

PAKISTAN

There were a reported 838 or more attacks on schools in Pakistan during 2009-2012, more than in any other country, leaving hundreds of schools destroyed. Militants recruited children from schools and madrassas, some to be suicide bombers. There were also targeted killings of teachers and academics.

CONTEXT

The extremely high number of schools attacked in Pakistan during 2009-2012 was the result of multiple sources of tension but, in particular, the Pakistani Taliban insurgency in the north-west.

In addition to the unresolved conflict with India over Kashmir, a series of conflicts, internal disturbances and sectarian tensions plagued Pakistan in the run-up to and during the reporting period. Sunni and Shi'a Muslims periodically launched attacks against one another, frequently causing high numbers of casualties. In Balochistan, armed nationalist groups not only fought the federal government but also killed non-Balochs. The Pakistani military fought repeated offensives against Taliban militant strongholds in the tribal areas bordering Afghanistan throughout the period from 2009 to 2012.¹²⁰² They also regained control of the Swat Valley and surrounding districts from the Pakistani Taliban. Moreover, militants carried out attacks well beyond their strongholds, infiltrating all major cities. The southern port city of Karachi was periodically brought to a standstill by political and sectarian shootings and bomb attacks as well as violence by armed criminal gangs.¹²⁰³

In the two years preceding the reporting period, several hundred schools were damaged or destroyed, mostly burned down by militants, as they

sought to gain control of areas of the north-west, including in Waziristan and Swat. When the Pakistani Taliban did gain control of the Swat Valley, they first banned girls' education and banned women from teaching, through an edict in December 2008, and later amended their edict to permit the education of girls, but only up to grade 4.¹²⁰⁴

Many children are unable to access education for reasons that range from cost to community attitudes towards education, attacks on school structures or the long distance to the nearest school. Many who enrol may not complete a full course of study and, for those who do, other problems, such as teacher absenteeism and poor facilities, impinge adversely on the quality of their education. The nature of the curriculum and the parallel existence of private, public, and madrassa school systems are seen by some as contributing to social divisions.¹²⁰⁵ Boys from urban areas attend school for 10 years if they come from the country's richest 20 per cent; poor rural girls, on the other hand, receive an average of just one year of education.¹²⁰⁶

In primary education, net enrolment was 72 per cent; in secondary education, it was 35 per cent and gross enrolment in tertiary education was 8 per cent (2011). Adult literacy was 55 per cent (2009).¹²⁰⁷

ATTACKS ON SCHOOLS

In areas affected by Taliban militancy, hundreds of schools were blown up and proponents of female education were killed. The total number of reported militant attacks on schools in 2009-2012 was at least 838 and could be as high as 919. Difficulties faced by journalists and other observers working in the worst affected areas mean that the true total could be considerably higher.¹²⁰⁸ The Human Rights Commission of Pakistan (HRCPC) reported 505 schools damaged or destroyed in 2009 alone.¹²⁰⁹

There was a strong trend for schools to be blown up at night in Khyber Pukhtunkhwa (KP) province and the Federally Administered Tribal Areas (FATA) in the north-west.¹²¹⁰ Typically, perpetrators set off small, improvised devices remotely or with timers, rarely causing casualties. The schools were mostly government-run but private schools catering to higher socio-economic groups were also affected. Madrassas were not targeted. Pakistani Taliban groups sometimes claimed responsibility for the attacks.¹²¹¹

Daytime attacks on schools included bombings and grenade and gun attacks; one school was shelled with mortars two years in a row.¹²¹²

The bombing of schools was an alarmingly efficient campaign for which few of the perpetrators have been held to account despite hundreds of schools being destroyed.¹²¹³ Hundreds of thousands of children were deprived of education as a result.¹²¹⁴

Whether the intention was to target school buildings as symbols of government authority, because of their use as army bases or because of the education imparted in them, or for all of these reasons, is not documented. However, the Pakistani Taliban's record in Swat demonstrated that preventing girls' education was one of their objectives.

