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## Children's Rights

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Attacks on Students, Teachers, and Schools in Pakistan

(London, March 27, 2017) Attacks by the Taliban and other militant groups are having a devastating impact on education in Pakistan, Human Rights Watch said in a new report released a day before the Second International Conference on Safe Schools in Buenos Aires, Argentina.

Pakistan faces significant education challenges, with an estimated 25 million children out of school. The report includes testimonies on how militant violence has disrupted the education of hundreds of thousands of children, particularly girls. The report also documents instances of military use of educational institutions.

Pakistani students in Lahore return to school under high alert security after the December 16, 2014 attack by the Pakistani Taliban on the Army Public School in Peshawar, January 1, 2015. 2015 Rana Sajid Hussain/Pacific Press/ LightRocket via Getty Images

(London, March 27, 2017) Attacks by the Taliban and other militant groups are having a devastating impact on education in Pakistan, Human Rights Watch said in a new report released a day before the Second International Conference on Safe Schools in Buenos Aires, Argentina.

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I was just 10 when more than 400 schools were destroyed. Women were flogged. People were killed. And our beautiful dreams turned into nightmares. Education went from being a right to being a crime. Girls were stopped from going to school.

Malala Yousafzai accepting the Nobel Peace Prize, Oslo, December 10, 2014

On December 16, 2014, six days after Malala Yousafzai received the Nobel Peace Prize, armed militants attacked the Army Public School in Pakistans Peshawar city, killing 145 people, almost all of them children. Gunmen systematically went from classroom to classroom, shooting children and teachers at the military-run school. Tehreek-i-Taliban Pakistan (TTP), the so-called Pakistani Taliban, claimed responsibility for the attack as revenge for a Pakistan Army offensive in the tribal areas of North Waziristan that began in June 2014. It remains among the deadliest attacks ever on a school in any country.

Pakistan already faces major challenges to education because of factors such as poor access, low enrollment rates, gender bias, lack of trained teachers, and poor physical infrastructure. Islamist militant violence has further exacerbated those challenges, however, and disrupted the education of hundreds of thousands of children.

Human Rights Watch defines attacks on education as encompassing the full range of violations that place children at risk and deny them access to education. This includes attacks on school infrastructure and on students, teachers, and school administrators; the occupation of schools by the police and military; and harassment and threats against teachers, parents, and education professionals.

Militant groups have damaged and destroyed school buildings, attacked teachers and students, and terrorized parents into keeping their children out of school. They have also targeted colleges and other higher-education institutions. Such attacks and threats of attack on education not only harm the students and families directly affected, they have an incalculable long-term effect on Pakistani society.

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In addition, in some areas, government security forces have used educational institutions, including schools and college hostels or dormitories, as temporary or permanent barracks or military bases. When an educational facility is used for military purposes, it disrupts the schools functioning, places it at increased risk of attack, and often frightens parents into keeping their children especially girls at home. Criminal gangs, often operating with political patronage, have also occupied schools.

Pakistan's militant Islamist groups use attacks on schools and universities to foster intolerance and exclusion, to target symbols of the government, and particularly to enforce gender discrimination, notably by preventing the education of girls. The challenge to educating girls in Pakistan drew international attention in 2012, when the Taliban shot a young student, Malala Yousafzai, for publicly defending her right to education. She survived the attack and continued her campaign, becoming the youngest individual and the first and only child to receive the Nobel Peace Prize in 2014.

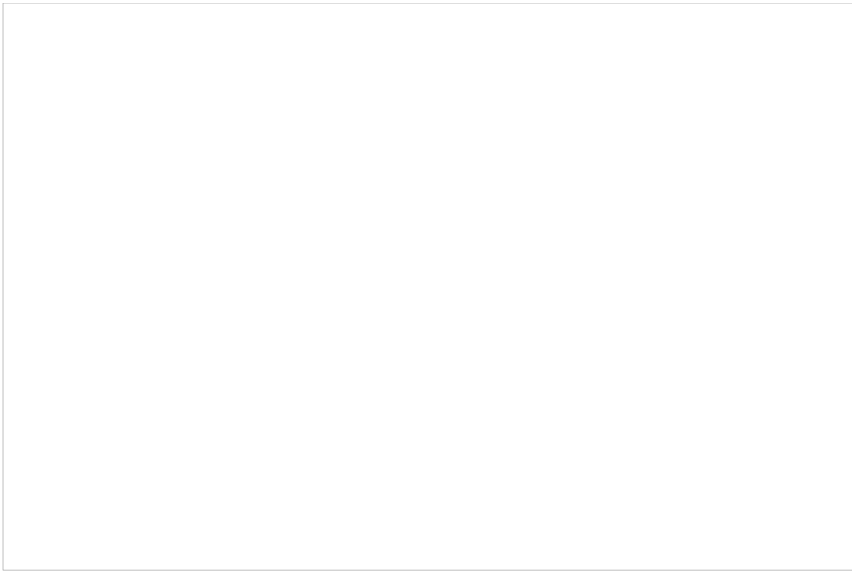
This report, based on interviews with 48 people including students, teachers, parents, and school administrators in the provinces of Punjab, Sindh, and Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (KP) documents attacks on schools, students, and teachers between 2007 and late 2016. In a 2010 report, Human Rights Watch documented the killing of at least 22 teachers and education professionals by nationalist militants in Balochistan province between 2008 and 2010.

The Pakistani government does not collect specific data on the number of attacks on schools and universities, or the number of deaths and injuries from such attacks. However, according to the Global Terrorism Database maintained by researchers at the University of Maryland, there were 867 attacks on educational institutions in Pakistan from 2007 to 2015, resulting in 392 deaths and 724 injuries. According to the Global Coalition to Protect Education from Attack, at least 838 schools in Pakistan were attacked between 2009 and 2012, killing at least 30 students and injuring 97 others. The data available indicate that attacks since 2012 have claimed hundreds of lives.

On January 20, 2016, alleged TPP militants attacked Bacha Khan University in Charsadda, KP, killing at least 21 people, most of them students. A 23-year-old student at the university told Human Rights Watch:

Tehreek-i-Taliban Pakistan (TTP), the Lashkar-e-Jhangvi (LeJ), and several other Islamist militant groups across the country attack schools, teachers, and students for various reasons. Some target schools for supposedly having too secular or Western curricula. Other schools have been threatened and targeted simply for educating girls. Militants also view schools as symbols of the Pakistani state. Some groups say they attack schools because they are used as bases by the security forces.

Militants often target unoccupied school buildings. The primary goal of these attacks is not to physically harm students or teachers, but to disrupt the educational process, particularly at girls schools.



[Click to expand Image](#)

School children flee as soldiers conducting an exercise to repel militant attacks detain a mock-militant (R) at the Islamia Collegiate School in Peshawar, Pakistan, February 2016. 2016 Khuram Parvez/Reuters

While education remains under threat across Pakistan, teachers, professors, and school administrators are particularly at risk in KP, Balochistan, and FATA. For instance, in December 2015, the Ministry for States and Frontier Regions (SAFRON) reported that 360 schools were destroyed in three of the seven regions of FATA in 2015situated along the Afghan border and under the direct control of Pakistans federal government. No information was provided about the other four regions, but local activists say that scores of schools were targeted in their respective regions.

General insecurity and violence aimed at education compounds other barriers that keep children, especially girls, from going to school. Attacks on education disproportionately affect women and girls. When the TTP gained complete control over the Swat Valley in KP in 2009, they began a violent campaign against education for girls, forcing over 900 schools to close. As a result, over 120,000 students and 8,000 female teachers stopped attending school. The TTP also issued edicts banning girls education in Swat. In January 2009, Muslim Khan, a Taliban spokesperson, told the Associated Press that the Taliban would not allow girls schools to operate in the Swat Valley because they promote obscenity and vulgarity in society.

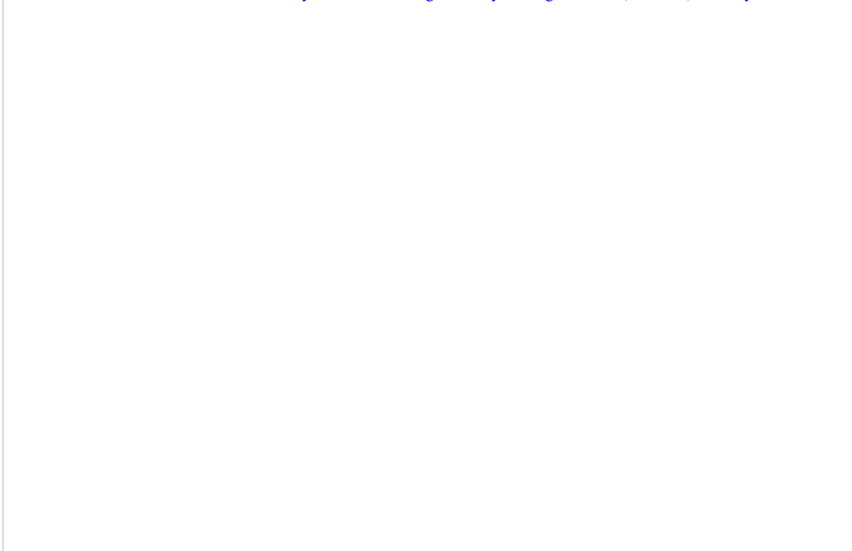
Even after the military pushed back the Taliban, activists said that thousands of children remained out of school because of this disruption. Babar Khan (a pseudonym), who works with children affected by conflict in Swat, told Human Rights Watch: There is no psychological counseling available, at least from the government. Children are afraid of the Taliban and the army; both are a constant reminder of the ongoing conflict and violence. They have seen both the Taliban and the army kill family members and destroy their houses.

