

THAILAND

Attacks on education continued in 2020 and 2021. Non-state armed groups targeted soldiers guarding teachers and schools in the conflict-affected southern provinces, placing educators, students, and education facilities at risk. The police also arrested student protesters during this reporting period.

Context

Armed conflict in Thailand's southern Pattani, Yala, Narathiwat, and Songkhla provinces continued during the reporting period despite peace dialogues and decreasing violence in recent years, according to International Crisis Group and *The New Humanitarian*.¹⁶⁶¹ In April 2020 the Barisan Revolusi Nasional (BRN), an ethnic Malay Muslim armed group with separatist ambitions, declared a unilateral ceasefire to allow humanitarian access and healthcare services during the Covid-19 pandemic.¹⁶⁶² The Thai military did not accept the ceasefire and continued to carry out counter-insurgency operations. The unilateral ceasefire ended after Thai security forces killed three suspected BRN members in Pattani province in late April 2020.¹⁶⁶³ Since then, armed violence increased as insurgents attacked military and police convoys and posts in late 2020 and 2021, according to Human Rights Watch and International Crisis Group.¹⁶⁶⁴ For instance, a roadside improvised explosive device (IED) was detonated in Chanae district, Narathiwat province, in September 2021, killing two police officers and injuring four others;¹⁶⁶⁵ in December 2021, an IED was installed outside an army base in Rueso district, Narathiwat province.¹⁶⁶⁶

Thai police responded with excessive force to some protests demanding political reforms held by secondary and university students and youth, during this reporting period. In February 2020, Thailand's constitutional court dissolved the Future Forward Party and banned party executives from politics for ten years due to allegations of violating election laws, according to media and the Council on Foreign Relations.¹⁶⁶⁷ The party was popular among young people and gained 80 seats in parliament in the 2019 election.¹⁶⁶⁸ After the party's dissolution, Thai youth led protests against Prime Minister Gen. Prayut Chan-ocha's government, including on university campuses, demanding the government revise the constitution, hold new elections, reform the monarchy, reduce corruption, and end intimidation of government critics.¹⁶⁶⁹ Thai organization Thai Lawyers for Human Rights reported that police officers entered schools to intimidate students for participating in protests, including by photographing and questioning them.¹⁶⁷⁰ During off-campus protests, the police arrested student and youth leaders and used teargas and other measures of excessive force against protesters.¹⁶⁷¹

In March 2020, the government closed schools to limit the spread of Covid-19.¹⁶⁷² Schools reopened in July 2020,¹⁶⁷³ but many closed again in January and April 2021 due to high virus rates.¹⁶⁷⁴

In January 2020, BRN signed the Deed of Commitment for the Protection of Children from the Effects of Armed Conflict, which includes protections for education and a commitment to not recruit children during military operations.¹⁶⁷⁵ However, in early 2021, Human Rights Watch reported that the commitments had not yet been fulfilled.¹⁶⁷⁶

Attacks on Schools

During the 2020-2021 reporting period, GCPEA identified approximately five reported attacks on schools. In comparison, GCPEA collected five reports of attacks on schools in 2019 and two in 2018. As in *Education under Attack 2020*, which covered 2017-2019, attacks on schools routinely involved explosive weapons.¹⁶⁷⁷ In 2020, GCPEA collected two reported incidents of attacks on schools in the southern provinces of Pattani and Yala:

- On February 17, 2020, unknown assailants reportedly detonated an IED at a school in Moo 3 village, Nong Chik district, Pattani province. According to *Bangkok Post*, the explosion left a hole in the concrete wall in front of the school but caused no injuries.¹⁶⁷⁸
- *Thaiger* reported that on July 8, 2020, unidentified assailants shot a ranger volunteer in front of a school in Wang Phayaya sub-district, Yala province. The ranger was reportedly returning to the 41st paramilitary battalion and appeared not to be guarding the school or teachers at the time of the attack.¹⁶⁷⁹

In 2021, GCPEA identified three reported attacks on schools, all in southern Narathiwat province:

- On February 13, 2021, unknown assailants reportedly entered Rueso Withaya School to throw a grenade over the wall into a police station parking area, where it exploded and damaged several vehicles, in Rueso Ok, Rueso district, Narathiwat province.¹⁶⁸⁰
- On June 1, 2021, suspected non-state armed group members shot and killed an army ranger as he set up a checkpoint near a school in Tue Ngo village, Si Sakhon district, Narathiwat province, as reported by local media outlets. The assailants reportedly hid behind the school before carrying out the attack.¹⁶⁸¹
- On October 4, 2021, an unidentified assailant reportedly detonated a bomb near Su-Ngai Padi High School in Chue Rae village, Narathiwat province. No fatalities were reported.¹⁶⁸²

Attacks on school students, teachers, and other education personnel

In 2020 and 2021, GCPEA collected approximately six reported incidents of attacks on school students, teachers, and staff. This is a decrease compared to *Education under Attack 2020*, which included five and ten reported attacks in 2019 and 2018, respectively.¹⁶⁸³ As in the previous reporting period, many attacks affecting students and teachers involved the targeting of police or volunteer defense guards tasked with protecting teachers, students, and schools. Although these attacks targeted the police or guards, they put teachers and students at risk.