ATTACKS ON SCHOOL STUDENTS, TEACHERS AND OTHER EDUCATION PERSONNEL

Attacks on school students

Human rights and media reports suggest that at least 30 children were killed¹²¹⁵ in attacks on schools and school transport from 2009 to 2012 and more than 97 were injured.¹²¹⁶ At least 138 school students and staff were reported to have been kidnapped, of whom 122 were abducted in a single incident when

armed Taliban militants seized control of a convoy of 28 school buses transporting secondary school students and teachers in North Waziristan, bordering Afghanistan, and tried to take them to South Waziristan. However, 71 of the students and nine teachers were freed in a military operation.¹²¹⁷ Forty-two students and teachers remained in custody. Initially, the militants tried to kidnap 300 students and 30 teachers but more than half were able to escape. The Taliban reportedly used kidnapping to fund their operations and buy weapons.¹²¹⁸

At the start of 2009, Taliban militants were in control of the Swat Valley in the North West Frontier province (later renamed Khyber Pukhtunkhwa), enforcing their hard-line interpretation of Sharia law and conducting a violent campaign against female education. In January 2009, they banned girls' schooling outright, forcing 900 schools to close or stop enrolment for female pupils.¹²¹⁹ Some 120,000 girls and 8,000 female teachers stopped attending school in Swat district.¹²²⁰ Over the following months, the Pakistani military regained control of the area but many schoolgirls and female teachers were too scared to return to school nearly a year after the military ousted the Taliban.¹²²¹

On 9 October 2012, Malala Yousafzai was shot, along with two other students, Shazia Ramzan and Kainat Riaz, on their school bus by a gunman who escaped from the scene. The gunman asked for Malala by name before shooting her in the face and neck and then turning his gun on the two girls on either side of her.¹²²² Malala required life-saving surgery. The Tehreek-e-Taliban Pakistan (TTP) spokesman, Ehsanullah Ehsan, claimed responsibility, saying that the 15-year-old was attacked for promoting values he said were secular and anti-Taliban. Malala had written an anonymous blog for the BBC about life as a schoolgirl under the Taliban. She then campaigned

publicly for girls' education after the military ousted the TTP from the Swat Valley.¹²²³ Malala survived and went on to campaign internationally on the same issue, and was invited to address youth representatives at the UN General Assembly in New York in July 2013.¹²²⁴

Across Pakistan, there were at least five school bus attacks.¹²²⁵ In one attack in September 2011, Taliban militants fired a rocket at a school bus transporting students home from Khyber Model School near Peshawar. When the rocket missed they opened fire with guns on one side of the vehicle. A pupil aged 15 said he managed to help some younger pupils off the bus under gunfire, only to encounter another volley of bullets opening up from the second side. He was one of 12 injured children. Four students and the driver died.¹²²⁶ Most of the other bus attacks were bombings, including one on a bus carrying disabled schoolchildren in Peshawar in May 2009, injuring seven students.¹²²⁷

Attacks on school teachers and other education personnel

A compilation of media and human rights reports suggests that at least 15 school teachers were killed in 2009-2012¹²²⁸ and at least eight were injured,¹²²⁹ of whom four were female victims of acid attacks.¹²³⁰ At least four other education personnel, comprising one provincial education minister, two school bus drivers and a security guard, were killed¹²³¹ and two more were injured. Many of the attacks, particularly against women, appeared to be motivated by the militant stance against female education and against women working outside the home.¹²³² But in most cases, the motive was not confirmed.