The conflict between the TTP and the Pakistani government has resulted in an estimated 5 million internally displaced persons from KP and FATA between 2004 and 2014. Some have relocated to Afghanistan. Others have settled inside or around camps in KP and FATA. Educational opportunities for displaced children are extremely limited, both within the camps and out. Educational services in the camps are mostly temporary schools set up in tents, often known as Temporary Learning Centers.

A large number of those displaced choose not to stay in the camps and are instead housed in school buildings in the host communities. According to an official report by the KP provincial government, 222 schools were partially occupied and 63 schools were entirely occupied by displaced families or security forces. This also prevents or limits schools ability to teach students.

Educational institutions in several conflict zones in Swat and FATA, and even in urban centers such as Karachi, have been taken over by the armed forces for use as barracks or bases.

[A Pakistani soldier assists a child aim a military assault rifle during a security training in Karachi, Pakistan, February 2016.](#)



[Click to expand Image](#)

A Pakistani soldier assists achild aim a military assaultrifle during a security training in Karachi, Pakistan, February 2016. 2016 Sabir Mazhar/Anadolu Agency/Getty Images

In Swat, the Pakistan Armys offensive forced out the Taliban, vacating the schools, but the army then occupied them instead. Although most schools have now been vacated, the military was still using about 20 schools in Swat as of December 2016. Qaiser Khan, a member of a private school association in Swat who asked us to use a pseudonym, said that the military had occupied his school since 2009. He told Human Rights Watch:

Bilal, a teacher at a school in Swat, described how security operations can traumatize children:

The Pakistan Rangers, a federal paramilitary force, have occupied at least five historic educational sites in Karachi since they were called in to assist the civil authorities to curb violence in the city in the late 1980s. The Sindh education minister told the Sindh Assembly in 2009 that at least 27 schools, colleges, and hostels across the province were occupied by the army, Rangers, or police. No updated numbers are available.

The negative consequences of the Pakistani security forces using schools for military purposes are not limited to incidents within Pakistan. Human Rights Watch has found a local school in the Central African Republic being occupied and used as base by Pakistani peacekeepers.

The Pakistani government paid little attention to the protection of schools, students, and teachers until the attack on the Army Public School in 2014. Since then, the state has adopted new security measures, including training teachers in use of arms, mock security drills, and raising boundary walls. Reportedly, before the Peshawar attack, about 5,000 public schools in KP, 2,600 public schools in Punjab, 3,600 public schools in Balochistan, and 49,000 public schools in Sindh had no boundary walls.

However, securing the rights of children to safe access to education remains a low priority. After the attack on the Army Public School, Pakistani Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif announced a 20-point National Action Plan to comprehensively deal with terrorism, but none of the 20 points pertained to students or education.

Securing schools has largely been left to the provincial governments, which have been sporadic and vary widely across provinces, paying little attention to the specific need to protect girls education. In January 2016, after the Bacha Khan University attack, police conducted a mock security drill in Lahores Punjab University, causing fear and panic as most students were not informed in advance of the drill, and many scrambled to escape, believing it to be a real attack. In February 2016, students panicked after hearing gunshots inside Islamia College in Peshawar, during a drill in which the security forces were giving firearm training to students and teachers.

School and university administrations are also responsible for security measures and paying for the cost of these measures. Some have adopted a policy of arming teachers or deploying students for guard duties. In June 2015, a teacher in Mingora, Swat, accidentally shot and killed a student while cleaning his gun. Shamim Ara, the principal at a government boys middle school in Lahore told Human Rights Watch:

Despite hundreds of attacks on teachers, students and educational institutions, the Pakistani government has not successfully prosecuted the perpetrators in most cases. This failure was highlighted in June 2015, when it

was reported that eight out of the ten individuals arrested and charged for the attack on Malala Yousafzai were acquitted, even after they all confessed to their role in court.

Instead of conducting proper investigations and prosecuting those implicated, the Pakistani government constituted secret military courts after the Army Public School attack. Although there have been a number of convictions and even executions since, the families of victims do not know if the actual perpetrators were punished since the trials were conducted in secret.

In December 2015, four people found guilty by a military court of providing funds, transportation and other assistance to the Army Public School attackers were executed at a prison in Kohat, KP. In December 2016, the army chief ratified the death sentences of four individuals found guilty of planning the attack on Bacha Khan University by a military court. The military also ratified the death sentence of another individual found guilty by a military court of being involved in attacks on security officials and the destruction of an education institution in December 2016, but the government did not provide more details about the educational institution that was allegedly destroyed.

Pakistans national and provincial governments need to recognize that they have a responsibility to protect children and their right to an education. To be effective, the approach must be systematic and should include specific steps to prioritize the protection of girls and their schools and teachers.

As a first step, Pakistan should endorse the Safe Schools Declaration, a non-binding political agreement opened for state support at an international conference in Oslo, Norway in May 2015. Countries that endorse the Safe Schools Declaration pledge to restore access to education when schools are attacked, and make it less likely that students, teachers, and schools will be attacked in the first place. They agree to deter such attacks by promising to investigate and prosecute crimes involving schools, and to minimize the use of schools for military purposes so they do not become targets for attack.

Human Rights Watch conducted 48 interviews with teachers, students, parents, and school administrators in the Pakistani provinces of Punjab, Sindh, and Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (KP) between February and November 2016. Due to ongoing insecurity in the Federally Administered Tribal Areas (FATA), a number of locations that would have been part of this research were inaccessible. The report documents attacks on schools, students, and teachers between January 2007 and October 2016. The report also documents past and ongoing military use of educational institutions.

All interviews were conducted with full and informed consent, and without compensation. The interviews were conducted in Urdu and when necessary (for example, in KP) through an interpreter. In all cases, Human Rights Watch took steps to minimize re-traumatization of survivors of abuses, immediately stopping interviews if they appeared to cause distress. The names of several interviewees have been replaced with pseudonyms, or left anonymous, due to safety concerns.

FATA and the areas constituting the Pakistan-Afghanistan border are in a state of armed conflict between the Pakistani government and the Taliban, with large numbers of the population displaced and inaccessible. Human Rights Watch documented attacks in these areas through interviews with local activists, media reports, and government documents.

Human Rights Watch also monitored and analyzed media reports, and reviewed government documents and academic publications regarding attacks on schools and military use of schools.

**ANP** Awami National Party

**BLA** Baloch Liberation Army

**BLUF****Baloch** Liberation United Front

**BRP**Baloch Republican Party

**CEDAW** Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women

**CRCC**Convention on the Rights of the Child

**FATA** Federally Administered Tribal Areas

**ICCPR** International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights

**ICECSR** International Covenant on Economic, Social, and Cultural Rights

**IDP** Internally Displaced Persons

**ISSB** Inter Service Selection Board

**KP** Khyber Pakhtunkhwa

**LeJ** Lashkar-e-Jhangvi

**MQM** Muttahida Qaumi Movement

**SAFRON**Ministry for States and Frontier Regions

**TTP**Tehreek-i-Taliban Pakistan

**VDC** Village Defense Councils

In April 2010, the 18th Amendment to the Constitution of Pakistan elevated the right to education to the status of a fundamental right. As a result, the government became constitutionally responsible for providing free and compulsory education to all children between the ages of 5 and 16. Nonetheless, an estimated 25 million children in Pakistan are out of school, the highest number in South Asia and second highest in the world.<sup>[1]</sup>

Pakistan faces significant educational challenges. Poor access, low enrollment rates, wide disparities between provinces, gaps in access to education between rural and urban areas, gender bias, lack of trained teachers, and poor physical infrastructure of schools are just a few of the factors behind the dismal state of education in the country.

Exacerbating the challenge, militant violence has disrupted the education of hundreds of thousands of children, particularly girls. Islamist militants have destroyed school buildings, targeted teachers and students, and terrorized parents into keeping their children out of school.

Under the 18th Amendment, provincial governments are responsible for education, including policy making and budgetary allocations.<sup>[2]</sup> In some instances, the provincial governments have requested the assistance of the federal government in rebuilding educational institutions damaged due to armed conflict or natural disaster.<sup>[3]</sup>

Provincial governments are also responsible for maintaining law and order in their respective provinces. After the attack on the Army Public School in Peshawar in December 2014, the provincial governments were required to make security arrangements for schools in their provinces. For example, in January 2015, the KP government allocated PKR 7.5 billion (US\$7.5 million) for the security of government schools.<sup>[4]</sup>

While education continues to be under threat across Pakistan, it is particularly vulnerable to attacks in the countrys northwest regions, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (KP) and the Federally Administered Tribal Areas (FATA).<sup>[5]</sup>

The Taliban took over large parts of the Swat Valley in KP province in 2007. By 2009, the TTP had gained complete control over the Swat Valley, where they enforced their fundamentalist interpretation of Sharia (Islamic law).

