

## PAKISTAN

***GCPEA found at least seven attacks on schools by non-state armed groups during the reporting period, a decline as compared to prior years. Armed groups targeted girls and women in several incidents. Security forces arrested at least 170 university students and personnel and 240 school students and personnel for participating in education-related protests in 2020 and 2021.***

### **Context**

The security context in Pakistan deteriorated during the 2020-2021 reporting period. Contributing to this was a spike in clashes between India and Pakistan that escalated in 2020, with the Armed Conflict Location and Event Data Project (ACLED) reporting 2020 to be “the most violent year of conflict” between the two countries since it began recording in 2016.<sup>1274</sup> In February 2021, Pakistan and India agreed to observe all peace and ceasefire agreements,<sup>1275</sup> an accord which both parties largely upheld throughout the year, according to conflict monitors and media.<sup>1276</sup> In Pakistan, attacks by armed groups targeting security forces and civilians increased in both Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and Balochistan provinces in 2020, according to ACLED; moreover, in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Pakistan security forces carried out attacks on armed groups.<sup>1277</sup>

Pakistan also experienced political tensions during the reporting period. A newly formed alliance of opposition parties, the Pakistan Democratic Movement (PDM), was formed in September 2020. PDM led anti-government demonstrations, focused on unemployment and high inflation rates, which gained mass support.<sup>1278</sup> The Tehreek-e-Labaik Pakistan (TLP) party organized mass protests against the government across the country in 2021, resulting in street violence, attacks on security forces, and a ban on the party.<sup>1279</sup>

At the end of 2020, 12.3 million people were reportedly in need of humanitarian assistance, including 6.4 million children.<sup>1280</sup> Heavy monsoon rainfall caused flooding and damages in Sindh and Khyber Pakhtunkhwa provinces.<sup>1281</sup> In Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, limited access to social services and employment affected social and economic development, stability and governance, according to the UN.<sup>1282</sup> In addition, the UN estimated that at least 5,300 Afghans had newly arrived in Pakistan in 2021, with numbers steadily increasing in August 2021.<sup>1283</sup> In response to the influx of Afghan arrivals, Pakistan added border restrictions and increased deportations.<sup>1284</sup>

Prior to the Covid-19 pandemic, over 5 million children at the primary school level were out of school, the majority of whom were girls; school closures to prevent the spread of Covid-19 affected around 45 million students in 2020.<sup>1285</sup> Widespread inequities in access to quality education existed during the reporting period across both gender and socioeconomic status, with the poorer students having lower completion rates than wealthier students, according to the UN.<sup>1286</sup> Furthermore, adolescent girls experienced high dropout rates.<sup>1287</sup> Although armed groups did attack education, and particularly girls’ education, the majority of attacks on education in Pakistan involved the violent repression of education-related protests by security forces throughout the 2020-2021 reporting period.

### **Attacks on schools**

Between 2020 and 2021, GCPEA identified seven incidents of attacks on schools including two attacks on girls’ schools. This is a decrease in attacks as compared to 2018 and 2019, when the UN verified 34 attacks<sup>1288</sup> and two attacks,<sup>1289</sup> respectively. However, the sole attack reported in 2020 led to more fatalities and injuries than all attacks in 2018 and 2019.<sup>1290</sup>

On October 27, 2020, a bomb attack targeting the Jamia Zubairia religious school in the Dir Colony Area of Peshawar, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa province, killed at least seven people and injured at least 130,<sup>1291</sup> including four children under the age of 13.<sup>1292</sup> The UN verified one attack in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa province in 2020, which may have been the same as the report identified by GCPEA.<sup>1293</sup>

In 2021, GCPEA identified six reports of attacks on schools from media sources, two of which targeted girls’ schools.<sup>1294</sup> Five of the incidents involved reported use of explosive weapons and one incident involved a raid of a school used as a polling station. Examples included:

- On July 12, 2021, unidentified armed men reportedly threw a grenade at a girls' school in Mir Ali, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa province, while examinations were in progress. No injuries or fatalities were reported.<sup>1295</sup>
- On July 27, 2021, unidentified armed men allegedly threw a grenade into a school for Afghan children in Peshawar, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa province. The school was empty at the time.<sup>1296</sup>
- On September 22, 2021, armed assailants reportedly targeted a girls' school that was undergoing construction in Tank district in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa governorate. The explosion reportedly destroyed parts of the school building. No casualties occurred.<sup>1297</sup>
- On November 17, 2021, a bomb reportedly detonated at a government girls' school in Kohlu district in Balochistan governorate. According to local media, the school was damaged, however no fatalities occurred.<sup>1298</sup>
- On December 10, 2021, a mortar shell reportedly struck a school in North Waziristan district in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa governorate. The attack injured two children.<sup>1299</sup>

### **Attacks on school students, teachers, and personnel**

During the 2020-2021 reporting period, GCPEA identified 11 reported attacks on school students, teachers, and personnel, in which over 250 students or educators were arrested. This is a similar rate as compared to the prior reporting period, when GCPEA collected 11 incidents in 2019, and two in 2018.<sup>1300</sup> As in the previous reporting period, many attacks involved police arresting or using excessive force against students or teachers involved in education-related protests.

In 2020, GCPEA identified two reported attacks on students, teachers, and personnel. These were:

- On July 15, 2020, as many as 120 teachers and owners of schools working under the Punjab Education Foundation (PEF) were reportedly arrested for protesting the government's non-payment of funds, outside the Punjab Assembly on the Mall in Lahore city, Punjab province.<sup>1301</sup>
- Pakistani media outlet *Dawn* reported that, on December 19, 2020, seven teachers were injured and 44 were arrested when police used baton charges and tear gas to control contract teachers demonstrating outside the Prime Minister's residence in Banigala in Islamabad city Federal Capital Territory, after teachers pelted police with stones, according to ACLED.<sup>1302</sup>

In 2021, GCPEA identified nine reports of attacks on school students, teachers, and personnel, including three attacks by a non-state armed group and six attacks by state security forces.<sup>1303</sup> For example:

- On January 6, 2021, police reportedly charged and fired tear gas on teachers, and arrested 20 teachers, when they staged a demonstration to demand that authorities honor a prior agreement to increase their salaries, in Muzaffarabad city, Pakistan-administered Kashmir. Teachers allegedly responded by pelting stones, according to local media.<sup>1304</sup>
- On January 13, 2021, police reportedly charged hundreds of teachers protesting in Muzaffarabad city, Pakistan-administered Kashmir, against the government for not receiving regular salary payments.<sup>1305</sup>
- Pakistani local media outlets reported that, on March 22, 2021, around 950 teachers staged a protest near the Chief Minister House in Karachi, Sindh province, demanding regularization of their jobs; a number were reportedly baton charged and detained by the police outside the Sindh Assembly.<sup>1306</sup>

In 2021, GCPEA identified three incidents that involved an attack by a non-state armed group.

- On June 20, 2021, unidentified armed gunmen reportedly shot a school vehicle transporting eleven female teachers in Mastung district in Balochistan governorate. The attack injured at least four teachers, according to media sources.<sup>1307</sup>
- On July 27, 2021, in Peshawar district in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa governorate, an unidentified group allegedly threw a grenade at a school for Afghan children. No students or teachers were at the school at the time of the attack and the school did not sustain damaged.<sup>1308</sup>
- On December 30, 2021, a bomb reportedly exploded outside of the Government Science College in Quetta City,

Balochistan governorate. The attack allegedly killed at least four people and injured at least fifteen. In addition, the attack damaged several buildings.<sup>1309</sup>

### **Attacks on higher education**

During 2020 and 2021,<sup>1310</sup> GCPEA identified at least 18 attacks on higher education, in which four female vocational trainers were killed and over 140 students and personnel were reportedly arrested. This was a slight increase compared to 2019 and 2018, when at least seven and two incidents occurred, respectively.<sup>1311</sup>

In 2020, GCPEA collected five reports of attacks on higher education facilities, students, and staff.<sup>1312</sup> All were incidents of protest repression against staff and students. For example:

- Pakistani media *Daily Times* (Pakistan) reported that on February 12, 2020, dozens of protesters were detained by police after unarmed students, employees from the Bolan University of Medical and Health Sciences and the All-Pakistan Clerks Association demonstrated. They were baton charged by the police at GPO Chowk in Quetta city, Balochistan province. The protesters were calling for a decrease in the varsity's fees and the expulsion of the vice chancellor.<sup>1313</sup>
- Scholars at Risk reported that, on June 24, 2020, police beat and arrested dozens of students in the Balochistan province during nonviolent protests across several universities in which the students demanded internet to participate in online classes. According to local media sources, police arrested at least 80 students.<sup>1314</sup>
- Local media sources *The Express Tribune* and *Dawn Pakistan* reported that, on September 11, 2020, police allegedly beat and arrested contractual employees of Allama Iqbal Open University (AIU) whose contracts had been terminated and who were holding a peaceful demonstration in Islamabad, Federal Capital Territory.<sup>1315</sup>

In 2021, GCPEA collected 13 reported incidents of attacks on higher education, 10 of were incidents of protest repression, sometimes in the context of education policies related to Covid-19. The remaining two reports involved attacks by armed groups on female educators and on a university.<sup>1316</sup> At least 85 students were arrested and another 25 were arrested during attacks on higher education in 2021. For example:

- Scholars at Risk reported that, on January 6, 2021, during a protest, outside the Pakistan Medical Commission (PMC), police used batons and water cannons against medical school students and recent graduates. The protesters called for the Commission to undo its decision to not recognize medical school diplomas issued by 21 universities in Kyrgyzstan and Uzbekistan. The protesters claimed that the universities that the PMC blacklisted were acknowledged by the World Health Organization (WHO).<sup>1317</sup>
- Scholars at Risk reported that, on January 26, 2021, at University of Central Punjab in Lahore, police baton-charged student protesters and arrested at least 36 students. Protesters were demanding online exams rather than on-campus exams amid the coronavirus pandemic. Police reported that the demonstrators set fire to the campus gate and pelted stones at security guards.<sup>1318</sup>
- On July 1, 2021, Scholars at Risk reported that police forcibly detained protesting students. Students demanded that institutions cancel in-person examinations due to Covid-19.<sup>1319</sup>
- On July 7, 2021, Scholars at Risk reported that police targeted student protesters with tear gas and batons at Islamia College Peshawar in Peshawar district in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa governorate.<sup>1320</sup>

Also in 2021, GCPEA identified two reports of attacks by armed groups, one that involved the killing of female educators and the other that involved an explosive weapons attack near a university:

- On February 22, 2021, four female vocational trainers of Bravo College Bannu were travelling to North Waziristan, in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa province's Newly Merged Districts (KPMDD) when they were attacked and killed in a village near Mirali. Unidentified assailants allegedly fired at their vehicle. Their driver was reportedly injured in the attack.<sup>1321</sup>
- On October 18, 2021, a bomb reportedly exploded near a police bus located outside a university in Quetta City in Balochistan governorate, according to media sources. The explosion allegedly killed a police personnel and injured 13 policemen and 4 civilians.<sup>1322</sup>

