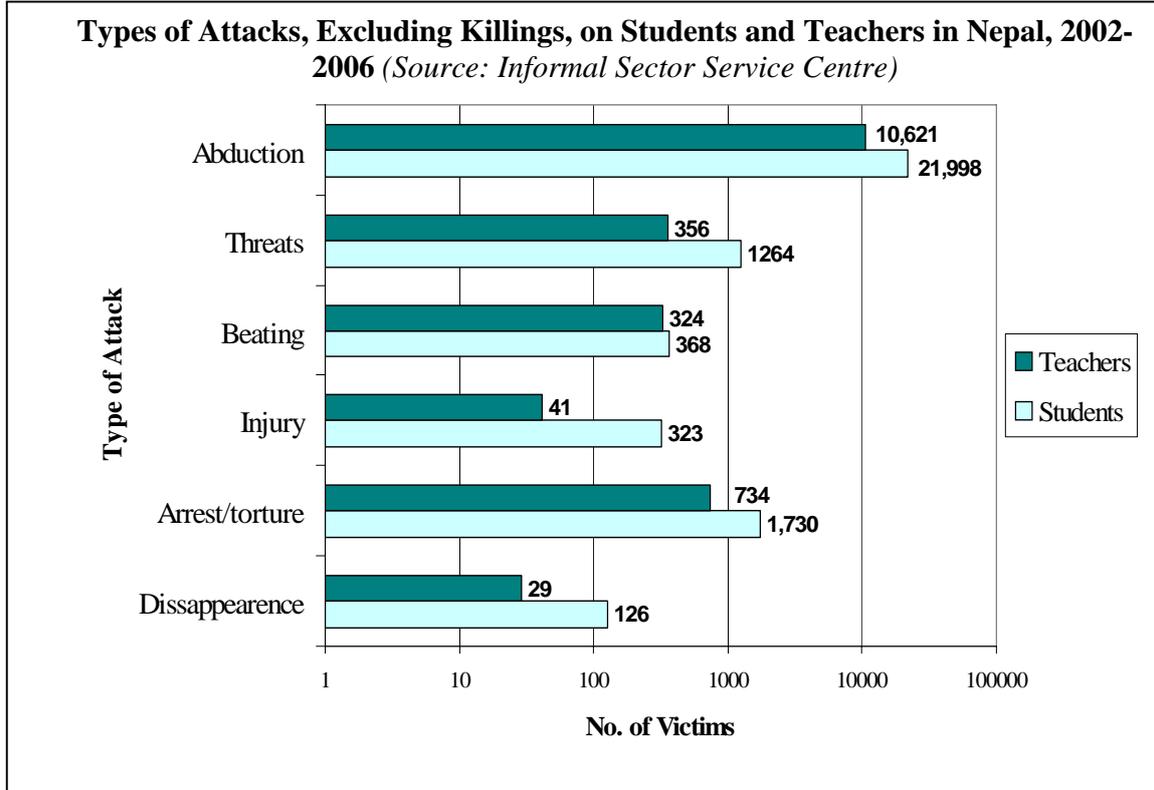
Many of the children would return after a few days but some would be held back for use as child soldiers – to be assigned such tasks as carrying bombs and ammunition,

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<sup>57</sup> *The Nation*, 16 July 2005, 'Yala Attacks: 60 People Believed to Have Taken Part'.

<sup>58</sup> Save the Children Nepal briefing, 2007, 'Rewrite the future'.

<sup>59</sup> Amnesty International, 2005, 'Nepal: Children Caught in the Conflict'.



acting as messengers, or in some cases actually taking part in fighting. Others were earmarked for future recruitment. Amnesty International concluded: ‘The scale and frequency of these abductions suggests that they are central to the CPN (Maoist) mobilization strategy.’

Kantipur FM radio reported on 26 January 2005, for instance, that rebels had abducted around 650 students and 47 teachers from 5 schools in Sankhuwasabha district, eastern Nepal, and more than 400 pupils and teachers in Dhading district, to involve them in ‘indoctrination sessions’ at an undisclosed destination.<sup>60</sup>

On 9 June 2005, *The Rising Nepal* newspaper reported that rebels had taken 150 pupils and 2 teachers by force from Shankar secondary school in Jajarkot district, western Nepal, and that 850 pupils and teachers were missing from 11 other schools.<sup>61</sup>

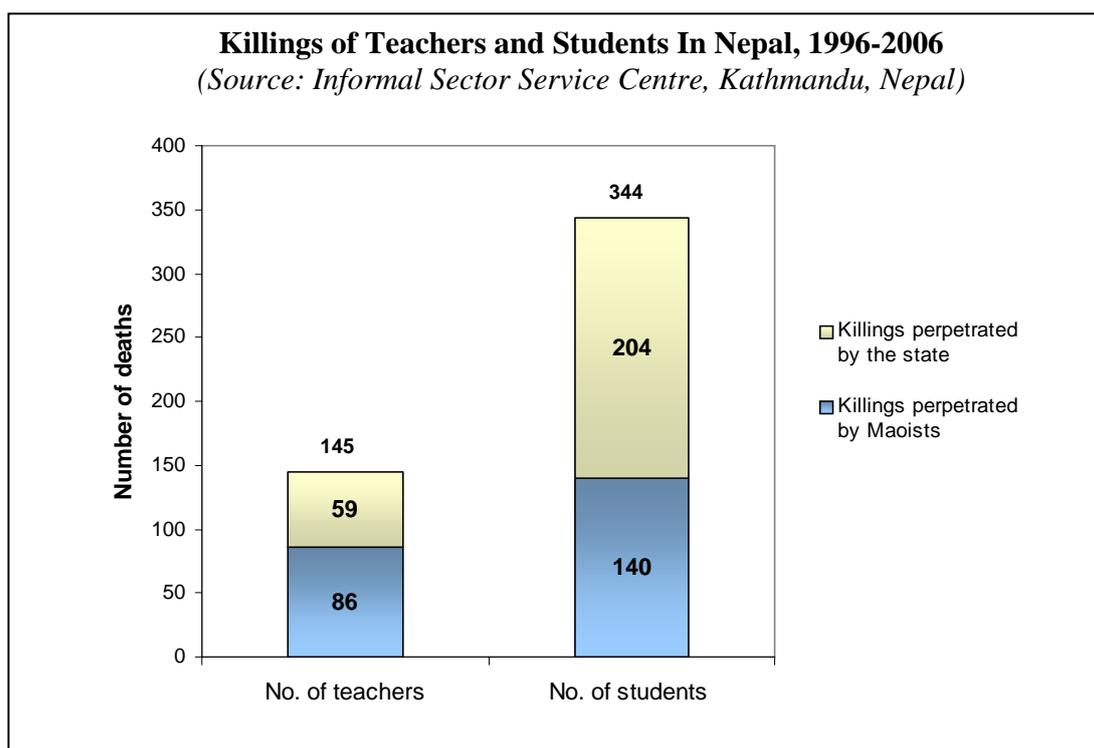
According to Human Rights Watch: ‘Once recruited, children were kept in the ranks through punishment or the fear of it: any children who considered escape also had to consider the possibility that the Maoists would exact reprisal upon their families.’<sup>62</sup>

Government security forces carried out their own variant on abduction: arresting teachers and students, forcing the disappearance of more than 150 and torturing more

<sup>60</sup> *The Hindu*, 28 January 2005, ‘Maoists Kidnap Over 1,000 Students, Teachers in Nepal’.