The Taliban imposed their authority in Swat and adjoining areas through summary executions, including beheadings, of state officials and political opponents. They also engaged in public whippings and large-scale intimidation of the population. Women were not allowed to leave their homes unless escorted by male family members. The Taliban halted Polio immunization programs, and expelled nongovernmental organizations.<sup>[6]</sup> Music and film were banned and stores trading in CDs and DVDs were destroyed. All men were required to grow beards.

The Taliban also began a violent campaign against education for girls, forcing over 900 girls schools to close.<sup>[7]</sup> As a result, over 120,000 female students and 8,000 women teachers stopped attending school.<sup>[8]</sup>

On April 13, 2009, President Asif Ali Zardari signed an ordinance imposing Sharia in the Swat Valley and adjoining areas as part of a deal with the Pakistani Taliban.<sup>[9]</sup> This effectively empowered the Taliban to impose its authority in the areas, which it did through serious human rights abuses. Responding to domestic and international outrage, on May 7, 2009, the government reversed course and declared an end to the deal, vowing to eliminate the Taliban.<sup>[10]</sup> The ensuing military operation triggered a massive displacement crisis as some 2 million civilians fled the fighting to adjoining districts.<sup>[11]</sup>

Tehreek-i-Taliban Pakistan has carried out deadly attacks in the countrys largest province, Punjab, killing hundreds of civilians and members of security forces. On March 27, 2016, a suicide attack which targeted Christian families celebrating Easter in a public park in Lahore killed at least 74 people and injured more than 300.<sup>[12]</sup> On August 16, 2016, two suicide attackers killed Punjabs home minister, Shuja Khanzada, and at least 20 other people at a public meeting in Attock district.<sup>[13]</sup> At least 8 people were injured on December 10, 2007, when a Pakistan Airforce employee bus carrying at least 50 school children was attacked by a suicide bomber outside the Pakistan Aeronautical Complex at Kamra, Attock.<sup>[14]</sup>

After the Army Public School attack on December 16, 2014, the Punjab government ordered all schools in the province to be closed, leading to the loss of several school days. The Punjab government announced winter holidays ordering all schools, colleges, and universities to remain closed from December 19, 2014, till January 12, 2015.<sup>[15]</sup>

In January 2016, the Punjab government ordered the closure of all public and private schools from January 26 until January 31. Although the government cited cold weather as the reason, officials from the education department and education professionals told media that the decision was motivated by security considerations.<sup>[16]</sup>

In August 2016, the Punjab government extended the summer holidays of educational institutions by two weeks, directing them to remain closed.<sup>[17]</sup> The government did not publicly give reasons for the decision, but a public school teacher told the *Express Tribune*, Security was cited as the reason for the extension. Apparently, the government is not satisfied with security arrangements. The School Education Department had advertised vacancies for guards but apparently not all posts were filled.<sup>[18]</sup>

Karachi, the capital of Sindh province and the largest city in Pakistan, has witnessed constant violence and turbulence for the past three decades. Political parties, ethnic groups, and sectarian and Islamist militant organizations have engaged in violence, resulting in thousands of deaths. The Pakistan Rangers and Sindh police, the two primary law enforcement agencies, are deployed in the city to maintain order. However, they have been accused of numerous serious human rights violations, including extrajudicial killings, enforced disappearances, and torture.<sup>[19]</sup>

Multiple actors threaten educational institutions in the city. Islamist extremist groups and factions of political parties have attacked schools for not paying extortion money.<sup>[20]</sup> Sectarian militant organizations such as the Lashkar-i-Jhangvi (LeJ) have also killed teachers who were Shia.<sup>[21]</sup>

Balochistan, Pakistans western-most province, borders eastern Iran and southern Afghanistan. It is the largest of the countrys four provinces in terms of area (44 percent of the countrys land area), but the smallest in terms of population at 8 million people (5 percent of the countrys total). According to the last national census in 1998, over two-thirds of the Baloch population lives in rural areas.

Teachers, professors, and school administrators have found their lives increasingly under threat in Balochistan. Human Rights Watch has previously documented the killings of at least 22 teachers and other educational personnel in the province who were targeted by suspected militant groups between 2008 and late 2010.<sup>[22]</sup> Militants have also threatened, bombed, or otherwise attacked schools, resulting in injuries, deaths, property

damage, and curtailed access to education for Balochistans children and youth.

Education falls in the crosshairs of three distinct violent conflicts in Balochistan. The first is a nationalist conflict, in which militant Baloch groups seeking separation or autonomy for Balochistan, such as the Baloch Liberation Army (BLA) and the Baloch Liberation United Front (BLUF), have targeted Punjabis and other minorities, particularly in the districts of Mastung, Kalat, Nushki, Gwadar, Khuzdar, and Quetta. While individuals from all professions have been the victims of such targeted killings, teachers and students constitute a significant proportion of victims because militant groups view schools and educational personnel, particularly ethnic Punjabis, as representatives of the Pakistani state and symbols of perceived Punjabi military oppression of the province.[\[23\]](#)

Bramdagh Bugti, chief of the Baloch Republican Party (BRP) and guerrilla commander, justified the targeted killings of Punjabi teachers as a reaction to Pakistan Army abuses:

The second distinct conflict is a sectarian one, in which militant Sunni Muslim groups have attacked members of the Shia community, especially members of the Persian-speaking Hazara community. Such sectarian attacks appeared to increase in 2009, and occur mainly in Quetta and its neighboring districts.[\[25\]](#)

The third conflict involves armed Islamist groups attacking those who are deemed to act contrary to their interpretation of Islam. Islamist militants have increasingly committed violence in opposition to the content and manner of local education, particularly that of girls and young women. There have also been several reported instances of demands that schools stop teaching girls and boys together, and that students and teachers adopt more local and conservative dress.[\[26\]](#)

Islamist militants attack schools, teachers, and students for a variety of reasons. Some target schools because the curriculum is perceived to be too secular or Western.[\[27\]](#) Other schools were threatened and targeted simply for educating girls. Militants also view schools as symbols of the Pakistani state. They have also claimed to attack schools because they are used as bases by the security forces.

**Tehreek-i-Taliban Pakistan (TTP)** is an alliance of Sunni militant networks formed in 2007 to unify opposition against the Pakistani state.[\[28\]](#) The TTP is inspired by the Taliban, a Sunni militant group in Afghanistan that was formed in the early 1990s and ruled Afghanistan from 1996 until October 2001.

However, the Afghan Taliban and the TTP have different targets and objectives. The Afghan Taliban have declared war against the Afghan government and attack the Afghan government, civilians, security personnel and international security forces.[\[29\]](#)

The TTPs stated objectives are to overthrow the Pakistani government, dismantle the state, establish a caliphate, and enforce a strict implementation of a particular interpretation of Islam.[\[30\]](#) TTP attacks on civilians and security forces in Pakistan have resulted in thousands of deaths. Hakeemullah Mehsud, in an October 2013 interview with the BBC, explained the objectives and motivations of the TTP:

On December 16, 2014, after attacking the Army Public School in Peshawar, the TTP justified the attack against the military-run school as revenge for an ongoing army offensive in the tribal areas of North Waziristan that began in June 2014.[\[32\]](#) Taliban spokesman Muhammad Umar Khorasani said the attack was intended to make the army feel the pain for allegedly targeting our families and females.[\[33\]](#)

**Lashkar-e-Jhangvi (LeJ)** is a militant extremist Sunni Deobandi group formed in 1996 as a breakaway faction of the sectarian militant Sipah-e-Sahaba Pakistan (SSP). The LeJ views Shia Muslims as heretics and their deaths as religiously justified.[\[34\]](#) The Pakistani government imposed a ban on LeJ and designated it as a terrorist organization in 2001.[\[35\]](#) Following the ban, some LeJ members fled to Afghanistan, seeking protection from the Afghan Taliban, and used that as a base to plan attacks in Pakistan. In addition to attacks on the Shia community, the LeJ has also been involved in attacks on Pakistan security forces, civilians, and foreign visitors in Pakistan.[\[36\]](#) The LeJ has attacked teachers, school administrators, and other education personnel on the basis of their sectarian affiliations.[\[37\]](#)

The extremist armed group **Islamic State** (also known as ISIS) has claimed responsibility for attacks on Pakistani civilians, including attacks on teachers and education personnel. ISIS controls large if decreasing swaths of Iraq and Syria and has offshoots in countries including Libya, Nigeria, Yemen, and Afghanistan. There is very little information on the scale of ISIS operations in Pakistan.[\[38\]](#) In December 2015, ISIS claimed responsibility for killing Zahid Askani, an educator in Gwadar, Balochistan, for promoting an education system which contradicts Islam and Sharia law.[\[39\]](#)

The **Balochistan Liberation Army (BLA)** is a Baloch nationalist armed separatist group based in the province of Balochistan. It has been in armed conflict with the Pakistani government since 2006. BLA has attacked teachers and other educational professionals on the basis of ethnicity.[\[40\]](#)

Following a June 2014 attack by militants at Jinnah International Airport in Karachi that killed more than 18 people, the military launched an offensive against the TTP.[\[41\]](#) This offensive took place in North Waziristan, FATA, and involved more than 30,000 troops.[\[42\]](#)

The fighting between the TTP and the Pakistan Army has resulted in an estimated 5 million internally displaced persons (IDPs) from KP and FATA from 2004-2014.[\[43\]](#) By August 2014, there were 1 million registered IDPs from FATA and possibly more that remained unregistered. According to estimates, over half of those displaced were children.[\[44\]](#)