- <sup>1274</sup> ACLED, “Ten conflicts to worry about in 2021,” February 2, 2021.
- <sup>1275</sup> Ayaz Gul, “Pakistan, India Agree to Immediate Ceasefire, Restoring 2003 Truce”, *Voa News*, February 25, 2021. Asad Hashim and Rifat Fareed, “India, Pakistan agree to stop cross-border firing in Kashmir”, *Aljazeera*, February 25, 2021.
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- <sup>1277</sup> ACLED, “TEN CONFLICTS TO WORRY ABOUT IN 2021,” February 2, 2021.
- <sup>1278</sup> ACLED, “TEN CONFLICTS TO WORRY ABOUT IN 2021,” February 2, 2021. ACLED, “ACLED 2020: The Year in Review,” March 22, 2021, pp. 23-24. Ayesha Tanzeem, “Thousands Gather in Pakistan, Seeking End to Imran Khan’s Government,” *Voice of America*, December 14, 2020.
- <sup>1279</sup> “Clashes in Pakistan after TLP takes several police hostage”, *Aljazeera*, April 18, 2021. Asad Hashim, “Protests continue across Pakistan over ar-rest of TLP leader”, *Aljazeera*, April 13, 2021.
- <sup>1280</sup> UNICEF, “Pakistan: End-year 2020 Situation Report (Non-COVID-19 Response) - Reporting Period: 1st January to 31st December 2020,” February 9, 2021, pp. 1, 3.
- <sup>1281</sup> UNICEF, “UNICEF Pakistan Annual Report 2020,” April 28, 2021.
- <sup>1282</sup> UNICEF, “Pakistan: End-year 2020 Situation Report (Non-COVID-19 Response) - Reporting Period: 1st January to 31st December 2020,” February 9, 2021, pp. 1, 3.
- <sup>1283</sup> UNHCR, “Flash External Update: Afghanistan Situation #4,” UNHCR, September 1, 2021, p. 1.
- <sup>1284</sup> Betsy Joles, “Afghan Refugees Get Cold Welcome in Pakistan”, *Foreign Policy*, November 22, 2021. Indrika Ratwatte “News Comment: UNHCR: Afghans struggle to seek safety as borders remain shut to most,” UNHCR press statement, December 1, 2021.
- <sup>1285</sup> Human Rights Watch, *World Report 2021: Events of 2020*, Pakistan chapter.
- <sup>1286</sup> UNICEF, “UNICEF Pakistan Annual Report 2020,” April 28, 2021.
- <sup>1287</sup> UNICEF, “UNICEF Pakistan Annual Report 2020,” April 28, 2021.
- <sup>1288</sup> GCPEA, *Education under Attack 2020*, Pakistan chapter.
- <sup>1289</sup> UN General Assembly and Security Council, “Children and armed conflict: Report of the Secretary-General,” A/74/845-S/2020/525, June 9, 2020, para 218.
- <sup>1290</sup> GCPEA, *Education under Attack 2020*; “Pakistan: Schools ‘must never be targeted’, UNICEF says after deadly blast,” UN News, October 27, 2020.
- <sup>1291</sup> “Pakistan: Schools ‘must never be targeted’, UNICEF says after deadly blast,” UN News, October 27, 2020.
- <sup>1292</sup> BBC, “Peshawar bombing: At least seven dead in Pakistan school attack,” BBC News, October 27, 2020.
- <sup>1293</sup> UN Security Council, “Children and armed conflict: Report of the Secretary-General,” A/75/873-S/2021/437, May 6, 2021, para. 262.
- <sup>1294</sup> A full list of references can be found on GCPEA’s website, [https://protectingeducation.org/wp-content/uploads/eua\\_2022\\_references.pdf](https://protectingeducation.org/wp-content/uploads/eua_2022_references.pdf)
- <sup>1295</sup> News International (Pakistan), as cited in ACLED, Event ID PAK68376. News International, “Grenade thrown at N Waziristan girls’ school during class 12 examination,” News International, July 12, 2021.
- <sup>1296</sup> Dawn, as cited in ACLED, Event ID PAK68678. Dawn, “Grenade hurled at Afghan school in Peshawar,” Dawn, July 28, 2021.
- <sup>1297</sup> Asian News International, as cited ACLED, Event ID PAK69847. PTI, “Blast at under-construction girls’ school in northwest Pakistan”, *The New In-dian Express*, September 22, 2021.
- <sup>1298</sup> *Pakistan Observer*, as cited in ACLED, Event ID PAK71108. “Bomb blast damages school building”, *Pakistan Observer*, November 18, 2021.
- <sup>1299</sup> Express Tribune (Pakistan), as cited in ACLED, Event ID PAK71696. “North Waziristan clashes leave two dead”, *Express Tribune* (Pakistan), De-cember 12, 2021.
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- <sup>1301</sup> *Dawn*, as cited in ACLED, Event ID PAK59116. “Non-payment of dues: Police manhandle, arrest protesting PEF school owners, teachers,” *Dawn* (Pakistan), July 19, 2020, <https://www.dawn.com/news/1569821>. “120 protesting PEF school owners, teachers held”, *Dawn* (Pakistan), July 16, 2021.
- <sup>1302</sup> *New International* (Pakistan), as cited in ACLED, Event ID PAK63958. Munawer Azeem, “Tear gas fired on teachers going to PM’s house,” *Dawn*, December 20, 2020. Haseeb Hanif, “Teachers protest in Bani Gala,” *The Express Tribune*, December 20, 2020. Shakeel Anjum, “Teachers protest outside Bani Gala”, *News International* (Pakistan), December 20, 2020.
- <sup>1303</sup> A full list of references can be found on GCPEA’s website, [https://protectingeducation.org/wp-content/uploads/eua\\_2022\\_references.pdf](https://protectingeducation.org/wp-content/uploads/eua_2022_references.pdf)
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- <sup>1305</sup> *Asian News*, as cited in ACLED, Event ID PAK64435. “PoK teachers take to streets demanding salary hike,” *ANI*, January 13, 2021.
- <sup>1306</sup> *Dawn*, as cited in ACLED, Event ID PAK65948. “20 held as police stop head teachers from marching on CM House,” *Dawn*, March 23, 2021.
- <sup>1307</sup> *South Asia Terrorism Portal*; *Asian News International*, as cited in ACLED, Event ID PAK67906. “School van fired upon in Mastung, four female teachers injured”, *Daily Times Pakistan*, June 20, 2021. Abdul Wahid Shahwani, “Four women teachers injured in firing”, *Dawn*, June 20, 2021.
- <sup>1308</sup> *Dawn* (Pakistan), as cited in ACLED, Event ID PAK68678. “Grenade hurled at Afghan school in Peshawar”, *Dawn*, July 28, 2021.
- <sup>1309</sup> *News International* (Pakistan), as cited in ACLED, Event ID PAK72089. Xinhua, “4 killed, 15 injured in blast in Pakistan’s Quetta”, *China Daily*,