<sup>61</sup> Chedda, Sudhir. *India Daily*, 10 June 2005, ‘Nepal Maoists Abducted 1,000 School Children and Hiding Them in Unknown Location – Time for International Action?’

<sup>62</sup> Human Rights Watch, February 2007, ‘Children in the Ranks: The Maoists’ Use of Child Soldiers in Nepal’.



than 2,000 others.<sup>63</sup> Children were being held for long periods in army barracks, police stations or adult prisons, without being subjected to any legal process.<sup>64</sup>

However, according to Human Rights Watch, the abduction of children did not stop with the signing of the comprehensive peace agreement in November 2006.

A Human Rights Watch report<sup>65</sup> in February 2007 suggested that the Maoists had failed to release the minors in their ranks and were still 'frequently' recruiting children, contrary to the terms of the peace agreement. Sometimes they ordered children to attend 'educational sessions' and then prohibited them from returning home.

#### *Colombia: Trade unionists in the firing line*

Samuel Morales never went anywhere without his pistol, not even school. Like other trade union leaders, the 37-year-old primary-school teacher was assigned bullet-proof vests, a bullet-proof vehicle and two bodyguards with 9mm pistols. Since not even this guaranteed his security, he carried legally registered arms into class. 'I carry a Beretta automatic,' he told me four years ago, when he temporarily fled to the United Kingdom for his own safety.<sup>66</sup> Now he is in a Colombian prison and fears for his life.

Morales is a member of the teachers' association of Arauca, a region in north-east Colombia, and president of the regional branch of the national executive in the Central Trades Union Federation of Colombia.

<sup>63</sup> Figures supplied by INSEC, 2007, *op cit*.

<sup>64</sup> Amnesty International, 2005, 'Nepal: Children Caught in the Conflict'.

<sup>65</sup> Human Rights Watch, February 2007, 'Children in the ranks: The Maoists's Use of Child Soldiers in Nepal'.

<sup>66</sup> Brendan O'Malley, 25 July 2003, The Times Educational Supplement, 'Union Leader Never Goes out Without Bullet-Proof Vest and Pistol'.

Over the years, he and his wife and four children have regularly had to change addresses. For many teachers in Colombia, forced displacement has become the only way of safeguarding themselves and their families.<sup>67</sup> At one point, he escaped the country when assassins tried to kill him on the way back from a funeral. He was spared because he changed his route but a journalist member of a regional peace committee was killed instead. He eventually gave up teaching because he was afraid it would put the lives of the children in his school in danger. According to Federación Colombiana de Educadores (Fecode): ‘The threats, displacements, disappearances, deaths of hundreds of teachers are a result of [teachers’] opposition to the forced recruitment of children and youths by armed groups and their positions of leadership in unions, education and the community, and because they are accused by one or another illegal armed group of collaborating with the opposition.’

Morales said he started as the only teacher in a school for 45 children aged 5 to 12 in Arauca. He became politically active when he could not accept that foreign oil companies were taking 400 barrels a day from an area right next to his school, yet he had to teach under a leaky palm leaf roof in a wooden building with an earth floor and no sanitation, no water and no textbooks.

Teachers in Colombia are often social leaders who get to know the problems of peasant farmers and their families, and do something about them, putting forward requests and petitions to the multinationals, Morales said. But that can make them a target for political assassination by paramilitary groups that protect the big firms’ interests.

He had a thick dossier of death threats received by himself and his colleagues. One sent to the president of the teachers’ association in Arauca said: ‘Look after your children or you won’t see them again.’

Under a protection programme that the government was obliged by the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights to set up, the nine out of ten teachers who are trade union members are given a printed checklist of security measures.

They are told to:

- always check to see if your car is being followed
- never sit in a public place with your back to the front door
- always be aware of your escape routes from any situation
- if you carry a weapon, make sure it is ready to fire.

This did not help Morales when he was arrested along with Raquel Castro, a member of the Teachers’ Association of Arauca, on 5 August 2004. Both were charged with ‘rebellion’. The army burst through the door at a meeting they were attending and killed three other trade unionists present. Hector Allrio Martinez, Leonel Goyeneche and Jorge Prieto were forced out of the house and shot in the back.<sup>68</sup> Four soldiers and a civilian have been charged with the killings. But Morales and Castro remain in prison.

According to Amnesty International, the leaders of the Teachers Association of Arauca have been the target of raids and arbitrary detentions by the security forces, and repeated death threats and killings by army-backed paramilitaries.

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<sup>67</sup> Fecode, 7 January 2007, *La lucha integral por los derechos humanos y Fecode*.

<sup>68</sup> Amnesty International press release, ‘Colombia: Time to stop the killing and persecution of trade unionists and activists’

During his time in prison, Samuel Morales and his family have received death threats. While he was in custody at a police station in the Arauca town of Saravena, a senior police officer is reported to have told him that he knew where to find his three sisters, who all work in schools, and his wife. Police officers are reported to have pressed the head of the local hospital to sack his wife.