Many of those fleeing the conflict either relocated to Afghanistan or settled inside or around the Bakakel camp in Bannu district, KP. The other three main camps in KP and FATA are the Jalozi camp, Togh Sarai camp in Hangu district, KP, and New Durrani camp in Kurram agency, FATA.[\[45\]](#) Educational opportunities for internally displaced children are extremely limited, both within the camps and out. In 2013, the Jalozi camp had 17 schools for over 55,000 people. Education services in the camps are usually temporary schools set up in tents, often known as Temporary Learning Centers (TLCs).[\[46\]](#)

A large number of the displaced persons choose not to stay in the camps and are housed in school buildings in host communities. According to a report by the KP Elementary and Secondary Education Departments Independent Monitoring Unit, 222 schools were partially occupied and 63 schools were entirely occupied by displaced families or security forces as of December 2014, disrupting the schools normal functions.[\[47\]](#)

In December 2015, the minister for States and Frontier Regions (SAFRON), in a report submitted to the National Assembly, stated that 360 schools were destroyed in three of the seven agencies of FATA in 2015. According to the government, at least 166 schools were destroyed in North Waziristan Agency, 139 in Khyber Agency, and 55 in South Waziristan Agency.[\[48\]](#) The statistics for the other four agencies were not available. The minister told the National Assembly, The areas of the [FATA] agencies which are not accessible are being assessed/surveyed.[\[49\]](#)

Muhammad Rasool, a journalist who worked closely with displaced persons, described the humanitarian and educational crisis:

In June 2016, Iqbal Jhagra, governor of K-P, announced an education emergency in FATA.[\[51\]](#)

After the attack on the Army Public School in Peshawar, the Pakistani government responded with a national action plan to fight terrorism, including tactics that violated basic rights. The government established the use of military courts instead of civilian courts in terrorism cases and also ended an unofficial moratorium on capital punishment.[\[52\]](#)

The Pakistan Rangers, a federal paramilitary force, have been deployed in Karachi, the provincial capital of Sindh, since the 1980s, but the deployment has been scaled up in recent years. The Pakistan Rangers have been given special policing powers and have occupied several educational institutions. The Sindh government has objected to the deployment of the Pakistan Rangers.[\[53\]](#) The federal government maintains that while the provincial government has the power to call the paramilitary force for assistance, the authority of how and where the troops are deployed lies with the federal government and the Pakistan Rangers.[\[54\]](#)

The impact of attacks has been devastating on education in Pakistan. Many teachers and students have been killed, injured, or traumatized. Attacks often lead to dramatic decreases in school attendance rates

Human Rights Watch observed that the streets of Swat district in KP have a high number of unattended children, some as young as five years old. Many are the children of those killed by the Taliban, those killed by the Pakistan Army as suspected militants, and of mountain dwellers displaced by the military offensive.[\[55\]](#)

Children of suspected Taliban members killed in battle are in the worst condition since it is practically prohibited for local residents to help them.[\[56\]](#) Any local educational institution, shelter, orphanage, or nongovernmental organization that attempts to help them is put under investigation for being Taliban sympathizers.[\[57\]](#) Babar Khan, who works with children affected by conflict in Swat, told Human Rights Watch:

Many children require psychological counselling because of being exposed to and affected by violence, but according to Babar Khan:

As a response to the Peshawar school attack, the government and the administration required security barricades for many schools in Lahore, and carried out drills simulating attacks, furthering trauma for students. Sadia Mukhtar, a doctor in Lahore and mother of an 8-year-old, described her daughters elite private school in Lahore after the Peshawar attack: It was surreal. The school was fortified with barbed wires, and there were snipers on the roof.[\[60\]](#)

Imran Ali, a lawyer, described the security drill at his sons private school in Lahore:

Some schools are now deploying children on guard duty. Shamim Ara, the principal at a government boys middle school in Lahore, said:

Pakistan has a huge gender disparity problem. According to the World Economic Forums Global Gender Gap Report 2016, Pakistan ranks 143 out of 144 countries in the gender inequality index.[\[63\]](#) Government figures showed that in 2014 only 47 percent of the women in Pakistan were literate, compared to 70 percent of men.[\[64\]](#) At least 53 percent of girls are out of school as compared to 43 percent of boys.[\[65\]](#)

Discriminatory policies and conservative cultural and social practices contribute to impeding equal access to education for women and girls. Parents often have a lower threshold for pulling their daughters out of school than boys, given greater social restrictions on girls movements and concerns about sexual harassment and violence. This exacerbates an already dire situation where only 35 percent of schools accept girls.[\[66\]](#)

In addition, women and girls in Pakistan bear the brunt of the attacks on education, exacerbating other barriers that keep girls from going to school. In January 2009, the TTP announced a deadline of January 15, after which no female student was allowed to go to school.[\[67\]](#) The Taliban also destroyed 400 of the approximately 1,600 schools around 70

percent of them girls schools in areas under their control.[\[68\]](#) Muslim Khan, a Taliban spokesperson, justified prohibiting and attacking girls education:

Human Rights Watch defines attacks on education as encompassing the full range of violations that place children at risk and deny them access to education. This includes attacks on school infrastructure and on students, teachers, and school administrators, the occupation of schools by the police and military, as well as harassment and threats against teachers, parents, and education professionals.

Pakistan is one of the most badly affected countries in the world in terms of attacks on schools. Reliable and transparent official government data on the number of attacks on schools and universities, or the number of injuries and casualties from such attacks, are non-existent. However, according to the Global Terrorism Database, there were 867 attacks on educational institutions in Pakistan from 2007 to 2015, resulting in 392 fatalities and 724 injured.[\[70\]](#)

According to the Global Coalition to Protect Education from Attack:

Attacks on educational institutions between 1990 and 2013 appear to have occurred on a much greater scale in Pakistan than anywhere else in the world.[\[72\]](#) The vast majority of the school attacks, around 94 percent, typically involved the use of explosives, arson, or incendiary devices on buildings that were unoccupied at the time of the attack. The primary goal of these attacks was not to physically harm students or teachers, but to disrupt the educational process, particularly at girls schools.[\[73\]](#) The TTP was allegedly responsible for three-fourths of the attacks.[\[74\]](#)

However, even when students are not harmed, these attacks adversely impact the right to education because they can lead to a drop in attendance among students, teachers, and staff; demotivation, distraction, and traumatization of students and teachers; a drop in staff recruitment; and declining enrollment of students.

In February 2016, militants targeted a newly constructed girls school in South Waziristan, FATA in a bomb attack. Sajna group, a faction of the TTP, claimed responsibility, saying, We have blown up the school because it was a government installation.[\[75\]](#)

In October 2014, a government-run girls primary school in Khyber agency, FATA, was targeted in a bomb attack.[\[76\]](#) Because the attack took place on a Sunday evening, there were no deaths or injuries. However, it

completely demolished the school, including all rooms and the boundary wall. Explosives planted in various parts of the school were detonated with a remote device.[\[77\]](#)

In September 2014, militants bombed a newly reconstructed school in Bajaur agency, FATA, on International Literacy Day. The school had been previously attacked and completely destroyed in 2009 and rebuilt in 2014.[\[78\]](#)

In September 2014, armed assailants entered, ransacked, and set fire to a private school in Turbat, Balochistan, destroying textbooks, furniture, and computers, as well as the entire principals office.[\[79\]](#) The attack occurred at night and there were no fatalities or injuries. The school was co-educational and offered classes in English to over 400 students. Al Jihad, a lesser known religious extremist group, claimed responsibility for the attack. The attackers also left pamphlets in the school demanding that other private schools stop imparting Western education.[\[80\]](#)

In June 2014, militants bombed a government girls school at night in South Waziristan, FATA, destroying the school entrance and three adjacent classrooms. Reportedly, the militants threatened the school watchman and asked him to leave before the attack.[\[81\]](#)

In July 2013, militants detonated heavy explosives alongside the wall of a government-run primary girls school in Bannu district, KP. While no one was injured, the blast destroyed a portion of the school boundary wall, the gate, and some classrooms.[\[82\]](#)

Schools in Pakistan are often designated as polling stations in general and local elections and in some instances have been attacked to enforce election boycotts. In May 2013, bomb attacks targeted two schools in the Naseerabad district of Balochistan which had been designated as polling stations for the general election.[\[83\]](#) Human Rights Watch also documented attacks on schools in Balochistan designated as polling stations before the February 2008 general election.[\[84\]](#)

In March 2012, a bomb targeted the government primary school for boys in Koteri village of Kohat district.[\[85\]](#) According to bomb disposal officials, 20 kilograms of explosives were used in the attack. Syed Kamal, the caretaker of the school, told Human Rights Watch:

In June 2012, a government-run girls primary school was targeted in a bomb attack.[\[87\]](#) The school watchman reportedly confessed to blowing it up on the orders of the Taliban. An official investigator told media, It is a unique case. In all other cases of terrorism, the government servants haven't cooperated with militants to such extent to blow up the building that is guarded by them.[\[88\]](#)

Teacher Ahmad Ali said they had feared such an attack because girls attended the school:

The school had been rebuilt and was functioning when Human Rights Watch visited.