Other attacks took place in the context of civil conflict in Balochistan. Human Rights Watch and the Human Rights Commission of Pakistan documented

a campaign of targeted killings of teachers and other education personnel considered to be ethnically non-Baloch, or who appeared to support the federal government, for example, by flying a Pakistani flag at school, teaching Pakistani history or asking children to sing the national anthem.¹²³³ The Baloch Liberation Army (BLA) and the Baloch Liberation United Front (BLUF) most commonly claimed responsibility for the attacks. Most of these teachers were from Punjab province. According to Human Rights Watch, teachers, especially ethnic Punjabis, are seen as symbols of the Pakistani state and of perceived military oppression in Balochistan. The human rights organization reported that at least 22 teachers and other education personnel were killed in targeted attacks in Balochistan between January 2008 and October 2010,¹²³⁴ including Shafiq Ahmed, the provincial minister for education, who was assassinated by the BLUF in October 2009 outside his home.¹²³⁵ In one incident, Anwar Baig, a teacher at the Model High School, Kalat, was shot nine times en route to school by gunmen on motorbikes. The BLA claimed responsibility for his death.¹²³⁶ On 24 July 2012, Abrar Ahmed, the deputy director of schools in Balochistan, was severely injured but survived an attack on his car in Quetta.¹²³⁷

Human Rights Watch and Amnesty International documented allegations of Pakistani intelligence and security forces arbitrarily detaining or enforcing the disappearance of students and teachers it suspected of involvement in armed Baloch nationalist activities, including the Baloch Student Organisation (Azad).¹²³⁸

Fear among those who fit the armed nationalist groups' target profile led to lower teacher recruitment, more transfer requests and lower attendance.¹²³⁹ In addition, Human Rights Watch cited a senior government official who estimated that government schools in Balochistan were only

open for 120 working days in 2009 compared to an average of 220 days for the rest of the country.¹²⁴⁰

Teachers opposed to the Pakistani Taliban or its ideology or methods were also targeted, particularly in the north-west. For example, on 22 January 2009, Taliban militants killed a teacher at a private school in Matta, Swat Valley, because he had refused to follow the dress code.¹²⁴¹ On 12 June 2009, the head teacher of a religious school in Lahore was killed in his office within the religious school complex during a suicide bomb attack. He appeared to have been targeted for his outspoken view that suicide bombings and other Taliban tactics were un-Islamic.¹²⁴²

Accusations of blasphemy adversely affected teachers as well as students. A Lahore teacher was threatened and went into hiding after omitting a section of a religious text she was copying by hand and erroneously juxtaposing a line about the Prophet Mohammad and one about street beggars.¹²⁴³ A 200-strong mob stormed the Farooqi Girls' High School where she taught, accused her of blasphemy, vandalized the school and set fire to the property. The 77-year-old head teacher of the school where she taught was arrested despite not having seen the text until after the accusations of blasphemy emerged.¹²⁴⁴

Attacks on education aid workers

Pakistani and foreign organizations promoting education were unable to operate freely in many areas of the country due to the threat of militant violence, notably in Khyber Pukhtunkhwa (KP).

Six education aid workers were killed in 2009-2012. Two teachers, one education aid worker and their driver, working for an NGO which promotes girls' education, were shot dead in Mansehra, KP, in April

2009.¹²⁴⁵ Farida Afridi, director of the NGO SAWERA in Jamrud, Khyber Agency, which provides education and training for women, was shot dead on 4 July 2012.¹²⁴⁶ On 8 December 2011, Zarteef Khan Afridi, the coordinator of the Human Rights Commission of Pakistan in Khyber Agency, was shot dead on his way to the school in Jamrud where he also worked as a head teacher. He had been threatened for his anti-Taliban stance and work for women's rights.¹²⁴⁷

In September 2009, the Taliban kidnapped a Greek teacher who raised funds for a school for the non-Muslim Kalash community in the north-western Kalash Valleys.¹²⁴⁸