In 2020, GCPEA identified approximately five reported attacks on school students, teachers, and staff.¹⁶⁸⁴ For example:

- The *Bangkok Post* reported that on July 14, 2020, unidentified assailants detonated an IED on a dirt road in Lapho village, Mae Lan district, Pattani province, targeting and killing an army ranger who was guarding teachers employed at Ban Khuan Plaeng Ngu School. No other casualties were reported.¹⁶⁸⁵
- On August 13, 2020, alleged non-state armed group members reportedly detonated an IED along the road leading to Pakaluesong Primary School in Nong Chik district, Pattani province, targeting soldiers as they escorted teachers and students to the school. According to media outlets *Benar News* and *Bangkok Post*, one soldier was killed while others were wounded.¹⁶⁸⁶ Teachers and army rangers at the school have been threatened in the past as well, according to Human Rights Watch.¹⁶⁸⁷
- On the same day, in a reportedly coordinated attack with the above-mentioned incident, an alleged non-state armed group detonated an IED along the road leading to Kalisa Primary School in Rangae district, Narathiwat province. Local media reported that the explosion targeted and killed one soldier and injured at least three others while they were guarding teachers en route to school.¹⁶⁸⁸ The two attacks on August 13, 2020, were reportedly the first such attacks since schools in the southern provinces reopened for in-person classes after Covid-19 closures.¹⁶⁸⁹
- On October 9, 2020, alleged non-state armed group members reportedly fired at a group of soldiers and volunteer patrols guarding teachers in Bang Kao Thale village, Sai Buri district, Pattani province. A soldier and volunteer guard were reportedly injured in the attack.¹⁶⁹⁰

In 2021, GCPEA collected one reported incident of an attack on school students. On January 16, members of the Bad Student group reportedly protested in front of the Ministry of Education in Bangkok. According to local media outlets, the students protested on Teachers' Day to draw attention to teachers' use of violence against students in classrooms. The police reportedly arrested at least two students then later released them that same day.¹⁶⁹¹

¹⁶⁶¹ ICG, *Southern Thailand's Peace Dialogue: Giving Substance to Form* (Brussels: International Crisis Group, January 21, 2020). Caleb Quinley, "In Thailand's deep south conflict, a 'glimpse of hope', but no momentum to sustain a COVID-19 ceasefire," *The New Humanitarian*, August 3, 2020.

¹⁶⁶² Barisan Revolusi Nasional Melayu Patani, "Declaration of BRN's Response to Covid-19," Geneva Call, April 3, 2020. Caleb Quinley, "In Thailand's deep south conflict, a 'glimpse of hope', but no momentum to sustain a COVID-19 ceasefire," *The New Humanitarian*, August 3, 2020.

¹⁶⁶³ "Thailand Forces Kill 3 Suspected Insurgents in Pattani," *Benar News*, April 30, 2020. Human Rights Watch, *World Report 2021* (New York: Human Rights Watch, 2020), Thailand chapter. Caleb Quinley, "In Thailand's deep south conflict, a 'glimpse of hope', but no momentum to sustain a COVID-19 ceasefire," *The New Humanitarian*, August 3, 2020.

¹⁶⁶⁴ "October 2021: Thailand," International Crisis Group Conflict Tracker, October 2021. Human Rights Watch, *World Report 2022* (New York: Human

Rights Watch, 2022), Thailand chapter. “Violence statistics in the year 64, more violent incidents, explosions, but losses lowest in 17 years ,” *ISRA News*, September 27, 2021.

¹⁶⁶⁵ “September 2021: Thailand,” International Crisis Group Conflict Tracker, September 2021. Waedao Harai, “Bomb under road kills 2 police officers, injures 4,” *Bangkok Post*, September 28, 2021.

¹⁶⁶⁶ Waedao Harai, “Bomb blast outside army base in far South,” *Bangkok Post*, December 29, 2021.

¹⁶⁶⁷ “FFP Dissolved, Executives Banned for 10 Years,” *Bangkok News*, February 21, 2020. Joshua Kurlantzick, “A Popular Thai Opposition Party Was Disbanded. What Happens Next?” Council on Foreign Relations in brief, February 27, 2020.

¹⁶⁶⁸ “Future Forward Party’s spectacular rise and fall,” *Bangkok Post*, December 30, 2020.

¹⁶⁶⁹ “Explainer: What’s behind Thailand’s protests?” *Reuters*, October 15, 2020. “#Whatshappeninginthailand: 10 Things You Need to Know,” Amnesty International news, November 6, 2020.

¹⁶⁷⁰ Thai Lawyers for Human Rights, “TLHR Overall Situation in February 2021,” February 2021. Sunai Phasuk, “Thailand’s ‘Bad Students’ are Rising Up for Democracy and Change,” Human Rights Watch commentary, September 17, 2020.

