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. 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. 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. 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. 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; in December 2021, an IED was installed outside an army base in Rueso district, Narathiwat province.

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. The party was popular among young people and gained 80 seats in parliament in the 2019 election. 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. 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. During off-campus protests, the police arrested student and youth leaders and used teargas and other measures of excessive force against protesters.

In March 2020, the government closed schools to limit the spread of Covid-19. Schools reopened in July 2020, but many closed again in January and April 2021 due to high virus rates.

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. However, in early 2021, Human Rights Watch reported that the commitments had not yet been fulfilled.

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. 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.

- Thaiger reported that on July 8, 2020, unidentified assailants shot a ranger volunteer in front of a school in Wang Phyaya 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.

In 2021, GCPEA identified three reported attacks on schools, all in southern Narathiwat province:
• On February 13, 2021, unknown assailants reportedly entered Rueso Witthaya 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.  

• 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 Sakon district, Narathiwat province, as reported by local media outlets. The assailants reportedly hid behind the school before carrying out the attack.  

• 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.

**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. 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. 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.  

• 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. Teachers and army rangers at the school have been threatened in the past as well, according to Human Rights Watch.  

• 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. 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.  

• 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.

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.


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


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 NCPD Pattani province,” Manager, October 9, 2020.