



Global Coalition to **Protect Education from Attack**

Submission to working group for adoption of list of issues to be taken up in connection with the consideration of the State Report of Yemen by the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women (9-13 March, 2015)

The Global Coalition to Protect Education from Attack (GCPEA)¹ writes in advance of the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women's pre-sessional working group on the State Report of Yemen for its 62nd Session to highlight areas of concern regarding attacks on students, educational staff, and facilities, as well as military use of schools and universities. We hope that this submission will inform the Committee's consideration of Yemen's compliance with the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW).

[GCPEA](#) was established in 2010 by organizations working in the fields of education in emergencies and conflict-affected contexts, higher education, protection, international human rights and humanitarian law who were concerned about ongoing attacks on educational institutions, their students and staff in countries affected by conflict and insecurity. GCPEA is an international coalition of organizations that includes: CARA (Council for At-Risk Academics), Human Rights Watch, Institute of International Education/IIE Scholar Rescue Fund, Protect Education in Insecurity and Conflict, Save the Children, Scholars at Risk Network, UNICEF, UNESCO, and UNHCR.

Attached is a [profile of Yemen](#) from GCPEA's global study, [Education Under Attack 2014](#),² which details attacks on education and military use of schools in Yemen from 2009- 2013.

GCPEA defines **attacks on education** as any threats or deliberate use of force against students, teachers, academics, education trade union members and government officials, aid workers and other education staff, and against schools, universities and other education institutions, carried out for political, military, ideological, sectarian, ethnic or religious reasons. These attacks violate girls' and women's right to education, amongst other rights enshrined in key international human rights treaties such as the CEDAW. They may also violate international

¹ This submission was prepared by the GCPEA Secretariat, based on information collected by the Secretariat and the Coalition's member organizations. **This submission is, however, independent of the individual member organizations of the GCPEA and does not necessarily reflect the views of the Steering Committee or other member organizations.**

² Global Coalition to Protect Education from Attack, *Education under Attack, 2014*, (2014).
<http://protectingeducation.org/education-under-attack-2014>

humanitarian and criminal law and constitute war crimes or crimes against humanity during war or peacetime.

The short- and long-term impacts of attacks on education can be devastating. The immediate effects can include death, injury, and the destruction of educational facilities, together with disrupted access to education. In the long term, attacks can lead to diminished education quality, loss of teachers and academics, and weakened educational systems, and may create a culture of impunity. The relevance of higher education can be degraded and research, academic freedom and innovation curtailed. Weakened education adversely affects a country's economic, political and social development, as well as its civil society.

GCPEA defines **military use of schools or universities** or use in support of the military effort to include the broad range of activities in which the fighting forces of parties to armed conflict may engage with the physical space of a school or university in support of the military effort, whether temporarily or on a long-term basis. The term includes, but is not limited to, the following uses: as barracks or bases; for offensive or defensive positioning; for storage of weapons or ammunition; for interrogation or detention; for military training or drilling of soldiers; for military recruitment of children contrary to international law; as observation posts; as a position from which to fire weapons or guide weapons onto their targets.³

Under international humanitarian law, military use of schools can convert them from civilian objects to legitimate military objectives, putting them at risk of attack from opposing forces, and jeopardizing the safety of students and teachers within them. In addition to the risk of death and severe injury from attacks, students and teachers may be exposed to recruitment and use by armed groups or forces, or sexual violence, exploitation or abuse perpetrated by soldiers. They may witness violence, and the presence of weapons and unexploded ordnance may threaten their lives. All of these risks can create a pervasive sense of fear and have a significant psychological impact on students and teachers causing reductions in enrollment as well as higher absenteeism and drop-out rates. Military use of schools can also cause damage and destruction of school infrastructure and materials, leading to a diminished quality of education even for those who continue to attend classes. Girls may be disproportionately affected as parents are particularly wary of sending their daughters to schools occupied by armed men.⁴

³ Global Coalition to Protect Education from Attack, Guidelines for Protecting Schools and Universities from Military Use in Armed Conflict, p. 7

http://www.protectingeducation.org/sites/default/files/documents/guidelines_en.pdf

⁴ Global Coalition to Protect Education from Attack, Lessons in War: Military Use of Schools and Other Education Institutions during Conflict (2012).

http://protectingeducation.org/sites/default/files/documents/lessons_in_war.pdf; Global Coalition to Protect

Given the impact of attacks on education and military use of schools and universities on individuals, communities, and ultimately entire societies, both in the present and affecting future generations, and recognizing the disproportionate or discriminatory impact that attacks can have upon girls and women, we hope that the Committee will draw upon the details in the attached Yemen profile from *Education under Attack 2014* during its examination of the State's report. Moreover, we encourage the Committee to ask the Government of Yemen the following questions, and offer them the recommendations below to facilitate better compliance with the CEDAW.

Suggested Questions to the Government of Yemen:

- How many schools, universities, or education facilities have been damaged or destroyed as a result of attacks by a) state security forces and b) non-state armed groups in each year of the reporting period, and since?
- What action has the Government taken to prevent attacks on schools and universities and to mitigate their impact when they do occur?
- How many schools, universities, or education facilities have been fully or partially occupied or used by a) Government security forces and b) non-state armed groups in each year of the reporting period, and since?
- What action has the Government taken to deter the use of schools and universities by state security forces and non-state armed groups?

Key recommendations

- The Government should investigate, prosecute and, if guilt is proven, punish individuals responsible for ordering, or bearing command responsibility for, or taking part in, the range of violations of international law that constitute attacks on education, and where appropriate, provide remedial measures for violations.
- The Government should take concrete measures to deter the military use of schools, along the lines of Security Council Resolution 2143 (2014), including through endorsing the [Guidelines for Protecting Schools and Universities from Military Use in Armed Conflict](#)⁵ and incorporating them into their legislation and military doctrine and policies.
- The Government should protect higher education institutions at all times and prevent violence and intimidation against students and academics by introducing and

Education from Attack, Questions and Answers on Guidelines for Protecting Schools and Universities in Armed Conflict (2014), http://www.protectingeducation.org/sites/default/files/documents/questions_and_answers.pdf

⁵ Global Coalition to Protect Education from Attack, Guidelines for Protecting Schools and Universities from Military Use in Armed Conflict, http://www.protectingeducation.org/sites/default/files/documents/guidelines_en.pdf

implementing policies, regulations and laws that promote both institutional autonomy and the security of higher education communities.