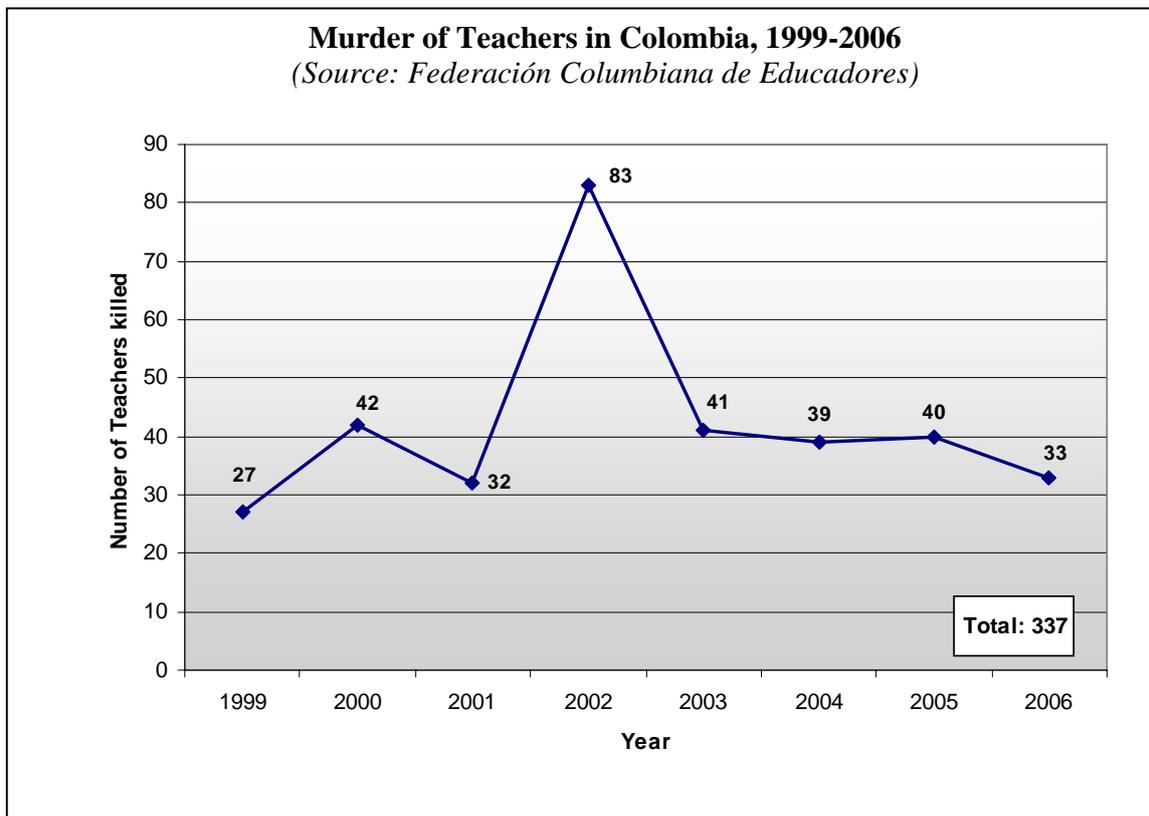
On 21 September 2005, the school where two of his sisters, Omayra and Gladys Morales, were working, received a call from a man claiming to represent the paramilitary United Self-Defence Forces of Colombia (AUC). He said that Morales's family are military targets and the two sisters must leave Arauca within 72 hours.

Half an hour later, the secretary at the school where Samuel's third sister, Matilde Morales, was working received a similar death threat.

In a statement, Amnesty International said it feared the arrest of Samuel Morales and Raquel Castro was part of an 'ongoing joint military-paramilitary strategy to undermine the work of trade unionists and human rights defenders in Arauca. Even if released, they will be in danger of being killed by those who have threatened Samuel and his family'.

It said Colombia faced a 'human rights crisis' because there is impunity in 90 per cent of cases of human rights abuses against trade unionists.

Only decisive action to bring justice to those responsible for International human rights abuses would have a significant impact on the situation, Amnesty International said. It called on solidarity groups worldwide to press their own governments 'to put pressure on the Colombian authorities to take measures to stop the killings and the persecution of trade unionists and activists'.



## 5. Impact on education provision

All attacks on the lives of teachers and students are abhorrent and morally repugnant in their own right. In addition, they typically disrupt and undermine the provision of education, access to education and the quality of education in a number of different ways:

- pupils and staff stay at home because of fear of further attacks.
- pupils and staff flee the area or country for fear of being targeted.
- buildings, materials and resources are destroyed or damaged.
- forced recruitment or voluntary enlistment of child soldiers prevents children from going to school.
- physical removal by abduction, detention or disappearance prevents teachers and students from going to school or university.
- murders and assassinations deny students their teacher and they may be irreplaceable in some areas.
- psychological trauma, fear and stress, caused by any of the above, hinder learning and teaching, affecting attention, motivation and attendance of both students and staff.

In the areas with the most incidents, the impact of violent attacks on education provision has been devastating.

Given that up to 40 per cent of the 77 million or more children in the world who are not attending school can be found in countries affected by conflict, understanding the impact of such attacks is crucial to attempts to achieve Education for All worldwide. But in relatively developed countries, too, the targeting of schools or universities can lead to a collapse of a previously admired system.

This is already the case in Iraq, which used to attract students from all over the region because of the quality of its education. The combination of spiralling general violence and targeted attacks on education appears to have reached a tipping point, bringing the university and school systems to their knees, as students and teachers flee the country or simply refuse to brave the streets to attend their courses of study.

Fred van Leeuwen, General Secretary of Education International, warned in November 2006 that the killing of teachers and closures of schools in Iraq have contributed to a ‘dramatic decrease in school attendance rates’ and are creating a catastrophic ‘brain drain’ of teachers that will put the future of Iraq at stake.

Mohamed Djelid, Director of UNESCO Iraq, said that the number of teachers leaving the country doubled last year. ‘Automatically it hit the quality of education. It really has become a problem. It is affecting a whole generation of students, not just a few people.’

Only 30 per cent of Iraq’s 3.5 million pupils are attending classes, compared to 75 per cent last school year.<sup>69</sup>

Universities in Baghdad and Basra, meanwhile, are on the verge of collapse. In Sunni areas of Baghdad, schools are emptying as students go to class only a few days a week, if at all. A survey of three Baghdad schools with less than 50 per cent attendance revealed that fear of abduction is the most common reason for staying at home.<sup>70</sup>

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<sup>69</sup> Fred van Leeuwen, General Secretary, Education International, 16 November 2006, Letter to President Jalal Talabani of Iraq.

Enrolment at Baghdad University's main campus was down 40 per cent in January 2007. One professor in Mosul said: 'In some departments at my institute attendance is down to a third. In others we have instances of no students turning up at all.'<sup>71</sup>

The exodus of thousands of teachers and academics is threatening a drastic drop in the quality of tertiary education. University students are reportedly graduating at the same level as a first-year undergraduate during Saddam Hussein's regime.

Increasingly, however many university students are deciding that graduating at any level is not an option, if it means they have to risk their lives to attend lectures. They may follow the example of Ehab Hassoon, a student at Baghdad's Mustansiriyah University, who decided after the bombings in January 2007 that it was time to stay home. 'Life is more important than a diploma,' he told the *Washington Times*.<sup>72</sup>

The burning and bombing of schools and assassinations of teachers and students in Afghanistan have also 'severely affected' education in some provinces, with girls' education hit hardest, according to Human Rights Watch. But the impact nationally is masked by steady increases in enrolment across other parts of the country. Nevertheless, Human Rights Watch reports: 'These attacks have forced many schools to close and made it nearly impossible to open new schools,' Human Rights Watch says. 'Where schools do remain open, parents are often afraid to send their children – in particular girls – to school.'<sup>73</sup>

For every night letter threatening a teacher or parent, every seizure of a girl on her way to school and every school burned, there is a knock-on effect deterring many others from going to school. One provincial official in Kandahar told Human Rights Watch that in the first three years after the fall of the Taliban, everybody wanted to send their daughters to school. 'For example, in Argandob district, girls were ready, women teachers were ready. But when two or three schools burned, then nobody wanted to send their girls to school after that,' the official said.

In March 2006, President Karzai said 100,000 children who had gone to school in 2003 and 2004 were no longer attending. Human Rights Watch said in 2006 that research suggested hundreds of thousands of students who had been attending school are now shut out, especially in the south and south-east. In March 2007, it was reported that 111 of 224 schools in Helmand province were closed. Schools were operating in only 3 of the province's 14 districts.<sup>74</sup>

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<sup>70</sup> Damien Cave, *New York Times*, 29 January 2007, 'Shell Hits Baghdad Girls School, Killing 5 Students'.