In November 2012, militants targeted a government-run girls primary school in Kama Khel area of Kohat district.[\[90\]](#) No one was killed in the nighttime attack, although the building was damaged. Muhammad Razzaq, the head teacher, told Human Rights Watch:

In many of the damaged schools that Human Rights Watch visited, classes are held on the grounds outside while the school, or parts of it, is rebuilt. Many interviewees expressed concern about the quality of reconstruction, which they felt authorities compromise in a rush to rebuild.

The Federal Government Public School in Kohat is close to the Inter Service Selection Board (ISSB) building, which is the main recruitment center for the Pakistan Army.[\[92\]](#) The area has been repeatedly targeted because of this proximity.[\[93\]](#) The first attack on the school occurred in 2006; it was attacked again in 2009.

Atif Haider, school caretaker since 2005, said that although the school was now fully functional, parents were concerned about safety after the 2009 bombing:

There is an acute shortage of schools and colleges in Swat. According to education department officials, Swat has 848 primary schools for boys and exactly half that number, 424, for girls. Many girls end up without access to education.[\[95\]](#) The few schools that do exist for girls are also under threat.

Schools were first destroyed in Swat when the Taliban took over in December 2008. According to Raza Shah, a member of a teachers association in Swat, the Taliban destroyed 265 schools from January to May 2009. Of these, only 68, or 25 percent, were boys schools and the rest were for girls.[\[96\]](#)

By the time military operations pushed the Taliban back, they had destroyed at least 393 schools in Swat.[\[97\]](#) Raza Shah said that many of those schools have been completely or partially rebuilt by aid from the US Agency for International Development (USAID) and the United Arab Emirates. In August 2016, the spokesperson for the KP governments Provincial Reconstruction Rehabilitation and Settlement Authority said in a statement that more than 100 schools had been constructed in collaboration with USAID and 47 schools had been constructed with the assistance of United Arab Emirates.[\[98\]](#) Only 23 of the schools damaged or destroyed by militants have not been rebuilt.[\[99\]](#)

However, one major consequence of the violence in Swat has been a disturbingly high dropout rate for children who were enrolled before the conflict started. At least 40 percent of male students and 80 percent of female students did not return to school even 11 months after the Pakistan Army had displaced the Taliban control of the area.[\[100\]](#)

In June 2016, the Taliban allegedly burned a school in Toha, Charbagh. Although the local Taliban leadership claimed responsibility for the attack, the government maintains that the school caught fire due to a wire short circuit, in an effort to deny responsibility for security failures.[\[101\]](#)

Karachi has witnessed violent attacks for decades in a stand-off between the Muttahida Qaumi Movement (MQM), a dominant political party claiming to represent Muslims who moved to Pakistan after the partition of the subcontinent in 1947, criminal gangs that operate under political patronage, and state security forces. Education is a hidden casualty.

In March 2015, assailants threw a grenade into a school in North Nazimabad and left a threatening letter.[\[102\]](#) Although children were inside at the time, no one was injured.

In 2015, the Government Primary School for Girls at Gul Muhammad Kalamthi Goth was targeted with an improvised explosive device placed near the boundary wall of the school. It was a weekly holiday and no one was injured, although the wall was damaged.[\[103\]](#)

The District West area in Karachi has been particularly affected by attacks on schools. Nine schools in the District West area were attacked from March 2013 to August 2013, mostly by unidentified gunmen firing on the school gate or building.[\[104\]](#) The schools that were attacked are:

In addition to attacks on school buildings, the TTP and other groups have also attacked students and staff, often specifically targeting girls.

In September 2011, militants attacked a school van in Peshawar, KP. Four students and the van driver were killed in the attack.[\[106\]](#) A TTP spokesperson claimed responsibility, telling the Associated Press: This was to teach them a lesson and we will continue to carry out attacks wherever and whenever possible, no matter if it is a school or a school bus.[\[107\]](#)

In October 2012, militants intercepted a school van carrying students from the Parachinar area of Kurram agency, FATA, to the Kohat University of Science and Technology for an exam, and threw acid on the faces of the female students. At least two girls sustained severe burns to their faces.[\[108\]](#) The local TTP commander told CNN:

After the attack, many parents no longer wanted to send their daughters to university. Zahid Hussain, a school teacher, explained that he was going to keep his daughter and niece at home: There is no other option. Being poor, we cannot afford for such incidents to happen to our daughters too.[\[110\]](#)

On March 30, 2013, armed gunmen attacked the Nation Secondary School in Ittehad Town, Karachi, a school with both female and male students.[\[111\]](#) A large number of students were present in the school at the time. The attackers entered the school building, hurled grenades into classrooms, and opened fire. The school principal, Abdul Rasheed, and a grade four student, Tahira Noor, were killed. Six girls and two visitors were injured. According to a friend of the principal, Rashid had received a threatening call from a TTP representative in Karachi demanding that he quit his affiliation with the Awami National Party (ANP), a Pashtun nationalist political party. Malala Yousafzai had visited the school in March 2012.[\[112\]](#)

One of those injured, Attaur Rahman, the principal of the nearby Iqbal academy, was visiting the school at the time of the attack. Rahman said that the attack seemed to specifically target the female students: The attacker was standing on the boys side and was firing towards the girls. Luckily, we managed to send them inside the classrooms when they opened fire, otherwise around a hundred female students would have died.[\[113\]](#)

On December 16, 2014, the TTP attacked the Army Public School, a school for girls and boys in Peshawar, KP, killing 145 people, almost all of them children.[\[114\]](#) Witnesses said that nine gunmen disguised in the uniforms of the Frontier Corps, a paramilitary force, entered the school by scaling the walls. According to the Pakistan military, the gunmen wanted to kill as many students and teachers as they could. There were more than 1,000 students and staff present at the time of the attack. The students ranged from age 5 to 17.[\[115\]](#)

Zeeshan, a student, described the attack. Our instructor asked us to duck and lie down. Then I saw militants walking past rows of students, shooting them in the head.[\[116\]](#)

The Army Public School attack was the deadliest ever on a school in Pakistan.[\[117\]](#) The TTP said the attack was revenge for the army's ongoing offensive in the tribal areas of North Waziristan that began in June 2014. Taliban spokesman Muhammad Umar Khorasani said the attack was intended to make the army feel the pain for allegedly targeting our families and females.[\[118\]](#) All seven attackers were killed during the government rescue operation. In December 2015, four men convicted by a closed military court for being involved in the planning of the attack were executed.[\[119\]](#)

On January 20, 2016, gunmen opened fire at [Bacha Khan University in Charsadda](#) district of KP. The Pakistan Army reported that four assailants had scaled the university walls and opened fire indiscriminately. The gunmen killed 21 students and wounded dozens of others. They were wearing suicide vests, but soldiers shot and killed all four of them before they could detonate.[\[120\]](#) Asim, a 23-year-old geology student, said:

Adnan, a 22-year-old student, told Human Rights Watch:

When the firing started, I ran to a friend's room. We locked the room and tried hiding in the cupboard. The militants came to our door and knocked saying, We are the police and we are here to rescue you. My friend and I were very scared and we almost opened the door. However, they spoke in Urdu and we thought that the Charsadda police would have talked to us in Pashto. When we did not open the door, they fired gunshots through the door and tried kicking it. But before they could break down the door, soldiers entered the hostel.

Seven of my closest friends were killed that evening. When I got out, I saw dead bodies of my friends lying in the corridors and in rooms with open doors. I also saw the bodies of two of the militants. I can never forget those scenes. The university closed for some time after the attack. Once it opened, I did not want to go back. My parents insisted that I go back. I remained up all night for weeks after the attack, checking repeatedly to see if the door of my room was locked. For weeks, almost everyone in the hostel remained up all night. I could hear people crying in their rooms and in the corridors.[\[122\]](#)

According to Fazal-e-Haq, a 23-year-old student, even six months after the attack, the attendance at the university remained significantly lower:

The main spokesman for TTP later denied and condemned the assault.[\[124\]](#) However, Khalifa Umar Mansoor, a TTP commander claiming responsibility for the attack on Bacha Khan University, Charsadda, KP, said in a video message:

Aitzaz Hasan, a 15-year-old student, was killed on January 7, 2014, while preventing a suicide bomber from entering a school in KPs Hangu district.[\[126\]](#) The school is the only one in Ibrahimzai, a Shia-dominated area in Hangu. There were nearly 2,000 students in the school at the time the attack occurred. Lashkar-e-Jhangvi (LeJ) later claimed responsibility for the attack.[\[127\]](#) Raza Ali, a 16-year-old student, witnessed the entire incident. He said:

Mujtaba Hasan said that he heard from witnesses that his younger brother Aitzaz grabbed the attacker to stop him from entering the school.



Ali Hussain, an elder of Ibrahimzai village in District Hangu, KP, told Human Rights Watch about his reluctance to send his son to school after the attempted suicide bombing by LeJ:

Teachers, professors, and school administrators have found their lives increasingly threatened in KP, Balochistan, and FATA. Human Rights Watch has previously documented the killings of at least 22 teachers and education professionals by Baloch nationalist militants.[\[131\]](#)

In March 2013, Shahnaz Ishtiaq, 41, headmistress of Community Girls School at Jamrud, FATA was killed while on her way to the school with her son.[\[132\]](#)

In January 2013, five female teachers were shot dead in Swabi district, KP as they were exiting the school building[\[133\]](#) Militants allegedly targeted them because they were deployed by the government as part of a polio eradication program. A female health worker and a male health technician were also killed.

