**Definitions of attacks on education**

Attacks on education are defined as any threat of or actual use of force carried out against students, teachers, academics, education support and transport staff (e.g., janitors, bus drivers), and education officials, as well as attacks on education buildings, resources, material, or facilities (including school buses). These actions may occur for political, military, ideological, sectarian, ethnic, or religious reasons. Incidents of attacks on education not only kill and maim teachers but also disrupt students’ right to education. They impede the ability of instructors and educational institutions to offer an education, and they restrict students’ ability to access school and university. Perpetrators of these attacks include national and international armed forces, police forces, intelligence services, regional and UN peacekeeping forces, paramilitaries and militias affiliated with the state, and rebel forces or any other non-state armed group.

Attacks on schools include targeted violent attacks on schools or school infrastructure (e.g., school playgrounds or libraries) by state military forces or non-state armed groups. These may take the form of arson; suicide, car, or other bombs aimed at a school; or artillery fire directed at a school. In addition, attacks on schools may include indiscriminate attacks that result in the damage or destruction of school infrastructure, the deaths or injury of students and educators who are present, and explosions that occur in close proximity to a school, which may affect the students, educational personnel, or infrastructure. Closures due to general conflict dynamics are not considered attacks on education.

Attacks on students, teachers, and other education personnel consist of killings, injuries, torture, abductions, forced disappearances, or threats of violence, including coercion or extortion involving violent threats directed towards students and education staff who work at the primary and secondary levels. Education personnel include teaching staff, as well as school support staff such as administrators, janitors, school bus drivers, or security guards. Included in this category are incidents in which these individuals are injured or killed while on their way to school, even if the attack does not directly target them; for example, if gunfire hits a student en route to class.

Military use of schools and universities includes cases in which armed forces or non-state armed groups occupy schools and use them as bases, barracks and temporary shelters for those associated with fighting forces, fighting positions, weapons storage facilities, or detention and interrogation centers. Armed forces or groups may include state police or military forces, international forces, intelligence services, rebel groups, or other non-state armed groups. These uses negatively affect the learning environment and prevent students from continuing their studies. Use of the full school or university may leave students without a place to study, but even the partial use of an institution endangers learners. If the students continue to attend classes, they may be subject to harassment or sexual violence. Parents may also be less willing to send their children, particularly their daughters, to school for fear of sexual violence. Military use of a school or university may trigger attack by opposing forces, risking the lives of students and instructors if they continue to attend, or destroying the school and preventing it from being used for educational purposes in the future. Military use often coincides with other abuses, including attacks on schools, sexual violence, and child recruitment.

Recruitment of children at school, or en route to or from, school occurs when armed forces or groups use schools or school routes as locales for recruiting girls and boys under the age of 18 as fighters, spies, or intelligence sources, to transport weapons or other materials, for domestic work, or for any other purposes associated with the armed group. This violation tends to be under-reported.

Sexual violence by armed parties at, or en route to or from, school or university, as an attack on education, occurs when state security forces or non-state armed groups rape, sexually harass, or abuse students or educators; abduct students or educators for sexual purposes; or recruit students or educators to serve a sexual function in an armed force or armed group, or threaten to engage in such conduct. This category considers such violations only if they occur while students or educators are traveling to and from, or are in, places of learning, or, if they occur at another time, explicitly target students or educators because of their status as students or educators. These sexual acts are committed by force, coercion, or the threat of force, or by otherwise taking advantage of a person’s inability to consent. Certain acts that do not occur en route to school are also included if there is a clear nexus with education. For example, forced marriage may be an attack on education if it occurs after an abduction from or along the route to school or university. Sexual violence perpetrated by other educators and students are not included as attacks on education unless these perpetrators also belong to armed forces or armed groups. Sexual violence as an attack on education may affect girls, boys, women, and men. Sexual violence tends to be under-reported, and while the UN and other groups do report on this violation, their reporting often does not indicate the location of the incident or the individual’s status as a learner or educator.

Attacks on higher education include attacks on universities, as well as attacks targeting university students, professors, and other higher education staff. Many of the violations included in this category are similar to those described at the primary and secondary school levels. These include bombings, airstrikes, or other methods of targeting university campuses, as well as killings, abductions, or threats directed at university students, faculty, or staff. The category includes cases of violent repression of student protests, in which state security forces kill, seriously injure, or otherwise use excessive force against university students or staff, in demonstrations related to education matters such as policies and laws or in on-campus protests. Such cases are much more common at the higher education level than at the primary or secondary level. Attacks on higher education also include deliberate acts of coercion, intimidation, or threats of physical force that create a climate of fear and repression that undermines academic freedom and educational functions. This category excludes violations such as infringements on academic freedom that do not consist of either physical violence or the threat of physical violence.