¹⁶⁷¹ “Thai Police Resort to Tear Gas, Arrest Warrants Against Protesters,” *Nikkei Asia*, October 16, 2020. “#Whatshappeninginthailand: 10 Things You Need to Know,” Amnesty International news, November 6, 2020. Child Rights Coalition, “Statement of the Child Rights Coalition Thailand following the dissolution of the protest in Bangkok on October 16, 2020,” October 16, 2020. “Independent UN Rights Experts Urge Thai Government to Allow Peaceful Protests,” UN News, October 22, 2020. “Thailand: Free Unjustly Detained Democracy Activists,” Human Rights Watch news release, April 20, 2021. “Thalugaz Protests: Lawyers’ Reflection of the “New Low” on Children’s Rights under Arrests,” Thai Lawyers for Human Rights, September 19, 2021.

¹⁶⁷² “Thailand closes schools, bars, puts off holiday to fight coronavirus,” *Reuters*, March 17, 2020.

¹⁶⁷³ Jiraporn Kuhakan, “Schools reopen across Thailand with temperature checks, masks,” *Reuters*, July 1, 2020.

¹⁶⁷⁴ “Bangkok to close schools for two weeks as number of COVID-19 cases rise,” *Reuters*, January 1, 2021. “Thailand to close schools, bars after surge in COVID-19 cases,” *Reuters*, April 16, 2021.

¹⁶⁷⁵ *Deed of Commitment Under Geneva Call for the Protection of Children from the Effects of Armed Conflict*, Geneva Call-BRN, January 15, 2020.

¹⁶⁷⁶ Human Rights Watch, World Report 2021 (New York: Human Rights Watch, 2020), Thailand chapter.

¹⁶⁷⁷ GCPEA, *Education under Attack* (New York, GCPEA: 2021), pp. 232-233.

¹⁶⁷⁸ Abdullah Benjakat, “Pattani school wall damaged by bomb,” *Bangkok Post*, February 17, 2020.

¹⁶⁷⁹ *Thai Rath*, as cited in ACLED, Data ID THA8081. Jack Burton, “Yala ramps up security after fatal shooting of volunteer ranger,” *The Thaiger*, July 9, 2020. Jack Burton, “Volunteer ranger shot dead in Yala,” *The Thaiger*, July 8, 2020.

¹⁶⁸⁰ Waedao Harai, “Cars damaged in Deep South grenade explosion,” *Bangkok Post*, February 14, 2021. *Matichon*, as cited in ACLED, Data ID THA8926.

¹⁶⁸¹ *Isranews Agency*, as cited in ACLED, Data ID THA9399. “Sniper shooting at 1 Srisakorn paramilitary ranger ,” *Isranews Agency*, June 2, 2021.

¹⁶⁸² *Isranews Agency*, as cited in ACLED, Event ID THA9805. “The tumultuous southern thieves did not stop laying down another one, hoping to create a chaotic situation in the Su-ngai Padi area”, *Thai Post*, October 4, 2021.

¹⁶⁸³ GCPEA, *Education under Attack* (New York, GCPEA: 2021), pp. 233-234.

¹⁶⁸⁴ A full list of references can be found on GCPEA’s website, https://protectingeducation.org/wp-content/uploads/eua_2022_references.pdf

¹⁶⁸⁵ *Daily News* (Thailand), as cited in ACLED, Data ID THA8089; “Ranger killed by bomb in Pattani,” *Bangkok Post*, July 14, 2020.

¹⁶⁸⁶ Mariyam Ahmad and Matahari Ismail, “Thailand: Soldiers Killed, Injured in Deep South Bomb Attacks,” August 13, 2020. Abdullah Benjakat, *Bangkok Post*, “Two rangers killed, others wounded by bombs in far South,” August 13, 2020.

¹⁶⁸⁷ “*Targets of Both Sides: Violence against Students, Teachers, and Schools in Thailand’s Southern Border Provinces* (New York, New York: Human Rights Watch, 2010).

¹⁶⁸⁸ Mariyam Ahmad and Matahari Ismail, “Thailand: Soldiers Killed, Injured in Deep South Bomb Attacks,” August 13, 2020. Abdullah Benjakat, “Two rangers killed, others wounded by bombs in far South,” August 13, 2020.

¹⁶⁸⁹ Mariyam Ahmad and Matahari Ismail, “Thailand: Soldiers Killed, Injured in Deep South Bomb Attacks,” August 13, 2020.

¹⁶⁹⁰ *Manager* (Thailand); *Isranews Agency*, as cited in ACLED, Data ID THA8359. “A hunter stepped on a landmine and immediately died while inspecting the shooting area of the NCPO in Pattani province,” *Manager*, October 9, 2020.

¹⁶⁹¹ *Prachatai*, as cited in ACLED, Data ID THA8854. “‘People’ issued a statement condemning the use of arrested violence. ‘Liberation card’ ,” *Thairath*, January 16, 2021. “Urgent! Bad students preparing for Teacher’s Day activities Ministry of Education, detained by Accounting Officer No. 1,” *Bright Today*, January 16, 2021. “Thai Students mark Teachers’ Day with paint-soaked protest”, *France 24*, January 16, 2021.