There have been multiple attacks on teachers in the Hangu district of KP, because it borders FATA, which has been an arena of conflict between the Pakistani government and the TTP since 2002. In February 2014, militants shot and killed Faqir Hussain, Syed Khalil, and Muhammad Khan, all teachers at Government Primary School Kacha Banda, on their way home from classes.[\[134\]](#) The district police officer said that the militants were attempting to damage education in the area by targeting teachers.

Just three days after the Kacha Banda shooting, Munawwar Hussain, a teacher at Hangus Government Primary School for Boys, sustained injuries when militants shot at him. [\[135\]](#) According to local police, Hussain had been receiving threats pressuring him to quit his job and leave the area.

In May 2014, two high school teachers were shot dead in the Khan Bari area of Hangu district.[\[136\]](#) In August 2014, three women teachers and two students were killed by a remote-controlled explosive device targeting a school van in Tangi, Salarzai tehsil, of Bajaur agency.[\[137\]](#) In October 2014, a grenade attack on the Askari Public School and College in Peshawar killed a teacher and injured two students.[\[138\]](#)

According to Raza Shah, teachers and education professionals have been under constant attack in Swat since 2008, but the situation has significantly worsened since the Taliban took charge.

Kaiser Khan, a member of the private schools association in Swat, told Human Rights Watch that the attacks have continued even after the military forced the Taliban to retreat:

Some education professionals feel that the government is deliberately not protecting them, particularly those who speak out against the government and security policies in Swat. Aslam Khan, a local village councilor, said that his brother a teacher and member of the local VDC was murdered:

As described above, a number of schools were targeted in attacks on infrastructure. In some cases, education authorities were deliberately killed or injured.

In August 2014, an unknown assailant killed Malik Ishaq, a school principal in Saeedabad, Karachi, inside his office.[\[142\]](#)

On May 14, 2013, unknown militants killed Abdul Waheed, a social activist running the Naunehal Public School in Orangi Town, Karachi; his brother and daughter were seriously injured in the attack.[\[143\]](#) Police suggested that the motive for the killing might be Waheeds refusal to pay extortion money. After Waheeds murder the private school shut down for a few months and reopened in August. Four days later, unknown attackers lobbed a grenade inside the school during the evening.[\[144\]](#) Rashid, a colleague of Abdul Waheed, said the attack occurred because militants do not like schools, and particularly oppose anyone, like Waheed, who supports polio vaccination programs:

Rashid said that since Waheeds assassination, enrollment has fallen from 800-900 students to just 80-100. He said:

Militants seek to justify attacks on educational infrastructure, staff, and students to prevent the education of girls, to oppose military action, or simply because they disagree with Western curricula. Some schools received warnings before attacks, or threats of attacks that did not materialize but nonetheless had a negative impact on students and teachers. School authorities usually choose to ignore these threats, but sometimes request additional state protection.

For instance, in December 2015, many schools in the coastal Makran region of Balochistan received pamphlets warning parents not to send their daughters to school. Earlier, in August, an education department official in Panjgur district said a lesser known religious group called Tanzeemul Islam al Furqan sent threatening letters to more than 25 schools because it wants English medium and coeducational schools to close down.[\[146\]](#)

In the case of the Naunehal Public School discussed above, Abdul Waheed received a letter from the Taliban stating, You people are involved in immoral activities not permitted by Islam. Stop them or else be ready to face the consequences.[\[147\]](#)

In October 2013, the Federal Government Girls High School, in R.A. Bazaar, Rawalpindi, received a letter from the Taliban demanding that the school close. According to *Dawn*, the letter said, It is a message from Ameer Sahib Abdul Wali of TTP Mohmand Agency that the girls school should be closed. Thank God, we have been successful in every bomb attack and will be successful in future too [sic]. And we can carry out bomb attacks anytime.[\[148\]](#)

In September 2014, the Askari Public School and College in Peshawar received a threatening letter demanding that the school administration ask students to wear the traditional *shalwar kameez* dress instead of pants and shirts as uniform.[\[149\]](#) In October 2014, a grenade attack on the school killed a teacher and injured two students. In January 2015, a threatening letter was pinned outside a school in Rajgarh area, Lahore. Many parents who were dropping off their children read the letter and refused to let them attend school that day.[\[150\]](#)

In February 2016, the Benazir Bhutto High School in Badami Bagh, Lahore, received a threatening letter demanding that the school administration ensure that girl students wear headscarves.[\[151\]](#) The same month, the Government Ghousia Girls and Boys Elementary School in Paposh Nagar, Karachi, received a threatening letter allegedly from the TTP asking the school administration to close the school.[\[152\]](#) The school administration did so for a day and local police provided security.[\[153\]](#) Meanwhile, the Government Girls Primary School in Multan received a threatening letter from an unknown source demanding that the school should be shut down because Islam does not allow education of girls.[\[154\]](#)

In 2015, the Taliban sent letters to schools in Swat warning the school administration to close schools or face attack. The Charbagh Government Girls school was specifically told to shut down or else it would be attacked.[\[155\]](#)

Pakistan has permanent, large-scale military deployments across the country. Cantonments are military quarters with significant number of troops stationed alongside the civilian population and infrastructure. There are presently 42 cantonment areas in Pakistan spread across all four provinces.[\[156\]](#)

Due to the presence of an elaborate network of military stations in the country, the Pakistan Army does not frequently need to set up ad hoc barracks or camps. However, in conflict areas, particularly in KP and FATA, the army has at times partially or completely occupied educational institutions. Many schools taken over by the army in Swat and FATA were previously occupied by Taliban forces.

Another dimension of the influence of militarys presence in civilian areas is the unsupervised power to inspect and search schools on security grounds. Babar Khan, an education activist in Swat, told Human Rights Watch:

When educational facilities are used for military purposes it can increase the risk of the recruitment and use of children by armed forces, or may leave children and youth vulnerable to sexual abuse or exploitation. It also increases the likelihood that education institutions are attacked, since the presence of military forces may make them legitimate military targets. Deploying military forces in and near schools exposes important education infrastructure to damage and destruction.

Additionally, school occupations can be extremely disruptive to education. When security forces arrive, a quick exodus of many students often follows, as children transfer elsewhere even at the cost of additional travel time or transportation expenses, or simply drop out. Some leave because they are afraid of insurgent attacks, while others, particularly girls, leave because they or their parents fear harassment. Those students who remain in occupied schools often feel the quality of their education deteriorates.

In her 2013 autobiography, *I Am Malala*, Malala Yousafzai describes discovering that a school in Swat run by her father had been occupied and used by Pakistani government forces while she and her family were displaced by fighting in and around her hometown:

There has been a significant military presence in Swat since 2009. The Taliban occupied and used educational institutions as barracks when they controlled Swat. When the Pakistan Army forced the Taliban out of the Swat Valley, they often occupied the very schools that Taliban fighters had previously used.

Although the military has vacated most schools in Swat, some remain in military use. According to Raza Shah, a member of a teachers association, about 20 schools were still under military use in Swat in 2016. The schools under occupation are mostly in rural areas or in the higher mountains, where there are Taliban hideouts and the army has fewer permanent bases, although there are examples of military use in the main valley too.[\[159\]](#)

The Swat education department reported that as of September 2016, the army fully occupied at least two schools.[\[160\]](#) The army has occupied Government Primary School Achar No. 2 for boys since May 2014, and its students and staff have been sent to another school.[\[161\]](#) The army occupied the Government Primary School Ozbaka for boys in September 2016, and according to the government, classes are now shelterless meaning they are held outside, in an area where temperatures can drop below zero Celsius during term time.[\[162\]](#)

At least five school buildings for boys were under partial occupation by the army and the paramilitary Frontier Corps during 2016. These include Government High School Sherpalam, Government Middle School Marghazar, Government Primary School Bar Sher Palam No. 1, and Government Primary School Kandaw Kass.[\[163\]](#) Raza Shah said that the military completely took over his private school in mid-2009 and used it as a military barracks for seven months.[\[164\]](#)

Raza Khan, a teacher in Swat, told Human Rights Watch that army occupied the Government Primary School Singrkandu, where he teaches, in June 2009:

An undergraduate college for women in Khwazakhela, KP, has been under army occupation since 2009. This college is one of the four undergraduate degree colleges in Swat. The space is being used as offices for senior military officials and the college building is heavily fortified.[\[166\]](#) An alternate space has been allotted for the college and classes are continuing. However, according to Jawad Khan, a teacher, a very high number of girls have dropped out because the new space is not as accessible.[\[167\]](#)

Kaiser Khan, a school administrator, said that his private school has been under military use since 2009, when the army took over government and some private schools, and colleges. He told Human Rights Watch:

The Pakistan Austrian Institute for Hotel Management is a joint venture between Pakistan and the Austrian government. The institute was shut down due to security concerns after the Taliban took over and burned down the nearby Malam Jabba ski resort, one of the most popular tourist destinations in the area, in June 2008.[\[169\]](#) The army has occupied it since 2009. The government has apparently been planning on opening the institute again, but the military still occupies large parts of the building.[\[170\]](#)

Bilal, a teacher at a school in Charbagh, Swat, said military operations can traumatize students:

The negative consequences of the Pakistan Army using schools for military purposes are not limited to incidents within Pakistan. As of February 2017, more than 7,000 forces were deployed in United Nations peacekeeping missions abroad,[\[172\]](#) including 1105 soldiers as part of the UN mission in the Central African Republic, which is known by its French abbreviation, MINUSCA.[\[173\]](#)

On January 22, 2017, Human Rights Watch researchers in the town of Mouruba, Ouaka province, found that the local school was occupied and being used as a base by Pakistani peacekeepers. Residents told Human Rights Watch that they want the peacekeepers to stay, but they also want to send their children back to school. The towns residents had fled in December 2016, when a militia group took control of the town and killed at least three people: a father and his two sons, 16 and 10 years old, respectively.[\[174\]](#) One parent said:

A 16-year-old boy told Human Rights Watch, I hope that peace returns so the Pakistanis leave the school and we can re-open it. I would like to be an intellectual. Without school I will have no future, so it is important to

me.[176]

The use of the school by the Pakistani peacekeepers is contrary to both a directive from the head of MINUSCA and the regulations of the United Nations Department of Peacekeeping Infantry Battalion Manual.[177]

The Pakistan Rangers are deployed in Karachi under the Anti-Terrorism Act of 1997.[178] The Rangers are a border federal security force under the Ministry of Interior, but operate under the command of the Pakistan Army.