<sup>71</sup> Peter Beaumont, 5 October 2006, 'Iraq's Universities and Schools Near Collapse as Teachers and Pupils Flee'.

<sup>72</sup> James Palmer, *Washington Times*, 19 January 2007, 'Bombing Latest Blow to Colleges'.

<sup>73</sup> Human Rights Watch, 15 February 2007, 'Insecurity and Attacks on Schools: Afghanistan and Iraq'.

<sup>74</sup> Jean Mackenzie, *Herald News*, 13 March 2007, 'Taliban Again Target Schools in Afghanistan', The education ministry estimated that female attendance at school nationally is 40 per cent. But UNICEF said only 5 per cent of girls attend secondary school.

Tom Koenigs, UN Special Representative to Afghanistan, said: ‘These attacks amount to a denial of the human right to education for Afghanistan’s children.’

The impact on education of the psychological trauma caused by attacks and displacement is another important factor. Witnessing atrocities could have a severe psychological impact on pupils and staff alike. In November, for example, a 48-year-old teacher was shot and burned to death in front of terrified staff and students in Sai Buri district, Pattani, southern Thailand.<sup>75</sup> In the same month in Iraq, a teacher in a Sunni area of western Baghdad was raped, mutilated and strung up by her feet outside the school building, where her body hung for days.

‘In the ten years of civil war in Sierra Leone, one of most horrendous things was the cutting off of the hands and arms of children who managed to get to school,’ recalls Jan Eastman, Deputy General Secretary of Education International. ‘It was horrific that a child trying to go to school to get an education would be punished in such a way.’

But it is not just extreme acts of brutality that can damage children psychologically. The pressures of constant fear can produce high levels of trauma, as reported among children in Nepal where many fled their villages to avoid abduction and forced recruitment by rebels – at one point, more than 500 children a day were crossing into India.<sup>76</sup>

Atrocities against teachers also leave staff feeling isolated and living under impossible pressures. One Nepalese headmaster was burned to death for refusing to provide food and shelter to the CPN-M. Maoists demanded that teachers hand over a slice of their salary and end practices such as singing the national anthem. If they did not comply, they faced punishment, possibly death. But if they acceded to the demands, they were treated as Maoists sympathizers by the security forces.<sup>77</sup>

Displacement is another common cause of children’s schooling being suspended or permanently ended, because there is no school to go to in their new surroundings or because they must spend their time trying to earn a living in order to survive.<sup>78</sup> In Colombia, some 1.35 million children have lost all access to education through forced displacement.<sup>79</sup>

Watchlist on Children in Armed Conflict reported in 2004 that 500,000 school-age children in Colombia do not enrol in elementary school each year and about 3 million 14- to 17-year-olds are not in school. The attendance rate of children aged 12 to 17 dropped by two percentage points between 1997 and 1999. UNICEF and Save the Children have attributed the growing drop-out rate to a combination of poor-quality education and the disruptive effects of the armed conflict.

Becoming a child soldier keeps hundreds of thousands of children out of school worldwide and some volunteer precisely because they do not have access to school and

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<sup>75</sup> Human Rights Watch, 29 November 2006, ‘Thailand: Insurgent Attacks Shut Down Schools in South’.

<sup>76</sup> [www.irinnews.org](http://www.irinnews.org), 23 February 2006, ‘Nepal: Focus on Impact of Conflict on Education’.

<sup>77</sup> Sue Bateman, *The Times Educational Supplement*, 20 September 2002, ‘Teaching Staff Flee Maoist Atrocities’.

<sup>78</sup> UNICEF (2006) ‘Situation of Women and Children in Nepal, 2006’

<sup>79</sup> Fecode, 11 January 2007, ‘*La lucha integral por los derechos humanos y Fecode*’.

see becoming a soldier as the only means to escape poverty and secure survival. A study of former child soldiers in Colombia found that 40 per cent could not read or write.<sup>80</sup>

Disruption is the most common side-effect of attacks, wearing away at the effectiveness of the school system.

Amnesty International reported in 2005 that, in many areas of Nepal, schools had been entirely shut down due to the destruction of premises, lack of teachers, military operations and threats by the CPN-M. In other areas, children were getting fewer than 100 days schooling a year because of Maoist activities, such as 'political education' sessions.<sup>81</sup>

In Thailand, the constant assassinations have forced large groups of between 100 and 1,000 schools to close for a week at a time because teachers are fearful of going to work or pupils are traumatized in the aftermath of attacks. The insecurity has led to a high turnover of teachers and a lowering of the quality of school education compared to other parts of the country, according to UNESCO Bangkok. Universities also are struggling to attract students from all over Thailand, as they used to, which in turn leads to a lower quality of entrant.

In the Palestinian Autonomous Territories, schools serving 12,000 children were closed for almost 5 months during continuous curfews imposed in 2000. During Israel's Operation Defensive Shield in March to May 2002, some 600,000 Palestinian children of school age were unable to attend school on a regular basis. Likewise, Palestinian attacks on school buses and other targets have kept Israeli children at home. A study of Israeli schools in 2000, before violence escalated, found that 6.5 per cent of secondary school pupils and 4.6 per cent of secondary students reported avoiding going to school at least once a month due to fear of violence on the way to or at school.<sup>82</sup>

Education International says that ways must be found to protect education from the effects of fighting and end the perception of schools as legitimate targets by combatants. 'We believe in quality education for all,' Jan Eastman said. 'Children should not have to suffer the loss of education and worse, the actual violence, no matter what the reason for the conflict.'

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<sup>80</sup> Erika Paez, Enabling Education Network, 27 June 2003, 'Child Soldiers in Colombia, South America'.

<sup>81</sup> Amnesty International, 2005, 'Nepal: Children Caught in the Conflict'.

<sup>82</sup> Watchlist on Children in Armed Conflict, September 2002, Israel/Palestinian Autonomous Territories.

## 6. Prevention and response

### Armed protection

Globally, responses to attacks on education are generally focused on the two traditional means to deal with conflict or turmoil, military force and political dialogue, but also on using an increasing array of legal instruments.

The traditional approach is epitomized by the Thai government's response, which has been to provide armed escorts for teachers to and from school, and weapons training so teachers can fight back. Nearly 2,000 teachers in the troubled southern provinces have been given training in the use of handguns, how to defend themselves and how to negotiate with hostage takers. The army sent 3,000 extra troops into the region in December 2006 and unveiled a new plan to provide safety for teachers from home to school. The Minister for Education also asked police to increase patrols around schools. Unfortunately, these measures did not stop the attacks.<sup>83</sup> In January 2007 a female teacher became the 73rd education worker to be murdered since 2004, shot by a pillion assassin. 'The situation in the south is getting worse and we are worried about that,' said Sanguan Intarak, president of the Teachers' Federation of Narathiwat. Teachers' representatives have demanded yet more troops in the south and round-the-clock protection, not just an armed escort on the way to and from school.<sup>84</sup>

Practical security measures are not new. Since the massacre at Mai'alot school in Israel in 1974, Israeli children have lived for over 30 years with armed security in every school, armed guards on every field trip and sporting event, armoured buses and armed security on those buses. In Iraq the Ministry of Education assigns guards to primary and secondary schools in Baghdad.<sup>85</sup> Research is needed to establish to what degree attacks have been deterred by these measures – as well as into the degree to which learning can be negatively affected by the transformation of a school into an armed encampment.