CHILD RECRUITMENT FROM SCHOOLS

Militant recruitment took place from mainstream schools as well as madrassas.¹²⁴⁹ Public perception most commonly associates recruitment of militants with unregulated madrassas promoting radical agendas. Recently, however, a clearer picture of militant recruitment from schools has emerged. Studies from the Brookings Institution¹²⁵⁰ and the International Crisis Group¹²⁵¹ notably blamed the lack of quality mainstream education for children's vulnerability to recruitment. Documentary maker Sharmeen Obaid-Chinoy also collected first-hand accounts from children who had been trained as suicide bombers¹²⁵² and from their militant recruiters. She described a radicalization process that starts by isolating the child from outside influences, including education, and only later introduces the more extreme and violent tenets of militant ideology in a second setting. Some children were recruited from madrassa schools,¹²⁵³ others were abducted.¹²⁵⁴ Several children who later escaped have described how they only realized they were expected to become suicide bombers after they were trapped.¹²⁵⁵

In July 2009, the Pakistan Army claimed that up to 1,500 boys as young as 11 had been kidnapped from schools and madrassas and trained in Swat by the Taliban to become suicide bombers. Many were reportedly used to attack US and NATO forces over the border in Afghanistan. There was no independent corroboration of the Army's claims.¹²⁵⁶ In August 2013, The Guardian published evidence that children in Afghanistan were being sent to madrassas in Pakistan to be trained as suicide bombers.¹²⁵⁷

MILITARY USE OF SCHOOLS

According to media reports, there were at least 40 cases of schools being used by the military,¹²⁵⁸ five incidents of militants based in schools¹²⁵⁹ and one case of the police being billeted right next to a school in 2009-2012.¹²⁶⁰ For example, one media report indicated that schools in Swat district had been used as bases by the Pakistani military for over a year, preventing the education of around 10,000 students.¹²⁶¹ In another case, the Pakistani military showed journalists a school that had been used by militants in Sararogha as a courthouse and a base.¹²⁶² At another boarding school in Ladha, the army claimed that it had been used to train suicide bombers and store military hardware, including explosives, ammunition, weapons and bomb-making chemicals, and that texts related to combat remained. It was not possible to verify the army's claims.¹²⁶³

ATTACKS ON HIGHER EDUCATION

Lahore and Karachi were the worst affected cities for regular clashes between armed political student groups on university campuses, a spillover of the political, ethnic and sectarian violence in these cities. Students and teachers were also affected by

Karachi's communal violence and a trend of kidnapping for ransom.

Higher education staff and students were victims of regular violence and intimidation by student political groups on campuses, many of whom carried firearms openly, particularly in Lahore and Karachi. In addition to dozens of injuries, the US State Department observed that these groups used threats of physical violence to influence the studies and lifestyles of students and teachers, including the course content, examination procedures, grades, the financial and recruitment decisions of university administrations, the language students spoke and the clothes they wore.¹²⁶⁴

Seven students were injured in the early hours of 26 June 2011 when about 25 members of the Islami Jamiat Talba (IJT) student organization at Punjab University attacked philosophy students with sticks, bike chains and bricks as they slept in their halls. There were reports of the sound of gunfire and some students brandished pistols but did not shoot anyone. One student was thrown from a first floor window. The IJT had accused the philosophy department of vulgarity and un-Islamic behaviour.¹²⁶⁵

In addition, higher education students and staff were attacked by those opposed to female education or were victims of kidnappings for ransom, which often also affected the drivers of those attacked. As with school attacks, some simply targeted universities because they associated them with authority. The Taliban said that they were responsible for launching a double suicide bombing on the International Islamic University in Islamabad on 20 October 2009, which killed two female and three male students, in retaliation for a Pakistani army offensive in South Waziristan.¹²⁶⁶

In Balochistan, there was a clear pattern of targeted killings of academics or students of non-Baloch ethnicity or opponents of Baloch nationalism, with gunmen on motorbikes launching attacks in daylight in public, usually when the victim was en route to or from university. The BLA claimed responsibility for the murder on 5 November 2009 of Kurshid Akhtar Ansari, the head of library sciences at the University of Balochistan¹²⁶⁷ and for the murder on 27 April 2010 of Nazima Talib, a professor at the same institution.¹²⁶⁸ Students and academics linked with nationalist organizations disappeared in a number of cases. For example, Amnesty International reported that a student and member of the Baloch Students Organisation (Azad) allegedly disappeared from his hometown of Panjgur, Balochistan, on 21 January 2011.¹²⁶⁹ In another incident, on 4 July 2011, a Baloch Students Organisation (Azad) activist was abducted from Hub town, Lasbela district, Balochistan. His corpse was found on 6 July with three bullet wounds to the upper body.¹²⁷⁰