In April 2008, the Sindh Cabinet decided that Rangers personnel should be withdrawn from educational institutions. At the time, more than 1,200 Rangers troops were stationed in and around the city's educational institutions, including 700 troops in Karachi University.[179] However, their presence in educational institutions continued, and the Sindh minister for Education admitted in the Sindh Assembly in 2009 that the army, Rangers, or police occupied at least 27 buildings of schools, colleges, and hostels across Sindh.[180]

In September 2013, the Rangers were given additional policing powers to act against criminal suspects implicated in targeted and sectarian killings, kidnappings for ransom, and extortion.[181] Abdul Hayi, a senior member of the nongovernmental Human Rights Commission of Pakistan, told Human Rights Watch that the Rangers have since partially occupied many educational institutions across Sindh, but keeping a tally is difficult since the occupation is sometimes temporary and many schools do not report when they are taken over by the military.[182]

The Pakistan Rangers have occupied at least five historic educational sites in Karachi since being deployed in the late 1980s:

The Jinnah Courts, a heritage building, was once used as a residential dorm by students.[183] The Rangers moved into Jinnah Courts in 1999 after they were asked to vacate another educational institution, the Shaikh Zayed Islamic Centre, which they had been using as their headquarters.[184] The hostel now serves as the official Rangers headquarters and is off limits for civilians.[185] Barbed wires surround the premises; three layers of sandboxes block the pavement; and red barricades separate an entire lane of the road.[186]

The Mitha Ram Hostel is another heritage site that was built in 1901 to accommodate students of the then DJ Science College. The Rangers took it over in 1992.[187] The college remains functional, but this residential facility is no longer available to the students. In 2015, the Rangers asked the Sindh government to turn the hostel into a small jail, justifying their demand by saying that individuals arrested in the Rangers law and order operations needed to be kept in an exclusive facility to ensure they had no communication with other inmates.[188] In April 2015, the Sindh government officially approved the Rangers using the building as a sub-jail.[189] Iron barriers have been installed at the entrance and a security checkpoint and sandbags block the sidewalk to the hostel. Instead of restoring such an important part of history, they have converted it into a jail, Hamid Akhud, chairperson of the Endowment Fund Trust for the hostel, told the *Express Tribune*. In which civilized society is an educational institution used as a sub-jail?[190]

Rangers currently occupy the hostel building for the Government College of Technology.[191] A local resident said:

I grew up in the area. In the mid-90s we saw the hostel gradually being captured by the paramilitary. It began with a single police car which stood at the gate, then a room inside the hostel was used, and gradually the whole building became their property.[192]

The building of the Karachi University Boys Hostel was designed to accommodate at least 1,000 students. However, since 1989, it has served as the regional wing of the Rangers, who were first deployed in the university for security and to prevent violent clashes between student factions.[193] According to a local journalist:

In March 2008, Rangers assaulted Riyaz Ahmad, an associate professor, after an altercation on the campus.[195] He had visible bruises on his back and his right hand was in a sling when he told journalists that he had previously admonished the Rangers official for an indecent act at the Department of Applied Chemistry.

Following the incident, the Karachi University Teachers Association held protests demanding an inquiry into the matter. The Rangers withdrew from campus.

Shah Abdul Latif Bhittai Library housed a wide array of books on history, politics, and literature. During protests in 2006, the library was burned to rubble. In 2011, the government ordered the library to be rebuilt, and the Rangers occupied it in 2012.[197]

Ghulam Rasool Raikani, a local leader of the Pakistan Peoples Party (PPP), described how the Rangers initially assumed control of the building:

Lyari is a low-income residential settlement in Karachi, Sindh. It is one of the city's most densely populated areas. Since 2004, there has been incessant, violent fighting in Lyari between criminal gangs, many of which enjoy the protection and patronage of various political parties.[199] The violence has disrupted everyday life and significantly damaged municipal infrastructure, schools, and hospitals.

Schools have also been used as offices of political parties and gang hideouts. Crossfire between law enforcement officials and gang members in 2010 has left bullet marks on the walls of many schools in Lyari, including Ghairiabad Girls Secondary School and M. Alvi Government Girls Primary School.

MQM is the most powerful party in the city and remained a principal ally to the government of President Pervez Musharraf from 2002-2008.

A member of the Sindh provincial assembly, Javaid Nagori, told Human Rights Watch that several schools, including the Government Boys Secondary School, Hakim Fateh Muhammad Saleem Government Boys Primary School, and Hakim Fateh Muhammad Lower Secondary School, were occupied by MQM members. He said:

Zahoor Uddin, headmaster of K.I. Kharadar Government Boys Primary Schools in Lyari, said the situation was very difficult before the MQM was finally evicted from the school in 2010:

There are 650 students in this school. MQM forcibly occupied this school in 2002. Classes continued in the school. The MQM people would come in at 4 p.m. and stay till the morning. They used the class rooms as torture chambers. Sometimes they would come and use spare rooms during the day, roaming around the school with automatic assault rifles.[201]

Shahnawaz, an elected member of Lyari's local government, said:

According to Shahnawaz, attendance in schools in Lyari fell to less than 50 percent. Schools on the border area of gang turf that is, in the area which demarcated gang territories, closed completely.[203]

Sher Muhammad, a teacher at Montessori Karachi Municipal Corporation School No. 19 in Lyari, told Human Rights Watch:

Bashir, a teacher at Wali Muhammad Haji Yaqoob Girls Section, said:

The school was completely functional and back at full strength when Human Rights Watch visited. However, the school administration and teachers were concerned about the damaged school building and were trying to convince the government to renovate it.

Mehmood Raza, a teacher at Government Boys School in Karim Bhai, Lyari, said the MQM occupied the building for four years. Its violent political slogans are still on classroom walls.

Aftab Ahmad, a teacher at Government Boys School, Karim Bhai, Lyari, said:

The Pakistani government had paid little attention to the protection of schools, students, and teachers until the attack on the Army Public School in December 2014. Soon after, however, Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif announced a 20-point National Action Plan to comprehensively deal with the threat from terrorism.[208]

Despite the nature of the attack, none of the 20 points pertained to protection of educational institutions.[209] Instead, in most cases, the responsibility for enhancing and maintaining security has been passed to school authorities. This has led to increased hardship and chaos. Some schools are organizing traumatic security drills, while others are arming teachers and students.

Before the Peshawar school attack, about 5,000 public schools in KP, 2,600 public schools in Punjab, 3,600 public schools in Balochistan, and 49,000 public schools in Sindh were without boundary walls. Such walls are important, particularly in high-risk areas, as they act as a deterrent to potential assailants, protect teachers and children from attack from the outside, and act as shock absorbers in the case of bomb attacks. In many places, those walls are now being constructed.[210] As of October 2016, walls for 81 educational institutions in Karachi declared to be sensitive had yet to be constructed.[211]

In February 2015, Theirworld, a UK charity, launched a 15-point plan for a Pakistan Safe Schools Initiative in collaboration with the Global Business Coalition for Education, and with the backing of Prime Minister Sharif and UN Special Envoy for Education Gordon Brown. Salient features of the plan include:

As of December 2015, the initiative included measures such as setting up plans for disarmament, demobilization, and reintegration in 137 schools in five districts of KP; training 120 teachers in emergency preparedness; and school safety in the Jalozai camps for internally displaced persons.[213]

However, other efforts have been sporadic and vary across provinces. In January 2016, after the Bacha Khan University attack, police conducted a mock security drill in Lahore's Punjab University, causing fear and panic among students.[214] Most students were not informed in advance of the drill, and believing it to be a real attack scrambled to escape.

In February 2016, students panicked after hearing gunshots inside the Islamia College, Peshawar, during a drill in which the security forces were giving firearm training to students and teachers.[215]

In June 2015, a teacher in Mingora, Swat, accidentally shot and killed a student while cleaning his gun. KP Information Minister Mushtaq Ghani, however, still justified the policy of arming teachers by arguing that firearms allow teachers to engage any possible attackers for the initial 5 to 10 minutes before law-enforcement personnel reached the spot.[216]

In Pakistan, education is under the authority of provincial governments. Various provinces have decreed new security measures, including boundary walls of varying heights.