In many countries, armed protection is not a realistic option where large numbers of institutions, staff or students are under threat, because the security forces are either already overstretched fighting elsewhere or they simply do not have sufficient capacity. The former is the case in Iraq, given the high level of general violence they have to deal with, and the latter may be true of Afghanistan.

In cases where the state is the aggressor, it is the security forces themselves that pose the threat.

### Community defence

An alternative preventive measure is to find ways to encourage local communities to defend schools. This approach is being developed in Afghanistan by the government, UNICEF and other partners. The strategy, initiated in June 2006, involves promoting community mobilization against attacks and positive responses in their aftermath.

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<sup>83</sup> Human Rights Watch, 15 February 2007, 'Insecurity and Attacks on Schools: Afghanistan and Iraq'.

<sup>84</sup> Selina Downes, [www.Aljazeera.net](http://www.Aljazeera.net), 11 January 2007, 'Thai Teachers in the Line of Fire'.

<sup>85</sup> Damien Cave, *New York Times*, 29 January 2007, 'Shell Hits Baghdad Girls' School, Killing 5 Students'.

Religious and political leaders are being trained to be vigilant against attacks, reopen schools and persuade parents to send their children to school. School protection committees are being created where school management committees do not exist. They will be supported by the establishment of a national system for gathering information on security-related incidents, co-ordinated by the Ministry of Education, in which provincial officials call in about incidents twice a day via a 24-hour-a-day communications system. Protection advisers in each province will monitor and analyse security data. They work with local reconstruction teams, which are supported by the military and local leaders to improve security. In addition, mobile protection teams will work with child protection officers, government and local communities to devise protection strategies for children, particularly girls, and female teachers, and to monitor mine-awareness guidelines.

UNICEF's school incident database is showing a sharp drop in school attacks in Afghanistan over the six months prior to March 2007, with daily reports of incidents received by the Ministry of Education down by 60 per cent. It is not possible to say whether this is due to the work of school protection committees, which is in its early stages. Local people, however, have rushed out to defend their schools when insurgents tried to set them ablaze. This has happened in the provinces of Kabul, Kunduz, Ghazni, Baghlan, Saripul, Takhar, Zabul, Nuristan, and Logar. For instance, in Puli Alam District, Logar province, on 2 October 2006, villagers ran out to confront ten extremists who were trying to set fire to the Kamail Girls' School in Hesarek village. By the time the Afghan National Police arrived, the attackers had fled.

Other ways in which communities take responsibility for protection have worked elsewhere. In Iraq, Human Rights Watch found that in June 2003 school attendance in Baghdad increased as families began arranging for their daughters to travel to and from school in groups and more male relatives escorted girls to school.

### **Promoting resilience**

A third approach is to reduce risk to students and staff by removing them from, or reducing the time they spend in, traditional places of learning. Schools and universities are often comprised of large buildings in prominent places in a town or village that are easy targets for shelling.

The Iraqi Ministry of Higher Education has told university researchers that they may come in just twice a week and work from home the rest of the time to reduce the risk of being subjected to attack. UNESCO is helping the government explore how distance learning by television and radio could be used to allow students to study at home. However, according to Mohamed Djelid, Director of UNESCO Iraq, much more could be done to help academics in exile to continue their work for the Iraqi education system and be ready to come back when the situation stabilizes.

'This has to become one of the concerns of the international community, to give academics who are leaving the chance to be accepted in other countries and continue doing their work, so they can be ready to go back,' Djelid says, 'rather than treating them as refugees with no rights.'

In Afghanistan, UNICEF is helping local people set up smaller school units closer to or within communities, even inside homes. 'Whenever schools are attacked, if people are fearful of going back, they can always fall back on the smaller units,' says Cream Wright, head of education at UNICEF, 'and because we are working with the

communities in doing this, they have a stake in defending their schools and the sort of mini-neighbourhood gathering places that can serve as schools as well.’<sup>86</sup>

Taking education out of traditional buildings is not so radical an idea in Afghanistan, since at least 2 million children already go to schools that do not have any walls - they learn either in tents or the open air. Also, in some areas the education gap is being plugged by voluntary schools run by parateachers (who get some training on the job each year), located in a large room in a villager’s house. These are far harder for outsiders to track down and are more easily watched over. Furthermore, there is a history of going underground and teaching children secretly at home, a tactic used successfully when the Taliban were in power and banned school for girls.

In Afghanistan, home-schooling, following the government primary curriculum, achieves double the completion rates of government schooling at a cheaper cost (US\$18 per pupil per year compared to US\$31) and 90 per cent of students pass end-of-year exams.<sup>87</sup> But that may be a reflection on the paucity of trained staff and resources in government schools.

Another way to maintain resilience in the face of attacks is to ensure a rapid response in their aftermath. UNICEF has a target of being ready to visit the locations of any attacks within 72 hours and being ready to provide classroom tents, teaching and learning materials, and floor mats within 5 days to speed up the return to learning.

### **International pressure**

The international community, having signed up to the Education for All agenda, the Millennium Development Goals and various human rights conventions, bears a heavy responsibility to play its part in ensuring the removal of impunity and in pressing parties in conflict to end attacks on education.

It can do this in three main ways, by:

- widening the implementation and application of human rights instruments,
- using aid and trade deals as leverage, and
- supporting and raising the profile of international solidarity campaigns that highlight the issues.

If every time there is an attack there is no investigation, nobody is arrested and no one is charged, people will give up hope that the violence will ever end, and that is already the situation in Iraq, suggests Djelid.

One important strategy for ending impunity is to press parties to ratify and implement or adhere to relevant international standards on human rights, children’s rights, the right to education, the International Labour Organization (ILO) /UNESCO recommendations on the status of teachers and of higher education teaching personnel and the rights to freedom of association and collective bargaining. Useful tactics include encouraging states to make adherence to norms and standards a precondition for trade or aid deals with parties who violate education workers’ and students’ rights, and supporting international solidarity campaigns that highlight abuses of rights.

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<sup>86</sup> Telephone interview with Brendan O’Malley, 20 March 2007.

<sup>87</sup> Rebecca Winthrop, 2006, *Forced Migration Review Education Supplement*, ‘Emergencies, Education and Innovation’.

It may be easier to apply pressure on states during conflicts than on rebel forces, which may operate in secret, be elusive, have no clear leadership and may not have clear objectives to provide a basis of negotiation. But when rebel movements come to the negotiating table and seek international aid, for instance to regroup as a democratic political party, there is an opportunity to set conditions.