In Karachi, students were affected by outbreaks of city-wide political and sectarian violence. On 26 December 2010, a bomb on the Karachi University campus targeted praying students of the Imamia Students Organisation, injuring five. It led to protests demanding that the administration prevent sectarian fighting on campus, claiming that bombs and weapons were being brought in.¹²⁷¹ Shot by unidentified assailants on a motorbike while they were talking at a tea stall outside their seminary in November 2012, six students were among 20 people killed during sectarian violence in one day.¹²⁷² An academic was killed in Karachi: Maulana Muhammad Ameen, a teacher at Jamia Binoria Alamia University and a distinguished Sunni cleric, was gunned down by assassins on motorbikes in October 2010.¹²⁷³

Also in October 2010, Taliban assassins shot dead Dr Mohammad Farooq Khan, in Mardan, Khyber-

Pakhtunkhwa province. Khan was the vice-chancellor of a new liberal university in Swat, due to be inaugurated a few days later, and had also devoted his time to teaching 150 boys liberated from the Taliban by the Pakistan Army at a school set up by the military in Swat with support from international donors.¹²⁷⁴ According to the New York Times, he was one of six university professors and Muslim intellectuals to have been murdered in the previous 12 months.¹²⁷⁵

ATTACKS ON EDUCATION IN 2013

Students from kindergarten, schools and colleges, teachers of both sexes and education institutions across the country were attacked in Pakistan in 2013. There were continuing attacks on schools, including bombings,¹²⁷⁶ grenade attacks¹²⁷⁷ and shootings. Female education and schooling in the north-west and tribal areas bordering Afghanistan continued to be targeted prominently.¹²⁷⁸ For instance, in January, militants shot dead five female teachers and two health workers returning by bus from their community project near Swabi, in Khyber Pukhtunkhwa province.¹²⁷⁹ In November, militants abducted 11 teachers from Hira Public School in the Khyber tribal agency after they helped in a polio vaccination campaign for schoolchildren.¹²⁸⁰

There were also attacks on schools in the south-west, in Karachi, where the Taliban has increased its influence,¹²⁸¹ and in Balochistan.¹²⁸² One primary school in western Karachi was attacked with guns, killing the head teacher and wounding three adults and six children attending a prize-giving ceremony in March.¹²⁸³ Another head teacher, who ran a private school, was shot dead in Karachi in May.¹²⁸⁴ At least two schools designated to be used as polling stations in 11 May elections in Balochistan were bombed.¹²⁸⁵

In higher education, clashes continued between rival armed student political groups¹²⁸⁶ and there were direct attacks on the institutions themselves, including the detonation of one kilogramme of explosives packed with ball bearings in the conference hall of the University of Peshawar's Institute of Islamic and Arabic Studies on 3 January, which injured five students.¹²⁸⁷ In the most serious incident, on 15 June, a coordinated attack was launched against the Sardar Bahaddur Khan Women's University in Quetta and the hospital ward where the casualties were taken. A bomb exploded on a bus at the campus killing 14 female students and wounding 19. Ninety minutes later, two suicide attackers and between two and 10 gunmen attacked the Bolan Medical Clinic, destroying the casualty department and operating theatre and killing 11, including two senior doctors and the Quetta Deputy Police Commissioner, who had come to offer security. Seventeen were wounded. The BBC reported that the Lashkar-e-Jhangvi militant group, which has carried out many attacks against Shia Muslims, was responsible,¹²⁸⁸ but said the attack may have been targeting women in general rather than Shias, as the university is the sole all-women university in Balochistan.¹²⁸⁹

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