December 31, 2021. Mujeeb Ullah, “Quetta death toll rises to six as city shuts down”, *Samaa*, December 31, 2021.

<sup>1310</sup> UN, “UNICEF condemns killing of four women in North Waziristan,” UN News release, February 22, 2021.

<sup>1311</sup> GCPEA, *Education under Attack 2020*, Pakistan chapter.

<sup>1312</sup> A full list of references can be found on GCPEA’s website, [https://protectingeducation.org/wp-content/uploads/eua\\_2022\\_references.pdf](https://protectingeducation.org/wp-content/uploads/eua_2022_references.pdf)

<sup>1313</sup> *Daily Times* (Pakistan), as cited in ACLED, Event ID PAK56091. “Dozens detained after protesting students, police clash in Quetta,” *Daily Times* (Pakistan), February 13, 2020.

<sup>1314</sup> Scholars at Risk, Academic Freedom Monitor, Various Institutions, June 24, 2020. Ameen Amjad Khan, “Students arrested in protests over on-line classes fees,” *University World News*, June 26, 2020.

<sup>1315</sup> *Express Tribune*, as cited in ACLED, Event ID PAK60927. “Police thrash protesting AIOU employees,” *Express Tribune*, September 12, 2020.

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<sup>1317</sup> Scholars at Risk, Academic Freedom Monitor, Unknown, January 6, 2021.

<sup>1318</sup> Scholars at Risk, Academic Freedom Monitor, University of Central Punjab, January 26, 2021. *ARY News; GeoTV; Express Tribune (Pakistan)*, as cited in ACLED, Event ID PAK64810.

<sup>1319</sup> Scholars at Risk Network, Academic Freedom Monitor, Various, July 1, 2021.

<sup>1320</sup> Scholars at Risk Network, Academic Freedom Monitor, Islamia College University-Peshawar, July 7, 2021.

<sup>1321</sup> UN, “UNICEF condemns killing of four women in North Waziristan,” UN News release, February 22, 2021. Pazir Gul, Amin Ahmed, “Four women vocational trainers shot dead in Waziristan,” *Dawn*, February 23, 2021. Malik Habibullah Khan, Mushtaq Yusufzai, “Martyred female trainers were imparting vocational training to women,” *The News* (Pakistan), February 23, 2021.

<sup>1322</sup> *AP; South Asia Terrorism Portal*, as cited in ACLED, Event ID PAK70494. Asad Hashim, “Police targeted in southwest Pakistan bombing”, *Aljazeera*, October 18, 2021.