The most commonly used human rights instruments and standards include the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, the Convention on the Rights of the Child, the Optional Protocol to that Convention on children in armed conflict, and the ILO core Conventions 87 and 98 on the freedom of association and the right to collective bargaining.

The 1966 and 1997 Recommendations concerning the Status of Teachers and concerning the Status of Higher-Education Teaching Personnel, adopted by UNESCO and the ILO, also laid down some important markers on the conditions in which education staff should be required to operate.

The ILO, which sends fact-finding missions to countries and publishes reports that are sometimes strongly critical of government practice, has a long track record of dealing openly with violations. By contrast, UNESCO prefers to use quiet diplomacy.

Two further developments have the potential to put additional muscle behind human rights instruments both on a general level and in regard to attacks on children and education. The first was the appointment of a Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Children and Armed Conflict in 1997 in response to Graca Machel's report for the Secretary-General, *Impact of Armed Conflict on Children*. The second was the establishment of the International Criminal Court in 2002, which deals with crimes against humanity, war crimes and genocide.

Under the Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court the Special Representative proposed three child-specific provisions, which have been classified as war crimes: the conscription, enlistment or use in hostilities of children younger than 15 years; intentional attacks on hospitals and schools; and grave acts of sexual violence. In addition, the forcible transfer of children of a group targeted for intentional destruction constitutes genocide under the Rome Statute.

Three investigations are currently ongoing in relation to situations in Darfur, the Democratic Republic of the Congo and Uganda. Attacks on educational institutions are part of the investigations in relation to the first two situations. The International Criminal Court's first trial, which began in January 2007, includes six charges of child conscription in the Democratic Republic of the Congo against Thomas Lubunga. In five warrants issued against leaders of the Lords Resistance Army (one of whom has since been killed) charges involve attacks against children in Uganda.

Under ILO convention 182, the Special Representative advocated that the enlistment of children as soldiers be classified as one of the worst forms of child labour. The Convention also prohibits the forced or compulsory recruitment of children under the age of 18 for use in armed conflicts.

One of the areas where there has been most progress is in the campaign to disband, demobilize and reintegrate child soldiers. It was heavily backed by the UN Security Council and the Office of the Special Representative.

In February 2005, the Secretary-General proposed a compliance regime involving naming offending parties, action plans to end violations, establishment of a monitoring

and reporting mechanism, and concrete action from the General Assembly and Security Council and pressure on Member States to comply with international norms and standards.<sup>88</sup>

A UN Security Council resolution in July 2005 established a monitoring and reporting system for children affected by armed conflict, which required both governments and armed groups to use time-bound plans of action to end the use and recruitment of child soldiers. It also requires the UN system to monitor and report on six grave violations against children: the killing or maiming of children, recruitment or use of child soldiers, attacks against schools or hospitals, rape and other forms of sexual violence, abduction of children, and denial of humanitarian access.<sup>89</sup> Rima Salah, Deputy Director of UNICEF, hailed this as a ‘critical measure to hold accountable the parties that continue to harm those children’.

The Office of the Special Representative was given the task of implementing the monitoring and reporting of grave violations in a phased approach beginning with Burundi, Côte d’Ivoire, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Somalia and the Sudan. It has also done so in Nepal and Sri Lanka. Its work has added to previous monitoring by the UN system and by NGOs.

It has strongly advocated the exclusion of all grave crimes against children from amnesty provisions and legislation arising from peace agreements. It has also sought to end impunity for child-related war crimes by developing a framework for the protection and participation of children in judicial tribunals and truth-seeking processes. This resulted, for instance, in guidelines for the Special Court and the Truth and Reconciliation Commission in Sierra Leone, and relevant provisions in the International Criminal Court rules of evidence and procedure.

Perhaps recognising that by far the most attention had been paid to the child soldier issue, the Secretary-General recommended in October 2006 that the Security Council give equal weight and attention to all six grave violations against children in all conflict situations of concern.

He also encouraged states parties to the Convention on the Rights of the Child to strengthen national and international measures for the prevention of the recruitment of children for armed forces or armed groups and their use in hostilities, in particular by signing and ratifying the Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child on the involvement of children in armed conflict, and by enacting legislation that explicitly prohibits by law the recruitment of children under 15 into the armed forces/groups or their direct participation in hostilities.<sup>90</sup>

These are all positive steps that will aid attempts to tackle impunity regarding a significant range of forms of attack covered by this study, but only attacks relating to children. It is too early to judge how effective the International Criminal Court will be and the monitoring of grave offences by the Office of the Special Representative has so far been heavily weighted in favour of child soldier issues, with only patchy reporting of

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<sup>88</sup> Report of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Children and Armed Conflict, 7 September 2005, (A/60/335).

<sup>89</sup> UNICEF, 25 July 2005, ‘Official Statement on the Security Council Resolution on Children in Armed Conflict’.

<sup>90</sup> UN Secretary General, 26 October 2006, ‘Children and Armed Conflict’.

attacks on schools. In addition, its remit does not extend to teachers or academics, universities, education trade unionists and education officials, which form part of the broader focus of this study.

Greater effort by the UN system and the human rights movements to press for the application of rights instruments to cases involving these particular groups, might result in significant progress right across the range of attacks on education. Under the Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court, the scope is there to investigate charges of attacks against teachers, academics, education trade unionists and education officials, since attacks against the civilian population or individuals not taking part in the conflict, and attacks against buildings dedicated to education, provided they are not military objectives, constitute war crimes. Where acts of murder, unlawful imprisonment and other severe deprivations of liberty are widespread and systematic and carried out under a publicly declared policy of targeting or killing civilians, for instance as perpetrated by the Taliban in Afghanistan, they are also crimes against humanity.<sup>91</sup> In addition, under international humanitarian law occupying powers must guarantee schools protection from attack and ensure provision of free and compulsory education at primary level.<sup>92</sup>

In 2003, when the late Katarina Tomasevski, former UN Special Rapporteur on the right to education, was asked if the UN Commission on Human Rights could prioritize the protection of teachers in their work, she said the Commission had failed to profile the right to education more assertively because it had not faced pressure from a forceful, well-coordinated NGO campaign. ‘That does not exist for the right to education. You will not see teachers’ trade unions coming to the Commission on Human Rights. They can’t seek protection here because the Commission does not even mention the rights of teachers. They will go to the ILO, which will protect them by special procedures for freedom of association.

‘If you were to scrutinize NGO-produced documentation to see what the NGOs have submitted to the Commission as a platform for what NGOs demand on the right to education, you find nothing.

‘What is needed here is the same growth of the human rights movement which we saw around freedom of expression or equal rights for women – good documents, sensible strategies and then well co-ordinated lobbying to get government delegations to move, but NGOs have to take the initiative. It is obviously not a job of diplomats to do human rights research, and to draw up alternative platforms.’<sup>93</sup>

The question today is whether the UN agencies and NGOs can build on the progress made on the issue of recruitment of child soldiers and focus attention on securing more protection against abductions, killings, illegal detention and torture of students and teachers, education officials and trade unionists, and against attacks on schools and universities. There are existing human rights instruments dealing with attacks on education. It is a matter of visiting them and trying to get commentaries and resolutions based on them. Some concerted action is required on this issue.