In Punjab, for instance, the day after the Peshawar attack, the government of Punjab issued a notice to ensure security for all public and private educational institutions in the province, including:

In January 2016, the Sindh government ordered a security audit survey of educational institutions in the province to devise a contingency security plan. The government also directed police to set up quick response forces in their jurisdictions.[218] In March 2016, the Pakistan Red Crescent, supported by the Norwegian Red Cross and Sindh government, launched a school safety program in Sindh province to enhance the physical security of schools and train students and teachers to deal with natural or man-made disasters.[219]

In January 2016, the Balochistan government decided to establish a special force to be deployed at university campuses across the province.[220] According to Akbar Durrani, the Balochistan home secretary, 60 security personnel were to be deployed at each university.

In November 2016, many educational institutions in Quetta were shut down based on a high security alert issued by the Balochistan home department due to threats of suicide attacks on educational institutions, particularly those for women.[221]

The KP government has demanded that schools implement strict security measures. Shah Babar, an education activist working in Saidu Sharif, told Human Rights Watch the KP government has placed schools in three categories, ranging from Most Sensitive, Sensitive, and Less Sensitive. The Taliban in the past has attacked the less sensitive schools, since they are the most vulnerable. But the government is doing little to protect schools, and instead threatens to discipline or even prosecute teachers and principals for not taking security measures.

Criminal cases have been filed against teachers and principals for not taking security measures. The government has empowered the district administrative officials to raid schools whenever they want on the pretext of security checks. However, in terms of real security measures, almost nothing is done by the government and the cost of taking these measures is borne out by the schools themselves. In 2015, the Taliban sent schools a letter telling the administration to close schools or face attack. The Charbagh Government Girls schools were specifically threatened. But even after specific threats, the government did not provide security, and asked

schools to take measures themselves.[222]

Raza Shah, a teacher in Swat, told Human Rights Watch:

Haider Ali, a private school principal in Mingora, Swat, described hardships created by the three private security guards that the school has been forced to fund:

Pakistani law and international humanitarian and human rights law protect schools, students, and teachers from attack and provide for the right to education.

The Constitution of Pakistan, when adopted in 1973, contained a provision under the non-enforceable principles of state policy that, The State shall remove illiteracy and provide free and compulsory secondary education within [the] minimum possible period.[225]

In 2010, however, the 18th Amendment introduced article 25-A in the section containing judicially enforceable fundamental rights, which states that The State shall provide free and compulsory education to all children of the age of five to sixteen years in such manner as may be determined by law.[226]

Article 25-A has been enforced in the different federal units of Pakistan via the Right to Free and 2012 Compulsory Education Act (for Islamabad), the 2013 Sindh Right of Children to Free and Compulsory Education Act, the 2014 Punjab Free and Compulsory Education Act, and the 2014 Balochistan Compulsory Education Act. However, requisite legislation for KP, Federally Administered Tribal Areas, Gilgit-Baltistan, and Azad Kashmir has yet to be drafted.

Pakistani law tries those responsible for attacks on schools even during armed conflict under ordinary criminal and anti-terrorism laws. The Manoeuvres, Field Firing and Artillery Practice Act of 1938 prohibits the use of any land attached to an educational institution for the purposes of military training and maneuvers.[227]

International humanitarian law, also known as the law of armed conflict, regulates the conduct of state armed forces and non-state armed groups in international and non-international armed conflicts. Fighting between certain armed groups and Pakistani military forces has risen to the level of an armed conflict in much of Pakistan.

The law of armed conflict prohibits attacks on civilians and civilian objects. Schools are normally civilian objects and, as such, may not be the object of attack unless they become legitimate military objectives.[228] Anyone who willfully attacks a school that is a civilian object is committing a war crime. In case of doubt whether a school is being used to make an effective contribution to military action, and thus a lawful military target, it shall be presumed to be a civilian object.[229]

The laws of war require that the parties to a conflict take precautions against the effects of attack. Parties to an armed conflict shall, to the maximum extent feasible, a) avoid locating military objectives within or near densely populated areas where schools are likely to be located; b) endeavor to remove civilians, including students and teachers, under their control from the vicinity of military objectives; and c) take the other necessary precautions to protect those schools under their control against the dangers resulting from military operations.[230]

Turning a school into a military objective (for example, by using it as a military barracks or to store ammunition) subjects it to possible attack. Placing military objectives, such as armored vehicles, in a school courtyard also increases the risk that the school will suffer incidental damage from an attack against those military targets.

Schools also benefit from special protection as cultural property under customary law, and each party to a conflict must respect and protect buildings dedicated to education that are included in the scope of cultural property.[231] This implies a duty of special care to avoid damage to buildings dedicated to education (unless they are military objectives), as well as the prohibition of all seizure of, or destruction or willful damage done to, institutions dedicated to education.[232]

National armed forces and non-state armed groups also need to take into account other relevant rules and principles of the law of armed conflict. Among these are special protections to children.[233] If educational institutions are fully or partially used for military purposes, the life and physical safety of children might be at risk and access to education is restricted or even impeded, either because children may not go to school for fear of being killed or injured in an attack by the opposing forces, or because they have been deprived of their usual educational building.

International human rights law is applicable at all times, subject to lawful derogations. A number of international human rights law provisions are relevant to the issue of the military use of schools.

International human rights law guarantees students, teachers, academics, and all educational staff the right to life, personal liberty, and security.[234] States shall also ensure, to the maximum extent possible, the survival and the development of children.[235]

As children, students under the age of 18 receive special protections under international human rights law. According to the Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC), in all actions concerning children, whether undertaken by public or private social welfare institutions, courts of law, administrative authorities or legislative bodies, the best interests of the child shall be a primary consideration.[236]

Everyone has the right to education.[237] With a view to achieving the full realization of this right, states shall make primary education compulsory and available free to all; secondary education generally available and accessible to all; and higher education equally accessible to all on the basis of capacity.[238] The material conditions of teaching staff shall be continuously improved.[239] States shall also take measures to encourage regular attendance by children at schools and the reduction of child dropout rates.[240] With respect to children, states shall undertake such measures to the maximum extent of their available resources and, where needed, within the framework of international cooperation.[241]

Pakistan also has obligations under international law to ensure girls and womens rights to equality and non-discrimination, including in access to education. The International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR) calls for the equal right of men and women to the enjoyment of all civil and political rights.[242] The International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (ICESCR) includes similar provisions.[243] The Convention on the Rights of the Child recognizes the right of children to be free from discrimination, including based on gender.[244]

The Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) has explained that inherent to the principle of equality between men and women, or gender equality, is the concept that all human beings, regardless of sex, are free to develop their personal abilities, pursue their professional careers and make choices without the limitations set by stereotypes, rigid gender roles, and prejudices.[245] Attacks on education and military use of schools disproportionately affect girls and young women, and negatively impacts the realization of many of girls and womens other human rights. The impact of these violations is felt by women throughout their lives, extending to their families and societies.

In June 2015, the United Nations Security Council expressed deep concern that the military use of schools in contravention of applicable international law may render schools legitimate targets of attack, thus endangering the safety of children and in this regard encourages Member States to take concrete measures to deter such use of schools by armed forces and armed groups.[246]

Earlier, in 2011, the Security Council voted unanimously to urge all parties to armed conflict to refrain from actions that impede childrens access to education and requested that the UN secretary-general monitor and report to the council on the issue of military use of schools.[247]

A number of government armed forces and some non-state armed groups have developed military orders or doctrines that clearly spell out protections for schools from military use, including explicit prohibitions on the use of schools for military purposes.[248]

In May 2015, at an international conference held in Oslo, Norway, the Safe Schools Declaration was opened for state endorsement. A non-binding political commitment, the declaration describes the immediate and long-term consequences of attacks on students, teachers, schools, and universities, and the military use of schools and universities, during times of armed conflict. It contrasts those consequences with the positive and protective role that education can have during armed conflict.

Countries that endorse the declaration commit to a number of measures aimed at strengthening the prevention of, and response to, attacks on students, teachers, and schools, including: collecting reliable data on attacks and military use of schools and universities; providing assistance to victims of attacks; investigating allegations of violations of national and international law and prosecuting perpetrators where appropriate; developing and promoting conflict sensitive approaches to education; and seeking to continue education during armed conflict.

Through joining the Safe Schools Declaration, countries also endorse the Guidelines for Protecting Schools and Universities from Military Use during Armed Conflict and commit to bring them into domestic policy and operational frameworks as far as possible and appropriate.

These guidelines were the product of consultation among expert representatives from the ministries of foreign affairs, defense, education, and the armed forces from countries around the world, along with representatives of human rights and humanitarian organizations.

The guidelines are not legally binding, but draw upon existing obligations under both international humanitarian law and international human rights law. By also drawing upon examples of good practice already applied by some parties to armed conflict, the guidelines reflect what is practically achievable and acknowledge that parties to armed conflict are invariably faced with difficult dilemmas requiring pragmatic solutions.

The guidelines begin with the overarching admonition that, Parties to armed conflict are urged not to use schools and universities for any purpose in support of the military effort. While it is acknowledged that certain uses would not be contrary to the law of armed conflict, all parties should endeavor to avoid impinging on students safety and education. The guidelines then provide six guidelines for responsible practice.

As of December 2016, 56 countries had joined the declaration and thereby endorsed the guidelines. Pakistan is not among the signatories.

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Prosecute Militant Group Violence Against Students, Teachers

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