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<sup>91</sup> Amnesty International, 19 April 2007, ‘Afghanistan: All who are not friends, are enemies: Taleban abuses against civilians’.

<sup>92</sup> Susan Nicolai, Forced Migration Review Education Supplement, 2006, ‘Education and Chronic Crisis in Palestine’.

<sup>93</sup> Katarina Tomasevski, interviewed in *Human Rights Features*, 5-12 April 2004.

### **Towards safe sanctuaries**

Any attempt to prioritize human rights protection for education workers and students comes up against two significant obstacles. One is the important argument that teachers' lives should not be treated as more important than the lives of other workers. However, the Office of the Special Representative for Children and Armed Conflict has already successfully put the case that schools and hospitals should be singled out for protection in human rights law because of their role in the care and protection of children. It would be an odd argument indeed if this applied only to the fabric of the building and not to the teachers and other workers who actually care for the children.

Education is becoming accepted as part of the initial response to an emergency, whether it is a conflict or a disaster, because when the fighting comes to an end parents' greatest concern is about the future and what will happen to their children. During a conflict, all parties could have a vested interest in protecting schools for the same reason.

The case for universities is put by the 1997 Recommendation concerning the Status of Higher Education Teaching Personnel, which considered that 'the right to education, teaching and research can only be fully enjoyed in an atmosphere of academic freedom and autonomy for institutions of higher education' and that staff should work in an environment that does not harm their health and safety.

The academic community is particularly vulnerable to political pressures that could undermine academic freedom because of its influence on public opinion, to a similar degree as journalists. There is a need to convince both sides in a conflict that destroying or undermining the education of a country's citizens will mortgage its future development no matter what the outcome of the fighting.

The other serious obstacle is the perception that education is not neutral: in many situations it is part of the problem. Although the armed groups that burn down schools and assassinate teachers espouse varying political aims, there are often deeper underlying reasons why schools in particular are singled out as targets. Attacks on education are rarely discrete events. They tend to reflect the ongoing struggle in society, whether religious, ethnic, sectarian or political. And while education can be pivotal in helping to bring countries out of the fragile state into which they have fallen through war, it can also be a flashpoint for tension, because it can seem to reinforce a more general sense of injustice, for instance through unequal distribution of the benefits of development or restrictions on the freedom to express and learn about one's culture.

'If you look at the major civil wars in West Africa, in Liberia, Sierra Leone, Cote d'Ivoire,' says Cream Wright, 'most of the young people forced into fighting on both sides want to reintegrate. Once they are rescued and demobilized, invariably their first demand is for education. And yet these are the same people who destroy schools. Part of their grievance is having being denied the benefits of education and so they are attacking those who have benefited or the places where they have benefited.'

In Sierra Leone, according to Save the Children, the ranks of the rebel forces (Revolutionary United Front) were swelled by school dropouts, pushouts and those who had never been to school. 'Symbols and signs of education and schooling were targeted for destruction,' says Ekundayo Thompson, a lecturer in education and human rights at

Njala University. 'By 2004, 60 per cent of primary schools and 40 per cent of secondary schools still needed major rehabilitation or reconstruction.'<sup>94</sup>

In other conflict-affected countries, 'hate' curricula and the use of propagandist history textbooks to stir up aggressive nationalism or demonize rival ethnic communities have fuelled tension. It does not help if schools divide children, with parallel systems, by religion or ethnicity.

To end attacks on education, a concerted effort must be made to end education's role in promoting conflict and to make it part of the solution to the problem. Force and political dialogue alone will not make the underlying issues go away.

Currently the Afghan government is working with local religious leaders – who as the only educated people in many communities are the best placed to advocate – to promote girls' education based on principles of Islam and to mobilize the community to protect schoolchildren and teachers. 'According to Islamic guidance, education is a must both for males and females. Religious leaders are well trained in this thought and they are to advocate for both,' says David McLoughlin,<sup>95</sup> head of education at UNICEF Kabul.

In Thailand, UNESCO is working with the government to explore ways to bring in use of the local language, Yawi, in initial literacy instruction in the three southernmost provinces. 'There is a wider sense of dissatisfaction, beyond separatism, and part of that is lack of sensitivity by the government to local specificity in the region – the culture, language and history background,' says Sheldon Shaeffer. Compromises made in the language and content of education, involving government schools teaching in the local language and teaching Islamic moral or religious instruction, and Islamic schools teaching the national secular curriculum history and Thai language in addition to religious instruction, as happens in Malay schools, could ease the perception of schools as legitimate targets.

Education is now accepted as a necessary part of the initial response to an emergency created by conflict. The challenge now is to make education part of the solution to conflicts. A useful international blueprint for the type of education that could serve as a model has existed for more than 40 years, in the form of the Recommendation concerning the Status of Teachers.

The Recommendation declared that education should inculcate 'a deep respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms' and that 'the utmost importance should be attached to the contribution to be made by education to peace and to understanding, tolerance and friendship among all nations and among racial or religious groups'.<sup>96</sup> Its guiding principles were written at the height of the Cold War, in a different world order, but their relevance is clear in the conflicts that have emerged since the collapse of the Soviet Union. The drawing back of the Iron Curtain unleashed a period of extreme local instability in many regions. Intra-state tension emerged as the dominant form of conflict, with ethnic majorities and minorities vying to establish new borders or impose old ones, and, throughout it all, education has retained the capacity to be either a trigger for increased tension or a catalyst for hope, stability and reconciliation. Removing attacks on

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<sup>94</sup> Ekundayo J D Thompson, March 2007, 'The Sierra Leone Civil War: Destruction of Educational Infrastructure'.

<sup>95</sup> Notes to Brendan O'Malley from David McLoughlin, January-March 2007.

<sup>96</sup> Recommendation concerning the Status of Teachers, para. 3, 1966.

education from the arena of conflict may require a more concerted effort to transform education into a force for inclusion, tolerance and understanding.

‘Schools should be places where people leave certain things at the doorstep and learn to understand and work together on different things,’ says Cream Wright.

This vision is not merely about what you teach children. It is not simply about having a peace curriculum, for example, but about the way the school is run, the whole ethos of the organization. Pupils must come to believe that the school stands for certain values and take those on board. It is about the way the school conducts itself, the way rules are transparent and fairly applied, the way difference is recognized and valued.

According to Sheldon Shaeffer: ‘It is especially important that schools are sanctuaries for children. Genuinely child-friendly schools, where cultural, religious and linguistic diversity is respected and welcomed, can do much in the long term to stop the increasingly critical cycle of violence against children.’

The notion of safe sanctuaries – just as churches used to be seen as safe sanctuaries in many countries – builds on the experience of emergency education projects that recognize that the priority for parents in post-emergency situations is to provide safe spaces for children, where they can be protected, and given food, water and shelter, for four or five hours a day so that the adults can begin to turn to the business of rebuilding their lives.

The international community needs to look more deeply at the role education can play in easing tension. While the traditional means of military force and political dialogue will always be important, there is a case for thinking outside the traditional box and recognizing the impact that a resilient education system can have in reducing conflict and the role a rapidly re-emerging one can play in building peace.

Moving beyond emergency-education packages, there is a need to find a way to promote and protect mutual, inclusive education in conflict-affected countries.

‘Whereas with religion you can say that is *your* church, that is *your* synagogue or that is *your* mosque, and therefore I am going to burn it down, the school should be a mutual place that is *our* school, for all of us,’ says Cream Wright. ‘I think if we push these angles, we can increasingly win acceptance and move to a more legalistic status, towards making schools and places of learning safe sanctuaries.’

Sheldon Shaeffer concurs that promoting schools as safe zones should be a priority, but it requires agreement from all parties. The best place to start may be in trying to encourage popular resistance to the attacks. ‘I think it is about mobilization of people to come out strongly and say schools are off limits.’ He thinks more effort should be made to persuade the moderate elements in the region to ‘weigh in visibly, heavily, strongly, publicly against these kinds of attacks’.

In Colombia, the Federación Colombiana de Educadores, working on similar lines, has launched a campaign for schools to be treated as a neutral territory in the armed conflict. Mario Novelli argues that there should be some pressure to stop using the education system as a battleground, whether that involves guerrillas or paramilitaries occupying schools or the way politics is being fought out in the universities.

There appears to be support from experts in UNESCO, UNICEF and Education International for a concerted effort to find ways of embedding protection of teachers in protection for schools and institutions, and the education process. ‘Our approach is to negotiate with both parties in a conflict to respect schools as safe zones - just as in health

we can get behind rebel lines and say we are here to vaccinate children,” says Cream Wright. ‘That is the issue we should all work at, whether it is through a legal framework or something else, for mutuality and respect for education as a safe zone.’

Jan Eastman, Deputy General Secretary of Education International, says the task now is to generate political will. ‘There could be an international commitment replicated at national and local level that education should be a conflict-free zone, not only because it is a human right, but also because education through inclusive schools should be regarded as the solution, the key to harmony, the key to building social justice, peace and hope for the future.’

## 7. Conclusions and recommendations

It is evident that there has been a noticeable increase in targeted attacks on education staff, students and institutions in a number of countries and that this constitutes a highly damaging assault on the provision of and access to education in the countries worst affected.

The dramatic increase in these deliberate attacks over the past three years, and the subsequent loss of life result from an abhorrent tactic of sacrificing the lives of both innocent young people and those who are trying to help them develop their potential, for the sake of political or ideological aims.

Traditional policies for preventing attacks have included providing armed guards or escorts to school or giving weapons training to teachers. But in many places these provisions do not exist or do not appear to have made sufficient impact on their own. Other methods being encouraged include providing monitoring and warning systems, mobilising communities to confront attackers and relocating classes or providing distance learning.

Recent international efforts to press for the application of human rights instruments on issues related to children in armed conflict, which have focused mostly on the recruitment of child soldiers, could be broadened. There is a strong case for working to embed protection of teachers and academics within human rights law and focusing application of existing instruments on protection, for schools, colleges and universities and the education process.

A significant obstacle to preventing attacks may be that parties in conflicts often perceive that education is not neutral. For instance the provision of good-quality education may be denied to particular groups, or it may appear that an alien culture, language or religion is being imposed on them. A serious challenge now in conflict-affected countries is to move towards a position where schools, colleges and universities can be accepted as safe sanctuaries and shielded from military and political violence. This would involve creating student-friendly, inclusive educational institutions, run transparently and free from sectarianism and political interference, that will give all sides a stake in their protection and advocacy work with armed parties and local communities. Schools, colleges and universities could then become zones of peace promoting tolerance and understanding and in so doing aid efforts to resolve the wider conflict.

If the international community is serious about attempts to achieve Education for All and the Millennium Development Goals on education it should focus attention urgently on these issues and provide the political will and resources required to tackle this growing problem. A number of recommendations flow from the findings and analyses presented in this report, notably the following:

- The UN should work with Member States to eradicate impunity in the case of attacks on education staff, students, trade unionists, officials and institutions.
- Greater resources should be given to the International Criminal Court to bring more cases to trial to widen its deterrent effect.

- Governments should use every opportunity to set conditions of adherence to human rights norms, with particular reference to the rights of children, the right to education and protection of both educational institutions and the process of education when entering trade or aid agreements with parties to a conflict.
- UN agencies, NGOs and teacher unions should campaign for international solidarity with targeted groups and institutions to raise pressure for human rights instruments to be applied more widely to attacks on education and for impunity to be eradicated. Further debate is also required on how to make the case for embedding protection of education institutions as zones of peace or safe sanctuaries in human rights instruments.
- The UN Security Council should recognize the role that education can play in both contributing to tension and in promoting peace, and should offer support for strategies to remove education as a factor in conflicts.
- Governments and parties to conflict should work to ensure education is perceived as neutral by ensuring schools, colleges and universities are transparently run in an inclusive, non-sectarian non-discriminatory way and that curricula are non-propagandist and sensitive to local linguistic, cultural and religious specificities.
- The international community, UN agencies and NGOs should devise strategies and campaigns to promote and fund inclusive child-friendly education in conflict-affected countries and establish acceptance of schools as sanctuaries or zones of peace.
- The international community, UN agencies and NGOs should work with governments of conflict-affected states and governments that are assisting in preventing or limiting conflict to:
  - Develop mechanisms to protect threatened students, teachers, academics, education trade unionists and officials, and to assist them in relocating internally or externally where appropriate
  - Develop ways to support the continuation of education in alternative places or via alternative methods and media in areas under attack
  - Develop ways to support the continuation of the work of academics in exile for the education system under attack
- Recognising the limitations of the current reporting system conducted by the Office of the Special Representative to the Secretary General on Children in Armed Conflict, the United Nations should demonstrate its commitment to the right to education by setting up a global system for monitoring violent attacks on education, including attacks on teachers and academics, and support the establishment of a publicly accessible, global database to keep track of the

scale of attack, types of attack, perpetrators, motives, impact on education provision and the nature and impact of prevention and response strategies.

- Qualitative research should be undertaken into the underlying reasons why students, teachers, academics, education officials, education trade unionists and educational institutions are targeted for attack, what prevention and response strategies are in place, and which ones are most effective.
- The international media should recognise their critical role and responsibility in bringing to the world's attention the targeting of education students, staff and trade unionists and officials in conflicts and the impact this has on children.

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## **Acronyms list**

AUC	United Self-Defence Forces of Colombia
CPN-M	Communist Party of Nepal-Maoist
Fecode	Federación Colombiana de Educadores
INSEC	Informal Sector Service Centre
ILO	International Labour Organization
MDG	Millennium Development Goal
MIPT	Memorial Institute for the Prevention of Terrorism
TKB	Terrorism Knowledge Base
UN	United Nations
UNESCO	United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization
UNICEF	United Nations Children's Fund